CULTURAL ADVICE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this document may contain images or names of people who have passed away.

EXEGESIS

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The Call of Lineage: A Living Epistemology

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Acknowledgements

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Kun Kunam. *Iyong niin Ooyombwith*

Introduction

Curator Manuel Olveira describes the lecture-performance as 'an expanded art practice, a specific kind of presentation that goes beyond the academic format of the lecture. Artists (and other cultural agents) use the lecture to turn it into a performance space which, in fusing aspects of drama and of education, enables a greater intellectual, emotive and affective commitment from the audience'[1].

The questions that drive this research pivot on the creative, relational dynamic of Wik and Wikway lore systems and the people as it shapes the possibility of what I will theorise and perform as Voice Emergence. The key questions are interlinking and are framed as follows:

1. How can this researcher use performance, movement, visual art and other creative modalities to show how Wik and Wikway ontologies are foundational to her own creative voice and life flow? How might this approach enable the modelling of a method to both comment on, and move forward from, the social trauma of colonisation?

2. Why is it important, and what does it enable in terms of narrative and political significance, to situate the study of museum repatriation of human biological samples within broader concerns about practices of First Nations healing and care?

3. How might this researcher extend approaches to auto-ethnography and sensuous ethnography as a conduit for Voice and so contribute to First Nations Research methodologies and broader appreciations of the performative and intergenerational dynamics of voice for First Nations peoples?

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Although performative and multi-modal lecture presentations have been used in the academy for some time (Milder 2011), my focus is specifically on the emergence of Indigenous voice through the application of First Nations Methodologies and the particular kinds of performative multimodal expressions comprise my repertoire as a First Nations creative researcher.

[11] Olveira, M. (2021). *New Artistic Formats, Places, Practices and Behaviours.* MUSAC.

In this exegesis I introduce to you my (performative) *Arnya* lecture genre and although I present this as a (type of) new genre, I acknowledge that mine is a particular elaboration of a construct that has been in existence and developing in various parts of the world since the 1960s (Olveira, n.d.). I also acknowledge the many creatives that have gone before and have ploughed ground, discovered and extracted revelational concepts and accordingly contributed to the pockets and spaces of our shared worlds both within the academy as well as beyond. The new knowledge contribution I refer to in terms of the *Arnya* lecture construct will be articulated in the final chapter of this work.

I alert you to my use of the term flow. I acknowledge Michaly Csikszentmihalyi's work on Flow describing it as 'a subjective experience characterized by (a) complete concentration on tasks at hand, (b) heightened sense of control, (c) loss of self-consciousness, (d) merging of action and awareness, (e) distortion of sense of time, and (f) autotelic experience (i.e. intrinsically rewarding experience; (Csikszentmihaly 1975) (Dwight, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2020:171). My use of this term primarily refers to (a) a dynamic of and in process as experienced by an individual and (b) a process in activated motion. These definitions are identified in the context of their respective sentences throughout the exegesis, the intended use of this term by me is easily identified in its statement. I also highlight that steadfast revelation experienced by the subject/recipient is a critical component of flow as a process in activated motion.

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Manu Aluli Meyer states that the epistemology that governs her dissertation 'is an interpretative analysis of my own epistemology, shaped by dream, taped narratives and a lifetime of interactions' (2004:86; as cited in Kovach 2009:34).

In this research, through innovations in form, content and method and through explanations diagrammatic, painted, danced and lectured, I have offered an articulated approach to appreciating the power and reach of First Nations voice. In this formulation, voice is a manifestation of individual expression informed and authorised by a foundational epistemology and ontology located in country and the old people themselves. What concerns me here is not voice as it might be presumed to be pre-given and therefore accessible and stable as a source of creativity and identity, but Voice emergence as a

process that is part of a living epistemology. Living epistemology means that one's creative practice as a First Nations artist and researcher concerned with form of intergenerational healing from trauma, must be understood to emerge as part of life's flow. Living epistemology brings an emphasis exactly to the work of emergence and the new forms and connections that result from adhering to my foundations in Wik and Wikway ontology and epistemology in the context of my life as a contemporary First Nations woman based in Cairns for the purposes of my PhD research.

The work of anthropologist Donald Thomson with the Wik of Cape York throughout the 1930s provides the stimulus for this work. Through an analysis of the collected organic material (our ancestors), a creative multi-modal response formulates a primary thread demonstrated throughout the critical and performative narrative that follows unfolding life circumstances that extend well beyond the repatriation process and the Thomson materials.

As I will describe, the Voice emergence that this research describes and investigates has resulted in a new form of performative academic presentation that I call the *Arnya* lecture. *Arnya* is defined as the essence of spirit self or your higher self. *Arnya*, as defined and contextualised in the Alngith/Liningithi vernacular, refers to a totemic ancestor and is also interpreted as instinct, intuition or guide.

The Arnya lecture as presented is titled *Idiwirra:* A Living Epistemology. It is a multi-modal performance devised as three acts and written over the course of four years. In its construct it is scaffolded and presented as an unfolding narrative.

In this exegesis, as well as describing the methodology that gave rise to this First Nations lecture form guided by Arnya, and placing it in relationship with other approaches to First Nations methodology, I will point to several key moments in the dramaturgy and performance of the resulting (approximately) 90-minute multimodal work that will help me to explain what I see as the key commitments of *Arnya* Songline methodology.

But beyond this kind of analysis, and more importantly, this exegesis tracks the transformation I have undergone beginning with initial entry into the academy, figuratively naked but with a conceptual seed pulsating in my belly. This journey culminates in the offering of my *Arnya* lecture construct. Throughout this articulation of journey and struggle

at multiple levels, I reflect on the processes of methodology, accountabilities and collective relationality across academic and personal and cultural kinship frameworks that have shaped this research. As you will see, I have sought out, discovered and pulled out the relating threads of the arguments revealed through this process of Voice emergence in order to develop the methodology in context referred to as *Arnya* Songline methodology that in turn gives rise to the performative aspect of this PhD: the *Arnya* lecture. So, rather than using this exegesis to provide micro-analysis detail (i.e. details of how I came to decisions of gesture use, movement, creative reveal etc.), or a discussion of the content of the creative work, I instead track the theorisation of my overall process and the resulting form in order to offer a broader argument about First Nations methodologies and the role of voice in creative practice research. To this end, the exegesis provides a written and diagrammatic explanation of the performative delivery of new knowledge through the *Arnya* lecture construct as a theorisation of what I am doing. It provides an account of my methodology and how I conceptualise, and respectfully develop, creative process in response to the specifically located forms of relationality, accountability and creative guidance upon which this method rests, as well as from which my innovation in scholarly form has resulted in an offering of a specific performative genre of First Nation Voice emergence. Additionally, I stress my sense of steadfast presence and dynamic of collective dialogue throughout the analytical and interrogative aspect of lived process. This is fundamental to the nature of First Nation Methodology which depicts collective ancestral voices as present and ongoing, throughout contemporary cultural practice. I offer here a statement of contribution to First Nation Methodology to note, that guidance, accompaniment and presence of ancestral voice is core and centre in the research process.

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My grandmother would often refer to the salt sea throughout my childhood. Here I distinguish the salt sea from other forms of the element of water running on and through Country as has been specified by my grandmother throughout her ontological teachings. My focus here therefore centres on *ngograchaahn* places and spirit manifestation as opposed to *cahtaahl* (fresh water)[2]. I understand the insights of my research to be directly informed

[2] *Ngograchaahn*: The salt sea. *Cahtaahl*: fresh water (Alngith/Liningithi).

by the teachings of my grandmother and the ways we would spend time together on Country as she would point out the significance of *ngograchaahn* and the relationship we (people and all that Country is comprised of that is, land, sea, air and all that inhabits) collectively shared. I refer to *ngograchaahn* in the female as an instinctive perspective of positioning and for reasons that go beyond a public explanation. (This term of reference is personal and does not enact a claim on the term in general, so please note here that others may specify differently.) Throughout this learning phase, I was also developing my own organic relationship with her *(ngograchaahn)*, fusing together the taught and the experienced. I would later find resonances of this experiential approach to knowledge in the areas of sensory ethnography, sensory knowledge, sensory embodied reflexivity, embodiment, inter-subjectivity and phenomenology (see Elliot and Culhane, 2017). And, though I do not unpack these terms here in the ways those authors do, I acknowledge that reading some of this literature inspired me to pursue my own form of sensuous auto-ethnography in this research.

My grandmother would also refer to certain members of a family group descending from the big-name lineage[3] (totemic ancestry) as *ngograchaahn* rather than in their 'English' names as they are more commonly called, even by my family. I recall a stirring in my spirit at the sound of her calling that name even then (an early indication of Voice emergence). Several decades later I, in turn, am offering an analysis of the spiritual aspect of this precious act of giving Voice and, in turn analysing the symbolic significance of Voice in terms of collective relationality and kinship from a First Nations standpoint, more specifically Wik and Wikway. In other words, the current analysis is about the coming to fruition of the process 'Voice emergence'.

So, as I begin, I want to call *ngograchaahn* by her name, celebrate her role and acknowledge her presence.

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[3] For further reading on 'big name/small name' terms (*oolay/oolway/pulway/Kampan*) see Martin, D.F., 1993:269 & McKnight, D. 1981:92. Also, McConnel, U. (1930) and Thomson, D. (1972).

Throughout my life, my creative voice has found different forms of expression, but they have all come from the same place. Born into a nation of peoples where song, dance, storytelling and dramatic re-enactment is a fundamental way of living, these frameworks and ways of being, knowing, seeing and doing provide the grounds of shared existence. Early childhood memories of ceremonial song and dance interaction and depiction continue to assert themselves throughout my memory template.

These encounters opened me up to a world of cultural and spiritual interactivity in context. From my early days living on the Western Cape, I have been a part of ceremony where I witnessed song men, women and dancers summon the deceased as is custom for one last look allowing those still living to see and experience the spirit energy for the last time before letting go once and for all[4]. I have had my own encounters of song and dance whereas I watched and experienced old dances[5] being performed, I also experienced the spiritual manifestations that arose as a result. The memory of the *piku* (crocodile) dance by *wootee* (grandfather) Ewan Bandicootcha as part of the Wanam Nation lingers clear in my mind today. The imagery of him rolling around in the dirt as singers and other dancers accompany with clapping and rhythmic chants is as clear as if it were yesterday, though I may have been only about eight or nine years old at the time.

Such is the songline exposure and encounter that shaped my life's creative trajectory. These experiences provide a template that has accompanied me throughout my life development as an explorative, expressive being. With a foundational fusion of primarily Wik and Wikway ontological orientations from these experiences, I went on to study dance in a contemporary setting in Sydney from the age of 16 to when I was 21. This season of my life fused, extended and developed my creative movement vocabulary, moulding the tribal and ceremonial with the genres and techniques of a contemporary performance framework and training field. A vocabulary of contemporary dance training (classical ballet, jazz (Horton[6]), modern (Graham[7]), tap, afro jazz added to my existing repertoire of tribal ceremonial

[4] Refer to Wirrer-George Oochunyung 2012 pp.3-4.
[5] Those ancient dances that either no longer or are rarely performed or sung today.
[6] Lester Horton: https://www.dancespirit.com/horton-technique-2326036575.html
[7] Martha Graham: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martha-Graham/additional-info#history

foundations[8]. A love for live performance theatre and dramatic re-enactment was also part of the instinctive template for creative process, utilisation, exploration, interrogation and depiction. Dramatic re-enactments were part of dance movement expression throughout these training years. It was also during these times at the dance school that my writing for dramatic theatre first emerged. As a young dance student, I was given opportunities to utilise my skills in this space. I wrote my first dramatic script 'television stories', incorporated into the school's end-of-year performance, when I was 19. Dramatic re-enactment was enacted in response to this script when I took a role as one of the performers also.

Herein is a necessarily brief depiction of the growth and extension trajectory of my creative voice template and identity. The desire and strong instinct to dramatically depict life experiences only strengthened from there on, and even though my desire was to commence further professional training at the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA)[9], my marriage to the man who became the father of my three daughters took me on a different path, indeed, for the rest of my life to date. Yet, throughout married life and amid the conceiving and rearing of our daughters and the responsibilities that came so suddenly with them, throughout the decades that followed I still found and utilised ways of continuing to develop and extend my interactivity with creative process as choreographer, performer (of dance and acting), writer and playwright and now creative research scholar. These explorative opportunities involved my interaction and development across genres while creating, writing and performing across Australia as well as overseas (Canada and Europe).

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In general terms my research 'falls within the family of arts-based research (ABR)' (Leavy 2018:54). When a creative, artistic performer approaches research in this way there is potential to 'stimulate interest, excitement, and the potential of change' (p.55). In accordance with my biographical creative template, the modes of creative depiction consist

[8] For further insight into contemporary dance training refer to Firestarter – The Story of Bangarra Directors Nel Minchin and Wayne Blair, Producer Ivan O'Mahoney www.screenaustralia.gov.au
[9] NIDA: https://www.nida.edu.au/?gclid=CjwKCAjwz6_8BRBkEiwA3p02VZHB9QYHrV2Bt6RyOvoWxcS965M-pdEmL6RNPvxIoimGsjU91eXcOxoC3KcQAvD_BwE

primarily of dramatic narrative delivery fused with academic terminology and criteria, physical movement vocabulary, visual imageries and song. In alignment with First Nations methodologies (Martin, K. 2008, Wilson, S. 2008, Whitinui, P. 2014, Tuhiwai-Smith, L. 2008, McIvor, O. 2010, DeLeon, A.P. 2010, Houston, J. 2007), I have undertaken this research with a focus on forms of relational accountability across generations.

Auto-ethnography has been key to developing my approach. Whitinui (2014) asserts that Indigenous auto-ethnography is 'grounded within a resistance-based discourse', stating further that this methodology 'aims to address issues of social justice' as well as 'to develop social change by engaging Indigenous researchers in rediscovering their own voices as culturally liberated human beings' (p.456). This PhD creative practice research project develops a performative approach to auto-ethnography to explore voice and 'voice emergence'. In doing so it aims to extend an approach that 'seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience' (Ellis 2004; Holman Jones, 2005 as cited in Ellis, Bochner and Adams, 2011) in ways that challenge 'canonical ways of doing research' (n.p). This particular approach has been identified and chosen as it is a methodology that allows the researcher to 'use tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write auto-ethnography' – or in this case to produce multimodal art forms based on life narratives. Therefore, as a method, auto-ethnography 'is both process and product' (Ellis, Bochner and Adams, 2011).

This approach to research has allowed me to pause and reflect on my own acquired knowledge resulting from personal experience and the creative methods developed as an expression of Wik ontology. This research is allowing me to flip the tables and now become the researcher. The Voice that speaks throughout the process represents the researched on behalf of her lineages (albeit only to an extent). The researched has become the researcher, contributing new knowledge to the academic sphere by incorporating performance interventions, arts-based methodologies, investigative poetics, interpretive practice and trans-contextual methodologies to contribute to the growth and expansion of First Nations methodologies.[10]

[10] For further reading, refer to Brearley, L. (2008).

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I arrived in the academy with a conceptual seed regarding the role of art in healing the individual and the collective, developed in 2011 while undertaking my masters degree. The timeframe of dormancy of the conceptual seed (initially referred to as Dreaming Story Way) was three years, although delay was inevitable because of diagnosis of breast cancer on my physical human frame early in 2014. As a result of a re-direction of focus, a year elapsed as I addressed treatment of the cancer, yet the instinct to pursue PhD research of the concept re-emerged in 2015 amid chemotherapy and radiation. The desire to commence a PhD became even stronger while fighting to re-gain optimum health for myself. When you are faced with a possibility of your time in this world realm being shortened, you suddenly delve into your internal checklist of heart's desires to see what can possibly be addressed and met. As an act of response and responsibility, I continued through these treatments as I pursued qualification through doing a graduate certificate course in order to qualify for a doctorate. I achieved this award in 2016. Throughout the period of pursuing PhD status (Graduate Certificate in Research Methodology) and commencement of the PhD, the layers 3-5 of my *Arnya* Songline methodology[11] were in activation. The mini performance titled Spirit *Arnya* resulted from the 2015 pre-PhD course as a result of the same methodology in practice. Although the methodology was not detailed and acknowledged as a methodology in the form it is now, it was a methodology in instinctive and spiritual flow in process.

In hindsight, I now see that the trajectory of my life has been one consistent lead-up to the work of this PhD. As you will see throughout the chapters that follow, my argument in this exegesis and in the creative exploration of 'Voice emergence' expressed in the *Arnya* lecture is an extension of my life experience as a creative artist who has lived and been cultivated in accordance with Wik and Wikway ontologies. The epistemologies, life experiences, encounters, teachings, training and context of the framework that constitutes me are the foundations from which this work has emerged.

[11] Refer to Chapter 5. Arnya Songline Methodology is a First Nation methodological approach that follows the protocols of (Wik and Wikway) Lore in execution in contemporary and in this specific context, academic process.

Leavy (2018)[12] states that 'researchers tapping into the power of the arts are doing so in order to create new ways to see, think, and communicate' (p.3). Leavy quotes Conrad & Beck (2015) that ABR philosophy is also strongly influenced by philosophical understandings of 'the body and, specifically, advances in embodiment theory and phenomenology. "Inter-subjectivity" refers to the relational quality of arts as knowing, as we make meanings with others, and with nature' (pp.5-6). In the *Handbook of Arts-Based Research* (2018) Leavy[13] outlines the advantages of this form of research, one being that it forges micro-macro connections. Here she states that 'ABR can be particularly useful in exploring, describing, or explaining (theorising about) the connections between our individual lives and the larger contexts in which we live our lives' (p.9).

I have primarily been reared by a woman who lived her life in accordance with *oolay Arnya*[14], a term of reference that constitutes the identity of a spirit ancestor. As previously mentioned, the English words I associate with the orientation to knowledge given by this totemic identity are primarily instinct and intuition. Inevitably, the teachings that were cultivated and nurtured within me have organically been scaffolded into the argument offering that follows. It is, an argument offering that takes the form of a multimodal performance and this, the accompanying exegesis, that builds to the written summation of my research findings: the five-layered creative Voice songline methodology titled *Arnya* Songline Methodology[15] and the *Arnya* lecture form through which the resulting new Voice flows.

This has not been a smooth, or even obvious, process of scaffolding and coming to knowledge. Not at all. At the outset, as I will describe, I did not know that this was what I was doing. I had no intimation that this was where I would end up. In order to arrive at this methodology and its expression, I had to find a specific case study to work through, not only to let an auto-ethnographic method lead to the production of the creative, performative components of this thesis, but also to also test and develop the form and content of what

[12] Leavy, P. (2018).
[13] Also from Leavy; Handbook of Emergent Methods, Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice, Second Edition, *Research Design*: *Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Art-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches. The Guilford Press, New York, London.*
[14] *Oolay Arnya*: Totemic Ancestral Identity of Awumpan's Lineage. Alngith ancestry.
[15] *Arnya* Songline Methodology: five-layered creative voice songline methodology. Refer to Chapter 5.

ultimately became a single, three-act performance. Only by locating my research and practice within the flow of my own life could I find a way to build and demonstrate my argument about the role of voice in a First Nations creative methodology. To do this I took as a primary focus a seemingly unlikely subject: a repatriation project involving human remains (hair samples) of close family members that I was charged with bringing home.

Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson of the Goenpul people, Quandamooka nation states that 'as an Indigenous woman my ontological relation to country informs my epistemology'[16] (2013:341). Morton-Robinson's standpoint theory offers a methodology that accords with my positioning in this thesis as a Wik and Wikway woman. Although my autoethnographic approach positions me as an individual person, the ontological and epistemological foundations of my analysis was always going to be a process that would call upon and draw from a collective of connected standpoints that ultimately form our kinship networks. This accords also with the Torres Strait Islander position Martin Nakata (2007) describes which speaks of the 'complex sets of relations that exist at the Interface', extending that 'understanding the Islander standpoint involves understanding that complexity and making it a primary interest of any theory that informs analysis'[17] (p.212). I note here the term standpoint theory[18] emerged out of Feminist Theory and first coined by the American Feminist Theorist Sandra Harding[19]. Its grounding as 'a feminist theoretical perspective that argues that knowledge stems from social position' (Borland n.y:n.p), the works of Nakata and Moreton-Robinson have in turn brought this theory into the First Nation space. My analysis of Voice Emergence is developed from my own standpoint which stems from my inherited lineage and the lore, customs and protocols that governs that as shaped by my lived experiences. This will be demonstrated throughout the creative work and the accompanying exegesis. In this research I bring forth the complexities of dual processes at work, that is Wik and Wikway systems and academia being brought into meaningful relationship through my standpoint and the critical-creative elaboration that I offer here.

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[16] For further reading refer to *Towards an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory: A Methodological Tool* (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).
[17] For further reading refer to *Disciplining The Savages: Savaging The Disciplines* (Nakata, 2007).
[18] Standpoint Theory: Standpoint theory feminism (Borland) https://www.britannica.com/topic/standpoint-theory
[19] Sandra Harding: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandra_Harding

The hair is symbolic of our female ancestors. Moreover, from my standpoint, the samples are the ancestors. In fact, the samples could just as well be bone or some other form of 'remains' linked to my ancestry[20]. As I will describe, it was in the quiet rooms of the museum where I encountered a colonial form of violent dislocation and a powerful call to response was what gave rise to this research project. As Kirmayer (2003) describes 'notions of tradition and healing are central to contemporary efforts by Aboriginal people'. This is fundamental to confronting 'the legacy of historical injustices and suffering brought on by the history of colonialism' (p.2). Healing for the community through performing cultural processes and celebration of ancestors' return to country is significant in relation to achieving a complete sense of wellbeing.

The performative, auto-ethnographic argument regarding Voice that I elaborate in this exegesis is my response to the repatriation process as it unfolded in often unexpected ways.

Throughout this exegesis, I will critically reflect on my choice of multi-modal methods, the relationship between the repatriation project and the creative work that it inspires, and work to demonstrate the healing capacity that creative practice enables when undertaken in the mode of the *Arnya* Songline methodology. I will do so by drawing comparisons with the work of contemporary First Nations artists working with museums and also in broader contexts concerned with addressing the ongoing social trauma and requirement to heal from colonial histories. I will also consider how my individual journey applies to others, the extended kinship network.

Through this initial focus on the ancestral hair and the critical-creative paths that it led me along, I have developed a specific language of voice and creativity. By staying close to the processes, relationships and events that unfolded as a result of my initial trip to the Museum of Victoria, I show how certain key dynamics and concepts found expression in the ideas and methods depicted here, specifically in terms of a trajectory of what I describe as voice displacement, identity, proclamation, reclamation and 'Voice emergence'.

[20] Our ancestral memories are in your blood, they are in your muscles, they are in you bones, **they are in your hair** (Kinunwa as cited by Wilson: 1995 as cited in McIvor, 2010:143.

The use of the term voice in this research

Voice is a term that has increasingly been used in reference to the necessary expression of First Nations peoples with regards to political and social justice issues in Australia and elsewhere. In 2019, "voice" was named the Word of the Year by the Australian National Dictionary Centre (Wahlquist 2019:n.p). As political activist and Cape York leader Noel Pearson stated in 2015, the term is 'defined by the dictionary as a formal channel for Indigenous input into the making of laws and policies affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' (n.p)[21]. First Nations leaders (Wyatt, Langton, Burney, Pearson, Calma), [22] all use the term during discussions regarding ways of instigating a voice to Parliament, as in representation of community views and input to relevant decision-making issues that directly affect the nation.

My use of the term is similar but different. What is similar is that I am directly referring to the message and opinions conveyed, articulated and reflected through and by First Nations people and communities in their own voices. What is different is that I am specifically focusing on this conveyance as framed, presented and delivered through creative forms and modes of practice with a perspective that is trans-generational in source and origin. An emergent and performative aspect of ontology and spirituality is at the core of my argument in context, because for Voice to be heard (or felt, or seen) it must be made to emerge.

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University of Nottingham researcher and academic Pat Thomson (2016)[23] has discussed the use of the term 'voice' in reference to intercultural arts practices and contexts. She makes distinctions between Elbow (1994), Kuh (1962) and her own use of the term. She describes how Elbow talks about 'a writing voice' in which she refers to the **audible** voice, the **dramatic** voice, the **distinctive** voice and the **authoritative** voice: how a piece of writing is constructed, delivered and interpreted by the reader (1996 as cited in Burnard, McKinlay

[21] The Guardian: Indigenous Recognition https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/dec/09/voice-named-2019-word-of-the-year-by-australian-national-dictionary-centre

[22] Ken Wyatt, member of the Australian House of Representatives; Marcia Langton AO, the foundation Chair in Australian Indigenous studies at the University of Melbourne ; Linda Burney, member of the Australian House of Representatives and Shadow Minister for Family and Social Services and for Preventing Family Violence; Noel Pearson, Australian lawyer, land-rights activist and founder of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership; Tom Calma, Aboriginal Australian human rights and social justice campaigner.

[23] https://nottingham.ac.uj/Educatiion/people/patricia.thomson University of Nottingham School of Education

and Powell 2016:283). She describes how Kuh focuses on voice as knowledge (as contributed to general understandings), **voice as speech** (she uses an interview format as an example) and **voice as a mimetic presentation of the artist's practice and the work itself** (the artist's voice as individual and unique)' (p.284). Thomson argues against the 'common sense narrative of an artist's "voice" as "personal expression", suggesting that researchers need to question this' (p.283). Her chapter concludes with highlighting the importance of 'seeing conversation and art making as the creation of a space of collective meaning-making'. I will quote Thomson's paraphrasing of Kuh's argument in order to highlight an approach to (an individual's) creative process which strongly resonates with the perspectives I develop in my own research.

> What is found to be significant in an artist's work is elusive, hard to pin down, not easily amenable to the application of rational criteria – it is ephemeral. It emanates from a unique individual unlike any other, it is an expression, a communication of that particular person, perhaps of their very essence, their soul, their inner-most being. The art they produce is beyond technique, not merely tedious, something more, something ineffable. Artists are authentic, genuine, sincere, there is no pretence about what they are trying to achieve – they are true to themselves and their unwavering convictions. They are not the same as lay people; their difference is due to their singular pursuit of a vision, an important innovation. They work through trial and error – there is no recipe, they are at the frontier, breaking new ground, going forward no matter what it takes. What they achieve through this single-minded pursuit is their brand, the work can be recognised as theirs alone, it is as distinctive as a handwritten signature. This way of working is far from easy – it is arduous, and the artwork is hard-won. It takes time and much repetition before it is refined and forged; the metaphors of distillation and smithery bring with them images of fire, sweat and physical demand (2016, pp.284-285).

I find something from each of Elbow, Thomson and Kuh that connects with my own use of the term voice and the creative process more generally. Elbow talks about voice 'as a presence in writing' and although he specifies the genre of 'writing' here, this can also apply to other forms of expression (p.283). Kuh's statement of the work being 'a personal expression' (p.284) and Thomson's statement of creative spaces being a place that allows for collective meaning-making extends voice into the realm of the social (p.293). In what follows, the ways that the specificity of a Wik and Wikway ontology and epistemology

shapes individual voice and expression will be articulated. The argument, and the expression of voice itself, will address the need for Voice in the context of colonial legacies of trauma and disconnection.

As a consequence of the historical legacy resulting from colonial practices affecting First Nations peoples, a particular kind of relationship has been inherited by all involved parties. Although this relationship for the most part has been one of distrust and contention resulting from the murders, trauma, theft, dispossession and displacement that have occurred, my argument is that through consistent, progressive, productive and sophisticated working together, there lies a yet-to-be realised potential to serve the greater good for everyone involved. It is with this in mind that I will then (comparatively) articulate my own methodology of identity scaffolding and re-positioning for the purpose of addressing the wounds of displacement and, in the process, lay out the path I seek to forge here towards the process of proclamation and reclamation of Voice in new contexts and for new audiences, both First Nations and the community beyond.

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Living Epistemologies

In her article on Indigenous evaluation frameworks, Kovach (2019) interrogates the role of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in terms of questioning how intangible cultural heritage might be defined and recognised. Defining First Nations scholarship as 'scholarship that is grounded in an Indigenous episteme and ethos', she asks how an assessment can be made on the 'non-quantifiable relational activity between Indigenous scholar, community, and scholarly product that defines Indigenous scholarship' (p.300). She also asks, 'who should assess said scholarship?' (p.300). To these questions, I would add: 'To whom should the scholarship be addressed?' And 'How might academic forms be adapted and changed in response to the relational obligations and orientations of First Nations scholars themselves?' These, in my opinion, are critical questions that continue to require much attention. I entered the gates of academia without any idea of what awaited me when it came to the methodology I was to take up and apply. However, in alignment with my deep and unquestionable grounding in Wik and Wikway episteme and ethos, I remained in alignment with this foundational approach regardless. It was all I knew; all that made true and sincere sense. Kovach makes mention of the 'resilience of the intangible in a tangible-centred world' (p.300). This expression is

something that I have had to work through consistently as I developed my approach and interaction with the academic collective as a form of dialogue between two distinct ways of knowing and relating. Countless times over these past years, I have felt vulnerable and raw as I journeyed my way through academia. Receiving and listening to the responses of my supervisors often had me questioning my ability in several ways in terms of whether to continue through this Western-dominated and dictated approach of meaning-making and communication vocabulary. I consistently felt that we fundamentally spoke different languages and came from different knowledge, intellectual and spiritual bases. I often struggled to find the words from the English vocabulary that would constitute and articulate the essence of the Voice that I found easily flowing from and through me in other contexts.

As defined by the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, "intangible cultural heritage" (ICH) involves:

> The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly re-created by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO 2003:2 as cited in Kovach 2019:302).

The article notes that ICH manifests itself as:

1. Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the ICH
2. Performing arts
3. Social practices, rituals and festive events
4. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and
5. Traditional craftsmanship (UNESCO 2003:2 as cited in Kovach 2019:302).

The manifestation of ICH is at the core of the methodology that I have developed in my research. Locating a research focus in process required abiding to this episteme and ethos. Another correlation exists between Kovach's terminology of Indigenous living scholarship

and what I would consider my much broader living epistemology[24]. While Kovach is referring to one's journey in the academy, a living epistemology refers to and encapsulates the person in process throughout academia as well as in life process beyond and outside scholarship. A living epistemology in terms of my intent and use of the term refers to how First Nations people are fundamentally wired and connected to ontology, epistemology and axiology throughout the flow of life in general. It is critical to note here that the term 'a living epistemology' manifested itself as a result of deep interrogation throughout critical scholarly analysis and adherence to protocols in process. Kovach's article states that 'intangible cultural heritage' is also known as a living heritage or a living culture. Here, she points out that 'both terms signal the interrelationship between artefacts, people, and environments' (p.300). A steadfast portrayal and depiction of this is the performative *Arnya* lecture construction titled *Idiwirra:* A Living Epistemology. A living epistemology as an *Arnya* lecture construct consists of the three acts being (Act 1) *Wik Cha'prah: Iyong cak cha tru chath,* (Act 2) *Ngograchaahn* Songline Dreaming, and the final act *Idiwirra. Idiwirra:* A Living Epistemology is a creative and multi-modal performative construct of Voice emergence and conveyance of the *Arnya* Songline methodology hereby termed an *Arnya* lecture.[25]

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McIvor (2010) covers a lot of ground in her 'I am my subject' article. The collective of scholars she draws from to illuminate her work and connect with are in the same pool that resonates, connects with and cements my position in this space. Just like Wilson, Martin and Whitinui, her voice has become part of the narrative thread interwoven throughout my own articulation. This sense of being connected to other scholars returns me to Wilson's 2007 conveyance of the importance of relationality (p.194 as cited in McIvor 2010:139). As I write this exegesis, I am aware that we are all connected in this story work thread that holds and speaks the essence of our collective voices. For beyond the specifics of my own work, Voice

[24] Refer to Chapter 4: Voice Emergence: A Living Epistemology.

[25] The ontological concept of the *Arnya* Songline methodology manifested through this project process has brought together and extended my own precedents of practice in multi-modal forms. In this approach I draw on my skills and experience as a trained dancer (Naisda graduate, 1991), experienced creative choreographer (most recent works CIAF: 2015-2017, Commonwealth Games, Gold Coast 2018), award-winning author (David Unaipon award 2003), playwright (*A Bastard's Tale* 2001, *Whispers of this Wik Woma***n** – The Play 2007), live theatre performer (*Yesterday Now* (2004-2008), Theatre for Change performing artist (2009-2012), *Children of the Black Skirt* (2005), *The Orphanage Project* (2003), *A Bastard's Tale* (2001/2006), as well as current practicing visual artist and painter (Yepenyi/Awumpan/Oochunyung Creations).

emergence is a global, collectively connected ongoing aspect of process. Those who have gone before have ploughed the ground in spaces in preparation for the next wave of voice/s to flow through and build upon. We, as a collective of voice vessels and modes of transference in human form, are critical for each other.

Yet at the same time, we must each find our own voice, in our own ways. McIvor stresses the process of being on a spirit journey that carries her back and forwards between ancestral guidance and accompaniment. Her descriptions stand in clear correlation with my process and the resulting depictions in the Arnya Lecture performative constructs, through the word construction and the accompanying multi-modal and multi-genre choices of conveyance and depiction. It is also portrayed and depicted in my painted and diagrammatic visual works as manifested throughout the case study process (some of which are included in the performance, and some are shared here in the exegesis). Furthermore, McIvor's chosen methodological approach of auto-ethnography connects with mine. Her statement regarding storytelling as being central to a First Nation worldview, 'an important part of Indigenous culture since the beginning of time', cements this particular methodology as a choice for those of us with whom such a standpoint resonates. This isn't to say that all First Nations scholars will opt for this emphasis.

Wilson (2007), Thomas (2005) and Archibald (2008) all stress an accountability and responsibility we inherit in process (as cited in McIvor 2010:141). Indeed, the accountability I am subjected to is an ongoing protocol to uphold. I have observed other scholars who have produced academic works on the people of my lineage and I have, and continue to, question the legitimacy of their position to speak. I have wondered about where and exactly how they had inherited or received the permission or authority to reveal what has been revealed through their academic production and contribution. I consistently continue to observe my own conduct throughout this process. I am particular about what is disclosed, how it is disclosed as well as its contextual portrayal at all. I also want to state clearly that there are those within my kinship collective who had entered the world before me and hold knowledge and positions that are greater than mine. I acknowledge that protocol in my conduct and position and hold myself accountable in context, protocol and wisdom. Through the reiteration of these protocols from our various (even global) standpoints and positioning, we keep each other accountable as we collectively continue to scaffold and

bring new knowledge and meaning-making to the surface, into academia, into our social constructs and ways of existing, being, knowing and doing.

In considering scholarly relationality in this broad sense, I also want to highlight McIvor's stance on integrity and spirit-based research. Integrity has been fundamental in terms of assessing questions of compromise. My belly *(arnya)* knows when integrity is being compromised in both process and practice as well as when in discussion with others in context. It is a gut thing, and this is primarily how the accompaniment and guidance of working with the *Arnya* works, as I discuss in the chapters that follow. When decisions to address those areas and issues take place and fail, I prepare for and transition into, a place of ceremonial intervention in order to call upon guidance and assistance. There are countless examples of this aspect of process at play in this PhD research. The silent author and driver of this fundamental aspect of First Nations methodology in practice has been the collective beyond the immediate space of this realm, who have provided accompaniment and guidance to me. What I am sharing here are the deeper layers of aspects of a First Nations methodology in practice and flow. New knowledge is constantly being cultivated and revealed, and yet so much more remains hidden, some to come at the appointed time and other knowledge that is not meant for revelation, only for guidance and contextualisation of fundamental knowing.

McIvor quotes Ellis (2004) regarding auto-ethnography connecting 'auto-ethnographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political' (McIvor p.141). I will state here that the other fundamental aspect in First Nations methodological auto-ethnography is that this approach facilitates an exploration of the spiritual aspect of the deeper self. McIvor and I agree that 'connection to spirit and spirit in research is essential' (p.147). She talks about embodying the work throughout the process. She cites Ellis (1997): 'I want to talk a different way, not just talk about talking a different way' (p.143).

This is exactly what I too attempt in this PhD research with its creative construct and delivery of *Idiwirra:* A Living Epistemology. Through the academic songline and approach construct that I lay out here, I am talking a different way. This talking in a different way is fundamentally a revelation and conveyance of Voice emergence in flow through the *Arnya*

Songline methodology, moving and speaking through my me as the living epistemology as breath in body, portrayal, process and execution (refer to diagram in Chapter 5).

And so, as you will come to understand more as you read this exegesis, this case study process has been driven not only by an intent to repatriate the remains of ancestors, but also by a kind of repatriation of process and approach that has occurred as I connected to those Old Girls in the museum, and so to ongoing demands and requirements of spirit. Consequently, through this process, new meanings of process, of voice conveyance of lore systems have been revealed.

In their collaboration, Phillips and Bunda (2018) state that 'story is not just written'. They respond to Cherokee scholar King's (2003) critique of 'Western assumptions' that imply that 'to be complete, stories need to be written down, and that written literature has an inherent sophistication over oral stories'. King points to the presumption 'that as we move from the cave to the condo we slough off the oral and leave it behind. Like an old skin'. Phillips and Bunda argue for the value of keeping and treasuring 'that skin, to decorate that skin, to add other layers to that skin' (p.5). This is exactly what I seek to demonstrate here in my *Arnya* lecture framing composition, without losing or compromising the integrity and spirit of stories passed onto me.

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In closing this introduction, I once more acknowledge those who went before and ploughed new ground in terms of the development of First Nations paradigms in academia. Wilson (2008) outlines this development in four stages. Drawing from Steinhauer (2001), he describes First Nations scholars being situated first in a Western framework during this time and mentions that these scholars 'were somehow able to separate their own Indigenous lives from their academic endeavours' (Wilson p.52). In the second phase the notion of First Nations paradigms is introduced, yet still First Nations scholars sought 'mainstream Western influences to avoid marginalisation'. The third phase, he argues, begins 'a focus on decolonisation'. The leading scholar here is Linda Tuhiwai-Smith in her *Decolonising Methodologies* (1999) which 'suggests a process of Indigenising Western methodologies' (p.53). The final phase is when First Nations scholars begin to work in alignment with 'the

use of an Indigenous paradigm', allowing 'them to do research that emanates from, honours and illuminates their worldviews'. In her own chronology, Martin (2008) refers to this phase as the Indigenous research phase. In this phase, First Nations scholars are challenged 'to articulate their own research paradigms, their own approaches to research and their own data collection methods' (p.54). Rigney (1997) is quoted here as stating that:

> Indigenous people are at a stage where they want research and research design to contribute to their self-determination and liberation struggles, as it is defined and controlled by their communities (p.3 as cited in Wilson 2008:54).

Wilson goes on quoting Rigney, citing his argument that 'Indigenous peoples think and interpret the world and its realities in differing ways to non-Indigenous peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures and values' (Rigney p.8 as cited in Wilson 2008:54).

As a consequence of those who went before and paved the way, I have been able to step into this time and space and uphold the voices and ways of process of my lineage and nation. I have been able to maintain the ontological, epistemological and axiological templates to work a process that conceived and brought forth new knowledge in the spirit of sharing and meaning-making in evolutionary and innovative ways of expression, depiction and moving forward. Wilson's articulation of relational accountability and connectivity is further examined and extended throughout the discussion of the *Arnya* Songline methodology that follows. Wilson's focus on relational accountability (pp.70-71) throughout process aligns with the *Arnya* Songline methodology process approach. As he states, it is a process that requires integrity in approach and logistics. What determines worth and why it is determined is governed by the relationality aspect of kinship in context (p.73). As Wilson notes, relationality is a dynamic 'between things rather than the things themselves' (p.74).

My exegesis is an offering of a performative approach to a relational epistemology that respectfully takes Wilson's (2008) assertion that 'Research is Ceremony' in a new direction, in new contexts and to new ends with a focus on the relational dynamic between my grandmother's teachings and the new voice that this PhD research has enabled to emerge.

Here is a summary of my ideas which have found expression in this thesis: A displaced identity is used to proclaim a voice in order to reclaim. The reclaim I am talking about here is

the reclamation of Voice, of identity, of position and of sovereignty. We (First Nations people), are finding ways to re-set that which has been disrupted in order to re-constitute and bring about balance, harmony and thus ultimate healing back into our lives as is fundamental ultimately for human existence to thrive at its best. We are finding our ways back home. As I take you through the works of three contemporary First Nations artists in Chapter 3, you will begin to see the connections that art practice and process have with fundamental healing. A process and outcome of healing is inevitable as creative expression engages the individual in a holistic sense as they interact throughout. This exegesis provides accounts of the connections between creative process, individual holistic engagement and cultural foundations. This PhD is part of the process, my personal contribution to a methodology of healing, sovereignty and assertion.

Specifically, the new knowledge emerging from this case study is delivered in the conceptualisation and unpacking of the following terms:

- Voice emergence
- *Arnya* Songline methodology
- *Arnya* lecture and
- A dual response to Shawn Wilson's 'Research is Ceremony' articulation that extends the potential of this formulation.

A summary of chapters

Chapter 1 introduces and positions me in accordance with kinship and lineage. It introduces First Nations methodologies and the place of creative processes within First Nations as well as auto-ethnography. I move from a discussion of collective trauma to introduce the idea of voice emergence to conclude the chapter. **Chapter 2** provides a background and context of ancestral lineage as well a look at the significance of hair in a global context with primary focus on First Nations and cultural perspective and standpoint. The legacy of the coloniser, Wik colonial violence and repatriation is highlighted. **Chapter 3** introduces three contemporary creative artists as fellow travellers working with Voice emergence in the context of museum collections (although they don't themselves use that terminology), as well as my first *Arnya* lecture-performance titled *Wik Cha'prah iyong cak chath tru chath.* An

extension of Voice emergence is covered as well as a section on the term 'ghosting' is also explored to find the correlations between my work and that which Mounsef (2019) talks about. **Chapter 4** introduces Voice emergence and the concept of a living epistemology. It provides an account of visitations, revelations, re-visitations and encounters experienced by me as a result of the ancestral remains case study process. It also introduces an account of revelation pertaining to Country. **Chapter 5** focuses on the emergence of a new voice as it is enabled by what I have called the *Arnya* Songline methodology. An example of this emergence in tangible form is the visual, audible and organic presence of Country demonstrated through footage and visual depiction, organic components of Country (that is, ochre, njurnjin etc), generational presence (mother/daughter) as well as intergenerational interactivity demonstrating cultural practice in context in real time (that is application of ochre, demonstration of movement vocabulary etc). It locates and raises this voice and brings into context relatedness and related methodologies by bringing my method into dialogue with Sean Wilson's (2008) 'Research is Ceremony'. It does this by placing an emphasis on the experience of institutional learning as an evolving and developing PhD student within the academy. I suggest that my own creative-research process has been a ceremony of becoming with respect to my own transformation into an academic. The exegesis concludes with **Chapter 6** introducing and detailing a new genre of lecture manifesting from this case study titled the *Arnya* lecture. This chapter extends my response to 'Research is Ceremony' in terms of the performative aspects of the final performance. I propose that as a result of the *Arnya* Songline methodology, a series of manifestations and discoveries is in turn being interpreted, scaffolded and presented throughout a philosophical and creatively constructed approach while remaining in adherence to a combining of academic and First Nations protocols of methodology, criteria and process. In this way, I argue for considering the *Arnya* lecture as a living epistemology that makes tangible new emergent relationships and knowledge in the form of the *Arnya* voice forged in a dynamic between Wik and Wikway Lore systems and academic criteria.

The methodology and its diagrammatic representation that I present in these final chapters forms a key aspect of my original contribution to the expanding field of First Nations methodologies. Through these innovations in form, content and method, I offer a new

approach to a First Nations theorising of Voice. In this formulation, Voice is a manifestation of individual expression informed and authorised by a foundational epistemology and ontology located in country and the old people themselves. What concerns me here is not voice as it might be presumed to be pre-given and therefore accessible and stable as a source of creativity and identity, but Voice emergence as a process that is part of a living epistemology. Living epistemology means that one's creative practice as a form of healing from trauma must be understood to emerge as part of life's flow. Please note that in accordance with my epistemology, I do not unpack every meaning or thought, nor all the depths in each movement, of the creative images or the stories revealed throughout. I hold a lot of detail back as I have opted not to strip myself naked or bare nor expose against protocol the *nyim nyim*[26] aspects of both our lore system as well as my personal positioning in that space as both an individual and in relation to kinship connect, for to do so would not serve my project here. This is an account of explanation and unpacking of process as well as a revelation of approach in relation to and guided by instinct and responding to what I term visitations, re-visitations, encounters, experiences and revelations. These are the blocks that have assisted me and contributed to the building of the theories presented in this work. The dual processes and epistemologies of the academy and Wik and Wikway lore systems as well as the tensions between these two spaces have directly impacted on and thus conceived Voice emergence, the *Arnya* Songline methodology and the Arnya lecture. It is the tension between the two epistemologies of Western academic criteria and Wik and Wikway lore systems that is at the heart and core of my *Arnya* lecture genre. I had to struggle to find ways to bring these epistemologies into relationship. To be more direct here, it is the tensions between white fella and black fella ways of operating, and the associated challenges of working and manoeuvring my way through both spaces and epistemologies, that ultimately bombard my everyday approach throughout and thus have shaped my entire life to date. My contribution in the space of First Nations methodologies is to creatively extend the possibilities of voice to enable Voice emergence in new ways and in new places. And although I acknowledge other First Nation researchers who have used creative forms and modes of process in articulation such as Thompson, Foley and Gough (Chapter 3), what separates my work in this space is the development of multi-modal genres

[26] *Nyim Nyim*: Secret/Sacred (Angith Language).

of performance and their associated stylized and choreographed method of delivery. I do this as a means of modelling an approach that can be adapted by other First Nations artists and performers. I use my own life as the site of critical-creative reflection and multimodal voice emergence practice within the broader context of the collective and its struggles. My research does not simply seek to analyse voice, or merely make an argument for its significance. The aim of this research is to develop a novel form of voice as a way of contributing to a larger project of Voice emergence as a necessary and urgent social endeavour for my people. The *Arnya* lecture that I perform for my PhD submission is a genre that has strong performative elements fused throughout its structure and presentation format. It is the result of an adherence to the *Arnya* Songline methodology approach. The *Arnya* lecture sits halfway between a performative construct or piece as is intended for mainstream theatre or general performance, and a lecture delivered in academia. It has and incorporates the elements of performance: spoken word, performative tone in narrative delivery, accompaniment of still images, footage, song (recorded and live), movement vocabulary (recorded and live) as well as use of creative resources both organic and non-organic (ochre, artefacts etc.). It upholds and meets an academic criterion, (just as it must uphold and meet Wik and Wikway criteria) in terms of tone, narrative construct, delivery and articulation. It establishes intellectual and informative connections among the scholarly kinship collective and presents these critical links in association as necessary. The purpose of the constructed vocabulary and narrative is to articulate, inform, establish, present, cement and offer new knowledges and meaning to the academy. This is similar to a performative construct intended for theatre (which generally delivers a message or point to the depicted storyline delivered) but is much more detailed, informed and comprehensive in material and content. The strong academic element, yet performative genres, infused throughout, is what establishes, highlights and pronounces its critical difference. All the elements that are present are necessary for powerful and effective theatre both in material form as well as content and delivery. Here, I am talking in a different way in both contexts. In the context of an academic lecture, I am talking in a different way by allowing Voice to be present and speak in alignment with Wik and Wikway ontology and I am talking in a different way as Wik and Wikway by participating in an academic context and criteria template and construct. This (specific) newly created genre is the result of approaching the challenge of repatriating

the ancestral remains in flow and alignment of the *Arnya* Songline methodology for the purpose of release and conveyance of Voice emergence and in this case as a living epistemology. This fusion in construct is in evidence and is present throughout each of the three acts presented in *Idiwirra:* A Living Epistemology*,* the *Arnya* lecture. Note that I have replaced the term 'Indigenous' with 'First Nations' in my references throughout. The term Indigenous is present only in context within quotes and references made by other scholars and academics. Note also that capitalization in the case of 'Voice' and 'Country' is inconsistent throughout the text. This is intentional. Where capitalization is used in 'Voice' is determined by and used within the context of Arnya or spirit flow articulation and conveyance in context. 'Country' is capitalized when referring to lineage homelands.

It is critical to note my position in terms of speaking Voice in context. I am very much aware of how voice is articulated as well as when, where and why. Primarily this right to speak is determined by my position as inherited through my lineage. As a woman reared and taught by my grandmother, growing up in a house without books but with a keen and critical mind being supported nonetheless, the responsibility to re-articulate and re-convey (and thus uphold) these teachings has been handed down to me. The knowledges and teachings passed on to me are meant to play an active role and are not for me to neglect, for in doing so would forfeit my responsibility to uphold, maintain, execute and pass on. This is in alignment with intergenerational and generational responsibility throughout life flow. This is what ensures the survival of our cultural lore from generation to generation and it is this specific protocol that places and challenges me to uphold and do what I do in the way that I do. In Chapter 4, I offer a close account of how mining affects our family group and therefore our cultural and kinship frameworks. In this instance, I articulate my voice through my legitimate inherited position in the kinship system. In other words, I know when it is time and right for me to speak and when it is not. For example, I will not speak of controversy relating to a men's sacred site even though it relates to a part of my own inherited nation. In this instance I would be utilised as a form of support in and throughout the process of negotiating with the mining company, but not as a front-line voice/speaker simply because I am female and it is not for me as a female to speak first. However, as you will see demonstrated in the exegesis, I exercise and demonstrate the appropriate context

in which I do speak in regard to concerns over threats of mining affecting Ngorinum (Woman's Story Place). I also inherit the responsibility to ensure that I do not over-step the boundaries that are in place. I cannot and do not claim to speak on behalf of First Nations Australia beyond my own inherited lineage. There are boundaries that define and determine position. However, as a contemporary First Nations woman living today, indeed I acknowledge and utilise the right that I have to speak and give voice to primary and pressing issues affecting First Nations, as others do and have for the same reasons in those areas that commonly affect us all in context. I am also critically aware of differing family groups (and indeed individual members) within my own lineage where I am to exercise boundaries in relevance. My participation and active demonstration in this way is guided by an existing knowledge template activated throughout this academic process but indeed also throughout life in general. This is an expected exercising of protocols that is to be upheld by First Nations peoples across Australia in general.

I also note that Indigenous methodology within academia has been evolving over and across a collective of First Nations scholars and has developed fundamentally at each generational level across time. Here too I have a sense of an intergenerational responsibility to add my voice. Just as I had entered into this space with what I have, positioning myself upon that which has been left for me by those who went before, then likewise those who come after me will approach their respective journeys in the same way. What I leave behind for those who will follow is what I have extended on from what was left for me. This demonstrates the power capital of intergenerational knowledge preparation, hand-over and support. Chapter 6 articulates in further detail my findings to the academic sphere, my position and contribution to First Nations methodologies, multi-modal creative practices and constructs as well as spirituality. The exegesis articulates this and the Arnya Lecture demonstrates these findings in its creative constructive form. The Arnya Lecture models and presents the findings. My work provides a critical and creative template which others of a similar context (auto-ethnography, creative processes, utilisation and depiction, spirituality and First Nations methodology) will refer to and be utilised and extended in accordance with their respective positions.

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I hereby declare that I have read and complied with the Guidelines for the Editing of Research Thesis by Professional Editors [2].

Chapter 1: An Academic Songline

Wilson describes research as ceremony. In order to take part in ceremony, prior preparation is necessary (Wilson, 2008 as cited in McIvor p.4). As Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson of the Goenpul people, Quandamoopah nation further states:

> The protocol for introducing oneself to other Indigenous people is to provide information about one's cultural location, so that connection can be made on political, cultural and social grounds and relations established (2000 p.xv as cited in Martin 2008:19).

I will now introduce myself. Established through a secondary[27] connection, as determined by my mother Annie Athailpun, my First Nations clan identity is Mbaiwum-Trotj, inherited through her father Twangul (totemic ancestors[28]): *tork* (small snail), *ngol* (small wallaby), *oochunyung* (wattle flower), *ilkutj/toong toong* (freshwater turtle). Her father inherited his identity through his father Waakmatha. I have direct links to Alngith-Liningithi Country through my mother's mother Awumpan (totemic ancestors): *waarth* (crow), *enor* (cyclone), *paanj* (small gecko), *omb* (spear grass tree), *thieling* (scrub plant) and *awumpan (black porpoise).* She inherited this through her father Kelinda and he through Yepenyi Mammus Rrutchuk Kelindun, my great-great-grandfather, an Alngith bushman untamed by the white man. I have links to Liningithi country through Waapun or otherwise known as Maapun, the wife of Yepenyi, a woman from Moingam, a woman I know very little of, although, *twal* (land eagle), is closely linked to this part of country which is situated on the south of the Embley River. I also have strong ties to the Apalich as inherited through my mother's mother's mother Nyrlotte (rare white waterlily) or *Kerwerthen* (whistle wind). A woman from Ornyawa, *kootheeth erdin* fairy Dreaming story[29].

What preparations is Wilson thinking of when he equates research to ceremony? As a developing Wik and Wikway researcher, my default reference from which to address this question of preparation is what Kovach (2009) refers to as the epistemic centre. Bennet (2012) writes; 'Kovach begins her process of inquiry by going back to ways of knowing

[27] In accordance with Wik and Wikway lore kinship systems, primary connection to country is paternally determined. All my connections to country, language and kinship positioning are all here determined through my mother.
[28]TA: Totemic ancestor or *oolay*, in accordance with Aboriginal kinship systems. Other forms of life are considered to be the spirits of those who have passed on. Different forms of creation are considered family.
[29] (Doyle) Wirrer-George, F. (2006/2011) www.uqp.com.au

derived from her Indigenous roots and her elders. In this way, Indigenous methodologies is a deep pursuit of questioning one's epistemological underpinnings; of questioning what knowledges we favour in our approach to research' (p.45 as cited in Bennett 2012:292). This is primarily a description of my methodological approach throughout this research process. Kovach's epistemic centre aligns with my methodology derived from Wik and Wikway lore systems and processes. These are results of a life lived and embodied in context. The person who has walked, lived, breathed and embodied this life is what I refer to as a living epistemology.[30] Likewise, the work I have produced in the academy as the *Arnya* lecture, is also a living epistemology delivered – and experienced – in the form of a multi-modal performative construct.

I have inherited and am obligated to practice what Wilson (2008) describes as a 'relational accountability' in order to get things right (p.141 as cited in McIvor). In alignment with Thomas (2005) and Wilson (2001), I am 'responsible to the ancestors, to my grandmothers and my grandfathers, and all my relations for this research' (p.142).

The term 'positionality' has been asserted and demonstrated by First Nations academics who have gone before as being critical, particularly in the introduction and positioning of self (Moreton-Robinson 2000, Martin 2008, Justice 2016, Wilson 2008, Smith 1999). A collective of First Nations women (Fredericks, White, Phillips, Bunda, Longbottom & Bargallie 2019) addresses 'the challenges in being Indigenous within the academy' in their 2019 collaboration. They collectively assert: 'We know as Indigenous women that when we are true to our embodiment as Indigenous Australian women, when we are authentic in being and enacting our Indigeneity within the Academy, we disrupt notions of what is an academic, who is an academic and what is the Academy within Australia and indeed the world' (p.76). In acknowledgment of these realities, they articulate that they 'know the personal is the political from our lived experience as Indigenous women, from what could be said to be numerous social positionings that interrelate and are woven around and within each of us in a complex web' (p.76). Once more I will stress that indeed it is important for

[30] A Living Epistemology, primarily referring to a depicted embodiment of ontology and epistemology whether in human form or construct. It can also be depicted through a framework of identified protocols. As will be further presented, this framework is also depicted as a performative construct hereby termed the *Arnya* lecture.

me here to acknowledge those who have gone before, those who have ploughed the ground for those of us who are now moving into the space of research and interrogation. It is imperative that I locate these people and find and make the connections from their work to mine. Also here, I will go beyond this scholarly lineage and additionally assert positionality regarding not only the self (i.e. researcher, academic, scholar) but also the positionality of others throughout our kinship collective, for this is another aspect of First Nations methodology in practice which demonstrates appropriate alignment with protocols. This is what I will refer to as kinship positionality.[31]

Figure 1: With kinship grandmothers and grandfathers of the Wik. The Yunkaporta siblings from left: Grandad B.Y, C.Y and F.Y and *chitch* old lady B.Y carrying Sheridan Nyrlotte. Sister and song woman granny A.K on end. Aurukun 2002. Photo credit to Goothala.

[31] Kinship positionality: One's position in the kinship matrix as connected to and determined by kinship lore systems and protocols. This determines practices, obligations and interactions throughout the social framework of one's lineage cluster.

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My discussion of First Nations methodologies in this thesis draws primarily from Karen Martin (2008), Onowa McIvor (2010), Paul Whitinui (2014) and Shawn Wilson (2008). Margaret Kovach (2009) also provides inspiration and guidance and fundamentally so does Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) and Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2016)[32].

Drawing from Tuhiwai-Smith (1999:83), Martin (2008) provides an in-depth account of interrelatedness and interdependence across a collective space of co-occupation.[33] She defines relatedness as the 'sets of conditions, processes and practices that occur among and between the creators and ancestors; the spirits; the filter and the entities'. This relatedness occurs across contexts and is maintained within conditions that are 'physical, spiritual, political, geographical, intellectual, emotional, social, historical, sensory, instinctive and intuitive' (p.69). She further states that 'people are no more important than climate, waterways and skies' (p.69).

In my own work, I seek to demonstrate a reclamation of place, position and sovereignty through ontological re-empowerment resulting from the re-visitation, reclaiming and re-instatement of original and ancient ontological frameworks. This is the basis of my creative practice, has been before this research, and will be after. In the context of this research, I have honed a methodology, an auto-ethnographic performative approach to deliver a new genre of voice emergence that takes kinship positionality as the guiding orientation.

An Academic Songline as Voice Emergence: From where and for whom?

Smith (1999) contends that Indigenous research is a matter of 'finding a "voice", or a way of finding a "voice", or a way of voicing concerns, fears desires, aspirations, needs and questions as they relate to research' (as cited in Whitinui, 2014:43). Likewise, Ellis (1997) as cited in McIvor states 'she is trying to find her voice, speak from her body' (p.135). Everyday people are constantly expressing themselves in different ways and platforms by using resources and genres that convey, articulate and depict. These modes of conveyance and expression are present and serve in the form of social media and technology in general. You

[32] Kovach, M. (2009), Moreton-Robinson, A. (2016), Smith (1999).

[33] Collective space of co-occupation: Collective space, an ontology and inter-connected and inter-related context of a nation and people as existing within their respective societal frameworks. Co-occupation, the dynamics, practices and protocols as lived and inter-actively existing within a collective space of co-existence among a people.

need only engage online through Facebook and Twitter to see the myriad and vastness of voice expression and conveyance done by everyday people, every day. For a compiled and articulate deep reflection and depiction of interactivity by a collective of First Nations people, I refer you to Phone and Spear (2019) by Miyarrka Media. Throughout this compilation you will learn about and see how the Yolngu of Arnhem Land[34] are finding new ways forward as changes unleash and time unravels, spiralling and carrying a people forward. This nation has found a way in a sense to bring along with them their *rom*[35] through contemporary expression and non-Yolngu contexts. Through the construction of phone and spear as a written and visual compilation by seven authors, Miyarrka Media describes this work as a Yuta[36] anthropology. In this work Deger informs that the challenge of Yuta anthropology is to bring different worlds into relationship (p.11). Gurrumuruwuy states, 'We are sharing what we've got, sharing with our experiences, our bodies, our *ngayangu*' (2019:25).[37]

Professionally practicing First Nations people and artists from across the continent are taking it to another level, developing new forms of creative expression for a specified intent such as an exhibition and professional display as you will see in Chapter 3. Voice takes many forms. It travels through spoken words, songs, written (and published) narratives and visual portrayals (sculptures, carvings, pottery, canvasses etc.). Voice is that which is compelled and destined to be vocalised though not necessarily only with human vocal cords. Voice addresses unfinished and unsettled business in multiple ways. Voice is a conveyance and articulation by the people. It exists in its own dynamic and form and flows through vessels that open up, connect and link with it. These conveying vessels are the humans who have established that link in respective contexts. As you will see in later chapters, this is Voice emergence and its fundamental purpose is to address and articulate justice. It is a collective process primarily originating in the bellies of generations of a subjugated people to address that which requires address and thus to find new ways forward to fundamentally sustain, adapt and survive the inevitability of ongoing change.

[34] http://www.dhimurru.com.au/yolngu-culture.html There is a vast array of written work and associated material available on the Yolngu of Arnhem Land.
[35] *Rom* (Yolngu): law, tradition, way of life (p.244)
[36] *Yuta* (Yolngu): new
[37] *Ngayangu* (Yolngu): heart, soul, sacred object.

This is a busy and critical time for First Nations peoples. The changes currently taking place involve humans in general as we shift into new times and new ways of living and being, but my focus is specifically on Indigeneity. Throughout this exegesis a depiction of my focus on Voice emergence – its purpose, its mode of conveyance, its essence – will be depicted and presented. Voice emergence is twofold in identity and praxis: in one way it adapts with the current unfolding dynamics of change and evolution and yet in another it remains in ontology and epistemology as determined and defined by lore. This is fundamentally decolonising in practice and approach.

> '(T)he starting point of decolonisation is not a rejection of colonialism', but 'rather replace the dominant with the marginalised, or as Fanon (1968, as cited in Sium et al., 2012) puts it, make it so "the last shall be first and the first last" (p.37). The decolonising project instead, seeks to re-imagine and re-articulate power, change, and knowledge through a multiplicity of epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies' (as cited in Sium et al. 2012:3).

Also, note that 'decolonisation cannot take place without contestation'. That it does have to 'push back against the colonial relations of power that threaten Indigenous ways of being' (p.3). Alfred (2009) and others have suggested that decolonisation can only be 'achieved through the resurgence of an Indigenous consciousness' (which I will argue is the process of Voice emergence originating from Wik and Wikway systems and protocols) 'and channelled into contention with colonialism' (p.48). Therefore, within the scope of this research, First Nations knowledge systems 'are the starting point for resurgence and decolonisation, are the medium through which we engage in the present, and are the possibility of an Indigenous future. Without this power base, decolonisation becomes a domesticated industry of ideas' (p.37 as cited in Sium, Desai and Ritskes pp.3-4). I want to articulate here that I am not in direct contention with colonialism as such. I am not in battle with this specific approach, not even with the museum as a colonial institution. I simply arrived in the academy and continued to remain positioned in my sovereignty and the sovereignty of Wik and Wikway lore. In the spirit and essence of this sovereignty, the process and approach undertaken have found ways (through the guidance of the *Arnya* spirit approach) of working together to conceive and bring forth the new knowledge and offerings that resulted from a dual methodology of (finding ways of) working together, each without sacrificing the core and fundamental integrity of either.

We, as First Nations people, have a responsibility to pass on the knowledge and information that we inherited consequential of life flow itself. This life flow consists of and encompasses life experiences, life teachings, knowledge gained and skills acquired. This practice ensures the survival of a culture in accordance with its protocols and lore systems. We are individually and collectively responsible and obligated to contribute to this necessity. Otherwise, a nation is deemed abandoned therefore to inevitably encounter a slow demise of its unified strength and coherence. Without knowledge and wisdom pertaining to our lineage and lore systems, the people become blind. McIvor (2010) states:

> while my story is my own and will have parts that are unique to me, I also believe that my story is one of an untold generation – a generation that may feel that they have nothing useful to say because we do not have the language … I hope that my story will bring voice to a generation lost. Lost without our language. Lost without our grandparents and their teachings. Lost without land and traditional food to nourish our mind-body-spirit. But, especially for those who have not lost hope (p.148).

I have an inherited responsibility not only to organically bring my daughter E. Awumpan into the space of the process of utilisation of knowledge but also for her to witness and be a part of my ongoing interrogation of conceptual development within context. The positioning of E. Awumpan as movement interpreter throughout the performative constructs is an extension of this protocol in practice. It is a living epistemology in demonstrative process, intergenerational knowledge transmission and expression. Just as I have acquired knowledge and information from those who went before me it is imperative that those who come after me inherit the same opportunity of acknowledgment and fulfilment.

An extract from McIvor's 2004 journal entry states: 'Do it for them, those who are coming, those who deserve better and have a right to ancestral knowledge and knowing' (2010:142). It is not particularly just E. Awumpan who I am obligated to demonstrate this to and with; this responsibility is likewise associated with the collective of our family, our nation and our communities.

What this research with and for the two old women still locked in museum cabinets has shown me (see Chapter 3 for the full description and discussion), again, is that the most appropriate member becomes available at any given point in time. You see, 'This is a spirit

journey, a journey of paddling back (and forth) to meet my ancestors and invite them to live with me in an authentic way, each day' (McIvor, p.140). The interwoven fabric of our kinship connections binds us all together in a cobweb matrix[38] of obligation.

In my personal case I had demonstrated from an early age my personal interest, ability and availability to sit at my grandmother's feet in the capacity that I did, in the way that I did, for as long as I did. However, the learning did not just occur in this context. Learning takes place organically throughout life itself and thus the associated growth development. My grandmother ensured I went to 'the mission school' to learn to read and write and to learn about the white man's ways but she also took me out bush among the elements during a cyclone so I could witness and learn about the processes of singing and dancing to *enor*[39] and asking for calm. She taught me about the relationality of all living things in accordance with our ontological and epistemological frameworks. She taught me how to read the land and the climate and the inter-connectivity of all living things within this framework all in connection and alignment with lore.

This demonstration of relationality and relational accountability (Wilson, 2008) demonstrates and fulfills its critical importance within an Indigenous research paradigm (as cited in Watson, 2012:3). In my own research, I am consistently aware of the myriad of dynamics unfolding between family members throughout a process of interrogation when it comes to issues relating to land and kinship. Here, there is a connection between positionality and relationality as will be demonstrated with the upholding of protocols within a First Nations framework. The knowledge I acquired during the years and time spent with the old people and with my grandmother in particular is now executed and asserted through my auto-ethnographic creative vocabulary, as expressed specifically within and throughout my academic journey and, thus, in the refinement of my constructed methodological approach. This is why an autoethnographic method is appropriate as an orientation to the social grounded in kinship positionality.

Additionally, and in terms of the operations and evidence of this methodology in practice, my other sisters play different roles in accordance with the knowledge they now possess

[38] Cobweb matrix: refer to glossary.
[39] *Oolay Enor*: (Alngith) cyclone. Y*o lok o pomo* (*Oyo*l: cyclone song) Totemic ancestor to the lineage of Awumpan (b.1925).

consequential of their own journeys to date. I am the one who tends to create in, and demonstrate through, multi-modal genres including contemporary expressions of movement vocabulary and visual creations. I am also the one who uses the tools and techniques of writing in order to document and thus preserve through print and narrative. I have also been led to, and entered, the gates of the academy, and it is critical to note that with my arrival and presence in the academy I bring with me the knowledge and wisdom of the ontological, epistemological and axiological academy of Wik and Wikway processes, systems and lore.

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I position my work in Voice emergence as an academic songline as a demonstration of the kinship network system that exists across all forms of creation. What can be seen throughout the three acts[40] are the different faces and modes of voice, i.e. through myself, through the image of *waarth* flying through the air, through the silent whispers of *ngograchaahn*, through the physical body flow and expression depicted through E. Awumpan, through the accompaniment and use of organic substances and through the silent images of country, kinship and lineage. Although presented as what appears to be a singular entity, Voice ultimately stems from a larger fabric, a kinship collective.

In Act 2 of the performative narrative, *Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming,* those aspects of our collective kinship ontologies are voiced so as to offer and provide some insight into our collective inheritance and sense of accountabilities and responsibilities. This is the accountability Wilson (among others including Martin, Smith, Moreton-Robinson, Nakata and McIvor) talks about. *Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming* was a depiction and result of how life continued to reveal itself. I offered an account of tensions and the reality of how those tensions and conflicts transpired into everyday life both between us and non-kin as well as among and between us. I spoke of and presented for consideration aspects of Country and landscape and the stories of Country in relation to songlines, stories, totemic story maps etc. This connection has been referred to as 'manifestations of the deep relationship between country, culture and cosmology' (Trinca, 2017). Visual depictions

[40] Final Arnya Lecture Performance titled: ***Idiwirra*: A Living Epistemology** consisting of Act 1: *Wik'Chaprah* (2018), Act 2: *Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming* (2019) & Act 3: *Idiwirra.*

through the form of paintings also resulted to offer Voice as an avenue for speech and conveyance within the larger project and multimodal performance.

Burning, a turtle clan woman belonging to the Kanyen'keha:ka people of the Mohawk Nation in Southern Ontario[41], Canada, asserts that creative practice gave the 'medicine needed to continue in (her) day to day'. Further stating: '(I)t is not for me to say that I am the creator of this knowledge. The knowledge systems are already there. I act in this work more as a curator of knowledge' (2017:4).

Martin (2008) states that, 'the Indigenist researcher begins in relatedness to the ancestral core working outwards through tasks that are essentially of the self before engaging with stories of another entity through research. Its challenge to the Indigenist researcher is to "first know thyself" in order to engage research in relatedness' (p.93). Does this activation, this process, provide an opportunity for the voice of self to speak? Or, is it the voice of others that utilises this opportunity through the person who has opened up and made themselves available as a vessel? Whitinui (2014) states that 'Indigenous auto-ethnography from this perspective is therefore about reclaiming *our* indigenous voice, visibility and vision' (Whitinui p.481). (See also Battiste (2000) and Smith (2005).

Creative Processes in First Nations methodologies

Herring (1997) argues that 'the use of creative arts is an inalienable aspect of native culture'. He stresses that it is 'enmeshed in historical and contemporary native spiritual and humanistic value systems' as well as in the perspectives and quality of life (p.105).

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation in Canada (2012) argues that creative arts are 'inseparable from culture, spirituality, and holistic healing'. Traditional healing encompassed culture, dance, spirituality, language, art, singing, traditional knowledge, drumming, dance, and storytelling and, in terms of the cultural 'healer', specific knowledge and expertise pertaining to their area of healing was also noted (p.3). Creative arts and native existence are interconnected; spirituality is central to our ways of being. Our spiritualities, that is all that is related and connected to our existence, are crucial in terms of holistic healing and wellbeing.

[41] Kanyen'Keha:ka, People of the Flint known today as the Mohawk Nation. Burning's family comes from the six nations of the Grand River Indian Reservation located in Southern Ontario, Canada. Burning, M. (2008).

Figure 2: Kinship sister doing weaving during CIAF . Cairns 2016. Image credit to Sheridan Nyrlotte Doyle.

Research shows that processes of creativity play a significant role in health and wellbeing (Kirmayer 2003, McLennon and Khavarpoor 2004, Herring 1997, Luethje 2009, Lavelle 2009, and Schmid 2005). For more recent references see also Cameron (2013), Kaimal, Girija & Arslanbek (2020), Malchiodi (2018 as cited in the *Handbook of Arts-Based Research*), Overton-Murphy (2014) & Conquergood (2013). The creative process can also be seen as a process of discovery, which, in turn, stimulates and guides the various expressive manifestations of its creator. Positive feelings and emotions are elicited which would consequently promote health and wellbeing. Schmid makes mention of a term 'everyday research', an emerging area of creativity research, which 'views creativity as a survival capacity'. This would allow humans participating to thus adapt to their changing environments, linking 'creativity' to evolution and 'hence to health and wellbeing' (Lumsden and Richards as cited in Schmid 2005:10). Allain (2011) quotes an elderly Wik woman of the Wik and Kugu Arts and Crafts Centre:

> This is my best idea – I feel better now – I reckon I got up in a good mood … All the things they use for play (singing and dancing). The children love it – playing with the elderly people. I don't like to stay home and do nothing … now I have something to do (painting) (Wik Elder, 2011:44).

Burning (2017), describes how 'Indigenous-centred performance enables and supports collective meaning-making and indigenous continuity'. Her paper focuses on how First Nations performers today are 'contributing to an empowered indigenous reality' and emphasising specifically how 'community engagement, empowerment, and Indigenous performance are intrinsically connected'. Her methodology drew from conversations with up to five First Nations artists focusing on their current works. She focused on the virtues, imperatives, and aspirations as well as their artistic performance and the expression that points to 'what remains vital for indigenous prosperity'. Burning notes that by presenting First Nations performers' work and their views about their artistic practice, we see 'an emergence of a self-determined space, specifically for and among indigenous people' (p.3).

Like Burning, I find it important to stress that my formulation of voice emergence is not a newly created idea, rather, it is a remembering and recognising of what once was. The idea is to reinstate this original way of doing and being into today's reality (decolonise) as a form of consideration and address. In other words, the approach focus and process is a re-mediation or a revitalising and incorporation of Wik and Wikway ontology into contemporary life through creative presentations for the purpose of reclamation, re-empowerment and ultimate health and wellbeing.

My story, the narrative and contribution of knowledge that I offer becomes a part of this academic songline.[42]

[42] The intended (mine) use of the term songline in this context is referring to an aspect throughout the course of time that is connected to significant events and happenings that connect the historical timeline of events throughout its flow. It is the main thread which runs throughout an historical timeline relating to an identified and specific collective of peoples, place and space.

Auto-ethnography and Creative Processes

Auto-ethnography often takes a creative form. Edward (2018), for instance, explores 'the notion of "mesearch", taking its departure from socio-logical and performing arts investigations in auto-ethnography and autobiography'. He defines 'mesearch' 'as a personalised research paradigm'. He describes how while exploring the relationship between himself and research within performing arts, he had reached 'the conclusion that there is no neutrality in reflexive research'. Further stating that 'having engaged in practice-led research projects, it became clear that an objective lens in such subjective work is neither achievable, nor desirable'. Edwards found that both the 'subject', that, is the (self), *'*and the objects of study *are inextricably connected'.* He articulates that the idea was 'essential' to his principle of 'mesearch'. Stating that 'the emergence of this subjective paradigm offers a platform to explore one's development of *self* and, simultaneously, one's research development' (n.p).

What inspires, excites and stimulates my interest in this particular research methodology is that auto-ethnography 'expands and opens up a wider lens on the world, eschewing rigid definitions of what constitutes meaningful and useful research'. It is an approach that 'also helps us understand how the kinds of people we claim, or are perceived, to be influence interpretations of what we study, how we study it, and what we say about our topic' (Adams, 2005; Wood, 2009:4. as cited in Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2017:275). The role of auto-ethnographers is to 'view research and writing as socially-just acts; rather than a preoccupation with accuracy'. Fundamentally, the goal is 'to produce analytical, accessible texts that change us and the world we *live* in for the better' (Holman Jones 2005:764 as cited in Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2017:284).

Being a storyteller, artist and performer, I have concluded that this is the most appropriate and effective methodology to undertake the research project at hand. I have been brought up in a society and space which consistently allowed me to witness a constant stream of anthropologists, historians and linguists permeating our space and lives throughout time. From early in my childhood, I have observed the interactions and interplay between these 'professionals' and my families. Back then I had always been curious, inquisitive, interested

in this interplay. Why did the white man constantly ask questions? Why always a pen and paper in their hand? Why a small box placed in front of my many grandparents as they spoke in response to the myriad of probing questions presented to them consistently? I subconsciously perceived this relationship as fundamentally placing our people not only appearing to be at the mercy of the white man but at the same time the white man appeared to be at our mercy as well. They appeared to be interested in us, they required our presence, our existence, our responses in order to fulfill and achieve whatever it was they were in search of.

Auto-ethnography works with stories as 'complex, constitutive, meaningful phenomena that taught morals and ethics, thereby introducing unique ways of "thinking and feeling" to social analysis'. Stories help people 'make sense of themselves and others' (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011:274)[43]. Part of our journey as First Nations researchers is to revise, research, reclaim, rename, remember, reconnect and recover (Absolon & Willet, 2005:139 as cited in McIvor 2010:3). By doing this, we are writing the wrongs of the past, those of us in the present with a heartbeat and voice to speak on behalf of those who went before us.

Overton-Murphy (2011) asserts that to 'create art from within has an inherent healing power'. This type of art therapy allows the participant to 'travel within themselves in search of healing and strength' (n.p). Transpersonal denotes travelling inside the self by means of meditation, taking you on a journey beyond your conditioned way of thinking and further into a deeper state of relaxation where accessing a higher state of consciousness is reached. The creative expression released is a depiction of what is hidden deep in one's subconscious (n.p).

Collective Trauma and Voice Emergence in the Academy

Throughout the research process of dialogue, interaction and creative practice (within and throughout the academic space), I found a way of existing and working the process that I felt kept me safe, considering how fragile, sensitive and often controversial certain aspects were. I often felt vulnerable at certain points. In fact, I continue to feel vulnerable. During the construction of Act 1, as I sat in that chair with my supervisor looking at me along with

[43] Original reference: 1) First published in the German language: Ellis, C., Adams T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2010). (pp.345-357).

my peers (one taking photos while the other recorded footage) my hair being cut to create an intergenerational echo of Thomson's collecting practice, I felt like an exhibit myself. At this point, I felt, in a sense, that I too was (an aspect of) the remains of the two ancestors. Indeed, I felt as if I was a subject on display.

Were these feelings of deep discomfort a consequence of inherited generational trauma that Atkinson (2002) talks about?[44] In reference to ongoing dysfunction in and across our communities she states:

> 'On the surface it would be easy to identify the contributing factors as a concoction of alcohol, drugs, poverty and poor health. But peel back the layers and what will be revealed is a nation of people that continue to exhibit a range of behaviours and symptoms that stem from "collective" or "communal" trauma. This type of trauma here refers to the type that large groups of people have encountered, the effects resulting from such experiences are psychological, cultural, spiritual, social and mental distress' (p.53).

In this space, I too was also looked at, observed, queried, focused on, pondered, interrogated, worked on and worked with. Every now and then I became aware of a sub-conscious[45] voice whispering 'What do they really think of me?' Yet, having said that, the difference here was in terms of logistical process: it was an interactive context. The dialogue was a two-way (or in this case four-way) process. My me, in this body, in this time, was not being dictated to or controlled (or manipulated) in such a way as to fulfill the criteria and objective of the researcher, the interrogator, the other for whatever purpose. I had autonomy. This was my research case study, from the perspective, as well as for the purpose, of and on behalf of the people. This was and is a process led by the researched who was now turning the tables and was in the process of being the researcher, the interrogator, the analyser. These three people in the room with me could not do anything to me that over-powered me, I could not be dictated to or abused or insulted or disrespected unless I allowed them to do so. I mean, they could if they wanted to but the difference here, in what I was encountering in this context, at this point in time, was that I too was the researcher and not merely a subject at the mercy of someone else and I held my own set of cards that could be played if needs be. This here was the difference between what the

[44] For further reading see Atkinson, J. 2002.

[45] Sub-conscious: 1. (adj) of or concerning the part of the mind of which one is not fully aware but which influences one's actions and feelings. 2 (noun) the subconscious part of the mind (not in technical use in psychoanalysis) where unconscious is preferred.

ancestors had undergone in the past compared with this present context happening in the now. I was, am, in an empowered position indeed, and this position came at a cost and it is an opportunity I do not take lightly. So, what was the purpose of that depiction? I will mention here that if that suggestion was unacceptable to me from my perspective, I would not have gone ahead with it. The fact that I agreed to the suggestion and cooperated with the capturing of that image depiction requires further analysis. I will return to that in the next chapter.

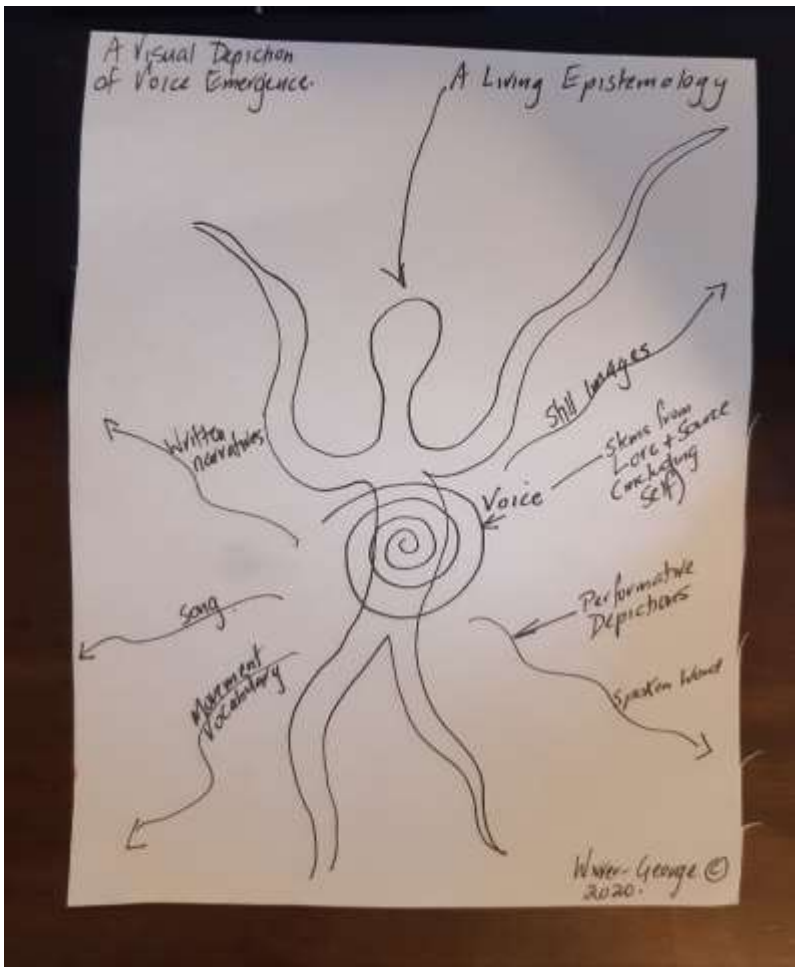

Figure 3: A visual depiction of voice emergence. Source: Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2021.

In the chapters that follow, I use the term songline in alignment with the template and foundations of ontological and epistemological lore. This is a songline that has survived and adapted to ongoing change and context. It is a songline that remains in our blood, our bellies, our hearts, our bodies and our tongues. It is a songline that lives on throughout time as a living epistemology. In alignment with Fredericks et al.'s question of whether their/our

‘writing then give(s) us the opportunity to challenge the dominant way of thinking and being’? (p.87), I emphasise again that my positioning in the academy, in this time and in this way, presents the opportunity to address the same.

Conclusion

This chapter commenced with the strongly stipulated protocol in regard to positioning and locating of the self. A profile of maternal lineage and inherited connection/s to Country led into a broader narrative depicting positioning in relation to layers of relationality and connection. Connections depicted not only articulated blood kinship relationality but also (national and global) academic kinship. I articulated this work’s intent to demonstrate a reclamation of position, place and sovereignty through the acknowledgment, activation and utilisation of ontological re-empowerment. I introduce the interrogative aspect and claim of the role and use of creative processes stemming from a First Nations standpoint as well as acknowledge and present the links between creative processes and auto-ethnography; here the work of Edward’s (2018) ‘mesearch’ is highlighted. Atkinson’s (2002) articulation on collective and communal trauma is also presented to demonstrate the threads interwoven throughout the research linking creative processes, auto-ethnography, First Nations methodologies and healing for the people impacted by the imposition of colonialism and colonialistic regime, interruption and disruption.

Chapter 2: Repatriation: The Call of the Displaced

Repatriation in general terms is the act of return of something (human remains/objects/artefacts) to its place of origin (Collison, Bell, K'awaas and Neel 2019:14). From a cultural heritage perspective, the activity has more of a specific meaning: a return of such objects to their original communities, homelands and people, ideally in ways deemed ontologically and culturally appropriate to the home community. In the words of Bunuba woman and First Nations rights activist June Oscar (2015),

> *I think it's important to help people understand and appreciate that they're dealing with human beings here, that they're dealing with people, people who lived on this country wherever it may be across Australia and these people belong to the groups that exist today. They belong to the story of this country and that they need to be treated with the absolute respect (Ormond-Parker et. Al, as cited in Fforde, McKeown and Keeler 2020:165).*

Repatriation therefore is 'not just a word, but a call to action' (Coble as cited in Collison et al. 2019:14). Repatriation is an act of reparation: a righting of a wrongful act of displacement from kin and country to distant museums, acts that would have been carried out oftentimes violently (Burden 2020:n.p., Griffin & Paroissien 2011:pp.6-7, Fforde, McKeown and Keeler 2020:xxxvi). As a result of colonial histories of collection, repatriation has become a key theme of engagements between First Nations people and museums on a global scale. As such, repatriation both demands and shapes a particular term of address between sovereign nations and nation states and their institutions. Almost 80 per cent of the 192 members of the United Nations have recognised the right that First Nations people have to repatriate their human remains and ceremonial objects (including photographs) through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms (McKeown from Fforde, McKeown and Keeler 2020:23). The repatriation movement involving human remains and artefacts across Australia has been growing steadily. It is a process that requires collective coordination both nationally as well as globally in order to achieve a successful return. In a report published by the University of Tasmania, it is stated that 'since the 1970s, the remains of around 5000 Indigenous people in Australian museums and scientific institutions have been repatriated or earmarked for return to their communities of origin … (a) further 1250 have been returned to Australia from overseas institutions' (2018:n.p).[46] Although every single return

[46]'Key facts: The Return, Reconcile, Renew network has amassed more than 3000 separate files relating to Indigenous remains and artefacts. Remains of an estimated 1000 Indigenous old people still lie in overseas institutions. Since the 1970s, remains of around 5000 people have been repatriated from Australian institutions and 1250 have been returned

is significant, I mention the following to name a few. Beginning in the 1980s, the Ngarrindjeri nation of the lower Murray region of South Australia 'has prioritised the repatriation and reburial of the first Stolen Generations (see Hemming and Wilson 2010)' (Hemming et.al. as cited in Fforde, et.al 2020:147). In 2002 the Royal College of Surgeons of England responded to requests made by First Nations groups and 'returned its holdings of Tasmanian Aboriginal human remains'(Fforde et. al. 2002:xiiii). A year later, the 'remaining collection of Australian Aboriginal human remains' had been returned. More remains were also returned by the Manchester Museum and the Horniman Museum, London, in 2003 (Fforde et. al 2002:xiii). Much closer to country for myself, an infant's skull made its way back home from the Queensland Museum in Brisbane to Cape York in 1996. The skull had been collected by the 'Protector of Aborigines', Walter Roth, during a visit to the old Weipa mission at the Embley River. The skull had been wrapped in a red cloth and placed in a dilly bag. It is believed the infant was about eight months old. The skull was re-buried back home in the local cemetery at Napranum (Figure 2, information and photocopy supplied to author by historian Geoff Wharton 2020[47]).

from overseas institutions. Indigenous Australians fought for the return of their ancestors' remains as far back as 1892. The myth of Indigenous Australians becoming extinct was portrayed in museum exhibits as recently as 2007'. From *Creativity, Culture and Society*, University of Tasmania (2018) https://www.utas.edu.au/news/2018/9/9/775-righting-the-wrongs-of-the-past/

[47] Geoff Wharton has done extensive work with the people on the histories of Weipa and Mapoon. For references to some of his works see: *Napranum/Weipa during Wartime* www.napranum.qld.gov.au *A River with Bush: The Pennefather River, Cape York Peninsula* (2010) and *The Day they Burned Mapoon: A study of the closure of a Queensland Presbyterian Mission* (1996) https://espace.library.uq.edu.au

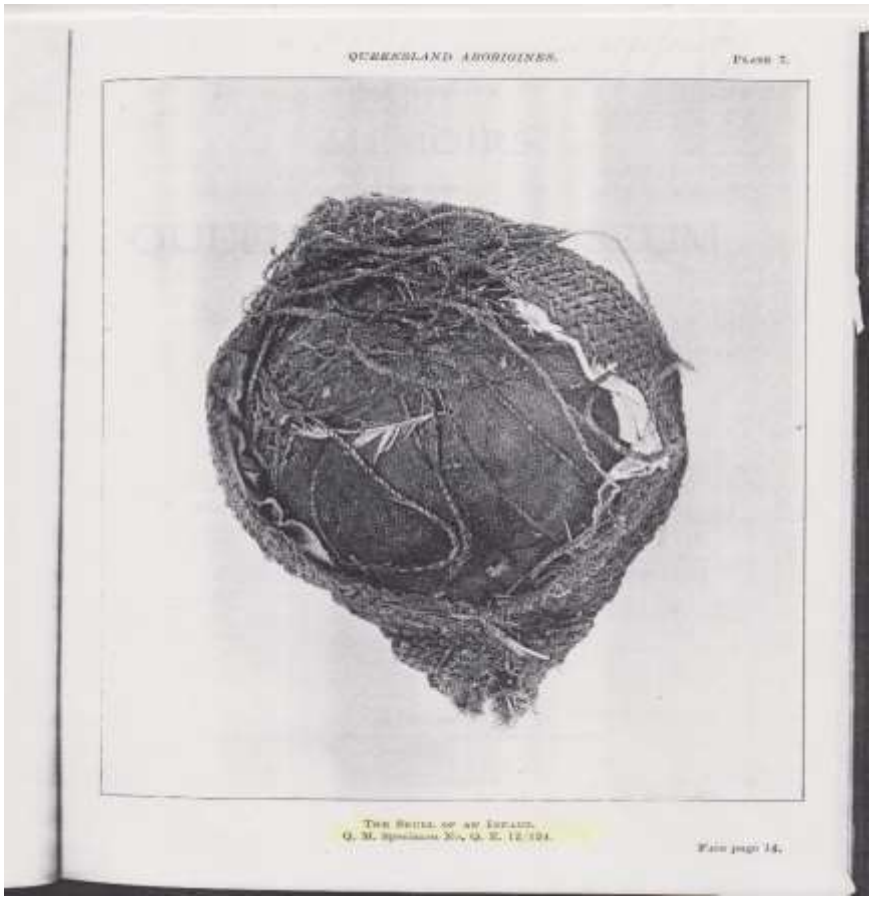

Figure 4: The skull of an infant, collected from the Embley River area by W.E. Roth in the 1900s and repatriated to Napranum in 1996. Q.M. Specimen No. Q.E.12/124. Extract from *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* Vol. 1. 1912, plate 7 opposite p.14.

Figure 5: Koht Alice Mark during the visit to the Queensland Museum to reunite-unite with the remains in order to return back home, 1996. Photo credit to Michael Aird (Current Director of Anthropology, Museum of University of Queensland).

During her engagement with this process, *koht* Alice Mark, the oldest of the three woman who made the trip to the Queensland Museum, was introduced to a photograph of herself as a child as well as a shell necklace, the same as one made by her father that she recognised as having worn during her childhood (Museums Australia 1996:2). (The term '*koht'* in reference to an elder is a kinship term from one of the local dialects. Although I am not entirely sure which dialect it comes from, it would most probably be the Mbaiwum/Trotj or the Anaigthangaith language group). Museums hold displaced objects of many kinds. Museum visits have the potential to stir up many layers of trauma and disquiet for First Nations custodians and kin.

The Weipa Bulletin

Edition No. 1494 Friday May 10, 1996 Phone: 070 698467 News: 070698971 Fax: 698704 Price: 70c

Embley River Child returns to rest

On Friday 4 May a small congregation gathered at the old cemetery in Napranum to bury the remains of the Embley River Child.

On Wednesday of this week many people were invited to commemorate the return of the child to his or her homeland.

The remains of a baby, guessed to be about 8 months old, its skull wrapped in red cotton and placed in bark, were returned to the Napranum people for proper burial after being away from it's country for almost one hundred years.

Dr. Walter Roth, Northern Protector of Aborigines, wrote three comprehensive volumes on Queensland Aboriginals and collected skeletal remains and many artefacts from the north west of Cape York. Between the late 1800s and early 1900s, Roth visited the Weipa area a number of times and it was while on one of these visits he took the child's remains. Roth observed that "children are usually put out of sight directly after death, though sometimes they may be carried about, wrapped up in bark". In 1903 he donated this body to the Queensland Museum in Brisbane. Through the Heritage Protection Section of the Department of Communications and the Arts, under the Protection and Return of Significant Cultural Property to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People program, a grant of $5000 was extended to the Napranum Aboriginal Corporation for the recovery and burial of The Embley River Child.

With the further assistance of Napranum Aboriginal Corporation, Napranum Aboriginal Community Council and other organisations and individuals, in April, traditional owners from the Embley River area, Alice Mark, Beatrice Gordon and Thelma Coconut went to Brisbane to bring the child back to Napranum. The only information about the child is that it is from the Embley River area. Nothing is known of it's ancestry, there is no documentation on exactly where or from which tribe the child came. So the people of Napranum, came together and invited others from the surrounding communities to mourn the loss and celebrate the return of this child. The traditional elders decided to bury the child in the old cemetery where it can be with the old people.

Various community members spoke at the ceremony. Ina Hall said, "It is a special occasion for the child and the people of Napranum". Thelma Coconut expressed, "feelings of pain as a mother when I saw the remains" she said, "It is a sad but happy day for the Community of Napranum putting her or him to rest". Beatrice Gordon said she was, "happy to be one of the women to return the child to Napranum." Ron Ngallametta, Council Chairman, thanked the ladies for returning the infant. He spoke of the times when children were taken from their parents and it is good now that this child's remains are being returned. Alice Mark pointed out how the child has brought the different tribes together as one, and Reverend Sione Afu went further to say, all of the community of Weipa and Napranum could feel the significance of this event.

The Granite headstone has a Thanecugue design, inlaid with gold leaf and is engraved with four messages. "Taken from the Embley River area prior to 1903. It's spirit back with family and country. 8 May, 1996." In the Ashathangaith language, "Oyong chun chach, awamlong kun unam ngong", translates as, "I tell you this, that child has come back here." In Thainakuith, "Agamlong ndrru'en luun ngguura nhingly Napranum" means, "They bring this child back here, home to Napranum", and in Ndrrang'ith "Kun ndru nhing ndra'thi", says "Now you stay here for good".

Traditional owner, Alice Mark lays flowers at the grave of the Embley River Child. On top sits a skin bark canoe or cradle, filled by the local school children, with bush food for the infant.

School children dance in a celebration of both welcome and farewell for the child.

Figure 6: Front page write-up of the return of the infant's skull back to home and country in the local Weipa Bulletin, 1996.

Considering the number of remains and artefacts that still await a return to their rightful owners, repatriation is an ongoing process across Australia involving many communities and descendant groups. In the majority of cases, remains require the reunion and retrieval to be undertaken with appropriate family members of the group in context. Generally, the appropriate people front-lining the process determine and demonstrate the cultural protocol to be delivered: for instance, introduction in reunion, smoking ceremony, fulfilling of kinship obligatory principles etc.

Background Context: The Ancestors Are Waiting

My involvement with repatriation began in 2016 when I was approached by an anthropologist who has done consistent work with the Western Cape Region, including with

key figures in my lineage bloodline, for many years. The preliminary meeting in Napranum entailed an introduction to a range of photos of old people taken by the anthropologist Donald Thomson in the 1930s[48]. During this meeting I was informed that two particular hair samples had been kept at the Museum of Victoria in Melbourne for almost 90 years, human remains that are categorised also as part of what is now referred to as *The Thomson Collection*. The hair belonged to Awumpin (born in 1910) and Athelpen (born in 1913). At that time, I was introduced to these two women through the photographs, I believed my relationship to them was great-grand-niece and great-grand-daughter respectively.

Figure 7: TPH 4080 (Awampan) Wik and Wikway Nations of Western Cape. Photographer – D. F. Thomson. The Donald Thomson Ethnohistory Collection. Reproduced courtesy of the Thomson family and Museum Victoria.

[48] http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/thomson-donald-finlay-fergusson-11851

Figure 8: TPH 4066 (Athelapan). Wik and Wikway Nations of Western Cape. Photographer – D.F. Thomson. The Donald Thomson Ethnohistory Collection. Reproduced courtesy of the Thomson family and Museum Victoria.

From the moment of that first encounter with those photographs – and the old girls that I encountered through them – I felt a strong instinctive response to take responsibility for making things right. At that point, I had no sense that this process would become the spark that ignited the research process that would eventually result in this PhD exploration of creative voice. This was not my motivation at all. Rather I was motivated by a complex set of feelings, memories and kin-based relationships. As Professor Peter Buckskin, a Narungga man puts it, 'It is very important for us to take people home to allow their spirits to be free' (as cited in Silk 2019:n.p.).

This is the thought that immediately came to my mind too when I learned of the hair of the ancestors being held in the museum for these past 90 years.

Ya'ngan (hair)[49]

Hair has long acted as a medium through which cultural understandings of race are expressed, debated, transformed, materialised, and enacted[50]. In physical anthropology, hair has been used to create and solidify ideas of racial difference, particularly during the 19th and early 20th centuries, 'when hair was thought to provide a key to racial distinctions'

[49] *Ya'ngan* translates hair in the Wik language.

[50] Hair can hold many meanings in different cultural contexts. In the natural hair movement, a process which focusses on encouraging women of African ancestry 'to celebrate and enjoy the natural characteristics of their kinky, curly, hair texture' (Kenneth 2009:n.p), hair is used to signal ideas of authenticity in response to histories of suppression and experiences of racism. And yet in the case of such factories in China, 'items such as "Brazilian" hair extensions and "Afro" wigs are physically manufactured through combinations of hair and labour that confound ethnic, racial, and national boundaries' (p.325) (as cited in Tarlo 2019:34).

(Tarlo 2019:324). In the 'commercialised world of the billion-dollar market for human hair', hair promises exoticism and ethnic variety to consumers. So a trade in human hair continues, although for different reasons from the anthropological collections with which I am now engaged.

From my Wik and Wikway standpoint position, hair holds much spiritual significance in terms of ontology and contemporary identity. The following is an excerpt from native American Barbie Stensgar (2019)[51] in reference to the significance of hair in ways that resonate with me:

> ... we don't cut our hair unless we have experienced a significant loss, like the death of a close family member, traumatic event or significant life change. Tribes have different teachings about the value of hair and how to care for it. In our family, we are taught that our hair is a physical extension of all our thoughts, prayers, dreams, aspirations, experiences and history. When we cut our hair, it represents the end of something that once was, and a new beginning. When we do have to cut our hair, it is never to be thrown away, but rather, burned with sage or sweet-grass in a ceremonial way. When our hair is burned, all of our thoughts, prayers, dreams, aspirations, experiences and history rise to the Creator to be properly taken care of. We are then guided in the direction from our prayers to be answered. Throwing our hair away is a form of personal disrespect (Stensgar 2019:n.p).

Although the above quote is in reference to native American Aboriginal Nations, the final line triggers memories of the intrusive practices of non-Indigenous school teachers in my own childhood. The cutting and shaving of hair without parental consultation or permission was rampant throughout my primary-school years. Non-Indigenous people took it upon themselves to enact authority over the children during the 1970s and 80s through the control of hair. The effect this had on both myself and my grandmother, in particular, sticks clear in my mind to this day. On the day that my own head was shaved, I was nine years old. I remember the voice of my grandmother in reaction to the sight of my bald head as I approached the house after school. I also recall my grandmother approaching that woman (teacher) and delivering a vocal storm, further gesturing her rage through a war dance in accompaniment to her words.

Within the contexts of my own Wik and Wikway heritage, hair is *nyim nyim* (sacred) business. Hair 'connects the person to both the physical and the spiritual realms of

[51] Stensgar (Colville Tribe: Arrow Lakes Band) 2019. sistersky.com *The Significance of hair in Native American Culture*.

existence' (Peers 2003:76). From a young age we are taught to be careful with hair as this is a human component that can be used in practices of magik in order to inflict pain and death (see Keen, 2006). Where I come from, hair can be used by an apprentice and graduate of a particular type of spiritual practice commonly known as *purri purri* or black magik. In this type of practice, a person of desire can be sung into a counterfeit version of 'love' between the practicing apprentice or magik person and the person of interest. As a result of growing up in this context, my relationship with hair is complex and fraught. I equate Thomson's act of so-called scientific collection as a material meddling with my ancestral ontology. From my perspective, it was as if he was committing something akin to an act of sorcery[52] in the taking of the hair. At the same time, the removal of the hair stands for the colonial devastation of my people.

In response to this act, a retrieval of the samples (which in ontological terms *are* our ancestors) followed by appropriate ceremonial address and finalisation, is critical. I currently stand in a leading position of this process, with the support of my family and relatives. Herein lies an example of kinship positionality, whereby I stand between two spaces: one of institutional academia and the other of ontological and kinship space of my lineage and respective nation. In this position, I am given an opportunity to work in accordance with both ways in order to address unfinished business, business that requires attention: hair taken belongs to the organic body of our ancestors and appropriate return and ceremony must be carried out in order for ancestors to be appropriately laid to rest. In other words, hair has great relational significance across time and kin and I am charged with caring for these relationships. As this hair sample also brings to the fore the relationship between anthropology (and its link with scientific research) and Aboriginal people, specifically the relationship between Donald Thomson and the Wik nation of Western Cape York, it also brings to the fore my own fledgling place within academic institutions as a research scholar with the relationships that I must continue to care for in that space.

[52] The use of magic, especially Black Magic. Keen. I (2006).

A Disgraceful Mind Set: The Legacy of the Coloniser

'For most of its history, anthropological practices have been enmeshed in the politics of power, dominion and exclusion' (Florek 2017:n.p.; see also Prictor, et. al. 2020). During the period 1926-1963, Joseph B. Birdsell and Norman B. Tindale led a collective of anthropologists to undertake extensive fieldwork across the continent. The stated intention was to demonstrate the placement of Aboriginal people in the big scheme of the human family tree. This involved a lot of collecting and categorising. During this time, workers diligently 'collected various measurements, botanical samples, stories, songs, genealogies, personal recollections, linguistic data and artefacts – well documented in writings and photographs. They compiled a rich repository of records, far surpassing initial research objectives' (Florek n.p). During this time, hair samples of more than 5000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from various communities were collected. The intent to acquire these samples was for them to be analysed in genetic research to show similarities and differences between regional groups[53] (Florek 2017:n.p). These kinds of differences were of no interest to First Nations people who had their own sophisticated cultural ways of distinguishing groups and their interrelationships.

Fast forward to the present and we find the decade-long Aboriginal Heritage Project working with a collection to 111 hair samples that were collected during the specified 1926-1963 timeframe. This project is 'led by the University of Adelaide's Australian Centre for Ancient DNA (ACAD) in partnership with the South Australian Museum' (University of Adelaide 2017:n.p)[54]. The lead researcher, Professor Alan Cooper, asserts that the analyses done 'are only conducted with their (Aboriginal families and communities) consent'. From the findings, Cooper concludes that First Nations people 'remained in discrete geographical regions' steadily for 50,000 years[55].

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[53] Florek, S. 2017. See also ABS Science: Article by Cooper, D. https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2017-03-09/dna-confirms-aboriginals-have-long-lasting-connection-to-country/8336284

[54] Aboriginal Hair shows 50,000 Years' Connection to Country. 2017 The University of Adelaide.

[55] He states:

> This is unlike people anywhere else in the world and provides compelling support for the remarkable Aboriginal cultural connection to country. We're hoping this project leads to a rewriting of Australia's history texts to include detailed Aboriginal history and what it means to have been on their land for 50, 000 years – that's around 10 times as long as all of the European history we're commonly taught'(n.p).

Cooper also states that results from the testing 'are first discussed with the families to get Aboriginal perspectives before scientific publication'. The report declares that First Nation elders guided the construction of the research model alongside 'the Genographic Project and professional ethicists'. In this way, Professor Cooper asserts that the project 'will allow people with Aboriginal heritage to trace their regional ancestry and reconstruct family genealogical history'; additionally, it 'will also assist with the repatriation of Aboriginal artefacts'. One of the original hair donors, Mr Lewis O'Brien (a Kaurna elder), says that 'Aboriginal people have always known that we have been on our land since the start of our time. But it is important to have science show that to the rest of the world.' He states that the project is 'exciting' and hopes that 'it will help assist those of our people from the Stolen Generation and others to reunite with their families'. The families particularly involved with the project are the Cherbourg, Koonibba and Point Pearce communities (the University of Adelaide 2017:n.p).

Although the report notes that both the research and the findings appear to be embraced by the people and communities, I cannot help but wonder what exactly is consent being given to? Are these families consenting to further probing and interference with the remains for the purpose of ongoing scientific analysis? How exactly was the project pitched to the people? Are they fully aware of the full context of analysis and indeed the background and initial intent of collection? I ask with no disrespect to the people and elders throughout this project. Rather, I wonder in terms of the people's perspective and position in this ongoing interrogation of human components of First Nations people (in this case their own ancestral lineages). Certainly, in our case I feel the urgency to bring the hair remains of our two ancestors back to country without any further time to waste if it can be helped, although, red tape[56] continues to create hold ups. I question this process in the context of the manner in which research has been enabled and conducted historically, and because hair means and matters differently to my people. This meddling has effects. And as

[56] At the time of writing, the samples had been handed from Museum Victoria to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (VAHC). The VAHC had still been in process of establishing the relevant associated systems and procedures and were therefore not in a position to progress with consolidating the hand-over of the remains back to the Wik.

I describe in the pages that follow, it continues to have effects, long after the anthropologist or researcher has laid down their notebooks.

The contents of an article written by Jacqueline D'Arcy come to mind. In this article entitled *'The Same but Different': Aborigines-Adelaide Universities' Anthropological Expedition to Cape Barren Island Reserve, January 1939*'[57] the intentions of why organic matter of First Nations people were collected are explicitly presented. D'Arcy addresses the process and agenda of eugenics with specific focus on the Cape Barren Island Reserve in the 1920s and 1930s as well as the expedition that took place there in 1939 (p.59). Her paper provides an account which reflects 'changes in contemporary Australian opinion regarding race and miscegenation[58] – an opinion that was moving steadily away form a social Darwinist explanation of the "half-caste problem", towards a eugenic solution' (p.60). She makes mention of Tindale and Birdsell's combined decision to 'advocate "absorption" as the solution to the "half-caste problem" of the 1920s and 1930s' (p.60). Here, she articulates that eugenics 'provided a template for a solution to the "half-caste problem"' (p.60). Reading this article, as a woman fathered by a man of Austrian origin and carried in the belly of a Mbaiwum woman of this land, I struggle to find the words that would appropriately or accurately describe the feelings activated deep inside my me. The despicable and evil attitudes, mentality, beliefs and conduct of eugenicists make deeply confronting reading. To have to encounter and consume such words as 'the half-caste problem', 'breed out the colour', 'separating the "full-bloods" (the racially pure but "inferior") from the "half-bloods" (the racially mixed or "defective whites")', to name only some of the terminology, was profoundly disturbing. These people were discussing human beings as mere specimens which they believed they had a superior right to tamper with, to control, to disrupt and to kill off. Although in a different context and away from my homeland, these references were basically being made about my families and myself. I reflect on their 'half-caste' reference as 'a problem' that they 'needed' to fix. I was conceived and entered into this world through two lineages that immediately termed me 'bi-racial' and 'half-caste'. The mindset of the day that categorised this position as illegitimate and of un-pure blood is nothing short of horrendous. I am a human being! My mother, my grandmother, my grandfather and indeed

[57] D'Arcy, J. 2007.
[58] Miscegenation: the interbreeding of people considered to be of different racial types.

all my relations are human beings in this realm and the audacity and arrogant racist mindset of these people to meddle with other human beings in this way is appalling and downright horrid. I was nurtured and cultivated and given a name by these 'natives' that the colonial mind believed they needed to control to serve their own evil beliefs and regimes. The reality of the vulnerability of those who came before impacted me to an extent not (consciously) felt prior to encountering these eugenicist views.[59]

…

During this same time of the Birdsell and Tindale mass collection, Thomson (specifically throughout the 1930s) was carrying out research with the Wik and Wikway nations of Western Cape[60]. My grandmother (born in 1925) had memories of Thomson during his time there. She would describe to me how he would throw lollies on the ground for the children to compete for. The photograph below was taken on my 2018 visit to the Thomson Collection at Museum Victoria accompanied by my older sister and daughter.

[59] Atkinson, J. (2002).
[60] Rigsby, B. & Peterson, N. (2005).

Figure 9: Justice Athailpun, the author and Lynette Jean look through Donald Thomson's official documentation. Photo taken by Melanie Raberts at Museum Victoria, 2018.

Figure 10: Justice Athailpun and the author review notes written during the 1930s along with the remains. Photo taken by Melanie Raberts.

As Florek (2017) writes, 'Indigenous groups in our region were defined through racial classification, often reduced to skin colour'. They were considered inferior to the Anglo-Saxon type who, presumably, had reached the 'pinnacle of human evolutionary progress'.[61] A sad legacy of Western anthropology is that for centuries it was intertwined with colonialism and racism (Florek 2017:n.p). Apart from the historical aspect of hair (refer to Tarlo 2019), the tampering of it and with it anthropologically and for the (intrusive) purpose of scientific research, my lineage perspective and therefore (inevitably) my relationship with this case specifically, warrants justified (and significant) focus and address. This interaction between all involved parties provides an opportunity to collectively work together to address those issues of past practices and injustices. This imperative is the reason that this became identified as a critical focus for this thesis though, as will become clear, the problem of repatriation became less central to the analytic focus as time went on. This hair has led

[61] Refer to Darwinism, the theory of biological evolution developed by the English naturalist Charles Darwin (1809-1882).

me to insights, visitations and forms of connection that reach far beyond the physical hair or even the process of its repatriation. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, photographs from the museum also provide critical materials for this research and appear within the performance itself.

Wik and Colonial Violence: A Background Context

The Wik were once a warrior people sustaining themselves for generations prior to colonial impact and interruption. My connection to this nation is through my maternal lineage (Lineage chart in Appendix). The Wik and Wikway are a nation of people that primarily occupy the community of Aurukun. One of the larger communities of the Western Cape it sits at the mouth of three rivers: the Archer, Watson and Ward. Dependent upon the weather and road conditions, the trip by road between Aurukun and Weipa takes about three hours.

Wik and Wikway nations have lived on Country for thousands of years between Pormpuraaw and Weipa. Five clan groups make up the nation being Apalech, Winchanam, Wanam, Chara (Wikway) and Puutch (Queensland Government, p.5).

Figure 11: Map of Cape York Peninsula. Source: en.wikipedia.org

The Wik were once a people who effectively and successfully upheld lore and culture, managing and maintaining a way of life in accordance with their own epistemological and ontological frameworks. We are a people who sustained a beautiful and strong survival existence for generations. Consequential of the missionary presence, the period leading up

to the end of the 1970s had the people transitioning into a semi-traditional lifestyle in coexistence with the church regime.

Since the arrival of the white man (first established in 1904 on behalf of the Presbyterian church by the missionary Arthur Richter), (Community histories A-B, Aurukun)[62], the nation transitioned into a way of life that ultimately caused a progressive degradation of lifestyle causing the once heroic and warrior-like nation to succumb to inevitable despair over time. This ongoing degradation was consequential of the intrusive practices of a colonialistic and imperialistic regime inflicted upon the people (period from early 1900s up to the 1980s)[63]. From the 1980s through to the present, the presence and use of alcohol and drugs are primary contributors to further critical breakdown among the people.

***

My earliest memories of life in Aurukun make me nostalgic. These memories consist of family interaction, singing and dancing as well as the viewing of and participation in ceremony[64]. There was a constant flow of stories told by the campfire, walking country, interacting with country, hunting and food gathering, preparation and consumption. The learning of language and teaching of cultural knowledge by various family members regularly took place where and as necessary throughout time. Learning was contextual and purposeful. This was a demonstration of necessary cultivation and preparation of a generation throughout time as is required for the nation's survival[65]. As I recall those times, intoxication, pre-occupation with drugs and the display of such conduct in relation to such use was absent. The Wik were without intoxication, strong and focused. Men knew and carried out their respective roles and women did likewise. Children roamed the community free of fear of anything. I was one of those children, and no matter where my feet took me during those days, my most delicate first decade as an inquisitive developing human, I

[62] *Community Histories, A.B., Aurukun*. Queensland Government. Retrieved from https://www/qld.gov.au/atsi/cultural-awarenss-heritage-arts/community-histories-aurukun

[63] Refer to Aurukun Timeline in Appendix.

[64] Aboriginal ceremonies | Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (qcaa.qld.edu.au)

[65] The passing on of cultural knowledge is imperative for a nation's ontology to remain and survive throughout generations.

always had a safe place by someone's campfire to rest, share food with, and be appropriately nurtured and taught in cultural context[66].

However, since the introduction of (primarily) alcohol in the 1980s decade (my teenage years) the state of affairs involving the people and therefore the community climate began to spiral into despair. This spiral into the depths of severe dysfunction left a once beautiful community in a state of extreme chaos and dysfunction. Today, people are wounded and in critical disarray. Healing is paramount for the nation to survive, progress, succeed and thus reclaim the inheritance and warrior-ship of the people, a warrior-ship legacy once so easily displayed by the ancestors. To place emphasis, although briefly, let us focus on the words of Peter Sutton, a linguist and anthropologist who spent a significant amount of time with my great-grandmother Nyrlotte Kerwerthen's[67] (see photo on p.21) people learning the ways and customs of our ontologies.

> In my time with the Wik people up to 2001, out of a population of less than 1000, eight people known to me had died by their own hand, two of them women, six of them men. Five of them were young people. From the same community in the same period, 13 people known to me had been victims of homicide, eight of them women, five of them men. Twelve others had committed homicide, nine of them men and three of them women … In almost all cases, assailants and victims were relatives whose families had been linked to each other for generations. They were my relatives, too, in a non-biological 'tribal' sense, because of Victor (Sutton, as cited in Ford, p.10).

Ford (2013) continues to paint a picture of this community stating that 'between 1985 and 2001, Aurukun went from a place of relative cohesion and functional civility to a town seemingly intent on self-annihilation'. Stating further, that 'a staggering number of Aurukun men and women were dying tragically, often as a result of violence, Sutton found himself in the midst of a frightening devolution' (p.2).

> I remember it being so different. That can be nostalgia, of course. There certainly were (tribal and clan tensions) and occasionally there were riots in the 70s, when I was first there,

[66] Wirrer-George Oochunyung, F. pp.5-6 2012. https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13597262-double-native

[67] Nyrlotte Kerwerthen: Maternal mother of Awumpan, my maternal grandmother (refer to Totemic Lineage chart in Appendix).

> but people would sit in their front yards next to a fire in the evening, and people would drop by and have a cup of tea and a talk, or you could be walking by and someone would call out, 'Hey, come over'. Fast forward to the 90s, and people are locking themselves up behind 12-foot mesh fences at night with guard dogs, savage dogs. A radical shift in relationships (Sutton, as cited in Ford, 2013. p:2[68]).

The current climate is pretty much the same with a heavier infiltration and presence of drugs and conduct resulting from such use[69]. As Atkinson (2002) reminds us, 'savagery' and 'violence' arrived with the colonisers, 'who acted out (without consent) their own aggression on those whose lands they were trespassing on'. She states that 'this savagery', is the key to understanding the situation of violence in Aboriginal families and our communities today (p:50).

I take the removal of my ancestor's hair for collection and storage as museum specimens to be one such act of savagery. I take the opportunity to repatriate it, as the chance to implement creative reflection and action, and so as a means of addressing this history from a new perspective.

Repatriation: A Call to Creative Action

The sheer size of *The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Repatriation* (2020) indicates the ongoing growth in understanding resulting from repatriation process to date. What interests me most in this collection are the accounts of the ways in which repatriation 'inter-connects with reconciliation, healing, and wellbeing' (Fforde et. al. p:1). It shows how 'sovereignty, Indigenous nation (re)-building and resistance to ongoing colonialism are critical components of the repatriation movement (Fforde et al., p:1)' as well, and how arts addressing the process of repatriation are playing a major role in terms of addressing the fundamentals of past injustices.

There are many ways which creative response and address can take form in response to the task of repatriation and the call of the displaced. In the words of Martin Thomas, the

[68] The 1970s decade Sutton is referring to is my first decade as a child roaming the community and lands of this nation.
[69] Dixon, N. N. 2002.

documentary filmmaker of *Etched in Bone* (as cited in Goodall 2019)[70]: 'Death does not alter our responsibility to respect each other' (2019). In accordance with my commitments both to the repatriation and the broader social project of moving forward from the trauma of colonialism, I suggest that 'the other' to which Thomas is referring is the interconnected collective who are all involved in various ways. This makes repatriation a moral task that involves both black and white Australians. We have all inherited a responsibility to do what is right and address the wrongdoings and actions of the past. The past is gone but its effects continue throughout generations, affecting our collective present reality. The ongoing current situation of unfinished business regarding the return of all remains and objects requires collective address.

As I argue in this dissertation, this is a process that requires an active awareness of, a sensitivity to and an allowance of Voice emergence. By Voice emergence, I mean a rising revelation and conveyance of truth speaking from the position of the speaker or conveyer. The place from which this truth speaking comes is twofold in origin. The first origin can either be the vessel (artist/person) who is used as, or is, the conveyer or it can be somewhere beyond the vessel (artist/person), from another source who resides (spiritually speaking), in a different realm or dimension (i.e. the Dreaming place)[71]. Voice emergence is a framework dynamic that represents and allows the truth essence and standpoint positions of First Nations people to be revealed and demonstrated. It is a multi-genre articulated response to the unfolding narrative and legacy of the intrusive and invasive practices of colonialism. Therein lies a type of spirit speak[72] in response to the colonial legacies that

[70] Thomas, M. & and Bijon, B. 2018.

[71] In accordance with First Nations spirituality (although, note that I am speaking from specifically Wik and Wikway ontology in this context) it is believed that as loved ones depart this realm their spirits go on to reside in the place of their kinship dreaming (refer to glossary of terms in Appendix). They return to their story place or the anthropologically termed 'clan estate'. This refers to relatives/ancestors in the form of flora, fauna as well as the elements. For more readings refer to *Aborigine Dreaming: An introduction to the wisdom and thought of the Aboriginal traditions of Australia* (Cowan J. 2002). Other references are Cowan (1992), Swain (1991), and Stanner (1965). Clan estates*:* Certain places that were traditionally held by particular families. For some people they may be 'history' rather than 'country'. Known as 'main place' for certain families, places of central ownership. People were not confined to living on their own clan estate but had quite free access to the countries of spouses, of other relations and of neighboring landowners, in the old pre-mission days. (Sutton, 1998. Personal correspondence between Sutton and the author).

[72] Spirit speak: the voice of the spirit. Akin to voice emergence.

wreaked the destructive mess that continues to permeate throughout the lives of First Nations Australia.

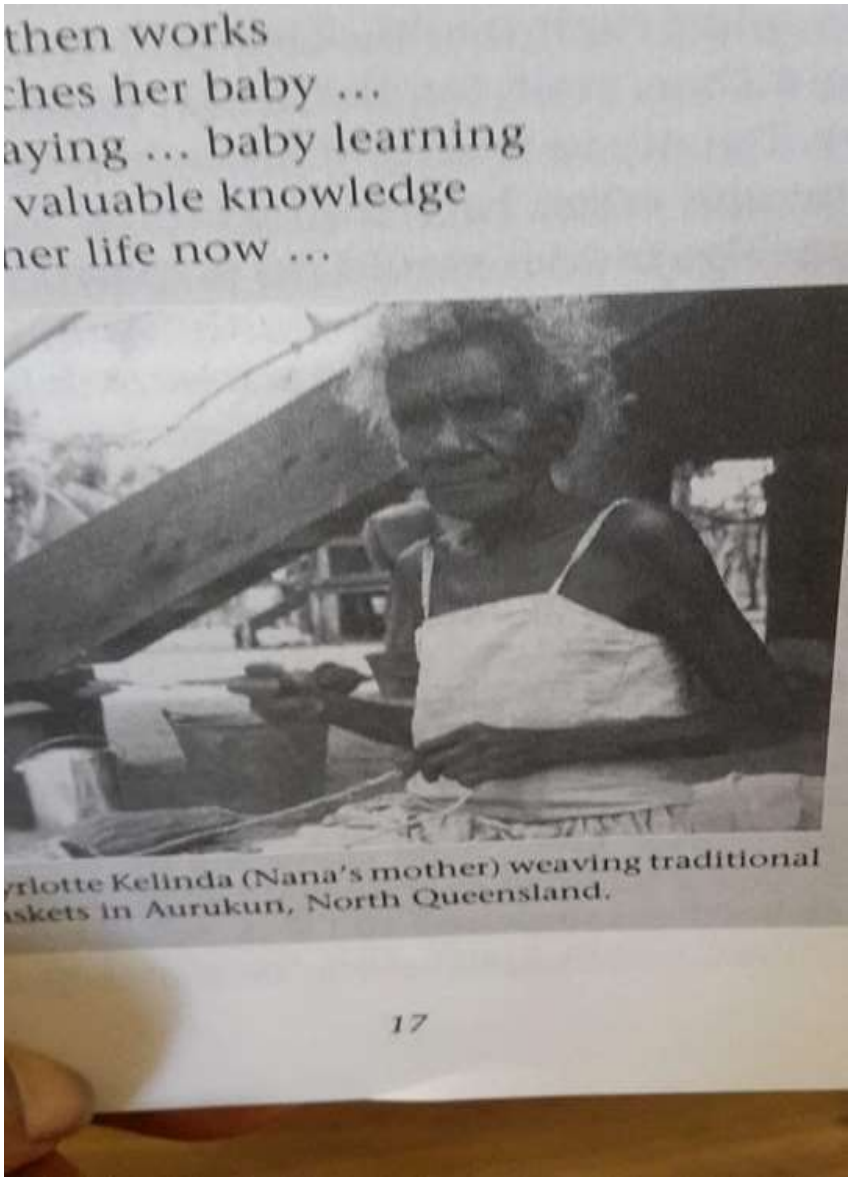

Figure 12: Nyrlotte Kerwerthen. My mother's mother's mother. Wik Apalich Nation. Photo courtesy of Whispers of this Wik Woman (2004:17), a biography by the author. Original source for photo (unknown).

Ceremony, Creativity and Healing

Atkinson states that cultural and spiritual practices held during ceremony and with the intent to repair and heal human distress had, in many cases, 'been outlawed and destroyed'

and that this had been done under conditions and enforcements of colonisation (2020:50). Aboriginal people were 'in good health and free from disease' (Franklin & White, 1991:3 as cited in Sherwood, 2010:40). The arrival of the colonisers instigated an intrusive and barbaric approach to the severe detriment of Aboriginal people. A 'deliberate and calculated' practice was executed by the coloniser with the conscious intent 'to displace and distance people from their land and resources' (Sinclair, 2004:50 as cited in Sherwood 2010:41). Attempts of cultural, language and 'identity genocide' were politically and legislatively supported and upheld towards Aboriginal Australia, such that the effects of ongoing trauma continue to be evident in the lives of people today. 'Disease, poor socioeconomic status and severe disadvantage' remain a grim reality across the nation (Mitchel, 2007 as cited in Sherwood, 2013:40).

This is a burden that the Government and indeed the entire country has inherited. To continue to ignore, deny or blame will do no justice for that which requires absolute critical focus and address. What I propose is that the people (beginning with Wik) revisit the systems and processes that sustained our society for millennia and incorporate those ontological frameworks into present-day contexts. This is the creative practice methodology, or the *Arnya* Songline methodology, that I have critically developed in this research.

This argument for revisiting traditional systems and processes in the context of the present is not ignorant to the rapidly changing climate and context of our world. Rather, it presents a fundamental foundation in which to ground the self as an individual as well as the collective and community in terms of a foundational template, framework and approach. Healing is critical for First Nations Australia as well as the country. It has to come from us.

In his 2010 visit to Aurukun, Sutton refers to the old mango trees that still stand outside the local store. He begins to reflect and yarn, 'The missionary, William McKenzie[73], used to whip children who took mangoes from these trees with a dried stingray tail'. He continues, 'There is a photo of an Aboriginal woman chained to one of these trees'. I recall a similar story being told to me. This woman could very well be my great-grandmother, nana's mother,

[73] Wharton, G. (2000).

Nyrlotte Kerwerthen. Sutton continues, 'These trees were the choice of people who hanged themselves, 60 years later'. Ford (2013) reports that a silence descends in the car the group are travelling in. 'McKenzie[74] was engaged in a brutal power struggle for control of this place', he concludes (Sutton as cited in Ford, 2013:30).

In response to the continuous deterioration of the nation's climate, Cape York political activist and leader Noel Pearson[75] developed the Cape York Agenda in 2005. This resulted six years after he wrote his paper on reform titled *Our Rights, Our Responsibilities.* The agenda was 'a radical blueprint for the transformation of Indigenous communities through acceptance of personal and community responsibility'. The ultimate goal of the Cape York Agenda is 'to ensure that Cape York people have the capabilities to choose a life they have reason to value' (2005:2). We believe that if individuals and communities take responsibility for their lives, opportunities open up and self-reliance flourishes. Pearson stresses that 'this agenda does not entail making choices for people but is rather about expanding the range of choices people have available *to* them' (p.2). He pushes the process of individual autonomy and responsibility in order to successfully participate in economic advancement and sustainability, especially conveying whether people remain 'on country' or not.

The importance of an empowered people to choose between real options is paramount to individual progression and successful participation. It is long overdue for us, the people, to take healing and the projection of our futures into our own hands. A demonstration that presents contestable interrogative debate is taking place between Indigenous leaders and academics in response to Pearson's initiatives. Birri woman Gracelyn Smallwood, a Townsville-based Aboriginal professor, is quoted as saying, 'Just because Pearson's zero tolerance approach sounds tough, does not make it effective'. Pearson in turn welcomed the debate responding with 'I understand Dr Smallwood is highly critical of my policies in Cape York. I welcome debate' (*Courier-Mail*, 2017). What is missing from these debates are the direct voices of the Wik people themselves. I stress that we must be the determinators

[74] For further reading: Cruickshank and Grimshaw (2015).
[75] Noel Pearson: One of Australia's leading thinkers, Pearson is the founder of Cape York Partnerships and is the primary architect of the Cape York Agenda. He comes from the Guugu Yimidhirr community of Hope Vale on southeastern Cape York Peninsula https://capeyorkpartnership.org.au

of our lives and futures[76]. We must not only attend closely to the voice of the displaced as a call to action, but we must also find new ways for Voice to emerge as a healing force.

Conclusion

In a recent paper, Altman cites Lemkin (2018:xxi) who writes that 'a group does not need to be physically exterminated to suffer genocide' (2018:339)[77]. The consequences and effects of a slow erosion and loss of ontological systems continues to the present, contributing to the myriad of displacements that motivate this thesis and the creative work it presents and proposes. In the same paper, Altman cites Short (2016), (who is invoking Patrick Wolfe) that 'genocide, like invasion, is an ongoing process in an Australia that has failed to decolonise' (p.340).

In other words, whether a life has ended or a person is still in this life, some form of displacement has occurred to every First Nations person in this country. This thesis is concerned with developing a methodology and theory of Voice emergence as a technique for responding to the call of the displaced, including the calls we might hear from within ourselves. I use my own life history and auto-ethnographic reflections as a way to contribute to a vision for healing our Wik nation and, I suggest, the wider Australian nation. This project is not primarily concerned with decolonising the museum. As will become clear in the chapters that follow, the dynamics of displacement and reclamation that are under consideration here extend beyond repatriation and the specific case of my ancestor's hair.

This hair repatriation project, however, is an important place to start. It allows this thesis to begin its narrative and critical intervention from a colonial site of removal, separation and disruption, and to proceed to the work of developing and applying a template that seeks out new forms of creative resistance and sovereign assertion in response to new opportunities for reclamation and repatriation. This process of giving rise to new proclamations of sovereignty is Voice emergence. Voice emergence, as will be made clear in this thesis, entails more than speaking back. This emergence is a type of creative re-assertion of self, of identity both self-perceived as well as reclaimed and re-created within the broader contexts

[76] Cape York Partnership. *Responsibility, Opportunity, Freedom.* Retrieved from https://capeyorkpartnership.org.au/our-agenda/cape-york-agenda/
[77] Jon Altman (2018).

of our histories, our old people and our futures in museums, art galleries and in my own work for this research, in university lecture halls. That day I was in the room with my research siblings, my supervisor (through the critical approach of focusing on my personal hair) prompted and challenged me into drilling down into spaces and places that lay dormant within myself, spaces that may never be opened up and dialogued with if it was not for the offering up of the self in order to step into uncharted waters. The release of tightly bounded (safety) measures and restrictions one puts in place intended to guard oneself began to become loosened. To allow my fellow colleagues to discuss, touch, cut and film interactively with my hair took me to another level of experienced interrogative and auto-ethnographical analysis for the purpose of this focus. In Chapter 6 I revisit this thread of hair focus from a generational standpoint and in this specific case, mine, in terms of the unfolding narrative that continues to organically unravel and reveal. It's an unravelling that dynamically brings into focus and receivership new knowledge in revelation.

Chapter 3: Giving Voice to Voice

Beckett (1994) offers the historical view that, 'Aboriginal people in Australia were virtually without a voice. Administrators, missionaries, scientists, novelists spoke of them and occasionally for them, with authority as to make a native voice seem unnecessary, even impossible' (as cited in Wilson 2008:49). My research is compelled by the conviction that it is critical for voice to speak. It begins with the understanding that we, the people, are part-and-parcel of that voice, a collective voice that reaches across time and generations and families. Voice continues to assert itself. However, without us, the people, being accountable, connected and available to that voice, then it will weaken, particularly if country continues to be eroded and poisoned.

A perspective on spirit voice or voice of the spirit is interrogated in the remaining chapters. My argument is that the essence of what is depicted through multi-modal forms of expression and conveyance stems from and encapsulates the core essence of voice as spoken and conveyed by spirit through the (creative) human vessel. Make note that spirit voice or the voice of the spirit is conveyed and intends to address issues of social justice as required.

In her introduction to the recent exhibition *First Australians Talking Blak to History*, senior First Nations curator Margo Neale, from the National Museum of Australia, points to the significance of voice in the museum.

> Talking Blak to History cuts through the dominant narratives of Australian history, it gives primacy to Indigenous voice, that is, to our voice, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, in a way that's not mediated by the museum voice (Neale 2020:n.p).[78]

Talking Blak, Neale seems to be suggesting, involves something more than 'talking back' to the dominant culture on its own terms. It involves something more than using the existing language of the colonists to lay blame. In similar terms to the work of First Nation peoples' responses to and within museology as is detailed in this thesis, I also talk back to the history lineage of this country and how it has and continues to be portrayed and reflected by the other, that is, the colonial position and perspective. What is different with my approach is the mode and genre of conveyance. Neale is emphasising the spiritual essence of the First

[78] *First Australians Talking Blak*: National Museum of Australia 2020 bit.ly/32HNCLA

Nations narrative and how, through museology, a place, space and platform is provided for its residency and mode of articulation, demonstration and depiction. The space I am currently occupying and utilising is academia and particularly through a lecture format. I have re-structured the lecture format into what I have termed the *Arnya* lecture construct, and have incorporated my multi-modal gestures of voice incorporation and transference. Where Neale uses the term Talking Blak, mine is Talking Voice. Or, rather, voice emergence. You will find the evolution of this idea articulated throughout this chapter. I have been influenced by the following authors in developing my idea of voice emergence. McCallum, Waller and Meadows (2012) in their *Raising the Volume: Indigenous Voices in News, Media and Policy* explore contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 'to shaping public and policy agenda through their use of the news media' (p.101). In her article *Broadcasting Indigenous Voices*: Sami Minority Media Production*,* Pietikainen (2000) writes that 'the ethnic minority media are also important for self-expression and alternative representation – voicing the concerns of ethnic minority people from their perspectives and in their own ways' (p.177). Dreher, McCallum and Waller (2015) talk about how voice relates to digital and social media in the Australian landscape and how it is being used to bring about change regarding the lives and communities of First Nations Australia. They 'argue that while the digital media environment allows diverse Indigenous voices to be represented, recent scholarship on participation and listening extends the analysis to ask which voices we heard as politics is increasingly mediatised' (p.23). Additionally, Petray (2012) looks at First Nations media and its role in empowering First Nations voices. She quotes Dr Pita Sharples who stated, 'Today we celebrate the success of Indigenous Media: television, radio, film and social media – in bringing Indigenous values and voices into every home'. She adds that 'empowering Indigenous voice is also about an enhanced emphasis on language revitalisation' (n.p). And lastly, Villenueve (2001), talks about how 'Indigenous thought is vital to the future of Indigenous people' (p.126). She quotes Battiste who explains that the restoration of Indigenous voices and visions 'will allow humanity to rebuild society based on diversity rather than on an ancient quest for singularity' (xviii as cited in Villenueve p.126).

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This chapter considers the ways that the introduction and reunion experiences that museums provide to Indigenous people can give birth to creative statements by artists that are expressions of voice. I will explore these processes of 'Talking Blak' in terms of creative practices and methods that reach beyond literal words or individual spoken articulations of identity. Voice emergence, I argue in this thesis, provides a powerful path forward for First Nations people. The execution and receiving of an articulated spirit truth has the potential to create awareness, inform, address unfinished business, create new meaning and bring about all that is required to produce acknowledgment, understanding, acceptance and change. The process provides a path to healing through self-expression in ways that can connect us back and take us forward.

In this chapter, I begin to develop these ideas in discussion with the work of practicing artists Christian Thompson, Julie Gough, Fiona Foley and my own lecture-performance, particularly Act 1/*Wik Cha'prah: Iyong cak cha tru chath*. Although the idea of voice emergence is my own, I can identify it in the work of other artists working with museum collections (and elsewhere, although there is no space in this exegesis to describe this). I find this useful in showing the particular concerns and methods that underpin the creative methodologies that I have developed and analysed in this PhD research. In these cases, the relationship between the identity of the individual artist and the collective as dislocated in the museum are called into focus and reconfigured, though in different ways.

Giving Voice to Voice

Barrow (2013) states that 'art has the ability to provide us with new possibilities for thinking about identity and continuity as changing concepts in consideration of historical events, retaining cultural/spiritual traditions while engaging with the diversification of contemporary society' (p.1). This is the potential and thus movement emerging out of First Nations Australia through the utilisation of what is commonly known as art practice or creative expression. Creative expression has long been a way of life for First Nations people; indeed, it is the very heartbeat of our way of existence. In order to assert, to educate and to inform, we have sung, danced, painted and re-enacted. A statement and assertion of self is fundamental for grounding of self. Out of removal and displacement comes a searching and a yearning for a sense and grounding of home. Stuart Hall (as cited in Barrow) contributes to the discussion by stating that 'the seemingly irreducible concept of identity is related to the

set of problems that it has emerged from, its centrality to the question of agency and politics'. Marcia Langton asserts that 'the challenge is to produce a new body of creative knowledge from Indigenous perspectives, Western traditions and from history' (as cited in Barrow). Barrow responds that 'artists are taking on this challenge, making art about the world in which they live, everyday life, through the processes of exchange between people and places, and through the consequent changes of meaning inherent within such transactions'(p.1).

In formulating my thesis in terms of voice, I argue that creative exploration and voice presentation is a type of sovereign re-positioning and re-instatement of identity. It is a form of reclamation in terms of personal sovereignty, and a statement defining the self. This liberating and powerful process of voice assertion emerges from the creative aspect of self as it manifests in individuals as something coming from – and speaking of – the wider collective. Here is voice emergence. It is the process that matters here – the activity of voice emergence. This process is a phenomenon in itself, not a final artwork or exhibition, at least for me.

This concern with voice emergence makes me ask particular questions when I look at other artists' work: From where does the template and criteria of creative expression come? From within the artist, or from somewhere beyond? These questions bring into focus questions regarding identity that are central to my own ongoing reflections and commitments to Wik creative ontology as a foundation for social healing put into practice by artists and other creatives: Whose voice is voice? Where does it come from? The way I see it is that voice is at once individual as well as a collective. That is when voice is voice. When voice represents the self in connection and alignment with the kinship collective of lineage – that's when voice emergence happens.

Let's look at this idea more concretely. The three artists I describe below use their bodies, personal histories, ancestral relationships and responsibilities to rework material objects in ways that respond to the dislocating colonial histories of collecting and categorising – and so enact the sovereign process of voice emergence. In their work they upend longstanding colonial assumptions about traditional or authentic 'natives' and their place in Australian history and society.

From the standpoint position of the other: Christian Thompson's role-play reversal and self-objectification

Museum of Others

Christian Thompson, a Bidjara man from central Western Queensland, often uses museum collections to magnify issues of displacement. He responds to Western museology through creative process and expression in what primarily appears to be a type of objectification approach. A look through his body of work reveals Thompson has engaged with the explorative and creative play of, and with, objects and still images[79]. He uses these as props for a play with placement and juxtaposition in a practice in which his own self and body is also deliberately objectified. For example, in the *Museum of Others* series (2016), Thompson creates a symbolic dialogue with the objectification of the coloniser. Here he dismembers photographic images and presents colonial figures as puppets by placing cut-outs of their heads on sticks. Thompson's eyes can be seen peering through from behind, a statement which could be interpreted as if 'seeing through the eyes of the coloniser'. Is Thompson attempting to see life and others from the standpoint of the other, in this case the coloniser? Is he playing chess with different standpoints to understand, comprehend, contextualise? What change occurs within as a result of this positioning? Here, Thompson is flipping the referencing of the other. The colonist is now the other as opposed to the native.

This creative busyness[80] with objectification and dress-up provides detailed and multi-perspective insights into both his thinking processes and performative approach to making work. Thompson exhibited his show *Collection+* at the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation (SCAF) in 2015. Gene Sherman, chairman and executive director of Sherman Galleries, describes how she was 'drawn' to Thompson's works because of his 'deeply thought-through costume play' (Hemmings, 2017:258).[81] Sherman's acknowledgment and interest in Thompson's creative approach and methodology is in line with what interests me about the performative nature of Thompson's art. It is worth noting here that Thompson was 'a child of the airforce' and that a fair amount of his life was spent moving around. As

[79] www.christianthompson.net

[80] Thompson appears to be preoccupied (or consistently busy) with the objectification of self, here he utilises costume dress-ups as well as additionally the use and inclusion of associated paraphernalia in display and context. This approach to creative construct, delivery and depiction of his work and personal template has been consistent throughout his developing artistic profile.

[81] https://doi.org/10.1080/14759756.2017.1283087

Jane O'Neill argues, this sheds light on 'the endlessly revolving costumes' that 'resonate strongly with a peripatetic background' (O'Neill n.p/n.y)[82] Yet, displacement is not Thompson's only move. In a review of Thompson's 2015 exhibition at the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Hemmings (2017) refers to Kubler and Smith's interpretation of Thompson's exhibited work (refer below) at SCAF as a type of reclamation of 'the spirituality' of 'symbolic animals and motifs within Aboriginal culture for himself' (p.260).[83] It is this dynamic of reclamation that connects my own practice to Thompson's work.

Figure 13: Othering the ethnologist Augustus Pitt River and Anthropologist, Walter-Baldwin-Spencer (2016) Source: https://www.christianthompson.net/museumofothers2016

Australian Graffiti: Objects and Symbolism

The themes of displacement and reclamation continue in much of Thompson's other work even when it is not so explicitly drawing on museum collections. In another key work entitled *Australian Graffiti* (2008), we see Thompson camouflaged behind a draping bouquet of gum-nut flowers while dressed in a black hoodie. Is this a contemporised symbolic statement of Australian native, the merging of First Nations human and flora perhaps? Thompson has specifically chosen a native floral species to adorn the self-body[84] while also dressing himself in a specific type of contemporary clothing. The result is an image that depicts the contemporised version of the black person and his physical body,

[82] Jane O'Neill: *Ritual Intimacy:* Eyeline Contemporary Visual Arts.
[83] Exhibition curated by Alana Kushnir.
[84] Refer to glossary.

that is contemporary native living in a contemporary system wearing contemporary clothing. [85] Thompson is making a strong statement of fusion between the native and the contemporary by making himself a specimen of sorts. A marrying of Australian native flora (beautiful, natural, native, belonging) and a black hoodie is another clue to a message coming through in the narrative. It is as if it is a symbolic statement of sovereign authorship in terms of self-contextualisation, self-dress and a willingness of self-display in order for the ongoing colonialistic presumptions of 'the native' to continue. Thompson is willingly continuing with a process of objectifying 'the native' with specific types of defining symbols, in order to feed the frenzy of fascination with the native, except this time it is on his terms. I take this photograph (Black Gum 1) to be a reclamation statement through symbolic imagery. This is also a visual statement of positioning and identity (native original belonging to this land), although, in this depiction the face is (paradoxically) not visible, sending a message regarding the enduring invisibility of the native within contemporary Australian society in general. The First Nations human is present in Australian society, yet not. You see me, yet you really don't see me. Like many of his contemporaries, Thompson's art is delivering a message. It is doing so by using images at the level of the symbolic. Like Fiona Foley, as you will see, he is lending of self, of body, of voice in order to address a (shameful) history that is a part of Australia's ongoing identity. He is clever in that he gets to play while speaking out and address the existing politics of injustice and social inequality affecting First Nations through the construction of creatively produced and constructed imagery. An aspect of his creative approach that also resonates with me is his tendency to role-play.

[85] This piece of clothing has attracted massive media interest in regard to popular culture, race and identity. Its introduction to the wardrobe occurred in the early and mid-20th century 'primarily marketed to blue-collar workers and athletes for their utilitarian functions (i.e. to provide warmth and comfort to its wearers)' (Hayes 2012 as cited in Rahman 2016:n.p). It made its way through the fashion industry attracting many rappers and hip-hop artists who had incorporated it into their dress construct. The influence this made on the younger generations was huge and impactful. 'It also became a symbolic representation of youth culture's desire to dissociate from authority figures and the older generations' (Prosper 2012 as cited in Rahman 2016:n.p). A slang word for 'a hooded garment', the hoodie officially entered the dictionary (The Oxford in 2005 and The Collins (in 2007). It is also related to words such as 'hoodlum', 'hood' and the 'hoods'. Appearing in different literatures it has connotations 'particularly related to the field of criminology' (n.p) https://go-gale-com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=james_cook&id=GALE%7CA472689360&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon

Figure 14: Black Gum 1 (from the series Australian Griffiti, 2008). Image courtesy of the artist, Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne and Michael Reid, Sydney and Berlin.

In the earlier-mentioned SCAF Project 29 curated by Alana Kushnir, three machine-knit sweaters were also displayed. The sweaters each present with over-sized arms (Figure 12) as well as a depiction of imageries drawn from the artist's 'personal collection of misrepresentational kitsch relating to Aboriginal people' (p.259). The first is the Ayers Rock jumper (2002), the second is the Tiwi jumper (2002) and the third is the kangaroo and boomerang jumper (2002). In their interpretation Kubler and Smith (as cited in Hemmings 2017) sees Thompson as embracing the 'now daggy past' (p.260). The over-sized arms are a pronounced statement as is each of the symbols. The construction is provocative, bold and deliberate in intent and approach. There is a narrative statement in the fusion of exaggerated length extension and iconic symbolism of Aboriginal Australia. Thompson almost appears to be taunting the observer in symbolic dialogue.

While Christian Thompson uses objects and images in ways that are quite different from my own, his work nonetheless provides an important touchstone for this project. His work brings to the fore ongoing questions regarding Aboriginal subjectivity as defined in relation to colonial institutions and imaginaries. Hemmings (2017) acknowledges that Thompson 'presents thought-provoking questions for Australian and global audiences' p.8). His work beams focus on the complex dynamics of 'multiculturalism and the legacy of Britain's colonial era' (p.8). She does not share the same view of his work being a statement of 'reclamation' as Kubler and Smith do – and as I also do – but she does state that the artist's 'ability to present a provocative sense of uncertainty about his personal identity – and by

extension our world today – tests our collective visual memories without allowing for oversimplified answers' (p.9).

My view is that Thompson is consistently making statements of reclamation. He plays with imagery, symbolism, role-play and juxtaposition to reclaim and represent through his bold and unapologetic creative constructions aimed at Australian and international art audiences. Thompson does not, at first glance, appear to be concerned with responding to, and elaborating, the specified and located ontology and protocols that shape my own practice (discussed later in this exegesis). However, in the above quoted review article by O'Neill, we learn that Thompson does in fact reach into his Bidjara lineage and 'sings a dramatic love song about betrayal' (n.p). This is presented in a recently constructed work by Thompson that inhabits the corridor of the Monash University of Art in Melbourne in his father's Bidjara language titled *Berceuse*.[86] Thompson states:

> I've tried to base (each song) around a traditional practice or idea – kinship, connectedness, camaraderie, rites of passage … I don't translate the work, because then I think it starts to become didactic and explanatory. I want people to engage with the lyricism of the language, because it is an incredibly beautiful language (Gallo 2019:n.p)[87].

Here he demonstrates the link to ancestry and language in terms of connection to lineage identity.[88] A form of sovereign replacement is gestured in response to a multi-form of displacement endured by First Nations Australians.

Thompson's symbolic and still imageries are statements that speak back to a colonialised history. His practice explores what I identify as a type of reclamation through the use of objects and objectification of self. Thompson states that he likes the idea of 'adorning himself in history' (Radio National Interview 2015 as cited in Gallo 2019:n.p). As I see it, Thompson's methods of working with objects, images and sounds allows him to render a

[86] https://www.monash.edu/muma https://michaelreid.com.au/communication/art-tube/christian-thompson-berceuse-2017/?v=322b26af01d5 'Berceuse draws the audience into a space in time, a hypnotic melody that transcends space and time whilst being powerfully connected to the contemporary present'. Art Tube 2017. See also Refuge (2015) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Lb2zyqEyco; a collaboration with James Young formally of 'Nico'.
[87] Gallo, R. (2019).
[88] Riphagen, M. (2007).

performative ontology that is critical of colonial histories and the collecting, categorising practices of museums. This is his method of voice emergence. In my research, I also critically speak back to a colonial history in response to museum collections, but with a somewhat different approach to the practice of voice emergence. An example of my voice emergence manifests as the dynamic monologue presented in Act 1: *Wik Cha'prah Iyong cak cha tru chath* where I directly address Thomson (see pages 161-162). Another example is the dramatic re-enactment portrayed in Act 3: *Idiwirra: A Living Epistemology* in which I depict a response of my decision to instead have my hair brushed as opposed to cut. This is a simple yet loaded re-enactment statement of secure sovereignty that we as living descendants have in contrast to the realities our ancestors had once endured.

Figure 15: Collection+: Christian Thompson. Installation view, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, 2015. Photo: silversalt photography.

Julie Gough

Speaking Back and Running With the Old People

Julie Gough is an Aboriginal woman of the Trawlwoolway Nation whose country is Tebrikunna of far northeast Tasmania. Her focus is on the interrogation of colonial history and the impact it has had on Tasmania's First Peoples. Gough's creative expression is often

concerned with the revitalisation of museum objects with which she locates a specific connection (Gough as cited in Fforde, McKeown and Keeler 2020:849). Gough states that she does so in order to claim the space to speak back to the colonial version and regime of narrative (2019:n.p)[89]. This is where I draw parallels with my own work.

As described in the previous chapter, one critic has described Julie Gough's work as offering a new and powerful 'visual language'. In my terms, this is voice emergence. Let me explain more. Senior curator of Indigenous art (National Gallery of Victoria) Judith Ryan has referred to Gough as 'an obsessive historian and an experiential researcher'. She further notes that Gough,

> Works like a forensic scientist, scouring primary sources and government records to tease out instances of historical deception and injustice buried in fragmentary and incomplete colonial records. From these puzzling and unpalatable truths and murmurings of Tasmanian Aboriginal frontier history, located in place, time and actuality, Gough constructs, embroiders and conceptualises assemblage works that confront the viewer and challenge conventional and lazy accounts of history (Artlink 2013:n.p).

Ryan concludes her essay by referring to Gough's work as a 'multivalent art of unsettledness that exists beyond the written and the spoken' (n.p)[90]. Here is another parallel between Gough's work and mine. In her essay, 'The Artist as Detective in the Museum Archive' (2020), Gough describes herself as an artist-detective who seems 'fixed on this path of almost pseudo re-enacting past deeds, to try to bring them, re-draw them forward, to a form of conclusion or resolution' (p.836). She compares her return to country as ongoing and not a one-off moment in time, a parallel she draws also with the return of ancestral remains and cultural objects. The return of the displaced and stolen is not something that can be fixed overnight; this is a process that is ongoing. Gough shares that returning to country in order to absorb information and knowledge was imperative, and that the availability of these wisdoms and insights could only authentically be derived from being on

[89] Julie Gough: *Tense Past* Exhibition. https://www.tmag.tas.gov.au/whats_on/exhibitions/current_upcoming/info/julie_gough_tense_past
[90] https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/3958/disquiet-and-resistance-in-the-art-of-julie-gough/

the land of lineage itself. This indicates the critical connection to country aspect that Aboriginal people know and feel in their spirits and bones and carry in their bodies throughout their lives. This connection and relationship to the land is significantly attached and related to identity in relation to kinship networks and collective groups.

Gough is particularly interesting in terms of how she draws on her life trajectory to date and how that positions her in reference to her Aboriginal lineage and relationship with tribal lands. Born in Victoria and spending much of her time away from country, Gough returned to Tasmania in 1993. Even though she had never actually lived there previous to her arrival (Gough as cited in Fforde, McKeown & Keeler 2020:836), her deep connection to ancestral affiliation is evident in her works. She is referred to as a 'Tasmanian artist of national significance who has created new work about Tasmania from an Aboriginal perspective' (Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery n.p). I take the 'Aboriginal perspective' here to be the shared space and template that connects the collective of First Nations critical thinkers who use a creative approach and expression to give voice to voice, a practice of voice emergence that varies according to the context and medium of our respective genres and modes of expression. There are many works of Gough that capture my attention but here I focus on her 2008 *Dark Valley: Van Diemen's Land* collection, *Ebb Tide: Whispering Sands* display and *Tense Past* exhibition. Across these three creations, themes of displacement and reclamation from a First Nations perspective are clearly evident in response to a colonial regime and practices through museology.

Dark Valley

Gough made the work *Dark Valley* in reference to the shell necklace tradition of the Tasmanian people. Gough states that the work refers to her 'own gap in missing the inheritance of that tradition in my immediate family' stating further 'and how the processes of dispossession of country: colonisation, farming, hunting, mining are in part responsible for this gap' (Art Gallery New South Wales 2008:n.p)[91]. The focus here is the manifestation of connection through the form of a necklace made of coal (Figure 13). Although she ironically and interestingly points out her own family's relationship with coal mines on both

[91] *Dark Valley*, Van Diemen's land 2008 Art Gallery NSW artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/348.2008.a-c/

sides (Aboriginal and Scottish), Gough states that the 'feel of coal in my hands is compelling'. She lets the reader in further by sharing:

> Somehow familiar, I feel the pull to collect, sort, drill and thread these giant necklaces. The blackness of the coal dust is somehow disconcerting given it is not the warm charcoal of a fireplace but the darkest coldest blackness of our ancient island's core. The weight of a coal necklace becomes more than the personal, it seems to be the share load of our history. I walk with each one around my shoulders once it is made, before it is consigned to a crate. *Dark Valley, Van Diemen's Land* is then a mute memorial, a remembrance of the grim times and an invocation to keep making one's way forward to comprehend what happened in VDL and where we are today in Tasmania (n.p).

Gough is a deep thinker who has clearly absorbed the weight of Tasmania's dark colonial past and the ongoing implications that continue to impact and present in the current moment. Through creative interrogation and expression, she is able to have a visual dialogue with this intense narrative. Gough's choice to hang the necklace from antlers 'represent the avoidance and anxiety evident across Tasmania today in terms of the mainstream unwillingness/inability to present colonial history as also Tasmanian Aboriginal history' (n.p). She has found a way to re-connect to the legacy of her lineage and through this connection, she lends voice to an ongoing unfinished legacy of address. Jonathon Jones (2014) suggests that Gough 'directly quotes the strong culture of her people by creating it in the sentinel form of a necklace'. This I argue is the strength and mystery of Voice speak and emergence through, and as a result of, creative flow. This is not just a necklace on display awaiting a transaction either through sale, trade or forced collection. This is a symbolic, multi-layered narrative statement that addresses Australia's longstanding legacy of displacement and dispossession as given form in the material culture and human remains collections held within museums. The coal represents the earth land, here, Gough's utilisation of it also represents her re-connecting with country. She displays it in the shape of Tasmania hanging as previously mentioned from deer antlers (introduced by the British in the 1830s while the nations of First Peoples were 'being outlawed from their homelands'). As Jones states, Gough's work 'investigates, uncovers and re-writes wider Tasmanian and Australian histories framed within her own family's history, creating a personalised reality of our forgotten national past' (n.p).

Figure 16: Dark Valley, Diemen's Land 2008.

Inter-connected Songlines and Voice Emergence

But is this work simply about the past? What is Gough really saying here? Displaying the necklace in the shape of the state of her country of lineage is a pronounced statement. It is bold and explicit. She is conveying a statement of connection to more than just a specific part of Tasmania; she has gone beyond and embraced the state in symbolic connection. The organic matter extracted from the land is now in her hands. Gough sees this as an opportunity to re-connect in response to displacement. She enters a process of re-construction, a re-construction to demonstrate and depict connection, and through this process she asserts position and identity while also providing a platform and an opportunity for Voice emergence. Voice has emerged or rather re-emerged as a result of this re-connect in order to reinstate connection to country. This is the process of reclamation and proclamation that I identify with in Gough's work. As Gough interacts with the organic matter of the land, something resonates across time and place. This material approach resonates, in turn, with me. Whenever I am back on home soil I find myself connecting with land in ways that generate what I experience as an organic and spiritual dialogue between it and myself that also takes form through materials found and reworked in country. The shell necklace (Figures 14-16) is threaded as a result of my interaction with country, as a connection process. The process from picking the tiny shells to cleaning and preparation through to threading, is a creative process of bonding with Country – and the shells help to

secure this bond when I am away from Country. Those shells accompany me back to the land in which I reside during my study time – the lands of the Yirrganydji and Yidinji nations[92]. I have an extracted organic component of home country with me. This is a material ontological connection. The feel and relationship I continue to cultivate allows a sense of home to accompany me regardless of geographical distance. Like Gough, the placing of these elements around our neck is more than just for aesthetic adornment, but rather, it is a symbolic and spiritual statement of belonging, an ontologically powerful, ongoing connection and relationship to the land of lineage. In *Idiwirra: A Living Epistemology*, this organic thread of connection accompanies me throughout the flow of voice speak in articulation, as it sits around my neck, symbolising its travel through an area that is significant to voice travel and process, the neck. Right at the end of the final act you will see a gesture that depicts a transference of this organic thread as one is handed on to the next generation so as to depict an act of knowledge transference as well as kinship inheritance, connection, responsibility and accountability.

[92] www.cairns.qld.gov.au

Figure 17: Shells and necklace from Alngith Lands. Artist Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2019.

Figure 18: Shells and necklace from Alngith Lands. Artist Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2019.

Figure 19: Shells and necklace from Alngith Lands. Artist Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2019

Ebb Tide, Whispering Sands

Gough's 1998 *Ebb Tide, Whispering Sands* work (Figures 17-18) bears similarities with Christian Thompson's (2016) *Museum of Others* in the way in which life-sized figures of British collectors are placed in water back on country (Fforde et al.2020:841). Both First Nations creatives are asserting a type of voice response in sovereignty: 'you played with us, now we play with you' type portrayal. These works enacts a displacement of the colonist in return, especially in Gough's case. Is the deeper message here for the coloniser or indeed the colonial regime to be displaced in return and for them to now find their/its way home, back to their homeland? Gough displaces the coloniser through the symbolic cut-out images that represent them. The imagery in this is strong, almost eerie in a visual sense. These colonial figures are as if ghosts, lost and suspended in a watery displacement awaiting rescue. It portrays a dynamic of almost being in purgatory. They are at the mercy of the

rescuer. Here, through her acts of reciprocal displacement, Gough is giving voice to the countless displaced through the interfering ruthless regime of colonial intrusion. If the people could speak back at the time of intrusion and controlled imposition, what would they say? Does Gough presume the placing (and thus displacing) of the coloniser through the use of this imagery represents the voice response and narrative of the people? Is this a presumption or a stated conveyance of flow reception? Or is this solely an individual response of Gough's voice alone (as opposed to the collective voice of voice)?

Figure 20: Ebb Tide. The Whispering Sands 1998. Image taken from researchgate.net/figure/Julie-Gough-The-Whispering-Sands-Ebb-Tidal1998-Sixteen-lifesize-pyrographically_fig5_265870739

Gough is speaking to a colonised history from the perspective of a living descendant. Here the artwork enacts a type of reclamation asserted as an act of sovereignty. Gough asserts her agency in this action of displacement in response to the violently intrusive colonial regime. These depictions align with my position in intent and practice. Like Gough, I too

speak back to that legacy from my lineage position as an act of inherited obligation and through the genre of creative expression. Through my sovereign position as a research scholar, I am able to utilise this position to interrogate and depict a response through my me in representation and on behalf of giving voice to voice. What I simply mean here is that voice works through and with a person as a vessel of expression (in order to speak and convey), and, in this case, my me. The imagery between *Unfinished Histories* the display and the collective gathering of Wik ancestors (Figure 19) draws a visual correspondence in terms of the dynamic effect behind this choice of assemblage and display by us as artists.

Figure 21: Artwork about unresolved histories. juliegough.net

Figure 22: Wik Cha'prah rehearsal. Image of Wik ancestors. Picture from Donald Thomson: the man and scholar (Rigsby & Peterson) 2005:53.

The Remains of a Tense Past

In Gough's first major solo exhibition titled *Tense Past* (2019) her work is brought to the attention of a broader audience providing vital insight into an Aboriginal perspective and standpoint. Senior curator Mary Knight states that:

> while the subject matter relating to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal histories in colonial Tasmania is challenging, Gough presents difficult issues in ways that are poignant, poetic and inventive – opening up spaces for reflection, dialogue and debate (as cited in Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery website n.p).

Gough has opted to address a space that is intensely uncomfortable and traumatic. She does so in a sophisticated and critically effective way. Gough informs the importance of First Nations having access to museum and archival collections and content. Through this practice and approach, 'Aboriginal artists can reverse the gaze and challenge the mainstream given perspective of things' (n.p). Regardless of which display you look at in the exhibition, the message is consistent with my formulation of giving voice to Voice. This is done through a construct of visual depiction in response to the narrative of history from the colonial perspective. Gough's work speaks from the First Nations position which would otherwise be silenced, suppressed, hidden or mis-represented. This is what I mean by giving voice to voice, the artist (in this instance Gough) lends her voice (through artistic and

creative construction and process) to allow the voice of the collective, the land and the people, to speak.

The following images (Figures 20-21) are drawn from Gough's chapter in *The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Repatriation: Return, Reconcile and Renew* (2020:838-839). The artist highlights an extract from the journal of George Augustus Robinson (3 November, 1830, Swan Island, Northeast Tasmania).

Figure 23: ***I issued slops to all the fresh natives, gave them baubles and played the flute, and rendered them as satisfied as I could. The people all seemed satisfied at their clothes. Trousers is excellent things and confines their legs so they cannot run*****. Julie Gough,** ***We ran/I am*****, 2007.**

Figure 24: *We Ran/I am* by Julie Gough (2007).

George Augustus Robinson's agenda was to restrict and prevent freedom for the people. The power of this captured image of Gough running though the bush as a living descendant pushes against that agenda. Here she reclaims and responds. She offers a response to his regime through her current living self. From a position of enforced displacement imposed on the ancestors, a living descendant defies through her sovereign position and agency in the now. Shiels (2019) describes this image as giving 'form to' the 'brutal attempts' that 'dispossess Aboriginal people'. She sees this image as Gough 'linking herself to her ancestors'. Shiels details further informing that the artist retraces the Black Line[93] 'on foot', capturing 'her own body running and stumbling in 14 still images (n.p). For me, this image shows the ancestors running through Gough. Gough is also running with them, running away, running to where? To a desired freedom, I presume. This image signifies the breaking of the chains[94], such is the power of imagery. Such is the power of Voice reclamation and re-positioning through sovereign, active and engaging creative processes and manifestation.

[93] https://theconversation.com/julie-goughs-tense-past-reminds-us-how-the-brutalities-of-colonial-settlement-are-still-felt-today-118923

[94] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4882748/Shocking-photos-Aboriginals-shackled-chains.html

Fiona Foley

Foley's 1994 work, *Badtjala Woman*, strongly resonates with me in terms of imagery and essence. Here she is moved by an image of a female of her lineage Nation encountered during her own research, prompting her to re-enact and thus re-create using her physical self in portrayal. On encounter with the image, a sensorial dynamic was activated and imagination took over, producing for Foley a view of self (as opposed to the image of kin and also to the figure of Thompson and his use of his own body) in context. The anthropologist Stuart McLean (2007) describes imagination as 'an active component of experience and perception, engaged in a constant interchange with the material textures of the existing world' (as cited in Elliot and Culhane 2017:13). Describing the important role of the sensory in ethnography, Culhane states that 'humans are embodied, multisensory beings':

> 'we experience ourselves, each other, and non-humans through what Ingold (2011a) calls our "entanglements" with the world: the interrelations among embodiment, affect, imagination and sensory experience, shot through by power and history. Sensory ethnography considers such co-creating knowledge' (Porcello et al. 2010 as cited in Elliot and Culhane 2017:46).

It seems to me that Foley had an embodied and sensuous experience on visual encountering the archive. Senses were activated, imagination was stimulated and a creative narrative emerged. On analysis of Foley's approach, Typquiengco (2020) states that Foley 'uses the colonial institutions of library and archives for her own artistic aims' (p.1). In similar fashion to Thompson, Foley offers up her physical self in aid of expression but the difference here is that she is answering primarily to sensorial promptings instigated by kin as opposed to coloniser. The photograph (circa 1899) which births such a reaction in Foley is part of the ethnographic collection at the John Oxley Library at the State Library of Queensland. It has been stated that it is the only known image of the unknown Badtjala woman (n.y)[95] In response to such a powerful image of ancestral kin, the artist is prompted to 'recontextualise her (ancestral kin) in contemporary photography using my own self' (Loxley as cited in MCA Australia n.p). The traditional adornments (a reed necklace, a shell necklace and wax string) she wears around her neck as well as the dilly on her head are simple,

[95] Tyquiengco, M. (2020).

elegant and yet sophisticated. It is not clear from where Foley has sourced the adornments. Whether or not she has re-created them in an exact or similar fashion to the original to complete this re-enactment is not stated. Regardless, this articulate composition of dress attire depicts the contextualised and grounded beauty of a people. Foley has opted to also recapture the context of the time the image was taken and has shed white-man clothing from her body while fully embracing the rawness of her physical native self. This is a bold, provocative and powerful statement made by Foley who is pushing against the mindset of the colonial power regime to control and direct the constituting of the 'authentic native'. Typquiengco mentions that Indigenous artists are 'looking back to look forward' in response to growing interest in their works (p.2). By reaching back into the archives, Foley revisits, re-connects and reclaims a legacy that is part of her inherited trajectory through lineage. She positions herself on her terms and reauthors imagery, presentation and composition in context. A current living descendant, she repositions as an act of reclamation. In these depictions, she demonstrates an ownership of self, of identity, of the use of the exotic beauty that is for the native woman everywhere, to assert in this way on their own terms. They are no longer specimens on exhibit but sovereign women asserting and exhibiting sovereign voice through creative process and depiction. This re-authorship is an assertion of personal autonomy yet also contributes to the collective voice of kin and voice in context.

At the taking of the photos, Foley is in the contemporary future present of the moment (as opposed to the time of when the photo were originally taken), but where is she in her imagination in the moment of taking of her photos? What is she seeing in her mind and how does this affecting emotion flow? An active creative being, that is an artist, takes the steps necessary to explore and visibly manifest their response to the observer and thus to themselves. In these photos her posture and person emanate a silent power of female lineage essence, an essence that in turn stimulates a sensorial provocation in me as I observe in turn. Ingold and Hallam (2007) talk about 'treating creativity as a social and cultural process'. They state that this approach brings critical focus on this process 'as a form of invention exercised by the autonomous individual' (as cited in Elliot and Culhane:16.). This sensorial connection that living descendants encounter and experience with passed ancestors (through the connection of images) is what holds my interest.

Figure 25: Fiona Foley Badtjala Woman with collecting bag mca.com.au

Figure 26: Foley (1995) two sets of beads mca.com.au

In the same article on Foley's evolving use of archives, Typquiengco interprets that the 're-use of archival images imbues life back to their subjects and honours these images as signs of survival' (p.1). In *The Conversation* (Martin-Chew 2019) Foley explains the context of her ancestor's identity:

> She had a name, and a birth year and a role in society. She had a day that she died. There was no information at all with the photograph. She deserved more. I thought, 'I could recreate that image. I'd have to reveal myself similarly, to do it bare-breasted' (as cited in *The Conversation*: Academic Rigour journalistic flair n.p).

In this visual statement, Foley has offered life back to the unknown ancestor by acknowledging her once-lived identity. It is an offering of an identity from one lineage to another across generations and time. This is a re-instating of identity, a reclaiming of identity and presence across generations. This is Foley's articulation of proclaiming and acknowledging the once-lived presence of one who had been suppressed and silent in her time. This is the position First Nations artists have today. As quoted in Kembrey (2020), Foley says 'My work is research and history-based. For me, I think that territory is rich, still largely unexplored … it's about not letting other people be the expert of your own culture' (n.p). The legacy and profile of Foley's work depicts an evolution of using 'archive as subject, to use of archive as inspiration'. I like the words of Tyquiengco when she refers to the artist as 'weaponising herself with all manner of knowledge', that 'Foley has positioned herself to be her own Badtjala heroine, to thrive' (p.4). Edwards states that 'reclassification always entails making new meanings' (2001:195). Here, Foley is doing that in her re-enactment. This is a type of intergenerational interactive dialogue through imagery, one resulting from staged positioning carried out sometime in the 18th century of colonial Australia while the other by living kin in response to the ongoing narrative of voice identity and emergence in the 21st century.

Dwight Conquergood (1991:80) talks about embodied practice, referrring to it as 'an intensely sensuous way of knowing'. He challenges researchers to pay close attention to their sensory experiences. He states that the 'embodied researcher is the instrument' (as cited in Elliot & Culhane 2017:49). An interesting juxtapositoin exists between Thompson, Gough, Foley and me in terms of sensory experiences and response. Unlike the three artists

who place their physical selves at the centre of their works, I tend to address the narrative by remaining primarily removed and external from the depiction, although I remain in the midst, even driving, the manifested, reclaimed, proclaimed, replaced narrative of voice. This is done through the embodying of voice speech (language) articulation and conveyence, song and dance movement vocabulary as well as the visibility of organic components of country (necklace, ochre) scaffolded and thus being physically present within the performance narrative and construct.

Wik Cha'prah: Iyong cak cha tru chath

Wik Cha'prah: Iyong cak cha tru chath is the title of the first act of the final Academic Songline titled *Idiwirra: A Living Epistemology***.** The title translates as *Wik blood: Speaks toyou*.[96] *Wik Cha'prah* introduces the audience to the museum repatriation project that initiated this arts-based research project. The thread of 'proclaim to reclaim' that which has been displaced runs through the work constructs of Gough's, Thompson's, Foley's and my own multi-modal approach. Yet unlike Gough, Thompson and Foley, this performative lecture deliberately occupies a different kind of white space: a university lecture hall. This choice is therefore also a deliberate act of displacement of white authority and a long history informed by a presumptive right to speak for and about First Nations.

Significantly, this was my first attempt at creating work that was not intended for the stage or the gallery. It became the first iteration of the *Arnya* lecture (Chapter 6): an extension of First Nations methodologies through the incorporation of voice and techniques of voice emergence. As such, it is a work of proclamation and giving voice to Voice.

Wik Cha'prah is important in my research therefore because it was where I found my way to a new form of voice proclamation. It reaches back to mainly the ancestors and old people to accompany me in the scaffolding and building of a performative construct that drew on my past work but was also very different from anything I had previously done. Additionally, I also bring into the space, through the multi-modal creative approach, other members of the family collective including a live dynamic accompaniment of the next generation in the form of one of my offspring while delivering my lecture. This is a kinship collective-based process

[96] I have intentionally utilised two different languages to construct this heading. *Cha'prah* from the Wik Munkan language translates blood and *Iyong cak cha tru chath* from my grandmother's Alngith language.

in which, although the methodology is auto-ethnographic in approach, the positioning and terms of reference that determines findings and voice as such is kinship-based – and answerable therefore to kin.

Figure 27: Silhouette of E. Awumpan during movement vocabulary in *Wik Cha'prah*. Photo by Baskin-Coffey and Lowe 2018.

Figure 28: Silhouette of E. Awumpan during movement vocabulary in *Wik Cha'prah.* Photo by Baskin-Coffey and Lowe 2018.

Figure 29: Application of ochre through hair amid lecture. *Wik Cha'prah: Iyong cak cha tru chath* Depiction of intergenerational interaction. Portraying First Nations methodology in organic process fused in with academic criteria and construct. Photograph by Baskin-Coffey and Lowe 2018.

In this way, we are sharing the avenue of voice speak and flow in the lecture hall itself. It is a collective conveyed articulation (through multiple modes of depiction and representation) which ensures both the address and fulfilment of responsibility and accountability that will be assessed by audience members and kin networks. What I mean by accountability is we (the collective kinship of lineage and nation) keep each other in check in terms of the works of process in alignment with protocols and systems in lore.

I should acknowledge that the academic songline approach that I describe in greater depth in later chapters was not consciously chosen as such. I did not consciously decide this was the approach I would deliver and present in. When I first worked on the creative template and scaffolding of *Wik Cha'prah* it was instinct that guided me. Initially, I had planned to create an exhibition for my final creative work of this research. In this envisaging, the set-up would have consisted primarily of created pieces (consisting of created canvasses as well as other creative works) presented on display in a gallery context. The creative aspect to this would still have been a performative songline narrative throughout the time frame and consisting of movement vocabulary, moving and still images and other accompanying forms of depiction. The fundamental difference from what could have been is that I now

deliberately stand and perform in an academic space. This genre of performativity is unique, as it is not a 'typical' performance. It is infused with and constructed in response to the template of academic criteria and the materials, ideas and literature that this research led me to. It was constructed as a conference keynote performance for the 2018 Australian Anthropology conference.

Yet I simply could not see myself just speaking in the form of a traditional lecture. It is as if my creative voice template is innately multi-performative in instinct, delivery and nature. If a traditional lecture would have been the only mode of presentation, it would immediately (and consistently) have felt as if my voice flow would have been wrenched out of its natural mode of conveyance.

Wik Cha'prah is my template. I am multi-performative in the conveyance of voice vocabulary and depiction. This approach is also indicative of the nature and identity of voice. The Voice I am referring to is a product of First Nations and in the context of this thesis, a Wik and Wikway template of operations. Wik and Wikway ontology and epistemology is hereby contributing to the decolonising of the academic lecturing template and criteria through this case study. We do not just speak; we re-enact as performative storytellers. This is the Voice in which I participate in this space. My *Arnya* lecture construct is therefore a decolonising of the traditional lecturing structure in process.[97]

In creating *Wik Cha'prah* I drew from the basket of cultural ontological lore as a guidance template of operations[98]. Wilson similarly (2008) refers to this as relationality[99] in which relational protocols set the foundation of process. What is of primary interest throughout this process is fundamentally lore systems that determine approach (methodology), processes, kinship systems that determine relationship, significance and interactive dynamics, the relationality of all living things on country as well as the significance of elements (organic/spiritual/atmospheric) in context.

[97] Masini, J. M. Gutierrez. 2018 & Vellino, B. 2018: 'Re-creation Stories: Re-Presencing, Re-Embodiment, and Repatriation practices' in Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's 'How to steal a Canoe', *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, Volume 38: Issue 1 (pp.129-152) ProQuest.

[98] Refer to glossary.
[99] Refer to Chapter 2.

In the performance, incorporated elements of moving imageries scaffold a particular type of dynamic in terms of visual aesthetics. Consequently, the audience experiences a multi-modal sensory affect visually and audibly. The construct of movement vocabulary depicts a fused concoction of ancient techniques as well as contemporised versions delivered by a descendant of the lineages in focus (that is, live depiction of intergenerational interactivity). Imagery of the anthropologist Thomson is also present as well as performative depictions of the interactions made between him and the women whose hair he took. All this is scaffolded into the narrative *Arnya* lecture. This multi-construct provides for as well as allows voice emergence to present as a reclamation of that which had been taken and thus displaced. In this case, the hair as well as the photographs have been occupying a space which is a displacement.

The human remains of our old people do not belong in a drawer with a code name on it; they belong back in the earth, back in the land of their lineage. In the words of Keith Andrews (2015); '[I] strongly believe that these remains should be put back home to lay at rest, strongly by us, the next generation, people have come through to look after our people that have been taken away hundreds of years ago' (as cited in Fforde et al., 2020:169). In *Wik Cha'prah*, what was to become the first act of the final performance piece, I respond to that displacement by offering up myself, my ability to offer voice to Voice and my body to re-enact, depict and thus speak in context.

Significantly, beyond kin past and present, Donald Thomson is also invited into the space of Voice emergence through the incorporation and therefore presence of his image as well as dramatic dialogue I direct to him. Donald Thomson continues to be a part of the narrative almost a century later. He is questioned and interrogated by a descendant in the context in which I operate. My interrogation and questioning is a demonstration of giving voice not only to those two women but also to the collective of the nation from which I descend through my maternal lineages. Through my creative construct, one is able to see and experience a much more pronounced presence and incorporation of lore and ontology in addition to ethnographic and other imagery.

Arguably, one of the most powerful moments in *Wik Cha'prah* is the re-enactment of the interaction between Thomson and the women through the visual depiction of cutting of

hair: the slow-motion construct allows the audience to feel, if only for a moment, the context of the act and the connections between generations suffering as a result of living in a society that gazes on them as ethnographic 'specimens'. *Wik Cha'prah* the performative work speaks in similar tones and with similar relational complexities as the depiction of Thompson's cut-outs of Pitt-River and Baldwin-Spencer (Museum of Others 2016), which conjured up a strong reaction in me, and Gough's submerged images as well as her still imagery of running through the bush, which invited me into the energy essence of voice emergence and speak. The performative construct draws on the recall of ancient songs and dances and images of ancestors as well as current family members, and elements of cultural protocols and practices through the application of ochre and a smoking visual[100].

Figure 30: Incorporation depiction of cultural elements and processes during Academic Songline delivery: Application of ochre in re-enactment by E. Awumpan. *Wik Cha'prah: Iyong cak cha tru chath*. December, 2018. Photo by Baskin-Coffey and Lowe 2018.

Thompson, Gough and Foley position the colonisers in a specific way in order to proclaim a statement as well as present a symbolic assertion through the use of imagery with 'their subjects'. Likewise, I position Donald Thomson to deliver my monologue to him, bringing me into direct relationship not only with archival images, and colonial figures, but with the

[100] Due to health and safety regulations the smoking effect within the theatre was created using dry ice, not actual smoke.

actual agent of dislocation. Through the Academic Songline (*Arnya* lecture) construct, I invite the audience into this space of conversation as witnesses to the presence and flow of Voice emergence.

Voice Emergence and Ghosting

In her article, *The Future Performative: Staging the Body as Failure of the Archive* (University of Alberta), Mounsef (2019) refers to what she calls a process of memorialisation, commemoration and ghosting (termed by Carlson and Blau 1990 as cited in Mounsef 2019:n.p) as it informs her approach to performance. Mounsef states that the term memorialisation 'generally refers to physical or architectural structures of memory' for example monuments, sites, statues, buildings, burials, and museums, while commemoration 'refers to the collective need to remember and grieve through symbolic, interpretative, or representational memorials' (for example gatherings, stories, retelling, performances, re-enactments, ceremonies etc.). She quotes Zerubavel (2013) that 'the physical and the symbolic are not disconnected; rather, they help shape each other as physical sites of memory can shape the stories that people tell about the past' (n.p).

A large portion of my creative methodological approach is guided by what I call a template of memories[101] that have accumulated throughout development and life to date. One way this is depicted is through the narrative in my script composition which demonstrates a recall and live/living re-assertion of my grandmother's teachings and voice. Mounsef then moves on to introduce Carlson's (2003) 'assertion that theatre is a memory machine' (n.p) and so a technique for ghosting. She quotes Carlson, stating that 'in theatre, the present experience is always ghosted by previous experiences and associations while these ghosts are simultaneously shifted and modified by the processes of recycling and recollection' (Carlson 2003:2 as cited in Mounsef 2019 n.p). Mounsef states that, 'ghosts, paradoxically, denote an absence that is made present through their return. By their haunting of the present, ghosts in theatre point towards a future that may not be able to shed the past' (n.p). Indeed, the "ghosts" of lives and experiences once lived continue to live in the memories of the living present'[102].

[101] Template of Memories: Refer to glossary.
[102] Living Present: Refer to glossary.

I find this notion of ghosting intriguing and will critically analyse this concept and develop it for future publication. What is more exciting is the description of performance as a mode by which to integrate the 'indexical bond with real bodies – those of the performer and audience'. In this work, I also use sound and images. In particular, I use the ontological force of photography and video to make the ancestors, kin and even the anthropologist present in the space (Deger, pers. comm). Additionally, the presence of a descendant of lineage as an active 'in-person' presence in the room with me – by this I am referring to my daughter E. Awumpan – also participates to re-create an opportunity for voice emergence, one positioned clearly in relation to the original thread of Voice.

But I am interested in doing this to produce something different from memorialisation. This is a reclamation in process. This is a depiction of Voice emergence and therefore Voice speak in flow within the fused constructs of the academy and my creative methodology which draws from the foundations of ancient protocols and lore systems.

The performative and dialogic approach of *Wik Cha'prah* allows for my vessel and personal voice to give voice to the silence of the subjugated in dialogue with both the collector and the 'collected'. This is an assertion of sovereignty. This is what Warrior (1995:91) is talking about when he asserts that it is 'a decision we make in our minds, in our hearts, and in our bodies to be sovereign and to find out what that means in the process' (as cited in Moreton-Robinson 2016:5). In similar fashion, Thompson, Gough and Foley answer back to the colonial regimes and imposition inflicted upon our lineages.

When I enquire about Thomson's intensions and approach in dialogue with his photograph I probe the dynamic of relationship with the old women, taking into consideration the context of the time. It is political because I challenge the integrity of the process within context. I speak in the now because I can. Even though this critical, questioning and angry voice may not have been presented in the time in context, it has now re-emerged (voice emergence) through a descendant in the present now.

Like Gough, Thompson and Foley I also use my physical body to speak. This is translated and depicted through the re-enactment of dance movement vocabulary and dramatic re-enactment that are symbolic and representational depictions of ceremonial practices of lore and ontology. The physical movement vocabulary is fundamentally constructed in

accordance with the techniques of cultural dance ontology. The most subtle of nuanced steps and movement are evident throughout. These movement gestures are not just part of the constructed vocabulary for the sake of having a 'choreographed' piece to 'perform' as such; rather they are movement gestures that link the body back to the ontology of origin.

This is a type of ceremony in process taking place within the context of academia. Katan (2016) refers to dance (along with linguistics) as 'a medium for communicative expression' (p.ix). For me, the re-enactment of these gestures takes me back into a place that deeply translates to a sense of home. I immediately see, feel, hear and know this place. The body carries within it the stories of generations of lineage ancestors and they sound out the call of home in the lecture hall, ringing out into the world of the academy with its brutal methods of collecting and categorising my people, and my family.

Dislocation. Reclamation. Proclamation. In an intercultural exchange and interplay between generations across time and space, Voice of spirit and origin interacts with the living descendants of the now. In *Wik Cha'prah*, creative process and depiction allows Voice to speak. Creative beings of lineage are giving and utilising themselves as platforms (and vessels) in order to convey. This encapsulates and demonstrates my work of giving voice to Voice. As I explain in the chapters to follow, this genre of multi-modal lecture became the template from which a longer and fuller work of autoethnographic Voice emergence was to emerge.

Summary

This chapter introduced voice and the different meanings of its use in context. I also made mention of the terms spirit Voice or voice of the spirit and how these are used through creative processes to address issues of social justice. The profiles of three contemporary First Nations artists were presented and interrogated in accordance with their respective genres. Thompson mainly presented through a type of re-enactment and role-play while Gough engaged in conversation, answering back to history through her creative narrative/s compiled over time. I made links with Foley's work and sensory ethnography as well as finding and making correlations with all three in relation to my own *Wik Cha'prah*. The concept of ghosting as articulated by Mounsef (2019) was presented in terms of the paradox of ghosts generally being perceived as representing those who are no longer with us, yet

through the empowered process of creativity those who are (supposedly) no longer with us are able to return (in a sense) and become part of the unfolding, experiencing now. Voice emergence emerges towards the end of the chapter in preparation for the next chapter's articulation which primarily focuses on the term and concept of 'a living epistemology' in relation to its position and connection across the thread that runs throughout this work and methodology.

Chapter 4: Voice Emergence: A Living Epistemology

> What we do to the country that is ours by birthright, to other humans and non-humans, to all with whom we are in relationship, is the essence of our humanity. In this sense, the land is central to Aboriginal identity and it provides a logos or guide for human interaction and sense of wellness or wellbeing. If the country is sick, people are sick. If the country is well, people are well.
>
> Atkinson (2002), *Trauma Trails, Recreating Song Lines (p.30).*

In accordance with First Nations methodologies, I have provided a background context of my lineage and ontological context, and I have articulated how my academic journey has evolved into its current form. I have described the role of creative processes within ethnographic museum contexts by offering comparative accounts of three contemporary Indigenous creatives in terms of their respective contexts and methodologies. I have also begun to describe the ways that I have developed my own auto-ethnographic method of investigation of the repatriation process and the series of events that this set in action as my *Arnya* lecture presentation consisting of performative elements and constructs.

In previous chapters, I argued that Voice emergence is a response to a much wider First Nations call to action in relation to an extended history of colonial displacement and violence. I proposed that we think about objects and human remains collected by ethnographic museums as inciting new dynamics of proclamation and reclamation. In this chapter, I detail and share the mechanics of how a life lived in what I describe as an 'organic unpredictable flow' further informs and gives form to the auto-ethnographic genre, the *Arnya* lecture, and an approach based in a living epistemology.

In this chapter, I turn to the second act of my *Arnya* lecture, *Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming*, to detail the processes that informed its creation, as well as the songline presentation which in essence is a constructed manifestation of voice emergence. The performative construct and delivery of this second Act allows me to show you the face, nature and identity of this conceptual argument as opposed to just informing you about it.

Following my initial meeting with the old people in the museum in August 2018, connections with families and country increased so that we might address obvious logistics (in terms of protocols and appropriate modes of process and approach in repatriating

them). Other things arose that also increased time spent with families and country. Specifically, what happened was that Arniyum (primary clan estate and Dreaming place of the Kelinda lineage) became the target of mining interest. Arniyum is where Awumpin DT 4256 is to be returned. The proposal to mine in its very nature is contentious but what I emphasise here is that the interest and proposal to mine unfolded simultaneously to the repatriation project. So, on one hand I have instigated a process to repatriate, and on the other I am required back on country to protect and preserve the land. This fight is urgent so that Awumpin has untouched country to return into.

As a result of these developments, the presence of both ancestors became more pronounced in my reality in varying ways. Since I had held their remains in my hands, speaking and singing to them back in the museum, it was as if they had awoken in response. For me this made their return even more critical and made my life even more intense.

***

Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming came about in response to a highly charged year of unfolding events, experiences and encounters. During this period, I contacted the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council by email, enquiring about where red tape was, but despite my efforts we made no real progress on furthering the repatriation process during that year. Nonetheless, my encounter with the ancestors and the responsibility of their repatriation started to profoundly inform other aspects of my life and its creative expression. This timeframe sat between the first delivery of *Wik Chaprah: Iyong cak cha tru chath*[103] (Act 1) in 2018, and November of 2019 when the first iteration of *Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming* (Act 2) was delivered to a small audience in Cairns in a lecture theatre at James Cook University.

[103] Refer to Chapter 3.

Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming

Ngograchaahn translates as the salt-sea water in the Alngith language and throughout the period in which I produced this second Act I consistently felt her strong, still, quiet and ever-present presence. *Ngograchaahn* makes up both the open sea as well as the salty river systems that cut and weave through country. It is the salty as opposed to fresh that distinguishes *ngograchaahn* from *cahtaahl* (fresh water). While a lot of focus is spent on the earth or land component of country, the sea is often overlooked. Yet, in accordance with lineage geographical placing, through my maternal grandmother's lineage, we are a people of both land and sea. In this articulation, I want to re-emphasise the connectivity and relatedness of all spirit entities that occupy this combined space collectively. To link this concept of relatedness and connectivity, I return to Martin's (2008) reference to seven entities: people, skies, land, waterways, animals, plants and climate (p.66)[104].

My perspective of country consists of both land and sea and all that is in, on and above it. A primary (Alngith and Liningithi) legend passed on to me by my grandmother consists of ancestral identities which settled on and in both land and sea within the trajectory of Country songlines.[105] These are the sites and areas across the land that are now identified on Country as places of significance or sacred sites. These two components of the landscape cannot be separated, just as the other forms of entities cannot be either. The sustenance and interconnectedness of the seven entities is critical to overall health and wellbeing of each and thus all forms of life and creation within the larger construct of relational collective connection. Martin states that the entities 'filter the power of the Creators and Ancestors to ensure their messages are received by the Entities as they are intended' … 'this occurs as a matter of keeping all Entities in relatedness and alternatively referred to as "spirituality"' (p.66).

During the conceptual scaffolding phase of this second Act, I consistently received visualisations of the relationship between land and sea and how they complemented each other within and across our paradigm. I take these visual encounters as a manifestation of what I call flow, which refers to a technique and demonstration of voice emergence. These

[104] Martin, K. L. (2008).
[105] Refer to *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters*. National Museum Australia (2017).

visualisations reminded me consistently that there is a fundamental strength in how these elements (land, sea and air components of Country) work together, in terms of their coexistence alongside each other and of their corresponding inter-relatedness. A form of organic and spiritual fusion exists in my person as a result of the life lived in relationship and in accordance with this ontology and epistemology. The organic components of both the land and sea that make up country in accordance with lineage are vital to my health and ultimately my grounded form of, and I add here sense of, existence. That relationality between land, sea, water, air, people and all that grows within it is a critical space of intersectionality and interdependency.

In response to a discussion regarding relationality, Wilson (2008), asserts the 'importance of relationships to the land' after a colleague mentions 'the environment being the 'knowledge or the pedagogy of place'. He further states that 'knowledge itself is held in the relationships and connections formed with the environment that surrounds us. This reinforces the earlier point that knowledge, theories and ideas are only knots in the strands of relationality that are not physically visible but are nonetheless real' (p.87).

Figure 31: Aerial shot of Country between Weipa and Aurukun, Western Cape York. Photo by H. N Peinkinna (Wik) © 2019.

I extend that idea here to state that the knowledge, theories and ideas Wilson is referring to here are the instructive, conceptual and wise teachings that are part-and-parcel of the emplaced and ancestrally authorised ontology and epistemology of my people. The mechanisms and techniques in which these instructions, concepts and wisdoms are revealed and executed is through the process of Voice emergence. For further readings on First Nations methodologies, refer to Tuhiwai-Smith (1999/2008/2012), Whitinui (2014), McIvor (2010), Kovach (2010), Houston (2015), DeLeon (2010) and Archibald & Lee-Morgan (2019), Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008) to name a few.

During 2019 as I continued my research after the successful performance of *Wik Cha'prah* but with the repatriation process itself stalled, it became clear that emphasis for this new act was to be on *ngograchaahn* in relation to her role and connection to country. This realisation resulted from the series of encounters and experiences I had been having. *Ngograchaahn* is a provider of food; she is medicinal in essence; she is a critical organic entity that contributes to connectivity and survival of the people. She is core and essential to all forms of life. A source of life. Life itself. As Gunditjmara singer Archie Roach sings out in his song titled *Into the bloodstream* (2017)[106]:

> Well, my body is like this land. And this land, this land, this land, this land's the same. And the heartbeat keeps on pumping, that sweet precious life through your veins
>
> Into the bloodstream, into the bloodstream, into the blood, into the blood, into the bloodstream.
>
> Well, the river, is like my veins, carrying sweet precious life, to the muscles and the veins
>
> (Mushroom Music Publishing).

Roach's lament demonstrates not only a perspective through a First Nations lens but also a fundamental cry from the human heart in relation to the spiritual and organic connection to it. We share with the elements of country, of water and land and all that is in it, around it and above it.

[106] Archie Roach: *Into the bloodstream*. youtube.com/watch

Wik and Wikway Methodology: A Depiction of Creative Process and Construction

When Act 1: *Wik Chaprah* had been received by the 2018 audience with a standing ovation, I was happy with its construction and delivery and only planned to make a few changes as I extended the presentation into a longer piece for submission and examination as my creative work in this PhD. Yet, of course, in any creative process the refinement of approach, process and ultimately presentation will always be under review. This is a cyclic and ongoing process. As Brearley (2008) writes, 'Creative approaches to research invite us to develop insights that would otherwise be inaccessible. They invite us to see more clearly and feel more deeply (see also Bjorkvold (1992); Ellis (1997/2004); Richardson (1997), Banks & Banks (1998) on creative practice process). They open us to the many ways in which the world can be experienced and represented' (Barone & Eisner 1997, as cited in Brearley 2008:4).

What happened to me is that my world and consequently my understanding of what my research was actually leading me to understand kept developing in unforeseen ways. As previously mentioned, 2019 was a spiritually and energetically charged year where I found myself consumed by a series of encounters and visitations by the ancestral spirits, not just those of Awumpin and Athelpan but also of other ancestral spirits[107]. The 2019 dynamic flow of encounter or visitation, and my own depiction through creative translation, in response, birthed and spurred on another visitation and so forth.

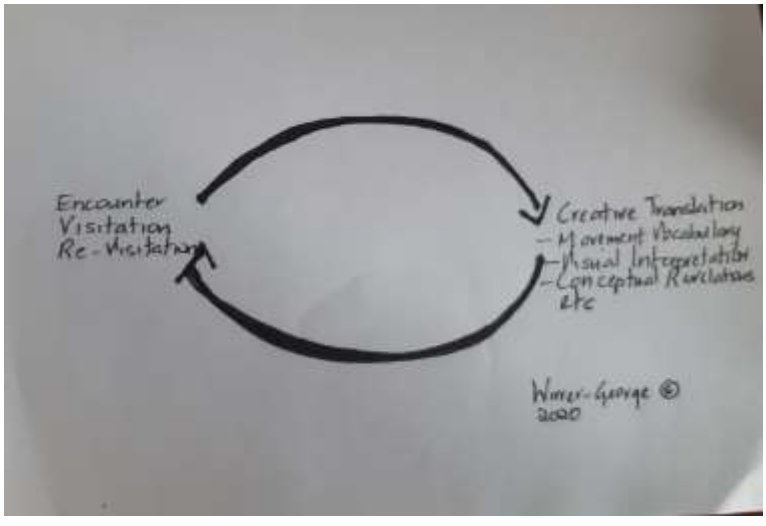

Figure 32: The 2019 dynamic flow of encounter or visitation. Source: Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2021.

[107] Part-and-parcel of First Nations methodology/*Arnya* Songline methodology in process and practice.

If we are to perceive such occurrences as communication, then indeed a collective dialogue was in flow: this time frame was a space for a ceremony of voice activation and delivery within the context of my own life. As I look back, I now see that this Voice emergence ceremony served as an articulated conveyance for the purpose of proclaiming and declaring ontological and epistemological sovereignty of and by the land. The encounters and visitations during this time spent between Cairns and Country were frequent and ongoing and consequently resulted in manifestations of a series of painted canvasses that were created as symbolic interpretations (and recordings) of these encounters and happenings. This demonstrates a dialogic dynamic in flow. This is a conversation. This is a key and foundational aspect of the Voice emergence process that I am documenting here.[108]

It has always been instinctive for me to depict voice in more than one way. Thus, my creative fusion works consist of multi-modal forms of depiction. These can be perceived as techniques of voice emergence in context.

Over the following pages you will find detailed notes on each of the encounters and visitations that specifically occurred throughout that year and which directly impacted the methods and process of this research.

Visitations, Revelations and Encounters

Baby Crocodile and *Thooth* String Bag (05/11/2018)

In the early hours of the morning, I had an experience while asleep. I was in a space where I could see a collective of people interacting and going about their respective business. I was among the people interacting. I was presented with a *Thooth* string *bag*[109]. When it came time for me to put my hand in the bag to retrieve whatever it was that I needed, something from inside the basket bit my hand. I looked inside and saw that it was *agaamloong* (baby) *cambaahl*[110]. I acknowledged *agaamloong cambaahl* was part of the basket and accepted its presence. I then realised I had somewhere to go, but rather than just walk I elevated and began to lift and proceed to flying. I was also accompanied by several people, about three or four. The people on the ground saw this and questioned what I was doing and how it was

[108] There is a correlation here in terms of the manifestation of songlines in terms of how songs, dances, stories and creative depictions are revealed as a result of an event or happening. Songlines were first referred to as 'Dreaming Tracks' in their descriptions of ancestral dreamings; trajectories across the landscape marked by water sources and prominent features. For further reading, refer to *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters. 2017. National Museum Australia.*

[109] *Thooth* string bag: bag (otherwise commonly referred to as dilly bag) created by traditional woven techniques derived from natural organic products such as *thooth* (swamp grass) or *argaar* (pandanas).

[110] *Cambaahl* translates crocodile: Alngith language.

that I could fly. I hovered in mid-air above them and told them that flying is something we can all do and I had 'worked out' how to do it. I kept telling them it was very possible and encouraging them to give it a go. I soon arrived at my destination in mid-air and on descent I found myself standing in front of a thick-trunked paper-bark tree. The collective of people who had been accompanying me also descended and stood behind me. Telepathically they directed me to place my hand towards the tree and pull back some of the bark. This opened up as if it had already been pre-prepared (similar to the technique used to cut bark from a tree for bark painting). Inside the trunk of the tree in front of me was what appeared to be cooked stingray meat, cooked in the fashion of a meat loaf and using the traditional cultural techniques practiced by the people[111]. Once more, I was instructed by the collective to eat the stingray meatloaf in the knowledge that therein lay the wisdom and teachings of our spiritualities. The encounter ended.

Collective Discussion Between Kelinda, Awumpan and I (19/11/18)

During this encounter I recall the presence of both Kelinda (my great-grandfather) and Awumpin 2 (my grandmother). We are sitting together and in deep discussion. The words are not clear nor is the topic of conversation. My chest and belly area is warm and buzzing with what I refer to as activated and flowing energy. Upon awaking, the energy and sensations felt in the encounter remain as I begin to operate in my conscious state in this present realm.

Awumpin and Athelpen warning to smoke mid-engagement in the *Wik Chaprah* scaffolding process (Late November, 2018).

When the construction of *Wik Chaprah* was under way I knew (and had also been prompted by the old people) to carry out appropriate practice in context. I am referring to a smoking practice of my two non-Indigenous research siblings and supervisor as images, sounds, and voices of the ancestors and others began to increasingly be encountered throughout the creative-technological-collaborative aspect of assembling the media for the performance.

However, I had been so busy throughout that time that I failed to vocalise this and kept delaying this responsibility, until quite late in the process. Smoking in this instance is necessary to protect non-family persons (and younger members of family as well) from becoming ill or becoming vulnerable to spiritual and supernatural visitations and, at times, forms of torment[112]. I knew that allowing my cohort siblings Sebastian and Viktoria to work alone with especially the voices and images was risky. The time came for the two to do some work without my presence and consequently encounters were experienced. I

[111] Traditional technique basically involves boiling the fish, skin peeled back, meat gathered and squeezed. The liver is mixed in with the meat which is then wrapped in paperbark and baked in the earth. The incorporation of the liver oils and moistens the meat. The people have adapted this technique to involve other ways of cooking both in the oven as well as on the stove top. Flavorings such as onion, curry and pepper have also been incorporated.

[112] This practice is carried out by First Nation people collectively across Australia. The fundamental belief here is that the smoke purifies the environment and space of negative energies and presence. It is also used as a protectant. A similar process also uses water in the same context as demonstrated by my grandmother throughout my learning years under her teachings. Other forms of protection practiced by the (Wik) involves spit, breath flow and body odour (armpit).

remember feeling very strongly that same weekend that I would mention to the three of them the importance and my intention of smoking their bodies and persons the first chance we got on Monday. On arrival at the university, I bumped into Sebastian and was about to mention it to him when he almost immediately informed me of the encounters they had that weekend and that they also felt they needed the smoking to happen as soon as possible and before continuing any further. This smoking process is practiced to ensure the safety of all participating as well as to ward off any negative energies and possibly disruptive happenings from manifesting. My intent was to also contact those spirits that are part of the process, in this case primarily Awumpin and Athelpen, to acknowledge them in practice and to invite them into the space. As a descendant and kin, I sent a message to the spirits that they were welcome to be a part of the process as it unfolded. It is a way of introducing non-blood participants into our space of collective process and practice.

The Wrong Athelpen (January)

It is intriguing that in hindsight I always felt something towards and about Athelpen DT 4251. There was something about this ancestor that I couldn't quite put my finger on. Was it her energy, her intense stare, her pronounced beauty or something else? I must admit, I was immediately drawn to her the first time her image was presented to me in 2017. I was intensely drawn to her and wanted to know more about her. I wanted to get to know her better. I remember feeling a sense of intrigued connection with this woman. I had been told and it became my belief that this was my mother's father's mother. How I didn't pick up on the fact that she was labelled by the museum as Dora and I've always known my mother's father's mother as Ethel is beyond me. In hindsight, it should have been an immediate distinction and one that should have been made by either myself or mother or even the anthropologist who introduced the photos to me. Even my older sister Lynette did not identify the discrepancy regarding the names as we began the process and progressed to exposure to and analysis of the Thomson notes during our visit to the Museum of Victoria in July of 2018. In hindsight, I cannot help but reflect on the question of whether we (at some level) actually wanted Athelpen to be our ancestor, as it was a way of meeting her and ultimately being close to her? How is it that no one realised or recognised the disconnect? Regardless, there lingered an energy surrounding Dora Athelpen (DT 4251). Lyn felt it, Justice (my daughter who accompanied us to MOV who also carries the same big name) felt it and I felt it. Her eyes were piercing, her stature astute, her presence grounding. None of us said anything of the sense we all personally had and felt towards her as the process progressed. I suppose at that point we were still trying to individually process the intense encounter we were all experiencing with and towards her. Following the museum visit we respectively returned to our individual lives without the actual retrieval of the samples and went about our familiar routines, myself back to university and Lyn and Justice back to their homes in Aurukun and Napranum. This was until one day I remember resting in my room (in Cairns) when suddenly I felt this strong sense to go downstairs and look in 'the box' (revealed to me in my mind's eye). This box was one in which I kept a majority of my historical and anthropological notes and information that I had been accumulating over many years. In fact, this prompting had been going on for a period, possibly several weeks or so by this stage. In response (and obedience), I went downstairs and without really knowing or having a clear purpose I located the box, placed it in front of me as I sat cross-legged on the floor and proceeded to look through it: for what exactly, I had no clear idea. I just had this sense that I had to keep looking. Although, at that stage I do remember already

knowing it had something to do with Athelpen not actually being our Athelpen, this sensing had already made itself known to my insides. Before too long I had picked up a piece of paper and felt compelled to look over it, reading each piece of information and name it consisted of. At that point, I still was not clear of the relevance of that particular note. It was as if the spirit of Athelpen was guiding me the whole time prompting me to figure out that indeed she was not the Athelpen we thought she was. Suddenly it happened. There it was. In that instant I became acutely aware of the names and why they were called to my attention in context. Here I was staring at an anthropologically handwritten kinship genealogy of Dora Athelpen and of course, she had a sister called Fanny Athelpen and the father's name was not the same as our George Waukmatha ancestor. The realisation of our Athelpen being Ethel as opposed to Dora resonated at the forefront of my conscious thinking at that specific moment. As I stared at the print, the visual comparison became evident. While all this revelation was taking place I also instantly felt her relief at my realisation of clarity. During this same time, coincidently, my sister Lynette was also in Cairns as she had decided to accompany a niece of ours from Aurukun to the main hospital there. It just so happens that this niece was actually the direct descendant of this Athelpen although we didn't know that at that point. It was out of character and unusual for Lyn to agree to accompany this niece but apparently no other member of family was available to assist her in this time of need and for some reason Lyn felt compelled to support her in this way. Once I realised the critical mis-understanding that had been made, I immediately contacted Lyn and, without telling her too much, I mentioned that we really needed to talk as soon as it would be possible to do so. We agree to meet on Saturday 26th January (Survival Day). As we sat down, I immediately revealed all to her. Her response was 'Fay, guess what? She (Dora Athelpen) was at me the whole time as well'. Lyn then went on to inform me that our niece had randomly decided to show Lyn an old photo of 'their ancestor' (during that same week) who resembled very much 'our Athelpen'. Lyn didn't say anything at the time but made note of the unmistakable resemblance. The rest is history, as I commenced emails and further analysis of kinship genealogy with Frank McKeown, the anthropologist who initially brought the photos to my attention. He immediately interrogated further and cross-checked all relevant information with David Martin's [113] work and in no time we were able to confirm that this Athelpen was in fact not our ancestor but the direct ancestor of relatives of ours, relatives of the niece Lyn had decided to accompany to Cairns during that same week of ultimate revelation. The spirit of Dora Athelpen kept at both Lyn and me simultaneously to just pause and reflect. Circumstances were put in context as we responded to events and happenings that aligned with our instinctive suspicions until clarity was reached and confirmed.

Lynette's Museum Freezer Encounter (told to me 04/02/19)

On our return from the Museum of Victoria, Lyn had an encounter. In the encounter she can see myself and Chooky (Angus Kerindun)[114], another (direct) descendant of Awumpin, standing outside a large freezer at the Museum of Victoria. Chooky is all painted up and ready to break into ceremonial dance but he keeps looking at me to indicate the right time for him to start singing and dancing. There are others present but they are not as clear in visual. The emphasis and focus is on Chooky and me. This freezer is the freezer in which we

[113] Martin, D. F. (1993).
[114] Angus *Chooky* Kerindun is the son of Mary Athelpen's son (*Cogai* Fred Kerindun).

learned during our MOV[115] visit the human remains of where Yolngu and Wik ancestors are kept together in the same space[116]. Following some silence, I signal to Chooky and he transitions into *oolay waarth*[117] (crow) and begins to sing and dance. As Lyn is relaying this encounter to me in this realm she says that she does not recognise the song and dance. I want to know about this song and dance and desperately prompt Lyn to recognise it but she is unable to. In my belly I get the feeling it is either Black Cockatoo or Ghost Dance belonging to the Wikway[118]. The last time I saw either of these dances being performed by the old people was many many years ago, although the living descendants of that time did collectively dance black cockatoo at Awumpan's (1925) house opening (in 2007). Uncle Gideon Chevathun was the last person I had seen dance the Ghost Dance. I have early life memories of watching uncle Joseph Chevathun dance the Black Cockatoo dance. Both uncles have since passed. It suffices to say here that these dances have unfortunately and most likely been lost by the current living generation, particularly the Ghost Dance. Although, I may be wrong about this as I strongly believe Black Cockatoo is possible for revival if necessary. In the next instance as in the encounter, and as Chooky is still dancing, all the remains in the freezer stand up and start walking out through the door in physical human form towards us. They are doing this in response to the song and dance occurring. It appears they are being sung towards us. The encounter ends. Lyn wakes up in a state. Her body does not feel good for the next several days following the encounter. This is a result of the lingering effects of the encounter and presence of spirits.

Iyee kunthak at Arniyum (June, 2019)

In this encounter I am floating in mid-air by the banks of Arniyum on the right-hand side as you enter. I am suddenly right in front *iyee kunthak* (oyster roots) as they hang from the mangroves. I am accompanied by a collective of old people who are positioned behind me looking over my shoulders. They instruct me to cut the oyster roots, take them home, separate the oysters from the roots, boil the oysters and drink the soup. The encounter ends.

Aambachil & dug-out canoe visitation (July, 2019)

I am back on Country with families. I know I am on Country because in this one we are in a dug-out canoe and floating on *ngograchaahn*. This is the river that separates the north and the south of Alngith and Liningithi country that I told you of earlier. I am not sure at what point in time this is. I am both as a child as well as in the now. In the canoe, I am positioned up the front and we are facing east towards Beening with Napranum to our left and Moingam, Prenjim and so forth, that is, the different parts of country on the south of the river to our right. Suddenly I see something coming from Moingam direction, skidding very quickly across the surface of *ngograchaahn* towards us. A ball of what appears to resemble collective energy is streaking towards us at lightning speed. I'm squinting trying to make out exactly what is happening. I can sense the collective dynamics in the canoe. All of us are

[115] Museum of Victoria (MOV). Melbourne. Donald Thomson Collection.

[116] https://museumsvictoria.com.au/article/museums-victorias-position-on-displaying-human-remains/

[117] *Oolay waarth* translates crow (ancestral/totemic kin to the Alngith/Liningithi Wikway). Waarth is significant in terms of spiritual totemic ancestry.

[118] Wikway: An identified nation of people comprising of (but not limited to) primarily Alngith and Liningithi people. Other groups are included in this collective, primarily my maternal grandmother's people as inherited through her paternal lineage. Refer to Sutton (2010), Martin (1993), McConnel (1930/1934/1936/1939-40), Thomson (1930s).

aware of this approaching and all we can do is wait. It was as if lightening had fallen from the sky and was now heading directly towards us with definite intent. The silence is intense. We can all tell that what is approaching was meant for us. The fear gripping us was equally intense. It soon became apparent that these streaks were actually a school of mullet, and I could see positioned on the lead was what appeared to be the main one. In the next instance this main *aambaachil* stood up straight on its tail mid-travel. It was massive and I felt at that point that he or it knew that I had recognised who he was, who they were. I then just waited for them to get closer. There was a great sense that the collective, due to its rapid speed, was going to bust through us sending us straight into *ngograchaahn*. I also remember the acknowledgment of the presence of *cambahl* (crocodile) beneath us. I remember thinking that there was a great threat in us ending up in the water, where *cambahl* resided and lay in wait. I, we, were concerned, but it's interesting because I also recall feeling *ok* about it. There was an acknowledgment (and acceptance) of whatever was to happen and that ultimately we were all one anyway. There was an encompassing sense of family. I also remember the acknowledgment of the presence of *cambahl* beneath us. I mean our awareness of the presence of *cambahl* was one thing, but the acknowledgment of it literally being under us was another. It was almost as if *cambahl* also knew what was happening. As they came closer I could hear, not audibly but just inside of me *aambaachil*, the main one up on its tail, spoke to me in dialect mid-travel. '*Tru cak Iyong? Nga tru Iyong? Nga Iyong*'. 'Who am I? Do you know who I am? You know who I am.' Just before they hit us he asked one more time, 'Who am I?' At that point, the presence behind me (my grandmother) arched up and with only a fraction of a second to spare, spoke, directing the words straight through the back of my neck which moulded with my tongue: *'Aambachil. Tru cak aambachil'.* At the sound of naming mullet in dialect the encounter abruptly ended.

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The above is a documentation of what I perceive to be the most significant of all the encounters and visitations I have had to date, or that have been related to me, that have direct bearing on this research process. The *aambaachil* and canoe encounter is the one that presented the energy and significance of *ngograchaahn* in terms of the message that voice brought forth to me. The essence of *ngograchaahn* reveals her role in terms of relationality and connectivity regarding the landscape and its people.

In this visitation, we the people are resting on her. We are surrounded by her. We are visited and communicated with by the kinship spirits who reside in her (*cambahl* and *aambachil*[119]). *Ngograchaahn* holds and gives life. *Ngograchaahn* is critical to our existence, she is critical to the existence of other life forms as part-and-parcel of our space and systems. To echo the words of Oodgeroo (1990) 'All living things, be they mammals, birds, reptiles, insects are our sisters and brothers and therefore we must protect them. We are

[119] *Cambaahl:* crocodile. *Aambaachil:* Short Mullet. Alngith Language.

their custodians. We not only share with them, we also guard them' (as cited in Martin 2008:76).

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Upon contemplation of where focus should be placed for the second-phase presentation (Act 2), the memory of this encounter immediately presented itself. In fact, it rushed towards me carrying the dull roar and spirit essence of *ngograchaahn* itself. It penetrated the core areas of my chest and belly with its impact. As I breathed in, this was acknowledged in my throat. This is *mboormbwin* breath flow which refers to a process I encounter regarding the consolidation and confirmation of *wisdomic* knowledge in relation to the teachings of the lore and the present moment in flow. This process translates as a sensation or rush primarily in my throat travelling down through my chest and into my belly area. My being translates this as an acknowledgment and confirmation of its sincere raw flow. This occurrence determines where focus will be throughout the constructive process. This is another technique of Voice emergence in terms of communication as opposed to portrayal and depiction. This is also a fundamental aspect of *Arnya* which will be presented in more detail in Chapter 5. *Ngograchaahn*, as much as how she will reveal and present herself, is the voice template in flow during this particular mid-phase focus and message. These organic processes will be revisited and further articulated in my methodology framework titled the *Arnya* Songline Methodology.

Mullet Songline Connection

Songlines: 'The idea of musical routes across the land, that wherever men have trodden they have left a trail of song', Chatwin (1987) as cited by Smith in *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* (2017 pp.216-217).

Spurred on as a result of the mullet and canoe encounter, I began to strongly recall the voice of my grandmother passing on the *cumbin* and *motmot* legend story. *Cumbin* is the silver mullet and *motmot* is the scaly mullet[120]. The Songline Dreaming is based at Gonbung, right at the point[121]. *Cumbin* is about to have her babies so she informs *motmot* her

[120] *Cumbin Mugil curema* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/white_mulltet and *motmot*: *Liza vaigiensis* www.daf.qld.gov.au

[121] Refer to appendix Gonbung Point (Map of Country) *motmot and cumbin* Dreaming.

husband (although I have come across readings where it was recorded that *cumbin* and *motmot* were also siblings) to accompany her to Bung (also spelled Baang) Point in order to give birth to her babies. Together they cross the channel (Embley River) and travel to Bung where she gives birth. Following the birth, they make their way back to Gonbung where they settle. This is the same area where the legend story of *argarr* (pandanas) stands[122]. The relevance here is the kinship connection and relationship between Bung and Gonbung and therefore being the two landmarks of country corresponding to each other directly across the mouth of the Embley River. These are just two of a handful of legend stories belonging to the Alngith and Liningithi people as told to me by my grandmother. These, among a collective songlines of others, are geographic landmarks of cultural and spiritual significance according to ontological lore.

***

Another link to *aambaachil* identity is tied to this encounter. On my return to country in 2015 following my breast cancer treatment, my daughters and I endeavoured to settle back on homeland soil following an 11-year absence. Shortly after our arrival I took up a position as coordinator of the women's group for MyPathways. In this position and in accordance with my role and responsibilities, I opted to keep the women engaged with activities as required but from a cultural standpoint. On one particular day, I routinely planned a trip out to Mbumchin, a particular part of Alngith country on the north side of the Embley River. On this day, the logistical objective was to collect shells to make necklaces. Once the women were settled, I decided to leave the camp and go for a stroll along the beach when suddenly I noticed a type of fish swimming in what seems to be an awkward position a couple of metres off the shoreline. On taking a closer look I soon realised it is mullet (about 10cm long) swimming upside down and in circles. I am aware of how this may sound, but the fish appeared to be looking in my direction and flapping one of its fins. A little perplexed by what I was seeing, I called out to where the other women were sitting and gestured for someone to join me and witness what I had been seeing at that point. Obviously, I wanted witnesses and thus hopefully confirmation regarding what I (possibly thought) I was seeing. Two others joined me and saw exactly the same thing. A recording on my phone was also

[122] Refer to *Whispers of this Wik Woman* (Fiona Doyle, 2004:61). www.uqp.uq.edu.au

made. Later that day as I re-counted the event to the collective of women back at the MyPathways women's space, an aunty (who I also refer to as *athoi*[123] in accordance with kinship protocol) took me aside and informed me that the encounter was the spirits of the land welcoming me home. 'Bub, that's the old people welcoming you home. They know you are home now, they happy to see you, finally after being away for so long, you have come back' (paraphrase). The area where this happened was on another spot just around the corner from Gonbung where the *cumbin* and *motmot* story is. Throughout the scaffolding of *Ngograchaahn* (Act 2) the songlines across the landscape of country (the Weipa end) began to present as powerfully significant from a multi-visual perspective. A flow of experiences and revelations was presented that highlighted the flow, nature, essence, positioning, conduct and roll of *ngograchaahn*. These were happening primarily through what is commonly referred to as dreams, but revelations also resulted from an organic flow of life experience and interactivity in general. The relationality between all aspects of country presented its own significance.

Songline Revelation

I have briefly mentioned that mid-scaffolding I began to see and sense the connections between the people, the land, the sea and all that occupies this space. Whether it is in, around, above or on, this relational and systemic framework is interdependent; science cements this. In terms of the impact of mining on country, Zhang and Moffat (2015) report that 'mining activities are inherently disruptive to the environment. For example, mining operations tend to generate dust and noise as well as impacts on ground water quality and quantity' (Franks et al., 2010, Roarty, 2010 as cited in Zhang & Moffat 2015:n.p).

All forms of life in context are in dialogue and relationship with each other. The breakdown and polluting of each or any component of this network inevitably brings erosion and destruction. This was also high in my mind through this period, as I advocated against the proposed mine.

Mullet appeared to be speaking to me through visitations, the teachings of my grandmother and literally (the Mbumchin encounter)? Why mullet? Why me? What are the teachings here and what is the message? I've thought about the possibility that these encounters and

[123] *Athoi*: mother (Alngith).

visitations are potentially just psychological and resulting from the process of this research in context but, that aside, the songline revelation was happening even prior to my commencing this research process. These encounters and teachings have been happening for a long time. They have been happening throughout my life journey and it is only now through the required reflexive focus of this research that I am able to become even more consciously aware of them and thus analytically (philosophically) determine and articulate the associated connections.

In other words, it is as a result of the ways in which my research has taught me to seek out connections and depth of meaning and significance critically and creatively as an integral aspect of voice emergence that I have increasingly become aware of these connections and the critical aspects of our relational and ontological framework in terms of how it all connects to Country. The land and waters of country are critical to our cultural survival, therein lies the lore. The lore is the spirit essence and voice of our identities as a nation of people. The lore is similar to and as critical as the air we breathe. The slow breakdown and degradation of the various organic components inevitably breaks down the fabric of our nation identity as the toxification and degradation of one area or aspect of the land inevitably affects the other (though connected) parts of country. And, although this process began with a response to a call to action in relation to the two ancestor's displacement, their call has provided for a broader call to action in context in the face of a different kind of displacement through mining.

My response to this call to action has become part of my responsibility in terms of this process as well as why and where it is leading. The ancestor's displacement 'stands for a much larger history of displacement and violence and a much wider call to response' (Deger: pers. comm). My response has led me to my own methodology in practice, the *Arnya* Songline methodology. An articulated methodological structuring and framing of this is presented in Chapter 5. This involves a much bigger process than the repatriation. As critical as the repatriation process is on its own, in terms of addressing and fulfilling of cultural protocols, it is also a platform, a vehicle, a space that presents the underlying aspects that continue to be revealed in terms of relationality across our ontology and its revelation through voice emergence.

The teachings I have encountered to date go back to my childhood when instruction was presented by a collective of my elders and family members through storytelling around the fireplace as well as during mealtimes and times spent out on country. Specific and articulated teachings were present during ceremonies and demonstrated through song, dance and re-enactment with my participation as student, dancer and observer. These teachings were visibly presented through symbolism which accompanied ceremony. They were re-articulated in different contexts such as asserting our positions throughout the determination of native title etc. I consistently witnessed not only my grandmother but also others carry the teachings, knowledges and wisdoms of lore, no matter where they travelled or for what purpose, it had to be demonstrated in any given context. Whether they were in Canberra to vocally demonstrate and assert the role and position to country or whether they were on country living an organic grounded flow, these people were the embodiment of that lore. Their lives, how they interacted with kin and the decisions that were made were all influenced and guided by the spirit essence of lore. In the same way I walked through the doors of academia and continue to practice in terms of this approach and apply it to the process of teaching and learning. Through this process, these teachings become shared and portrayed in the academy through by merging scholarly and creative forms whilst maintaining the essence of tribal integrity. The various modes of genre dynamics allow for more evolutionary and articulately sophisticated forms of contemporised conveyance. What I mean by this is that I am able to demonstrate through other accompanying modes of depiction simultaneously as opposed to just a singular mode. I am not only informing the audience through spoken narrative or formal lecture. There is a two-fold, three-fold or often four-fold mode of conveyance in delivery happening in real time together. In this way, the audience receives not just audibly but also through the multi-dynamics of accompanied sound, visual and portrayed dynamism as is the core characteristics of Arnya Lecture. In relation to the relationship people have with Country, Gillen (1896-1927) wrote; 'There is not a remarkable natural feature in the country without a special tradition – why it is the very breath of their nostrils' (p.217). The key elements of what is now commonly known as the Dreaming is outlined by Spencer & Gillen:

> a network of ancestral tracks threading the landscape; the link between these and rights in sacred knowledge; the extent to which sacred knowledge is tied to individual places in the

> landscape; and the relationship between sacred knowledge, totemic identity and rights in land' (Smith, as cited in *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters*. p.217).

And, although Spencer and Gillen are referring to the Arrernte[124] in this statement, the concept here is the same for us and indeed across this vast great continent.

Visual Interpretations (Paintings)

My paintings (or what I most commonly refer to as visual manifestations) are symbolic representations of events, happenings and experiences fused with knowledge derived from teachings bestowed on me. A major component of these manifestations is also my personal interpretation of the concept/s in focus and at hand. A lot of the manifested result is (also) directly linked to my person/personal point of reference as well as perspective and ultimately voice template. I will endeavour to provide some examples for review and comparison.

Look at *nanum owuch* (Figure 33). This is an old work (manifestation) of mine created (or creatively sung into existence) during my time living in Brisbane. This manifestation is a result of the fusion of knowledge passed onto me by Awumpan[125] but in addition to that, it also presents and consists of my influence, my interpretation, my creative breath into its ultimate visual depiction. This creative manifestation is a result of the following components. The boomerang or quarter moon shapes on either side of the spiral are the identification symbols of the Alngith (Wikway) and this is a teaching aspect of incorporation. The spiral in the centre symbolises or represents the spirit within, and this is my personal interpretation working as or utilised as a symbolic depiction. In this piece it also represents the person. The background colour of earthy brown symbolises the earth or country (both interpretative as well as literal). The larger white circles connected by the snake-like lines represent the many nations of people inhabiting country and the smaller dots, darker lines and additional images represent the songlines and other forms of creation that make up our world and ontology. This piece manifested during a time when I had become very ill mentally, physically, spiritually and psychologically. I was angry and felt displaced as a result

[124] Arrernte: Also sometimes referred to as Aranda, Arunta or Arrarnta. A group of Aboriginal Australian peoples who live in the Arrernte lands. They also occupy surrounding areas of the Central Australia region of the Northern Territory.
[125] Author's maternal grandmother.

of my immediate family breakdown as well as living in the city. I was disconnected geographically and organically. Creative processes and expression were a way of staying connected to that aspect of self that goes all the way back to a *s*ense of home and connection. The manifestation resulting from these creative processes were a contemporary version of spirit subconsciously and instinctively singing myself back to health. This is a demonstration of the healing power of the concept of the *Arnya* songline methodology as a process at work.

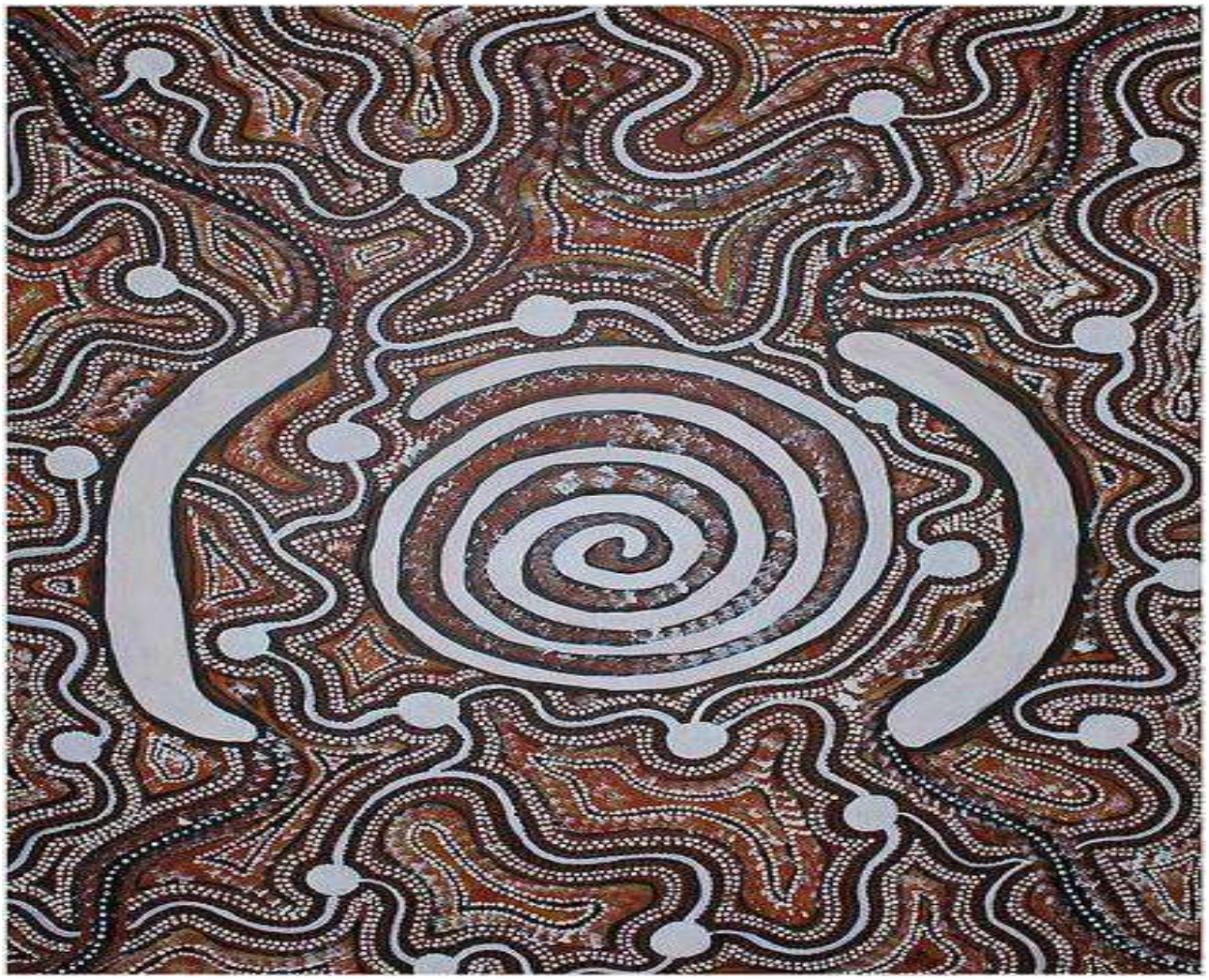

Figure 33: *Nanum Owuch* (our home). Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2010.

The next manifestation is a symbolic interpretation of the *aambaachil* and canoe encounter (Figure 34). Was this a visitation, a re-visitation or an encounter? There are no tribal elements here, no symbolism deriving from teachings passed on to me. This depiction is purely the result of my internal translation manifesting through a creative process. This is an aspect of voice emergence. This interpretation attempts to recapture my memory of the

encounter in terms of the visual, as much as I attempt to recapture it in its actual (for want of a better term) essence. Nevertheless, it remains primarily, an interpretation.

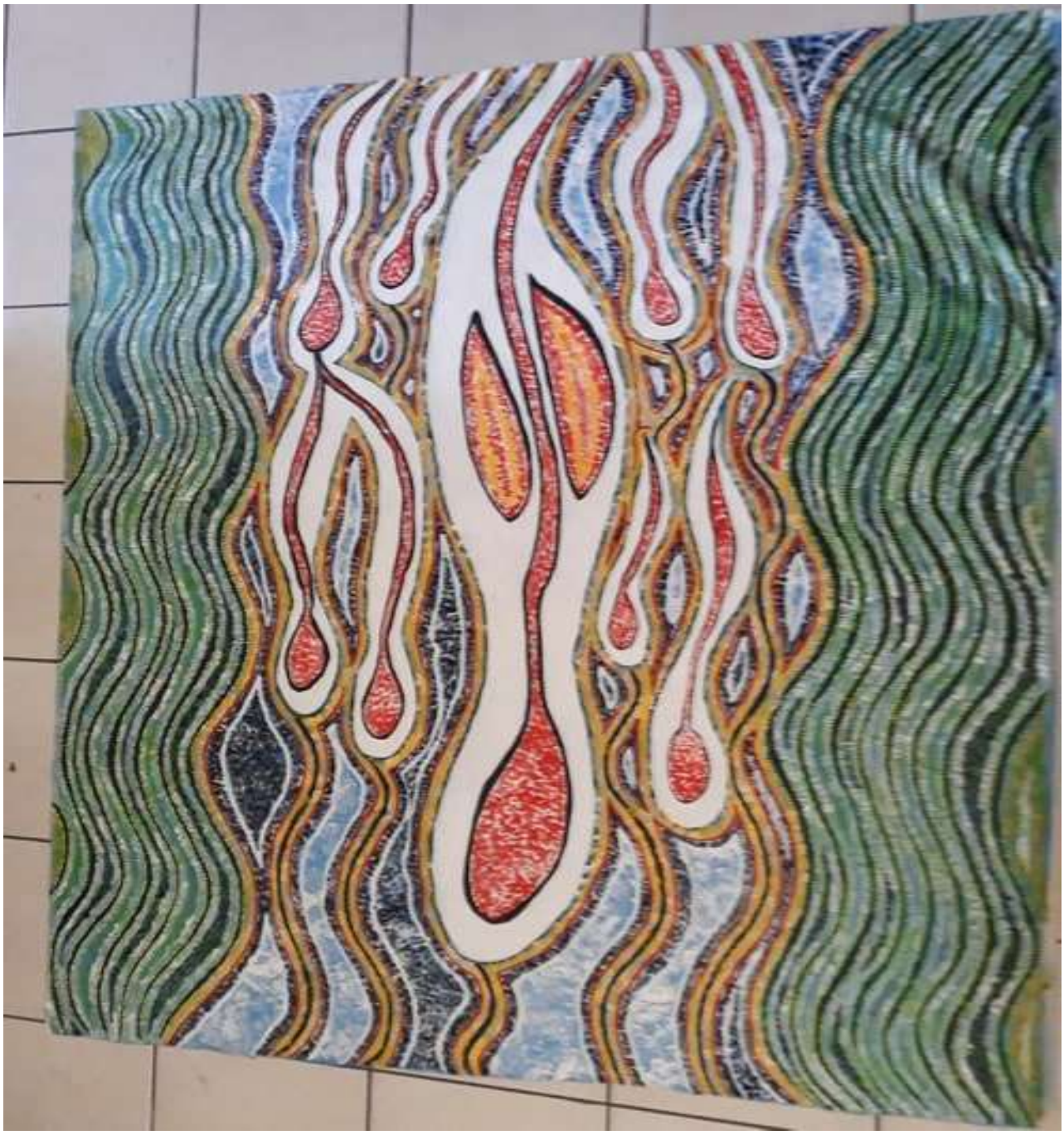

Figure 34: *Aambaachil* (short mullet). Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2019.

Arniyum (Figure 35) also does not depict any symbolic markings as taught or passed down. This manifested depiction is purely my interpretation of the landscape of country and in this specific case, of Arniyum. During the creative scaffolding and manifestation process for this painting, my perspective positioning is I am suspended in mid-air looking down on Arniyum

Creek. The yellow is symbolic of the flow of *ngograchaahn*. The middle area and various layers symbolise the life and essence within *ngograchaahn* which makes up the larger body mass of itself (that is the river component known as Arniyum Creek). The dark borders on either side are representative of the banks where *Iyee kundthak* (oyster) can be found. Refer also to the second image (Figure 36) which is an actual photo of Arniyum Creek. This picture was taken as we (the proposed mining representatives, Cape York Council representative and three of us representing family collectives) neared the mouth of the creek before entering it and venturing up-stream. The trip I am referring to here is one I made in response to a mining company's request to mine this area. I had travelled home to engage in discussions regarding this request. Lore teachings and protocols were consistently present throughout the process of discussion. As much as the representatives consistently pitched accountability and upholding of all that is necessary to 'protect the sacred site', the Voice within my belly opposed access and support of their pitch to mine. This is the immediate tribal land of Awumpin, of the two ancestors to whom the hair remains belong. Awumpin must be returned to this place. Arniyum must remain in order for Awumpin to return to.

Figure 35: *Arniyum*. Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2019.

Figure 36: Entry of Arniyum Creek (b). Photo by the author 2019.

Conclusion

Lore and songline in relation to country and kin is highly critical and paramount in terms of effective healthy sustainability. I stand back and witness and experience the threat and breakdown of this framework and system and how it slowly but surely threatens our survival in terms of overall (cultural) holistic health as a people of the land. Voice emergence and heeding the call of the displaced is crucial here.

Mining is the biggest threat to our systems and our lore as it goes against the very nature of our spirituality, which is caring for country and living in harmony and equilibrium with its organic natural state. There are many justifications for mining and I have heard and seen a handful to date, even by my own family members. Regardless, my personal standpoint remains firm and I could never resolve within me the destruction it causes. This is a realisation and standpoint that has grown steadily through time and has become increasingly grounded within me as I progress through the flow of life and mature accordingly. You will hear it stated in the *ngograchaahn* performance:

> the miners state that they will protect specific sites but my concern is when one area gets disturbed then the whole equilibrium of the landscape is compromised and disturbed. The essence of its gut is disrupted. The fight continues on as I speak, in all directions, and not just with the miners but also with the government (Wirrer-George, 2019).

Chapter 5: New Voice: Arnya Songline Methodology

The foundation of Indigenous scholarship is rooted in Indigenous philosophy and embodied experience. By this definition, Indigenous living scholarship is a relationist, tangible, intangible whole as the scholar negotiates personal, intellectual, cultural, social, natural and spirit worlds. Indigenous living scholarship cannot be understood solely as cultural scholarship limited to cultural teachings and practices (Kovach 2019:304).

Arnya Songline Methodology: An Introduction

The *Arnya* Songline methodology has been briefly introduced in the preceding chapters. In terms of spirit-led revelation, the term *Arnya* Songline methodology became explicitly articulated around three-quarters of the way through this research process (after the visitations described in the previous chapter). However, in essence I have been instinctively working towards this template from the commencement of this research. This was always going to be a fundamental approach and guided process of acquiring knowledge and insight as it stems from a First Nations ontological and epistemological approach to process.

I entered the academy with this template as a given, and regardless of the various turns the research focus took over the past four years, the *Arnya* Songline methodology remained consistent throughout. This was always going to be critical as this is a construct and framework of my approach to life-flow experience and living in general.

As this chapter progresses, I will return to some of the key scholars who have gone before me in order to draw parallels and establish links with my work. But first I will unpack my own diagrammatic depiction of the *Arnya* Songline methodology.

…

The *Arnya* Songline methodology comprises of primarily five layers indicating the process of voice travel and the flow and reveal of Voice emergence (Figure 37)[126]. The layers are as follows:

1. The fundamental template begins with the essence of the *Arnya* voice. *Arnya* is defined as the essence of spirit self or your higher self. *Arnya,* as defined and contextualised in the Alngith/Liningithi vernacular, refers to a totemic ancestor and

[126] Five-layered *Arnya* Songline methodology diagram: This model diagrammatically depicts the methodological process that has fundamentally guided this case study.

is also interpreted as instinct, intuition or guide. This is the centre of the *Arnya* Songline methodology articulation in diagrammatic form.

2. The second layer focuses on the self-person as a physical, breathing human, in this case my personal me. An individual's position in the ontology in terms of place and position is determined, influenced and directed by their lineage connection primarily through blood and birth. It is important also to note the acknowledgment and recognition of adoption status in this framework protocol as well.
3. The third layer is that aspect of the process in which experiences, occurrences, encounters, visitations and re-visitations have occurred. A lot of the above could predominantly be referred to as dreams. However, I have opted not to use this term. In alignment with our cultural beliefs, when a loved one enters the subconscious narrative flow of a living descendant while they are asleep, it is not just the brain playing a movie as such. It is believed that the person in this realm is having an encounter with loved ones who have passed on into another realm for the purpose of communication articulation and message conveyance. This primarily consisted of these occurrences and directly influenced the creative expressions through multiple-modal and multi-genre translation and depiction.
4. The fourth layer depicts the songlines[127] across Country. In this layer the cultural protocols and existing knowledges are considered, adhered to, used to guide and are utilised and implemented throughout process. Country is positioned at the fourth layer as this is a diagrammatic depiction of creative process. This process begins with the human self, in, through and with whom Arnya fundamentally works. The first three layers of the *Arnya* self, having and living a human experience of self and then experiencing visitations, encounters and experiences as the human self in relation to kinship connection and positioning to country, depicts the unfolding of this process.
5. The fifth and final layer refers to the voice translation and depiction aspect of it. This aspect is multi-modal and multi-genre in translation and constructed conveyance. The translation is immediately consequential of the wiring and construction of the person. It is determined by the talents, strengths, abilities, capabilities and creative interests of the individual. In the case of this diagrammatic articulation, the various

[127] Refer to Chapter 1.

modes of creative translation and depiction are in accordance with my personal creative forms of expression according to my multi-modal abilities and creative output.

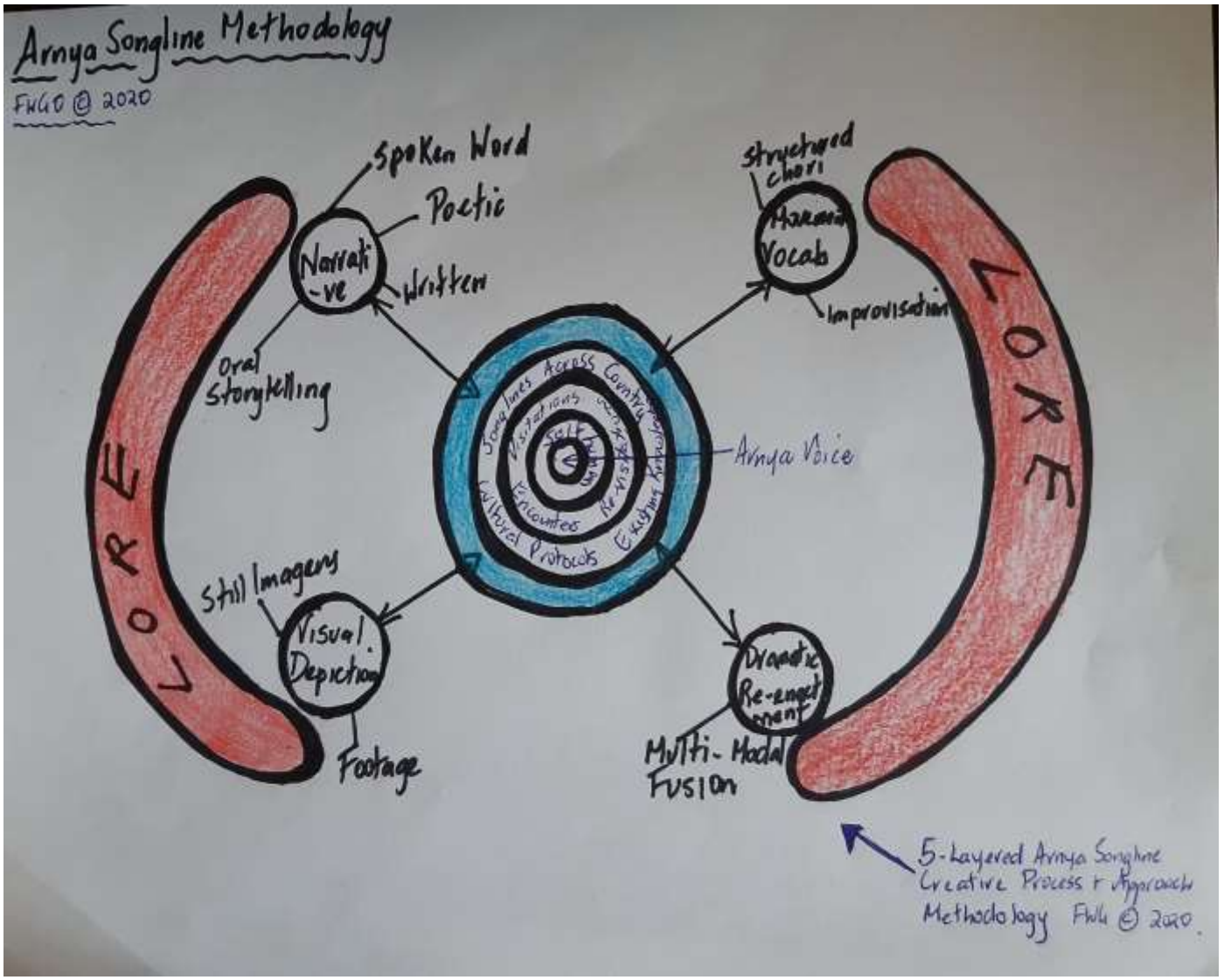

Figure 37: Arnya Songline Methodology diagram: Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2020.

All these layers are inter-connected in process and construction. What ultimately holds this framework in process is lore itself. Ontology, epistemology and axiology determine the fundamentals of process: approach, logistics and decision-making are all guided by the protocols of Wik and Wikway lore systems and principles. For example, the translation and scaffolding of performance throughout the research have been how I approach and conduct myself in terms of communication processes as determined by kinship protocols. *Mboormbwin* breath flow (Chapter 4) is activated within me in terms of communication,

voice emergence and confirmation. Confirmation throughout the process manifests in mainly my belly (gut) areas as well as through external modes of communication.

I have consistently upheld the first point of contact throughout the process with my older sister both to inform her of my progress as well as to seek guidance and confirmation throughout my decision-making. Another example depicted in the academic songline construct is the relevance of voice transference and presence of a kinship collective through the use of imagery, footage and song. This demonstrates collective voice conveyance through the use of multi-modal collaborative depiction.

The *Arnya* Songline methodology approach has been in place from commencement of this process to its culmination. However, it was not until the final stretch of the case study process that the articulated diagrammatic framing of this methodology manifested along with the name *Arnya* Songline methodology. This is a First Nations methodology in alignment with and as determined by Wik and Wikway ontology, epistemology and axiology. Fundamentally, how I approach the process is influenced and guided by Wik and Wikway knowledge systems. For example, my positioning in and across the kinship collective determines how I interact with both the remains as well as living members throughout the process. To unpack this even further, an example here would be that on collection of the remains in time, I will identify specific primary family members of the descendant lineage to accompany me to Melbourne for the purpose of retrieval of the samples, an activity and process that would take place (and will continue to take place) whether or not this activity were integral to my PhD research. The ceremonial aspect during the time of reclamation to Country will be determined by Wik and Wikway ceremonial practice and protocols in relation to protocols around kinship positioning and connection of each of the ancestors, their Dreaming, their totemic ancestry, the associated song and dance and so on in this context. Family members in attendance will be specific and most appropriate as determined by the kinship protocols. In further detail, it will be the most appropriate for the song and main dancer/s of Awumpan's (DT 4256) Wikway (Alngith/Liningithi) lineage to attend to sing and dance forth the spirit of the sample and in this case in memory and acknowledgment of Awumpan the human ancestor, the person. A specific song and dance will be chosen, identified during this time. Although I am aware of the options there will be from which to choose, ultimately the specifics will be determined following collective discussion by those

identified and involved throughout the process at that time. Throughout this process, the 'what, how and why' of articulated protocols and practice will be demonstrated and carried out.

This protocol is demonstrated in the museum freezer visual depiction as determined by the experience my older sister Lynette Jean had encountered on our return from our museum visit in 2018. The (dream-like) encounter was experienced by Lynette Jean, re-conveyed to me where it was then interpreted and transferred as a visual narrative and form of communication record on to canvas as a creative expression. This is a type of songline process translation of one of many threads that have unfolded throughout my research to date[128] (Figure 38). The imagery in the design of the museum freezer depicts the head-dress and *Sara* bow associated specifically with Alngith/Liningithi Wikway.

[128] Refer to Chapter 4 for experience to translation in reference to this specific thread.

Figure 38: *Museum Freezer* encounter visual translation. Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2019.

The *Arnya* Songline methodology fundamentally refers to a foundational template that determines process, seeks guidance and guides approach. This adherence to Wik and Wikway lore systems is parallel with Kovach's depiction of the epistemic centre. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this exegesis, Kovach 'begins her process of inquiry by going back to ways of knowing derived from her Indigenous roots and her elders' (as cited in Bennet 2012:292). Similarly, it was/are these ways of knowing that instigated my journey into academia and remained as a fundamental guidance template throughout process. Kovach's

(2009) *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts* correlates in so many ways to my own process. Her prologue connected with my belly place, my instinctive template of operations[129] immediately. She introduces a metaphor whereby one finds oneself 'standing in the eye of a tornado, in a protected but fearsome stillness that could snap at any moment'. The connection here is likewise and my positioning within my own research journey is as if I had been placed in the eye of *oolay enor* (cyclone). Kovach prepares the reader by telling them that in order for her to yarn her story she has needed 'to go back in time, back to memory' (p.3). Likewise with the unfolding of this exegesis you are developing a knowledge and a sense of the process I had lived, experienced and navigated from way before the actual date of enrolment. She makes mention of the 'analytical, reflective' and 'expository' forms of writing formulated throughout a narrative, pointing out the 'story' that will inevitably be a present thread that runs throughout, stating that 'our story is who we are' (p.4). She articulates the value of culture, stating that she 'was raised knowing that culture counts'. It is this very lived experienced that fundamentally informs my methodology epistemologically.

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[129] Instinctive template of operations: same as guidance template of operations. Refer to glossary.

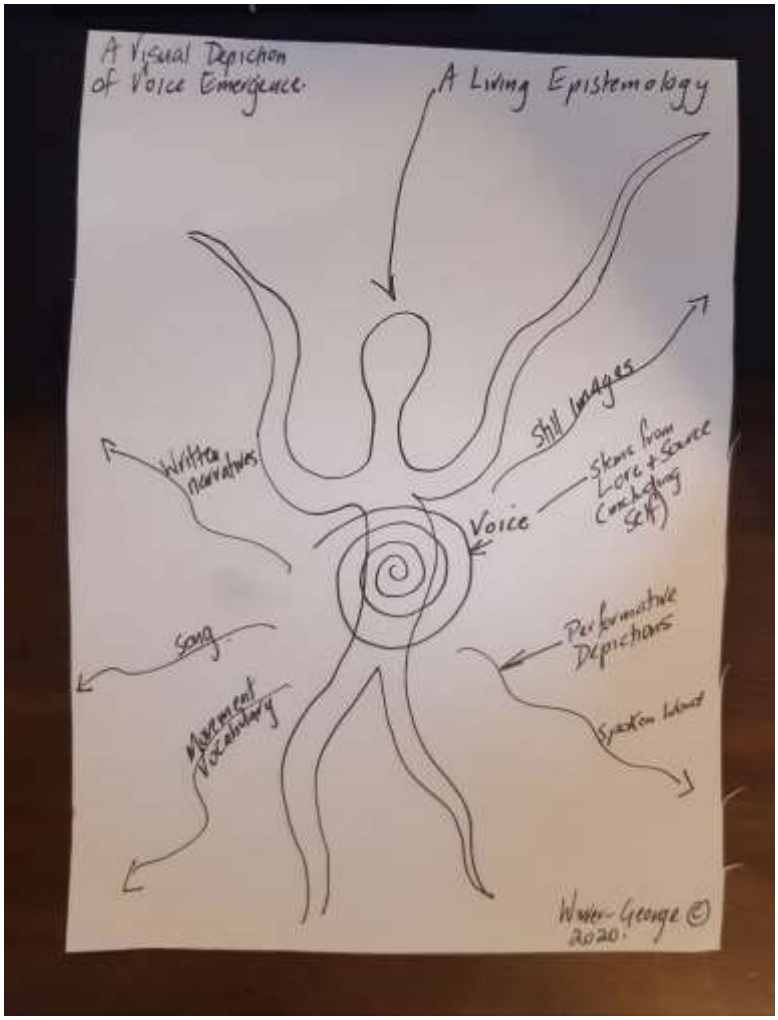

Figure 39: Voice Emergence/A Living Epistemology: Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2021.

Paul Whitinui (2014) interrogates the positioning and placing of self as a native method of inquiry. He highlights those aspects that are critical and sacred to the essence of who and how we are as native humans. The constructions of identity, society and dynamics of existence in both the self as well as the self that is connected to the larger kinship systems are critiqued and addressed. As he writes,

> Discovering, exploring, co-constructing, and narrating notions of 'self' as an Indigenous person must take into account an individual's ability to articulate meaning in relation to why their world is socially, culturally, and politically different as an Indigenous person (Whitinui 2014:458).

In his introduction, Whitinui immediately makes mention of Hauge's (2007) work on identity theories being 'place-identity theory, social-identity theory and identity process theory' (p.458). Drawing from Hauge he reiterates that these theories 'invariably locate (the) self holistically and as a reciprocal interaction between people and the physical environment'

(p.458). Hauge 'describes this as a "transactional view of settings" where variations of place (i.e., sense of place, place attachment, place identity, place dependence, and so on) are constantly influencing a person's perceptions, experiences, personality, and cognition' (p.458). Although this is coming from a Maori standpoint it directly correlates with an Australian First Nations position and more specifically my personal position as Wik and Wikway.

Aspects of these theories are evident in the *Arnya* Songline methodology construct in terms of the role of the primary thread that determines positionality is determined and inherited by lineage and consequently lineage/kinship protocols. The *Arnya* Songline methodology seeks to share and inform a form and process that declares and demonstrates its significance, role and purpose. The *Arnya* Songline methodology demonstrates a declaration of sovereign and ancient practice. It demonstrates a sovereign declaration of voice both within academia as well as beyond. The Arnya Lecture construct depicts its use and activation within academia. The narrative depicted thread revealed and highlighted in *Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming* (Act 2) demonstrates its activation and execution in context on country in defence and protection of country. Whitinui quotes Smith (1999) in terms of how the role of native people engaging 'with/in culture as "socially interested activists" is to critique the dominant values of society and to resist ideologies that limit our ability to participate fully as (tangata whenua) (people of this land) and in all other areas of society' (as cited in Whitinui 2014:460). This work declares an articulation of voice in response to the issues and contexts encountered throughout our lives.

Although this is an auto-ethnography, my accountability remains in connection to the collective from which I maternally descend and am, therefore, placed within and among. Whitinui quotes Hayano (1979) that 'as a "Native" researcher, validation is determined by a researcher's background and tribal group membership (as cited in Whitinui 2014:470). He adds that 'locating self as a "Native" researcher is a deeply personal one, whereby culture, as part of one's journey in life, is framed by our own perceptions and experiences' (p.470). Understanding of self as an individual but also intertwined and linked with the extended kinship collective in context was intricately revealed throughout process. Martin links here with reference to her point that the job of the 'indigenist researcher, is to first know thyself' prior to engaging in 'research in relatedness' (p.93). As I have described, the more I

analysed, interrogated, asked questions and pondered, the more new meanings and realisations were revealed in relevance and context. A deeper and richer understanding of self consistently emerged in terms of the role, obligation and responsibility I bear in relation to the social framework of my associated kinship nation. On initial entry into the course, I recall not possessing a sense of pronounced and grounded position in terms of myself among the collective of my nation. I felt my role was mainly as a listener, gatherer and accumulator of knowledge and instruction. However, at this final phase of this case study process and interrogation, I have transitioned and consequently have become grounded in position and assertiveness as a Wik and Wikway woman. And not just as an individual but also as a bearer of those different kinship positions I have inevitably inherited in accordance with this associated system (grand-daughter (*iyoncha*), sister (*keeig/thonchi*) mother (*kukoo/cogai/athoi*)[130].

Through the unfolding of process and the experiencing of encounters and visitations, I have come to realise that I now occupy an evolved and progressed position in Voice assertion in comparison to when I began this research. The creative practice and focused reflections on Voice emergence that this form of scholarship involved required me to reach this realised and occupied positioning. The accompaniment of the collective of voices, those especially conveyed through the visitations and encounters, have activated the flow of Voice emergence and legitimised this Voice assertion and conveyance.

I therefore now acknowledge, recognise and assert my position in the academy to speak as us, in alignment with our voice/s as opposed to our identities presented as an interpretation of the standpoint of non-Wik academics and others. I have been guided and brought into this space of academia to speak and to not remain silent. This is an articulation from the inside out. It is a declaration of who we are as well as why and how we are. This is important because it offers breath to the Voice/s of those from whom we descend. It is an honouring statement of ancestral lineage and nation identity. This is an articulation of the essence of voice throughout this process of Voice emergence. Here, Voice gets to speak in a new way in a new space through a new narrative construct. It serves a significant purpose as it has emerged from organic flow and critique in context. It flows through the living epistemology

[130] Alngith (Wikway) language.

in human form, the human connected through blood lineage inheritance. Accountability is demonstrated consistently throughout the process. Whitinui refers to Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008) in terms of the role of voice emergence and articulation by stating that 'new forms of critical and indigenous methods have emerged to counter the continual misrepresentation, misuse, and misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge' (p.471).

Voice emergence in this research process and construct speaks in sovereign terms from the inside of ontology, epistemology and axiology. It is speaking as itself through its own. This is why voice conveyance is critical in this space. Creative depiction of Voice also plays a critical role as it allows us to use the language of ourselves in order to capture, maintain and convey the core essence of our beings. It takes us beyond just telling of ourselves; it allows and enables us to show ourselves. This is a form of empowerment and liberation. It is an opportunity and platform to articulate the spirit essence of Voice as although words and the use of them are powerful, to show and demonstrate in other forms adds and brings another dynamic to this form and type of communication. Creative multi-modal depiction provides visual and audible stimulation to the viewer allowing each to engage in the performance presentation through their senses.

Whitinui references Smith (1999) who argues that 'research has been inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism because imperialism frames the Indigenous experience'. He continues that 'as a response, Indigenous peoples must respond by reclaiming our own agendas by repatriating our cultural thinking, knowledge, and knowing' (p.470). It is critically imperative in academia as it now has the opportunity for revelation and articulated conveyance. This is why I offer a new voice as part of the fourth layer that came out of the growth and evolution of First Nations methodologies in the academy. Its role offers a voice fused with the ancient essence of the old yet constructed by the current living lineage in context within First Nations methodological enquiry. The construct of new voice serves both the old and the new and consequential to it being a construct of the new, its articulation through the new reaches a broader audience[131], carrying with it the potential

[131] An effective and articulate construction of new voice's potential to reach a broader audience is determined by the space of performance conveyance as well as its chosen genre or mode. It's constructed package vocabulary as well as delivery tone also contributes to effective and affective ability of receivership.

for major change and greater understandings for the purpose of unity across communities and our society in general.

Arnya Songline Methodology: An example of process in flow activation

Arnya Voice is the essence that accompanies us throughout life. The conscious part of us is aware of this silent and consistent accompaniment and most commonly we just translate it as our thoughts and at a deeper level as our gut feeling, instinct, intuition, belly place etc. For me, the energy and dynamic I sense when I focus on this eternal aspect of my me is felt primarily in my throat, chest and belly areas. This aspect accompanies my human version of my me (Layer 2). Layer 1, the *Arnya* Voice, communicates with and does its best to guide, prompt, direct and communicate with the human version of me. This human version is utilised (in cooperation between the two) at this stage primarily for awareness, acknowledgment and dialogue. The human is situated in a position that is culturally determined by the kinship framework into which the human was born. In my case, this is a secondary position determined and inherited through maternal connection (refer to kinship chart in glossary). This secondary positioning guarantees and determines my authority to speak and participate in matters related to and in accordance with my ancestral, kinship community and nation. To be more specific, and in relation to following this methodology, my context positioned me to live an organic life flow and experience under the leadership, training and guidance primarily of my grandmother, my mother's mother.

Layer 3 flows from primarily kinship relationship and manifests in the form of what I refer to as visitations, encounters and re-visitations (instances in which the person having these experiences is taken back in time). I have had several of these encounters throughout the study process (refer to the translated depictions through creative expression produced). Layer 4 is directly linked to and determined by kinship positioning in accordance with Layer 2, the human person and in my case, primarily Mbaiwum/Trotj and Alngith/Liningith people of Country. The Layer 4 aspect is not only determined by kinship connection but also teachings received and life flow lived and experienced by the human, in this case, me. This layer is in evidence throughout the narrative construction as portrayed throughout both the *Arnya* Lecture construct as well as this exegesis. Layer 5 is the area and phase in which creative expression is translated, depicted, conveyed and articulated. This is multi-modal in conveyance and expression. This is the creative aspect of the *Arnya* Songline methodology.

The living epistemology diagram is an ultimate translative depiction resulting from a visitation encountered in Layer 4. The knowledge in between these layers is linked to the teachings received and life experiences lived by me on Country in the context of my inherited kinship collective. Consequential to my personal creative voice template, a creative depiction and articulation varies from genre to genre. In referring to the *Arnya* Songline methodology diagram, you will see that ultimately this methodology in process and depiction is held by the protocol framework of lore itself.

Cha'prah/Trelim: Blood

During the course of this research, blood has presented itself as both a critical philosophical concept and process as I have worked towards the formulation and conceptualisation of the *Arnya* Songline methodology. *Arnya:* spirit/intuition/instinct/guide; Songline: the connections across country and kinship; Methodology: A system of methods used in a particular area of study or activity or the branch of logic that studies reasoning or is the way something is done. The revelation of the identity and role of blood in this context is deep and in some respects, *nyim nyim*[132]. However, I sense that something needs to be said here, something that will be enough to provide some idea, some reference in context to the relationship here between blood and the creative process and methods to which I have committed in this research. To start with cross-culturally recognised ideas about blood: Blood is life, life pumps through blood. Jesus speaks about his blood informing believers to (symbolically) drink his blood so that they may have eternal life. In Wik ceremony, blood is sought out for magik rituals to be carried out. Magik makers and workers interact with this life-giving substance. I have been privy to many a warning regarding the roaming magik men who are after blood in order to consolidate a tampering, a disruption in order to perform an intrusive curse on their enemies, or even the unsuspecting. The drinking of blood, the tampering with and contaminating of blood, demonstrates the significance and role of blood in relation to life form, to the upholding of life, to the enabling of life, both symbolically and materially. The first Act was termed *Wik Cha'prah: Iyong cak chath tru chath* translating as 'Wik Blood: Speaks to you'. I named this first Act instinctively. It is only now, as I reflect and formulate this section of the exegesis, that I am thinking more deeply about blood. Blood is not only a critical life-holding substance that pumps throughout the bodies of descendant

[132] Nyim nyim: Sacred or secret. Not to be explicitly exposed. Alngith/Liningithi dialect/language.

beings, but also present in the creative process that has shaped this work. It exists in and travels alongside *Arnya*. A deep spiritual prompting reveals to me that there exists a dual alignment and relationship between *Arnya* and *cha'prah/trelim* (spirit instinct/voice and blood). *Arnya* and *cha'prah/trelim* are linked in process consolidating legitimacy throughout. The blood is speaking in, with and through Voice. Blood is the critical life-force substance ever-present throughout the process. No human in this world can exist without this essential component of life flow pumping through their bodies, so too it has been instinctively prompted within me at this point of an ever-evolving spiritual reveal that the presence and role of blood alongside the *Arnya* throughout process is consolidated. The connection and affiliation of blood in relation to the various phases of this study's findings will be presented through diagrammatic form in Chapter 6: the *Arnya* lecture. For now, my point is that blood as a material flow across generations is, I realise now, somehow the substance of Voice. Or, maybe, a better formulation might be that blood is how Voice is transmitted and how Voice is received. This is the flow of the living epistemology that I am engaging here. Blood is the life source of *Arnya* just as blood is the life force of all living entities and life itself.

Blood returns me to other bodily materials. The hair remains of our ancestors ceased to be just objects for analysis when I responded to them as kin in the museum. This process highlights the axiological aspect brought forth in the repatriation process that serves as the central focus in this research. Taking these samples as our ancestors requires a kinship response in alignment with relational and ceremonial protocols and obligations.

Relatedness Theory

So how does my methodology connect to and expand on previous frameworks? Martin's (2008) theoretical framework (relatedness theory) utilises an Indigenist Quampie[133] methodology consisting of four phases of (ontological, epistemological and axiological based) process (p.66). She draws from her inherited Quandamoopah ontology encompassing worldview, stories and relatedness, and shares her termed (3) Knowledge Bands[134] (ways of knowing, being and doing) in order to frame, encompass and articulate

[133] Translated as the pearl shell by the Quandamoopah people of Stradbroke Island. Refer to Martin, K. (2008) p.71.

[134] *The Three Knowledge Bands: Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing*. Martin, K. 2008. pp.72-80.

ontology, epistemology and axiology. In correlation, my *Arnya* Songline methodology frames and depicts Wik and Wikway systems and processes in alignment with my personal experience of creative practice throughout this research process. In terms of Wik and Wikway lore, what is revealed in this exegesis is determined by those protocols that determine what can be revealed and exposed as opposed to what will remain *nyim nyim*.

Martin links with Wilson in terms of his articulation of 'research is ceremony' and the preparation process in the lead-up and throughout (p.19). Martin summarises Wilson's position that 'preparing for research is like preparing for ceremony' (p.19). I would state in turn that the process I have undertaken, not only restricted to the specific timeframe of my research study but in existential review to date, commenced even prior to conception. My use of the term 'existential review' refers to the lived life experience of a person, and in this context, I am referring to mine. With the benefit of hindsight, I have reviewed my life lived to date. Revelations resulting from hindsight inform this thesis. I am aware that such a statement has the potential to open up a wider space of potential interrogation and for the sake and purpose of focus will opt not to travel in that direction here. However, I will re-state in alignment with the statement of preparation that indeed context of lineage conception, context of kinship positioning, context of life experience all in relation to the person known as me, have been a lived context and trajectory in preparation for my current position and role. In this context Martin and Wilson both talk about and establish the links between preparation and ceremony in the context of research specifically.

In both alignment and contrast, I suggest here that this preparation begins prior to conception. In order for me to be not only capable but also qualify to conceive and articulate the *Arnya* Songline methodology, I had to be conceived and born into the position I currently hold through lineage.

Martin commences each chapter with a prologue in the words of Kath Walker who later became 'Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal people' (p.20). She informs us that she does this so 'that the words that express the lives, realities, knowledges and beliefs of my people are presented prior to discussion of the many writers, researchers, academics and thinkers referred to or cited' in her dissertation (p.20). In contrast to Martin's upholding of the voice of those who came before, the voices of those who came before according to my lineage

are fused throughout the narrative of both exegesis as well as the *Arnya* lecture, although, the voice and teachings of my maternal grandmother Awumpan (b.1925 d.2005) is much more pronounced throughout the assertion (though not specifically as a stand-alone poetic construct).

This is an indication and demonstration of relationality. This is a demonstration of responsibility and obligation to the protocols of relationality. The voice and teachings of lore remain present and consistent throughout. The essence and spirit of Voice remains also in the various genres of speech and expression, existing in and conveyed through movement, song, still visual, movement visual, narrative speech, language use and visual symbolism. I am accompanied by the ancestral kinship collective throughout the process of argument, discussion, conveyance, assertion, articulation and contribution. This accompaniment is evidenced in the creative production and presentation resulting from the lived and experienced process throughout. This spiritual aspect of interactivity between Indigenous research scholar and the ancestral spirit world is collectively conveyed globally. Voice remains throughout generations and emerges in various forms and genres for articulation through multi-spaces of the constructed matrix of society.

Similar to the *Arnya* Songline methodology, Martin's 2000 Quampie Methodology Matrix starts at 'the Ancestral Core' and works 'outwards through tasks that are essentially of the self before engaging with stories of another entity through research' (p.93). Refer to (ASM diagram) to acknowledge a similar depiction and description between the two methodologies, although, the Quampie Methodology Matrix is depicted solely through a visual construct. Likewise, Kovach's discussion of epistemic centre also correlates here in terms of reaching back to the core of cultural teachings and connecting with ancestral guidance in accompaniment throughout the research process.

Research is Ceremony

I turn now to consider the foundations offered by Wilson (2008) as it relates to the *Arnya* Songline methodology. He writes,

> Something that has become apparent to me is that for Indigenous people, research is a ceremony. In our cultures, an integral part of any ceremony is setting the stage properly. When ceremonies take place, everyone who is participating needs to be ready to step

> beyond the everyday and to accept a raised state of consciousness. You could say that the specific rituals that make up the ceremony are designed to get the participants into a state of mind that will allow for the extraordinary to take place (p.69).

I first encountered this statement several years ago, possibly in my second year of doctoral studies. This statement of 'research is ceremony' immediately resonated with me. It was not an intellectual knowing, but rather a spiritual one. Within a timeframe of one year since encountering Wilson's work and how it influenced my own conceptual formulations and structured narratives, I was challenged by my supervisor to ponder further on the legitimacy and meaning of this statement. Her challenges interfered with further unquestionable absorption of this statement and it remained in my belly, spirit place, mind and body as I further developed into a research scholar. At one point, I came to a place where I felt resistance to the statement in a particular context. This was a result of the question posed to me. The question had triggered an ongoing yet non-conscious interrogation throughout the process as I had progressed in analysis and interrogation. I began to feel that possibly this statement was to an extent watering down the level of sacredness that ceremony, in a spiritual context in accordance with processes of ceremonial lore, was practiced and carried out. I knew that ceremony in relation to lore practices in a *nyim nyim* context held a much more intimate, private and sacred essence in practice. This type of ceremony was for a specific select person or group. This type of ceremony was initiated, led and carried out by graduated lore men and women as well as leaders who were qualified to carry out and oversee these processes who themselves over-came the sacred challenges involved. I began to develop a perspective against the idea that research is ceremony. I felt that the term ceremony, as I understood it, did not fit the way it was being used, in this case, in the academic space. I felt primarily that the context was just too different. It was a gut/spirit dynamic with intermittent bouts of intellectual address over time. I knew the arrival and presence of clarity in this context was not going to be an instant result of thought address. I knew in my belly that the wisdom that was necessary in this matter was to come at its right time as a result of a process I had yet to undergo, to be lived and experienced by an active me at some point along the trajectory of my research process. I left it for a time and continued on in formulation and analysis resulting from a consistent unfolding of an organic

lived flow in process. I knew that the time would come for me to revisit this issue to articulate the place where I would be led (in prompted guidance by *Arnya*) in arrival.

So, then what do I understand now? Is this research ceremony? Is the *Arnya* Songline methodology a method for ceremony? What happens if I theorise my methods and approach in this way, following Wilson but within the specific contours of Wik and Wikway Lore?

Wilson states that 'an Indigenous axiology is built upon the concept of relational accountability' (p.77). That seems clear and obvious in the case of my museum-held kin and the wider living epistemology that I am documenting. On becoming aware of the hair samples, my instinct to respond and take on responsibility for their return was immediate and strong. At the point of being informed of the hair samples, I had just qualified for PhD status but was still living on country surrounded by kinship and ontological dynamics. So, in hindsight, the timing of events was indeed precisely in alignment for what would unfold, bringing together social obligation and relational accountability with the desire to merge auto-ethnography and creative practice as a research practice concerned with demonstrating the potential for social healing through arts-based methods grounded in Wik and Wikway ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies.

But is my research actually ceremony? What does it mean to say this in the specific context of your research? At this point along the process of this study I have been able to re-address these questions posed to me by my supervisor several years back.

One way to answer this is to flip the question and suggest that I have been put through a kind of ceremony by seeking to work on my terms within the academy. For the past four years I have undergone intense training under the supervision of graduated and knowledgeable leaders to test, ignite and initiate my knowledge and ability in areas of great and critical significance for a specific purpose. How does it help to think of this as a form of ceremony? Throughout the process, have I experienced a feeling of being cut in almost every aspect of my self, causing me pain, to hurt, to ache and to bleed (tears, emotions, voice)? Have I grown from step to step allowing ultimately a trajectory of consistent outcome and progress throughout process? Have there been times where I felt as if I had been left alone in the dark, in fear, unable to see clearly ahead, confused, tired, with

feelings of abandonment? Has this cost me comfort and convenience, sacrifices (financial, social, family obligations etc.) that were difficult but necessary to undergo this process? Have I now stepped into my position with a sense and deep knowing of assertiveness to speak and declare? Do I feel articulate, strong, more experienced and equipped than I did prior to commencement of this process? In deep and yet humble sincerity I am able to answer 'yes' to all the above.

I have made it to this stage, to completing my research in the academy and through the upholding, guidance and teachings of the Wik and Wikway ontological, epistemological and axiological approach a ceremony of equivalence has been undertaken. The teachings of the kinship collective remained and guided me throughout and indeed I had been challenged and have in turn grown, transitioned and graduated into my current position. So yes, this research has been a ceremony, but not quite in the way that I understand Wilson to mean it. This research process has been my ceremony of preparation, training, challenges, informing and thus articulating the execution of my contribution (Voice emergence/a living epistemology/the *Arnya* Songline methodology /the *Arnya* lecture) within the academy with its particular demands for voice and Voice emergence. It has done all of this while upholding the protocols of lore systems with uncompromising steadfastness and integrity, ultimately answerable to the call of blood, hair, and spirit as these connect, ground and guide me onwards.

In my final chapter I return to the question of research as ceremony from a different perspective.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 provided an articulation of my *Arnya* Songline methodology detailing each of the five layers. This methodological framework demonstrates my inherent approach, which is in alignment with the protocols of inherited lineage.

An account of blood is also brought into focus where connections are made between *cha'prah/trelim* and the *Arnya* Songline methodology. A diagrammatic description of the two working in correlation is depicted in the *kek* and *thul* diagram in the final chapter. This chapter also revisits Martin's (2008) work on relatedness theory and her Indigenist Quampie methodology. Correlations are made between her Indigenous Quampie methodology and my A*rnya* Songline methodology. I also go back to Wilson's (2008) idea that research is

ceremony and provide further detail and analysis of my position and standpoint regarding this articulation. I present my lived process in the academy throughout my scholarship flow and draw a conclusion that connects this statement with my lived experience as encountered and revealed. In the final chapter, I push further with this statement and open with my *Arnya* lecture genre and its essence in connection with all aspects of my case study. I bring into discussion and focus the work of Mary Capello who sites Virginia Woolf and Mary Ruefle in her critical discussion. I also find connections with the collective voices of Miyarrka Media, a Yolngu-based system and lore process.

Chapter 6: The *Arnya* Lecture

Now the human voice is an instrument of varied power; it can enchant and it can soothe; it can rage and it can despair; but when it lectures it almost always bores (Virginia Woolf, cited in Cappello 2020:11)

I have encountered a lot of boring lectures throughout my academic development. I have sat through many more in other contexts as well. Such experiences have long prompted me to ask 'why?' Why stand up the front and deliver in this way? I have often wondered whether the lecturer realised his or her monotone, dull delivery. Did they have any idea? Were they even capable of differentiating between 'dull and boring' or 'living, alive, stimulating, energetic, inspiring'? Regardless, if the information was necessary, I would focus on the extraction of useful and relevant ideas. Looking back now, I see that part of what I found missing was the flow of a living epistemology, though not exactly in the sense that I had been thinking to date.

In this final chapter, I directly discuss a specific lecture form that I have developed in my research. I describe the performative dynamics and enlivening epistemologies enabled by the lecture form in general as a form arising out of Western knowledge systems. I compare this to the specific requirements and opportunities of the form of lecture that has developed in my own research and which I call the *Arnya* lecture. And although the *Arnya* lecture is within the genre of a performance lecture/lecture-performance, what sets this specific 'sub'-genre apart is its pronounced spirit-led component in relation and connection to First Nations methodology and more specifically Wik and Wikway ontology, epistemology and axiology.

When I began my PhD research with an interest in studying the value and application of art therapy in the context of my own community, I had no idea that I would end up creating this specific genre of voice emergence and depiction. That I have ended up here is because the academic space has allowed me to experiment and reflect: to respond to academic criteria and protocols while remaining true to the grounding and process of Wik and Wikway systems and processes embedded in cultural lore.

Voice emergence has been a major thread guiding this research. A focus on voice flow has been steadfast throughout but even though I knew this in my belly, the narrative of its

emergence was revelatory in practice and process. My commitment to this remains in First Nations methodology and I aim to remain authentically positioned[135] for these revelations to manifest. In this final chapter, I consider the lecture form that I have developed in order to cultivate and present voice emergence in an academic context using the *Arnya* Songline methodology.

The previous chapters have explained these ideas in detail. In this final chapter I make an overarching and concluding argument for the significance of the *Arnya* lecture form as a mode of giving voice to Voice.

Wik Cha'prah: the first iteration of the *Arnya* lecture

In my second year of study, as the result of a change of supervisory team, I made the switch to become an arts-based researcher (Leavy 2018). My initial idea then was to create a body of work that could be exhibited in an art gallery context within the community. Preliminary plans were laid for an exhibition at the Tanks Arts Centre in Cairns.[136] I looked forward to this as a welcome move away from the space and confines of academia. I had easily envisioned the construct of the event, involving a mix of multimodal works that would be produced to represent, and reflect on, the repatriation process that I had chosen as my case study. While still intending to pursue this outcome, after discussion with my supervisors, it was decided that I would instead present my work as an invited keynote performance at the Australian Anthropological Societies Conference to be held at James Cook University's Cairns campus[137] in December 2018. The realisation that a collective of academics would make up a large percentage of my audience base immediately shaped the construct (and, in turn, shaped the direction of the research and its outcomes in ways I could not have then anticipated).

I was a little nervous about coming up with something for a room full of anthropologists. Although I had already developed confidence as a competent public speaker, I knew that this particular space required something that I had not yet experienced or refined in my performance repertoire. For obvious reasons I had not yet found my voice in this context. Yet here was an opportunity to create a performance from my research to date. I recall now

[136] Cairns Tanks: www.tanksartscentre.com
[137] Australian Anthropology Society (AAS) Conference: *Life in the Age of Death* https://aasconf.org/2018

that even though I had not had the experience at that point, what was already pronounced within my belly, within my being was a deep sensing of methodology and delivery, although I did not have (at that point) an articulation of it in terms of details. Where was this instinct coming from? What was responsible for its strong and steadfast presence inside me? Why this form? Why performatively bring together and co-utilise contemporary ceremonial and Western oratory traditions? Would this even work on the terms of both sets of criteria that I had to meet as a PhD scholar? I can now only ask these questions in hindsight, at this point of the analysis, because back then I was so absorbed in its natural progression of process that I did not pause to question the unusual form that emerged as I worked with the experiences and understandings of my research to date.

And so, as Act 1, *Wik Cha'prah: Iyong cak chath tru chath*, came instinctively, it fused auto-ethnographical narrative, Wik and Wikway lore protocols and multi-modal dramatics, by drawing on my prior experiences as a performer and my postgraduate training in Indigenous research methodologies, but in a way for a new audience.

As I worked, I was aware that the construction, scaffolding, packaging and delivery of this first iteration of the form of the *Arnya* lecture was a result of operating and working within the academy – while developing, and adhering to, what I have described in detail in other parts of this exegesis (Chapter 5) as the *Arnya* Songline methodology. This creative and practice-based First Nations methodology entailed a risky experimental process where self (auto-ethnography), spirit-led revelation and scholarly modes of critical thinking were brought together in an attempt to reflect on the role of art as a mode of healing for the people. As I have described, in creating the work that became my PhD submission, I drew together multi-modal genres of performance (refined over years of training) to operate in the academy under the direction and use of First Nations methodology, in this case specifically Wik and Wikway lore systems (articulated as the *Arnya* Songline methodology).

I am now in a position to offer a closer analysis of the resulting form of the *Arnya* lecture. For while it may appear to be a Western genre that I have stepped into, I argue that the *Arnya* lecture construct is the result of a dynamic between both Wik and Wikway lore systems and academic criteria, which makes this lecture a very particular manifestation of the genre.

Living Epistemologies

My life unfolding to date has taught me that one can prepare for revelations and visitations by making oneself ready to receive them, even though you cannot summon them at will. This PhD research has taught me that in new ways. In the final months of my research, two-and-a-half years after the first performance, as I was struggling to pull together the final act and to get hold of what my supervisor called the 'red thread' of my argument, I came across Mary Cappello's book *Lecture*. It was a powerful revelation: I felt it physically as much as intellectually. Reading it led me into critical and creative dialogue with others concerned with the lecture form, allowing me to see my own work in a new way. I wondered why this book turned up now. Had the old people sent it via my supervisor? I saw immediately that the performative genre Arnya lecture shares overlapping concerns with Capello and the writers and theorists she draws from.

> I am totally with Virginia Woolf in wanting to create a new form of colloquy, to move with others and across affiliations in the collective formation of ideas – to converse – to arrive at a dwelling in common where real discussion can be had; but, rather than ask 'why lecture' with Woolf, I want to know if it is possible to re-inhabit what was great and stirring about the lecture when it was **a form of art** (Cappello 2020:12, my bold).

With her focus on recognising and amplifying what can be 'stirring' about a lecture, Cappello is not only pushing for lectures that make one sit up and pay attention, but she also indicates an awareness that there is a process of collective 'formation of ideas-to-converse-to arrive at' which leads her to inquire about the possibility of 're-inhabiting' the form. The reason my own belly stirred so strongly on reading this book is that Cappello's statement of the lecture as a form of art links directly with my instinctive approach to lecture formulation, structure and delivery. In fact, Cappello seems to be close to arguing for my termed *Arnya* Songline methodology. Her use of the idea of conversing, listening and performative journeying as a way to both find and deliver knowledge resonate strongly.

> I used to think I wrote because there was something I wanted to say. Then I thought, 'I will continue to write because I have not yet said what I wanted to say'; but I know now I continue to write because I have not yet heard what I have been listening to' (Mary Ruefle, *Madness, Rack and Honey: Collected Lectures* as cited in Cappello 2020:7).

Approaching the construction and delivery of a lecture through the living epistemological methodology that I work with requires and utilises a holistic approach. In this approach, I am inviting, bringing and utilising not only my whole body and self in the methodological approach; I am also working in ways that remain fundamentally grounded and linked to that which is beyond the self, that is to the spiritual realms of connection. In other words, I am not only in intellectual thought in framing and building the *Arnya* lecture, but I am also in spirit talk with self as well as the collective of kinship in terms of information exchange, retrieval, building and utilisation. This is what positions the *Arnya* lecture in its own specific genre category. This is also where the power of voice lies.

Often this language exchange can be in flow without the vessel, that is the person themselves being conscious of this type of exchange occurring. There is a correlation here in terms of Cappello's quote of Ruefle's statement of why she writes in relation to the act or art of listening. In my case and therefore throughout this dual methodology of academic process of working and doing while, at the same time, remaining in and upholding a lore approach, I have come to familiarise myself with the language of both the spirit self and the spirit collective. This is the Voice in which I speak. I have come to realise in the course of this research that there are several layers of listening and knowing: That which you arrive with consciously, that which is further revealed through analysis, thinking and dialogue with families and with academic colleagues, mentors and thought leaders and ultimately that which is revealed, realised and thus known from the deepest place of spirit listening. This is where I have arrived as a result of academic interrogation throughout the experience and continuous unfolding of process. This is the organic flow of the *Arnya* voice, *Arnya* spirit, *Arnya* listening, *Arnya* revelation and *Arnya* knowing. This is a holistic *Arnya* approach as a living epistemology and methodological process. This is the dynamic I both model and perform in the *Arnya* lecture itself.

In light of this positioning of lecture as a 'stirring' form, dependant on collective listening and conversing beyond the individual self, I want to return to Wilson's (2008) statement 'that for Indigenous people, research is a ceremony' (p.69). When talking about 'what an Indigenous paradigm is all about', he reveals that he came to this after realising that much of the knowledge manifestation that took place within him (throughout the interrogative process) came 'in an intuitive fashion'. Wilson also quotes his friend (Peter) who also shares

about making ‘intuitive leaps’ throughout his research process (p.69). On this intuitive process in flow (Peter) shares his own concerns regarding how he might convey this aspect in his thesis in terms of keeping the reader on the same template as he the researcher.

Questions and concerns of how much information and knowledge the First Nations researcher should reveal is evident in Wilson’s account and has indeed been a constant struggle throughout my own process as well. On working with her adoptive family, the Yolngu of Arnhem Land, Deger (2019) states: ‘not everything should be translated or can be translated’ … ‘We have carefully chosen what to emphasise and what not to spell out’ (p.19). In the case of my work, it is *Arnya* guidance, rather than any strict protocols that could be written down and set in stone, that determines the boundaries in this context.

As I have said, the *Arnya* lecture stems from the *Arnya* Songline methodology which is grounded in lore. *Arnya* is the spiritual voice that I take to be ancestral kin (please note here and as previously mentioned that the closest interpretation to *Arnya* in the English language is intuition or instinct). The correlation that runs through Wilson’s, (Peter’s) and my own work is this. Here I find a cultural, spiritual and philosophical connection among First Nations scholars in academia. This highlights an occurrence of not only a methodological and logistical aspect of process, but also a further combination of philosophical and spiritual element of flow. This aspect of the presence of intuition infused throughout First Nations methodologies prompts and reaffirms my instinctive knowing that this is indeed an unfolding process of ceremony.

To position both my methods and the resulting performance, the *Arnya* lecture, as ceremony is not only about the challenges, fulfilments and achievement of logistics but also the awakening, utilisation and refining of the spirit template in activation and use. This is the core instinctive aspect in context. Wilson’s statement of ‘an Indigenous research paradigm is relational and maintains relational accountability’ (p.71) is confirmed in my diagrammatic correlation between lore → *Arnya* Songline methodology → a living epistemology → voice emergence → the *Arnya* lecture. Herein this five-phase songline of voice flow is a complex constellation of relationality. Also notice the correlation between this five-phase songline and the five layers of the *Arnya* Songline methodology. I also present a further correlation towards the end of this chapter.

Obviously, the living epistemology of the *Arnya* lecture draws from performative genres that have very different roots, protocols and obligations from those assumed by Cappello, Woolf and others. Yes, of course, in response to the quote at the beginning of this chapter, the *Arnya* lecture should not be boring to the audience. But, if the *Arnya* lecture is to offer a successful manifestation of research as ceremony in Wilson's terms, then it must bring together form and content in ways that are more deeply inclusive and accountable than the ways that some of these non-Indigenous lecturers that I have experienced conceive their craft. Of course, not all non-Indigenous lecturers are boring and neither are First Nations lecturers always stimulating in delivery. Delivery of a stimulating lecture depends on the lecturer and their approach and methodology as well as the characteristics and skills as an individual.

As a First Nations lecturer and auto-ethnographic researcher, I draw from more than a single lifetime of lived experience. I have worked to create this *Arnya* lecture in order to ignite, stimulate, engage, connect, provoke, entertain, inform and hold the audience throughout its flow, i.e. to be not boring! What is evident throughout the scripted aspect of the lecture(s) is the link between residual and generational trauma which stimulates emotions such as anger, frustration and sadness throughout the process in both development and depiction. These states influence construction of the script. They prompt a dialogue across time not only with my ancestors but with the anthropologist who treated my relatives as specimens and created the painful situation that I am now charged with navigating (with the Museum of Victoria and the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council)[138].

> What has been done should have never been done! I ask you now, why did you do it!? Were my people nothing but specimens that even someone who saw himself as a friend committed such violations!? Were they just specimens to you!? Am I a specimen to you!? Do you see me as a specimen!? Do you see me as a specimen!? Is that all we are to you!? Is that all we continue to be to you!? How would you like it if the tables were turned!? How would you like it if I wanted to study your old people!? How would you like it if I stripped your ancestors, your old people, your grandmother and invasively photograph a full frontal of their naked bodies!? How would you like it if you were presented with photo images of your grandmothers naked along with organic components of what was once them? How would

[138] Extract from Act 1 *Wik cha'prah: Iyong cak chath tru chath.*

> you like it if remains of your old people were kept in a drawer for the purpose of research!? Were your questions answered!? Were you satisfied!? What were your conclusions!? What did you draw from your invasive practices!? May the bloodline descendants of ancestors now speak and ask and interrogate. May the researched flip the tables and now become the researcher. May the voices of our people now speak in response!

The key here lies in the final statement in this monologue 'May the voices of our people now speak in response!' This challenge of responding to the question that Thomson provoked regarding not only how I as a researcher, but how 'our people' might 'speak in response' has driven the formation of the creative work and the thinking of that which underpins this exegesis.

Each of the Acts has been constructed towards this goal. *Wik Cha'prah* introduces everyone (ancestral lineage, kin, Donald Thomson, academia, descendants and audience) into the space and the vocabulary throughout. *Wik Cha'prah* is *The Gathering* (the *petham*[139]) of the *Arnya* lecture ceremony in depiction and process. *Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming* re-emerges, re-invites and re-connects all associated bodies and entities on country and in dialogue with spirit. In this way, *Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming* introduces non-Wik and Wikway into our ontological, epistemological and axiological space in flow process and context. Onlookers get to observe and witness micro-dynamics of inter and intra relationship between kin and non-kin in dialogue, inter*activity* and inter*action*. *Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming* offers an opportunity to witness songlines of Country penetrating and permeating the current flow of current living descendants in contemporary existence and interactive current, ongoing and lived realities. The relational aspects of land and sea and all that is within and on it become part of the relational depiction through the construct of the *Arnya* Lecture, through the use of imagery, sound and organic use of such. Voice and voice emergence is the essence that flows between and throughout all fundamental aspects of this collective framework (including the present organic aspects of kinship in and through the form of E. Awumpan and myself). The final Act, *Idiwirra*, invites audiences further into the vessel and narrative of my living and organic me as a living epistemology in depiction, portrayal and conveyance. My me as a living epistemology

[139] *Petham:* Warm up to song and dance in Wik ceremonial ontology.

presents itself as the thinker, interrogator, speaker, demonstrator, family member and descendant kin in organic living and present time. The spirit aspect of self in connection with the larger kinship both human and spiritual continues to be a foundational thread that remains throughout this process of voice speak. This is the gut and belly essence of the *Arnya* lecture as a construct and as both a commentary on my contemporary life struggles resulting from colonial disconnection – and as a way of creatively working through them towards Voice emergence as a means of enabling the collective to speak in response.

The *Arnya* lecture portrays and presents my me that embodies the identity and spirit essence of Voice as she, he, it travels throughout the *Arnya* Songline methodological framework as a template and guidance. What differentiates my work is that I not only talk about process and all it entails but I embody, become, depict and portray the aspects and elements of process. Through the use of my body, my voice, my tongue, my arms, my legs, my feet, I show, as I move throughout space, a narrative songline of Voice and spirit flow from the autoethnographic perspective I have adopted. Here I become, and in this becoming, on-watchers, as an audience, are invited and ignited to come along this process with me. In the becoming, I am transitioning and transforming in order to depict and to show. Just as in ceremony the apprentice is transformed through process, so too is my me, as I function as the vessel and conveyer of the *Arnya* voice. What is different here is that my ceremonial transitioning is occurring in an academic space and so to a much wider and broader collective made up by the audience. My approach has been the researching of the self as subject as opposed to object. This has been a different approach to assembling objects for the purposes of extracting information and thus producing new knowledge. This approach of subject interrogation, not only as an individual but in terms of my position in reference to the kinship collective (relationality), has inevitably activated the process of voice emergence among not only the so-called 'specimens' (our two dear ancestors) but also an extended collective of those who have gone before (Chapter 4). The *Arnya* Songline methodology and *Arnya* lecture (process and construct) awaken, enable and maintain the (ongoing) activation and conveyance of voice emergence.

Arnya Cha'prah in the *Arnya* Songline Methodology Framework[140]

In Chapter 5, I introduced the role of *cha'prah/trelim* (spirit instinct/voice and blood) as I see, feel and intuitively know and perceive it to be in relation to the Voice emergence process. Here, I present a diagrammatic depiction to provide a visual of this multi-aspect intellectual, spiritual, philosophical, revelatory concept.

Thul[141]

Thul represents the framework of lore. In ceremonial hunting *thul* positions and anchors *kek* in alignment prior to execution toward its target. *Thul* is designed logistically to position and secure *kek* as well as ensuring a firm grip by the hunter. In this case the hunter is translated as the living epistemology who refers back to lore in order to function.

Symbolically the essence and spirit of *Arnya* is contained within *thul*. See the heartbeat and visibility of the *Arnya* voice within *cha'ay*[142] . It travels up through *thul* and out into *kek.*

Kek[143]

Kek in this diagram represents the *Arnya* Songline methodology[144]. The voice and spirit of *Arnya* mixes with the *cha'prah/trelim* flow through the descendants of lineage. These descendants of lineage depict, portray, re-enact and execute lore in action. This is voice emergence through the vessels of a living epistemology. *Cha'prah/trelim* and *Arnya* fuse as the one substance and work together throughout the *Arnya* Songline methodology aspect of process just as *kek* and *thul* work together prior to the execution of *kek* towards its intended target.

The *Arnya* lecture

The spear executes *cha'prah/trelim* and the essence of *Arnya* into what has become the *Arnya* lecture genre (in its own specific construct) that I offer to the academy. Refer to the diagram below to see that the symbol for the *Arnya* lecture is the same as the symbol for *Arnya* voice and out from there are the various multi-modal forms of genre depiction and portrayal (the creative form of expression and conveyance aspect of the *Arnya* methodology).

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[140] Refer to ASM diagram.
[141] Woomera: Wik.
[142] *Chaay* (Alngith): *Accool* shells or mud mussel.
[143] Spear: Wik.
[144] Refer to *kek* and *thul* diagram below.

My depiction of *cha'prah/trelim* here is necessarily brief. It would take almost another separate exegesis for me to receive and convey its manifestation. I leave this unpacking for another time. I have learned organically and consistently that indeed faith and patience to receive in this way is critical.

I include this here to demonstrate that this is an ongoing *spirit*-led work and this work is pushing beyond the revelatory statement that research is ceremony. This research and the resulting exegesis and performance has opened up and invited you into the process as I have experienced, and continue to experience, without breaking protocols of inappropriate or *nyim nyim* revelation. By remaining true to the *Arnya* Songline methodology, this exegesis has extended discussions of First Nations methodologies beyond Wilson's and Martin's revelations, and presented micro processes, insights, knowledges and outcomes. I am part of the fifth wave of researcher academics, those of us who work in, with and from First Nations methodologies. We are vessels who contribute to voice emergence and articulation as the world and all of us who exist within it continue to evolve and spiral into a new way and space in living.

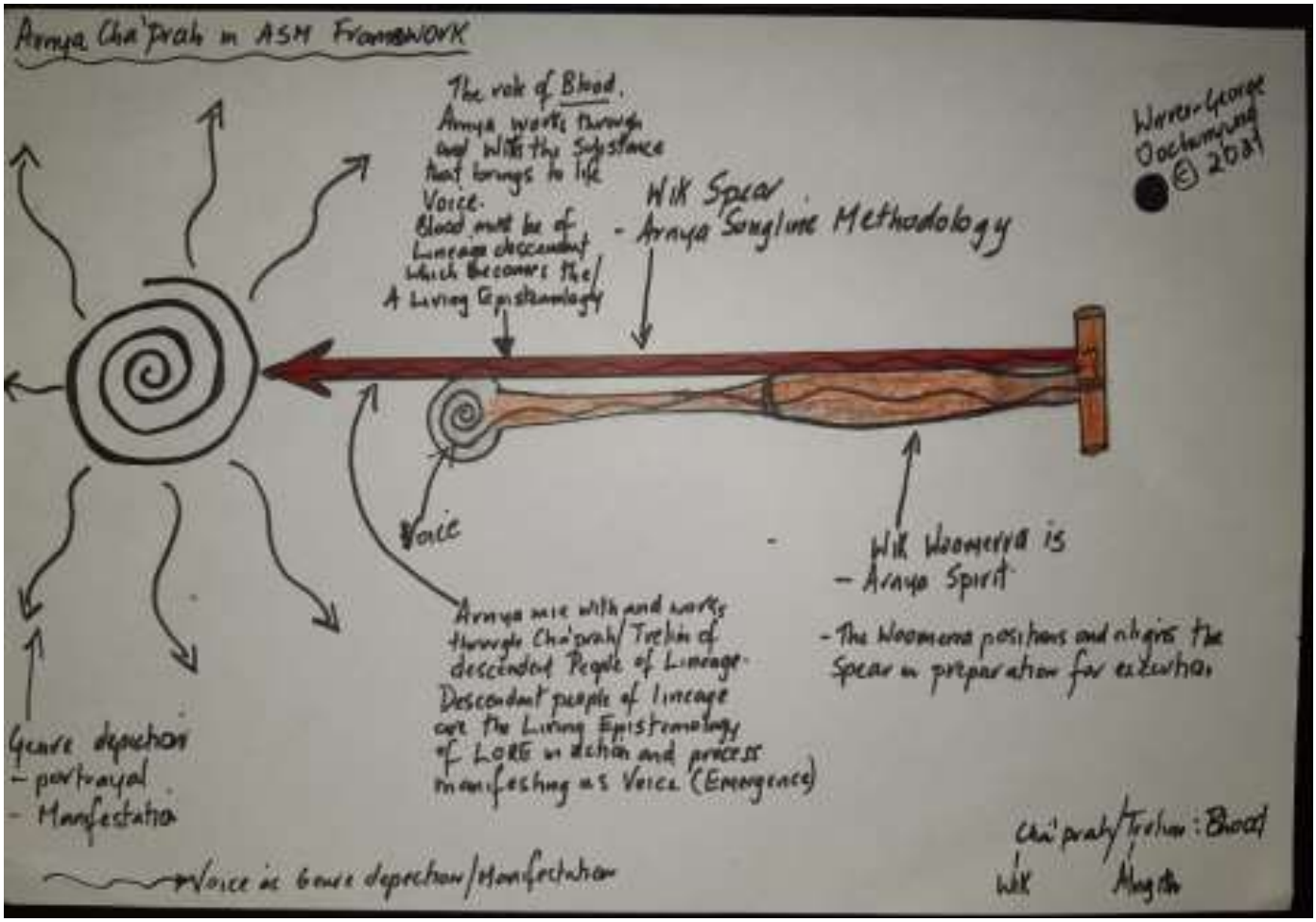

Figure 40: Kek & thul diagram: Arnya Cha'prah/Trelim in Arnya Songline Methodology Framework. Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung © 2021.

The Lecture as a dynamic between Wik and Wikway Lore Systems and Academic Criteria

Throughout this process, regardless of all else, it had been made clear that the adherence to Wik and Wikway lore systems has been fundamental and critical. In delivering a 'lecture' I have achieved, I believe, an adherence to academic criteria while remaining grounded in these lore systems. It is the fusion of these two protocols that directly contributes to the formation of the specific type of lecture form I offer here. In the course of this research, I have found a middle ground, a space where the ingredients (methodologies, protocols, criteria, academies, epistemological values and practices) have come together in ways that serve First Nations knowledge systems. It is one thing to practice, articulate and present elements of lore in a performative format; performing groups do this all the time in both contemporary and tribal settings and contexts. But this new knowledge and contribution articulates and demonstrates my approach to fusing the protocols of this with those of the

academic world in which I have existed for the past five years. Through the process of adhering to both, the *Arnya* lecture was conceived, evolved and has come to fruition.

I had often wondered throughout the process how far I could go with the utilisation and depiction of elements and aspects of ontology, epistemology and axiology. I was concerned about over-exposure or misuse of tribal knowledge and information. I'm even consciously aware of the use of the term 'fuse' in this aspect. Kovach (2019) states that 'there is a fundamental epistemological difference between Western and Indigenous thought, and this difference causes philosophical, ideological and methodological conflicts for Indigenous researchers' (p.29). I am totally committed to a practice whereby the knowledge of the *Arnya* Songline methodology maintain essence, integrity and wholeness. I have therefore been extremely careful to not let the Western academy override the Wik academy. I had to find a way for both sides to come together with their own protocols and criteria and work together to construct the new. Another way to frame this process is that my work orchestrates a coming together of the ways of two different academies, the Western and the academy of the Wik and Wikway. What I demonstrate here is a type of coexistence where each set of criteria and protocols is not compromised, but rather is upheld in its integrity yet they work together to create, explore and enable new forms of knowledge contribution and articulation to emerge.

Another question that arose in this process for me was: can ceremony allow for critical reflexivity, for critical thinking? This question is big. My response to this is 'yes it can and does', but here again process is critical and demands the upholding of fundamental protocols negotiated and reassessed on an ongoing basis. It is possible to offer a critique in this context. It is this new shared space of the coming together of First Nations methodology, of Wik and Wikway epistemology and academic criteria, that allows and initiates essential critique. The *Arnya* Songline methodology (which is a ceremony of process and protocols) in its construct has been critiqued in context and relation to this case study as I have sought to develop my argument and ideas to present here. This coming together is a recipe to manifest and offer for next-level awareness and knowledge paradigms and this is what *Arnya* has done. Kovach notes that 'a methodology that flows from a theoretical perspective that highly values "self-in-relation", such as auto-ethnography, will incorporate reflexivity as a necessary method to actualise its approach' … 'Evidence of self-reflexivity is

an acknowledgment by the researcher that her or his subjectivity may influence the research findings' (2009:33). *Arnya* is a result of the performative aspect and voice template of my me as an organic, human construct. This conceived and birthed genre encapsulates my life flow in context with the holistic kinship system as inherited through lineage and positioning.

This lecture – when seen, heard and experienced – takes the individual and collective observer/s into a process of receivership that goes beyond the non-performative, non-multi-modal and non-Indigenous methodological construct of the kind of lecture that I have learned to expect in the university. In terms of the Wik and Wikway foundations, a lot of the utilisation stemmed from an acquired and instilled knowledge base as well as a grounded, instinctive and spiritual template. In terms of the academic criteria, this was a different type of approach. This required much analytical and interrogative thought as well as citing of other academics and scholars to thicken and broaden the ideas and sense of an emergent identity finding form before the audience. The *Arnya* lecture depicts through creative multi-modal means, forms of contemporary life process, the struggles, the dynamics and all that is between and part-and-parcel of the realities of our manifested life experiences and ultimately our ongoing existence.

This process required me to familiarise myself with the narratives and offerings of others in the academy to create comparative and aligning discussion and arguments, so situating my project and performatively taking my place within broader discussions of concern to both First Nations and non-Indigenous scholars. To do this, I have had to research these narratives and find the connections – but not only find the connections, I also had to find the oppositional positions as well. In finding ways to talk about this in the exegesis I had to locate the gaps between what had been said and what I had found. This reading and thinking informed the development of the subsequent Acts. A new vocabulary and dialogue emerged as a result. This new fused language construct serves as a foundation for the script narrative and associated dramaturgy and multimodal choreography.

In short, academic criteria and demands challenged me to think and operate differently, even as I followed my instincts. I had to research, analyse, interrogate, critique, compare and link. Even though auto-ethnography is a form that uses biographical reflection as the

basis for analysis, I could not tell my life stories in the same way as before. As a result, different themes and tensions came to the fore. I could juxtapose audio-visual elements and the narration of specific events in ways that challenged audience expectations, with the aim of showing the process of Voice emergence as well as enacting it. In this way, the dynamic between Wik and Wikway ontology, epistemology, axiology and academic criteria directly initiated my conceptual revelation of a living epistemology as it took form in the *Arnya* lecture.

What I have demonstrated and offered here is a type of decolonising of the academy (Smith 1999). I hereby sing, dance and re-enact my contribution in accompaniment with the kinship collective.

Here stories and citations become enriched and expanded through nonverbal modes of performance adapted from the Wik and Wikway traditions I learned as a child primarily from my grandmother but also from the extended kinship collective. There is therefore much in this performance that will only be able to be registered by certain kin, and therefore not turned into anthropological knowledge. This refusal to explain and elaborate is an intrinsic aspect of my epistemology (See Audra Simpson 2014 on a Mohawk politics of refusal).

I share one example of this to make my point. Figure 40 shows my daughter, E. Awumpan, with her hands placed on her shoulders. Figure 41 shows tribal ceremonial gestures fused throughout the structured movement vocabulary. During this vocabulary, a series of gestures was depicted to portray the gesture collective vocabulary of the Wik during ceremony. This demonstrates the associated vocabulary and connections throughout the collective framework in terms of systems and processes. All aspects Wik and Wikway are presented not just through the physical bodies of myself and E. Awumpan but also through the presence and use of associated organic components (for example ochre clay from homeland) as well as artefacts (made from organic matter from homeland). Accompaniment is also demonstrated through use of multi-modal visuals (associated with country and kinship) as depicted.

Figure 41: E. Awumpan displays hands-on-shoulder ceremonial gesture. Pic courtesy of Baskin-Coffey and Lowe 2018.

Figure 42: The inclusion and display of Wik artefacts are also part of the visual narrative construct. Photo courtesy of Baskin-Coffey and Lowe 2018.

There is another vocabulary evidenced in the *Ngograchaahn* Songline Dreaming in the *Arnya* lecture presentation (Act 2) in which E. Awumpan depicts a movement interpretation I choreographed through gesture re-enactment and construction, drawing from a dream encounter/visitation I had with ancestors in relation to country and produce of country. This is the *iyee kundthak* at Arniyum encounter mentioned in Chapter 4. During Act 2 (*Ngograchaahn Songline Dreaming*) you hear the mention of this encounter through my live delivery of spoken narrative, and see a movement vocabulary depiction accompanying the vocabulary simultaneously. Likewise, in Idiwirra the final of the three acts, E. Awumpan takes the movement vocabulary to another level of construction methodology in which she produces and offers her own independent language through body gestures, physicality and re-enactment. E. Awumpan accompanies the spoken language through her personal interpretation of message conveyance as opposed to me constructing the vocabulary and in turn teaching her. A portion of the construction is also of a spontaneous (almost improvised) essence, received as an immediate result of the words being spoken at that point which is also influenced greatly by the tone and dynamic execution of the 'lecturer' i.e. myself. Being the youngest (participating in the academic space) living member born through our lineage, E. Awumpan's movement construction is takes on the form of the human physical form produced movement. It utilizes the human frame as a source of re-enactment (that is gestures produced by arms, hands, fingers, feet, head, steps, jumps, vocals etc) as well as through the release of breath flow throughout the movement vocabulary.

Conclusion

> To arrive at a lecture that comes to its point and does so with dazzling aplomb, but to re-value wandering ways: to distinguish the boredom that lectures characteristically instil from the ever-hovering attention they can incite; to court the counter-intuition of going on a journey with a wandering guide, then to share what is noticed – the marginal, the ephemeral – precisely because of the way that lecture holds you, as the necessary effect of its hover and drift. Midway between a sermon and a bedtime story, the lecture is knowledge's dramatic form. Nonfiction's lost performative: the lecture (Cappello:12).

As noted early in this exegesis, the auto-ethnographic method, as it informs the content and the first-person voice of the *Arnya* lecture, has guided my approach. In crafting the 'journey' enacted over the three Acts of this lecture, I have acknowledged and expressed the range of emotions that arose in the process of creating the actual lecture: they too determined narrative, construct and tone. It is important to acknowledge that the auto-ethnographical methodology has enabled me to self-position (as opposed to kinship positioning, Chapter 1: Footnote 31) throughout this analysis and out of this a new vocabulary of self-perception and of assertion has manifested. This is a fresh space, a fused space of the coming together of the old and new as a living epistemology in this new form. The auto-ethnographical has allowed me to bring the old with me on this journey. The old is heard through song, language and dance. They are seen in visual images depicted throughout. The protocol of collective presence has been scaffolded into the constructs to ensure relational accountability. The upholding of these processes has not been easy. I have had to resolve within myself the fact that these images would be displayed over and over again in a new, and potentially alienating, context. I had to risk those old girls becoming specimens all over again to an audience of strangers. The showing of images of loved ones who have passed carries much weight and responsibility. This practice cannot be done lightly, especially given the suspicious views held of universities by many of my extended networks of family, friends and colleagues.

To feel sufficiently comfortable to use the images of the two ancestors, I had to inform the primary family groups of this process and to carefully gauge their response or lack thereof, to my request. Responses depicted by main families determine the ultimate outcome. In this case, both primary families of the ancestors have acknowledged an awareness of what I am doing in the academy to my older sister, Lynette, back in the community. Lynette has remained my primary point of contact throughout. To do what I do in the way that I do, by insisting that Voice emergence cannot happen as it must without calling in the voices of ancestors and other authoritative kin in the various multimodal forms I have used, has placed enormous accountability on my shoulders.

I feel it is important also to acknowledge here that my commitment to this research and its attempts to walk and align with ancient practice in an unfamiliar space and territory has been personally costly and eroding to an extent. I have offered my own life as a living

epistemology to this process to creatively search for new ways of doing, being and knowing. These new ways of doing, being and knowing have in turn produced new knowledge and insights: knowledge and insights designed to participate in ongoing conversations and struggles being undertaken in academic circles and contexts. A PhD requires that one produces more than a regurgitating of old knowledge. My response to this challenge has been a utilisation of the old in order to re-produce a new in current and ongoing context (Miyarrka Media 2019). This research process has been life extending in response to the demands of academia. The stakes of such a positioning have been high, in terms of anxiety, stress, self-doubt, community scrutiny and, at times, suspicion, and they continue to be high throughout as this is unchartered territory. It continues to evolve in process, progress and innovation of this fifth wave revelation. Nonetheless, in this work I believe the *Arnya* lecture form serves me well. In joining with the other forms of performance lecture/lecture-performance structures created and utilised by a (global) collective of creatives within academia, I offer this specific construct here to model a new form of collective thinking-knowing and affirming of our knowledges, our epistemological commitments and the critical role of ancestral voice for the present and the future, new and old together, finding one voice in a form that is capable of engaging with, and drawing from, other voices, both First Nations and non-Indigenous, in new ways and new spaces. It is capable, I hope, of inspiring others: Of stirring them, as Capello puts it.

Many First Nation artists are concerned with the work of enlivening. For example, the arts collective Miyarrka Media (2019) talk about their exhibition and publication work with photography and story as making things live. To quote Paul Gurrumuruwuy:

> You have to show yourself with your body, who you are, your body, your identity … and people will see and straight away know who you are. That *gamunungu* gives out the knowledge and wisdom (p.14).

The *Arnya* lecture brings to life the essence of Voice. It does this through the multi-modal fused construct that it is. The different genres that make up its construct each play a different role in igniting, stimulating and affecting all others that encounter its delivery and flow. This is where my work differs from Wilson and others. I have made the connections wherein indeed the essence of ceremony is aligned and shared among and across the

process of First Nations methodologies in approach and unfolding, to create a lecture that functions as ceremony. The connections align in the areas of essence, spirituality, practice, process and upholding of protocols but where the *Arnya* lecture differs is that I embody the process in form and depiction. 'You have to show yourself with your body, who you are, your body' (p.14). I speak not only in written form and with the use of my tongue and voice box but I move in it as well and through that moving I am accompanied by the collective through the various genres (images/imagery/sounds/movement) that are scaffolded on to the depicted narrative of voice. My me becomes the Voice emergence stemming from beyond and grounded in lore. Voice emergence takes form and ultimately speaks through me, as me. 'That *gamunungu* gives out the knowledge and wisdom' (p.14), in contrast to the Yolngu and specifically in the case of my work it is *oolay Arnya* that flows through the work in all aspects and phases of the process. Wilson mentions intuition and of course relationality among the spaces of nations and kinship. My work depicts and articulates this foundation and then embodies it in portrayal and speech construct.

To return to the question of the failed or 'boring' lecture invoked at the beginning of this chapter, it would be an epic failure to be afforded a position to speak in any space, but specifically in this space, the space of academia and not affect, not move, not ignite, not invite in, not share spirit energy, not invoke others to experience their own form of flow in process. The *Arnya* lecture as a spirit-led First Nations methodologically based new genre of lecture has emerged and arrived, taking its place in the academy to articulate, effect and bring on new ways of being, seeing, doing, knowing, sharing, speaking, growing and loving. This is a new language in a new time for a new way of living. A new language has resulted from this study. This has resulted from the emergence and working together in accordance with the constructs of the Western academy, the spiritualities and guidance of Wik and Wikway ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies and all that is in between. My me (as a living epistemology) sits between the protocols of the Western constructs and the ways of my mother's lineage, which I have inherited. Voice emergence flows forth from lore, through the *Arnya* Songline methodology, manifesting as a living epistemology and framed, depicted and delivered through the *Arnya* lecture. This is an offering that has been ignited, led and guided by the spirits of lore and land. This has also been a form of reclamation, a reclamation of Voice and of process. This work speaks back to those who have seen us as

mere specimens to be investigated and analysed. It demonstrates and portrays our humanity in its multi-faceted aspects. The reclamation is activated and consolidated through this exegesis and the construct, portrayal and depiction/s presented through the *Arnya* lecture. Through me and this process, the voice of our lineage and nation is conveyed exposing the rawness of our hearts, minds and lives. It is also a reclamation of process through the adherence to the *Arnya* Songline methodology throughout. By adhering to Wik and Wikway lore systems this voice articulation has spoken from our standpoint as opposed to an outsider's view, perspective, standpoint and formed opinion/s. This work has reclaimed the sovereign right to speak our way. This is a response to the call for the Indigenising methodologies of which Tuhiwai-Smith speaks. Wik and Wikway have not compromised, abandoned or disregarded our own systems and protocols but instead through me in the position of scholar and fundamentally kin, have found and maintained a way of working in the middle space. We have found a way to work together for good. Through this process of reclamation, a healing essence will begin to flow, a healing activated as a consequence of acknowledging and addressing unfinished business and righting the wrongs of the past. The *Arnya* lecture provides a space through its construct and position to speak and thus to heal. The marriage of creative processes makes healing possible. All who encounter this genre in execution and portrayal will have experienced some form of affect, enabling the possibility of progression for the better. The *Arnya* lecture allows this form of process as a contribution among all present, that is, the speakers and carriers of voice and voice emergence as well as the receivers. The role of the encounters, visitations and re-visitations are fundamental in voice emergence and transference. I have been (and continue to be) the primary vessel and body of this process. May all those who have gone before continue to give back to and permeate the present that those of us on this side continue to inhabit as we work towards a collective healing in the wake of colonialism through the emergence and proclamation of voice at many registers and in many contexts across both old and new. In a sense, I have been used and worked in the same way as *kek*, a human spear. The *Arnya* Songline methodology as *thul* has positioned my me (as voice), propelling me forth through the utilisation of the combined workings of academic process and criteria and strict adherence to Wik and Wikway lore systems.

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It is critical to note that the *Arnya* Songline methodology is first and foremost specific to my immediate identity context and kinship positioning. It is also critically and immediately specific to the ontological, epistemological and axiological frameworks as upheld, taught and practiced specifically by Wik and Wikway and as demonstrated and handed down to me and as experienced by me. However, if you refer to the diagram you will see its adaptability and transferability to the human being in general. I refer to the first and immediate place of the spirit, a source of voice. We as humans have all inherently inherited this sacred place within. The second layer is also transferable by others (that is non-Wik/Wikway and non-First Nations) in terms that we are (at the point of writing this), living this experience as humans. The third layer is also applicable to all as these experiences are what is shared and had by all, although in different ways and to varying extents. The fourth layer may not be as easily translated or applicable by everyone. First Nations peoples (although not all) will be able to refer to songlines (as described and portrayed in this work) pertaining and relating to their own respective nations and countries. Non-First Nations people are able to utilise the concept of this layer and find the transferability as related to their individual context and identity profile. For example, where I mention cultural protocols in layer four this may be transferred to a set of values and morals as held by an individual. Where 'songlines' is mentioned could potentially be translated as the personal life or journey in an individual. Where the final layer of creative mode of expression and conveyance is depicted, again I would argue that this is a universal commonality we all share across the human community, although in different ways and to varying and different degrees. Creative modes of expression are transferable/adaptable in terms of the specific strengths, capabilities and talents of an individual. Where the lore is demonstrated in the conceptual diagram as two boomerangs holding the *Arnya* Songline methodology framework, this could once more be replicated as the non-Wik and Wikway individual's set of personal ethics and moral standards as well as personal individual cultural and identity positioning. This is a transferability that this work also offers to the communities beyond me and Wik and Wikway. Non-Wik and Wikway, non-First Nations as well as the academy and those who inhabit and work within and across the walls of the academy are able to refer to and utilise in varying ways as applicable in context. Please refer to my *Constellation of Relationality Methodology* diagram which serves as a contribution to the First Nations Methodologies

space. This specific five-step methodology is my offering to the academy. It is an offering to all those whom will find themselves navigating a similar route to refer to and use as a template guide to model their own process of standpoint positioning in creative research and analysis. It is critical to note here that each independent researcher will refer to the ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies of their respective lineages and cultural frameworks throughout process.

Epilogue

As I worked through the fine-tuning of this exegesis, particularly the conclusion of the final chapter, I became aware of a narrative that was playing out in my mind and belly place as I continued to detail and edit. Throughout the back-and-forth process, this independent narrative was speaking in a separate dialogue, revealing and highlighting a major thread that runs through this research process and only now reaching the forefront of my consciousness. I want to conclude with what I consider is a fundamental thread revelation. There are several aspects I will highlight.

I re-cap that I had once more approached the academy a couple of years after graduating with my Masters. During my Masters I had received the revelatory seed concept which grew to become known as *Dreaming Story Way*. It was a concept that encapsulated a process of an intent to address the dysfunctional and unhealthy aspects of trauma and trauma symptoms gripping First Nations people but specifically in my case the Wik and Wikway (including myself). My first attempt of entry to further my academic pursuits after a Masters level was prevented at that point as a consequence of my sudden cancer diagnosis early in 2014. I had to stall my desire to commence a PhD with that gifted concept in focus and instead address the diagnosis in terms of required and necessary treatment.

A second attempt to pursue academia (a year later) coincided with a head completely void of hair as a result of the chemotherapy I had undergone. Once I had gained entry to commence, clarification of my case study focus took several years.

Several days back when this current revelation was unfolding (as a secondary subconscious narrative) and as I worked through editing and finalising the different areas of this work, the following correlations were pushed to the forefront of my conscious realisation (an aspect of voice emergence in flow);

- My hair (for obvious reasons) commenced its regrowth as I in correlation commenced my journey towards my PhD trajectory, that is the organic growth of *ya'ngan* ran parallel to the organic growth of my academic and cases study progress and development.

- Consequential of a shift in supervisory dynamics and dialogue, a discussion on ancestral hair samples became the focus. Once this case focus was formalised and I commenced the process as required, I soon began to realise the organic nature of my hair growth. It feels, behaves and appears differently from how it did prior to the chemotherapy treatment. This may be an aspect that could be proven scientifically but I remain intent on highlighting this aspect in context.

- Following that specific collective discussion with my supervisors, it was spiritually confirmed within me (*mboormbwin* breath flow) that I should focus on this aspect of colonial intrusion and regime imposed on my ancestral kinship collective. As I developed further into the process my own hair (as already indicated) continued to grow rapidly in length, thickness and texture.

- During the gathering I articulate (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2) with my supervisor and research siblings the topic of hair once more that (for obvious reasons) became the focus of discussion and analysis with the dialogue vocalising the correlation between the ancestral samples and my own hair. The result of this is the footage created and incorporated into (Act 1) *Wik Cha'prah: Iyong cak chath tru chath*. This is also the point where I began to feel as if I too am a specimen. At this point, my interpretation is that I was experiencing a type of empathy with the two ancestors. I found myself imagining what the interactivity in that context might be like, sound like, look like, feel like. In hindsight, I now realise the beginnings of a type of sensuous embodying can be triggered to an extent.

- I have articulated that my perspective of Donald Thomson's taking of the samples is a type of spiritual tampering, of type of sorcery. This may not have been his conscious intent but from a cultural standpoint (and certainly my own), the correlations are there or can easily be made. As I dialogued with the research siblings and supervisor that day, I became acutely aware of my sovereign position in

place (in comparison with the ancestors) throughout the process in terms of where I was comfortable, whether I was comfortable or where (at times) I had experienced brewing sensations of intrusive practice or dynamics etc. stirring inside me. The contextual knowing or realisation that I was a sovereign and empowered participant in the unfolding process became pronounced in my awareness during that time. I continued to empathise with the two ancestors in terms of what they had experienced in the moment of the taking of their respective hairs 90-odd years before. In hindsight now, I realise that I had (sub) consciously commenced a type of transitioning as a type of specimen but on my own terms (and definitely with my conscious consent) for the purpose of not only fulfilling the academic study focus criteria but also as a living descendant who had inherited an opportunity to address unfinished business pertaining to generational and kinship obligations and responsibilities in this space and in this way.

- As opposed to the three First Nations artists I mention in Chapter 3, my methodology makes room for my me (in all aspects) to become the secondary case study to address the primary and stipulated focus. In that room that day I was empowered to articulate whether my hair could be touched, how it could be touched and why. For obvious reasons, the ancestors would not have had the opportunity to participate in this way, although I cannot say for sure how that context had played out during that time, considering what I have read and learned about the character of Donald Thomson in process and conduct.

- I had, in an organic sense, become a specimen for the sake of this case study process. A perfect specimen in a sense when you take into consideration the focus of anthropological and scientific 'hair and skin colour' regime[145], the two human components that were interrogated and justified the intrusive and abhorrent colonial regime imposed on First Nations people. Several days ago, I realised my me was tailor-made for this case study, in a sense. I began to acknowledge a type of realisation that I was almost appropriately suitable for this interrogation context. The growth of my hair, growing wildly in alignment with the process of Voice

[145] D'Arcy (2007) and Florek (2017).

emergence, was also both symbolic and organic. Genetically (and therefore naturally), my own hair is halfway between my biological parents and so is my skin colour, the perfect specimen. I am neither dark nor white: yes indeed, I am halfway. My hair is neither straight and wavey (as my father's) nor tight and frizzy (as my mother's). I am all resulting aspects in the middle. I am my own specimen in analysis for the empowerment of our voice articulation and conveyance. I am a type of specimen who speaks back through the guidance and essence of voice emergence and ancestral guidance.

- Through my summation here I want to highlight two aspects that are dominant in this thread of correlation and revelation. One is my hair return/regrowth, this relevant, specific and organic aspect of my organic body, that has been speaking a narrative of her own throughout this four-and-half year process. In correlation and through her return and growth, she has been symbolically depicting a return, an empowered emergence following the intrusive practice of chemotherapy. She symbolises her own sovereign and God-intended right to grow and emerge in order to exist and be in existence. You will see it demonstrated at the end of Act 3 *(Idiwirra)* in which I exercise and execute my sovereign voice and right to choose. I demonstrate this by demonstrating through dramatic re-enactment that as opposed to my hair getting cut or shaved by E. Awumpan, I instead gesture for her to brush my hair instead. The brushing of *ya'ngan* is symbolic of acknowledging my sovereign decision and my sovereign self, a right to consciously choose and pro-actively execute accordingly. The second aspect is my sovereign right to exist in my wholeness in full acknowledgment and celebration of my dual heritage. The term half-caste is to be debunked, discarded, trashed and killed off. I am a whole and living epistemology of a new organic narrative emerging out of dual heritage pro-creation. We are all (an emerged and resulting) whole and living epistemology regardless of lineage. Voice emergence continues to speak in ongoing and unfolding revelation. Indeed, it will continue to speak in its own flow. She can and will only be heard by those who are prepared to *nganyangai*, to listen. Listening and speaking have been fundamental throughout this case study and this process. I hope the reader has been able to listen, receive and connect.

And last of all I acknowledge and thank my old people, those that have gone before and laid the foundations on which I have drawn from, built on and been guided by. The Voices of old continues to live on through Voice Emergence.

Ooyombwith

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Glossary of Terms

Template of memories: A deep place of already knowing within one's spirit place. A place of resonance that makes connections and produces confirmation in ongoing occurrence and happenings in context.

Living present: The ongoing present now. That which is organically in existence and flowing in the now.

Voice emergence: A process of voice revelation, manifestation and speech in flow.

Kinship positionality: A positioning of an individual as determined by the kinship protocols of one's lineage affiliation. Is referring to the placing of individuals throughout the kinship network system according to kinship systems and protocols. This determines the roles and responsibilities one inherits in terms of personal responsibilities not only to self but also in relation to the broader kinship matrix.

Cobweb matrix: The complex and detailed framework of kinship connectivity and the protocols and principles as determined by this system.

Instinctive and spiritual flow in process: A process that organically and inevitably flows. An *Arnya*-led process and unfolding in flow.

Voice wave: An aspect of voice emergence which presents at a particular time in a specific way.

Truth speak: An emergence of what is essentially true and specific to context. Determined by the wisdoms of spirit.

Spirit truth: Truth of the spirit. Truth that is of the spirit.

Voice response in sovereignty: An assertion of voice emergence speaking in the essence of truth and sovereignty in context of position.

Guidance template of operations: The foundational template which prompts and guides decision-making and approach in and to process.

Techniques of voice emergence: The different modes and genres of how the spirit essence of voice emerges and presents in articulation.

Mboormbwin breath flow (MBF): refers to a process encountered (by the author) regarding the consolidation and confirmation of *wisdomic* knowledge in relation to the teachings of the lore and the present moment in flow. This process translates as a sensation or *rush*, beginning in my nasal passage and flowing down into my throat, moving down through my chest and settling in my belly area. My being translates this as an acknowledgment and confirmation of its sincerity.

Self-person/Body: Refers to the separate and individual aspect of self both as an eternal self as well as in human form and human existence.

Me: Same as self-person.

Existential review: Refers to the lived life experience of a person in review or hindsight of life flow to date.

Spirit listening: Listening with the spirit as opposed to just audible reception. This works together with *Arnya* voice. Reception, communication, language and translation is of the spirit. Intuition, instinct, (dreams which the author refers to as encounters, visitations and re-visitations) and *gut talk* are part of this language.

Dual Timeline for Aurukun and Weipa[146]

1605-1606: The first recorded contact between Europeans and Aboriginal Australia was near Aurukun on the Janszoon voyage.

1896: Archibald Meston reported on the First Nations of Cape York Peninsula, stating that the whole western coast of Cape York Peninsula from the Mitchell River to the Jardine was 'in absolute possession of the wild tribes'.

1898: Weipa Aboriginal Mission (first known as the Embley River Mission) established at Spring Creek.

1904: Arthur Richter, on behalf of the Presbyterian Church, established a mission on this stretch of coastline at the Archer River.

1913: Richter leaves Aurukun with a population of 51.

1919: Mission re-located to a nearby site due to water shortages and poor soil quality.

1920s: Missionaries at Aurukun raised extra income by selling sandwood and bech-de-mer collected by the residents, although over time these industries became unreliable.

1921: Roy George Uluchngoon/Twangul born at old Weipa mission to Old George Waukmatha of the Mbaiwum/Trotj and Old Ethel Athelpun.

1924-1965: The Reverend J W MacKenzie (Bill MacKenzie) became the superintendent at Aurukun. Shortly after the arrival of the MacKenzie's, families from the Kendall and Holroyd Rivers also settled at the mission.

1925: Jean George Awumpan born at Aurukun to Dick Kelinda, an Alngith man of Weipa and Nyrlotte, an Apalich woman of Wathaniin.

1931: Rev. Samuel McKay appointed superintendent, Weipa Mission. 1931-1932, Weipa Mission moved from Spring Creek down to the waterfront at Jessica Point (now known as Napranum) by Rev. McKay.

1933-1943: Fifteen removals from Aurukun were made under the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* 1897 (and subsequent amendment Acts).

1938: Mr James Sidney Winn and Mrs Berry Syme Winn (nee Graham) appointed superintendent and served until June 1963.

1939: *The Aboriginals Presentation and Protection Act* (Queensland) came into force.

1942: First Japanese air raid on Horn Island, Torres Strait.

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[146] Information for Dual Aurukun and Weipa Time-line extracted from: Queensland Government www.qld.au/atsi/cultural-awareness.heritage-arts/community-histories/community-histories-a-b/community-histories-aurukun
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurukun_Queensland
Whispers of this Wik Woman by Fiona Doyle (2004). University of Queensland Press. www.uqp.edu.au

1942: Jean George Awumpan and Roy George Twangul walk to Weipa as newlyweds accompanied by Old Matthew and Mariah of the Liningithi as well as Twangul's brother old Benny George.

1943: Awumpan gives birth to her first child, Annie Athailpun (mother of author).

1939-1945 (World War II): Younger girls from the Aurukun dormitory are released back to their parents while all the older girls are married off.

1948: Dick Kelinda, father of Awumpan and councillor of Aurukun Mission, passed away.

1950s: Cases of tuberculosis identified. Malnutrition, housing and water shortages as well as overcrowding in the dormitory were reported.

1953: Seven men were removed to Palm Island for causing an 'uprising' over low wages for compulsory mission work.

1955: Discovery of bauxite by Harry Evans at the red cliffs known as Pera Head.

1956: Exploration, surveying, mapping and drilling of Weipa bauxite deposits commenced by Enterprise Exploration Pty Ltd.

1956: Top Camp established by Enterprise Exploration, operating until 1967. Area known traditionally as Munthing.

1958: Comalco granted a bauxite mining lease incorporating the majority of Weipa and Mapoon mission reserves.

1964: Director for Native Affairs, Patrick Killoran, forcibly removed protesting residents from Mapoon.

1965: Awumpan's first grandchild, Lynette Jean, born at Thursday Island, Torres Strait.

1965: New Village at Weipa Mission (Napranum) officially opened by the Queensland Minister for Education, Hon. J. C. A. Pizzey.

1967: Aboriginal people first given citizenship and the right to vote and inclusion in the national census under the 1967 National Referendum which gave the Commonwealth control in Aboriginal Affairs over the states.

1966: End of Mission era at Weipa

1966: APBM[147] handed control of Weipa mission to Sub-Department of Native Affairs.

1968: Jessica Point State School officially opened.

1971: The *Aborigines Act* 1971 (Queensland) came into force.

1972: Opening of Aurukun Post Office.

1973: Weipa Aborigines Society formed.

1974: John Koowarta (Winchanam) instigates the process to purchase the Archer River Cattle Station which covers much of the Wik people's traditional homeland using funds provided by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission.

[147] Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions.

- The Government of Queensland blocks the sale before it could be completed by directing the Queensland Minister of Lands not to approve the sale.

1974: The school at Aurukun opened on 29 January and caters for students from pre-prep to Year 7.

1975: The Queensland Government, under Premier Bjelke-Petersen, passed legislation which facilitated bauxite mining on the Aurukun Aboriginal Reserve.

- The Aurukun Associates Agreement Act (1975) (Queensland) required a mining consortium to pay 3% of profits into an 'Aboriginal Welfare Fund' as compensation to the residents. The government claimed to have consulted the community and obtained agreement on the compensatory measures included in the legislation.
- The Aurukun residents, including the then Chairman of the Aurukun council, disagreed and obtained a Supreme Court injunction against Killoran, giving rise to the 1978 case of Corporation of the Director of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement v Peinkinna & Ors.
- The matter went to the Privy Council in London, ceasing mining in the area for three years (pending the Privy Council's decision).
- Eventually the case was lost by Peinkinna and on appeal the Queensland Government was granted permission to continue mining the area.

1978: The Queensland Government decided to take over the administration of both the Aurukun and Mornington Island missions. Both communities were against this, and protested, seeking the help of the Federal Government.

1979: Roy George Uluchngoon Twangul passed away at Weipa Hospital.

1987: The Wik and Kugu Art Centre opened, making it the oldest established art centre on Cape York Peninsula.

1991: Name of the DOGIT (Deed of Grant in Trust) area changed from Weipa to Napranum.

1992: First Rrutjuk Aboriginal Cultural Festival staged at Napranum.

1993: Napranum Wik and Wikway (Alngith/Liningith) Elder Jean George Awumpan met Prime Minister Paul Keating to discuss the Mabo decision and native title.

1993: Napranum Aboriginal Corporation (NAC) formed to take over from the Weipa Aborigines Society.

1993: Wik Peoples claim filed in the Queensland District Registry of the Federal Court of Australia.

1995: Weipa Aborigines Society officially handed over to the Napranum Aboriginal Corporation.

1996: Justice Drummond rejected the Wik claim in the Federal Court.

1996: Remains of a child taken from the Embley River area early in the 20th century were returned to Napranum. The remains had been kept by the Queensland Museum.

1996: Judgement of the High Court of Australia in the Wik case found that the Comalco Agreement and mining leases were valid. However, it also found that pastoral leases granted under the *Queensland Land Acts* did not 'confer rights of exclusive possession on the lessee, giving birth to the notion that pastoral leases and native title could coexist. Gladys Tybingoompa (aunty to author), made history when she danced outside the courts in Canberra in celebration of the finding.

1997: John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia, released The Ten Point Plan summarising the Australian Government's response to the Wik judgment.

1998: Agreement between Jean George Awumpan, Ronnie John and a third member of the Napranum community was signed at Cape York Land Council in regard to title to Alngith country. Awumpun relinquished primary claims to Alngith country north of the Embley River under considerable pressure from legal and professional representatives of the Cape York Land Council.

2000: Awumpan suffers a minor stroke, recovers and continues her fight for traditional recognition of Alngith Country.

2000: Jean George Awumpan submits a letter of retraction to the Cape York Land Council regarding the agreement signed by Ronnie John, a third person and herself in reference to the segregation of traditional estates over Alngith Country.

2001: Western Cape Communities Coexistence Agreement (WCCCA) signed at Evans Landing, Weipa, between the Peoples of the Western Cape, the Federal Government and Comalco. Awumpan signs the agreement as an Alngith Elder and an Alngith Wikway Elder. Subsequently, Awumpan suffers a second stroke but recovers once more.

2003: *Whispers of this Wik Woman* (a biography on Jean George Awumpan and written by the author) receives national David Unaipon Award.

2004: Awumpan is living with her eldest grand-daughter Lynette Jean in the same area she and her husband Roy George Uluchngoon Twangul moved into in 1965 with eight-month-old Lynette.

2004: Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung (author) moves to Brisbane with then husband and three daughters.

2005: Jean George Awumpan passes away at Weipa.

2006: *Whispers of this Wik Woman: The Play* makes its debut at Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts, Judith Wright Centre for Contemporary Arts, Brisbane.

2015: Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung moves back to Napranum with three daughters.

2016: Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung takes up position as Deputy Mayor at Napranum Aboriginal Council.

2016: Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung opens up Napranum's first Art Gallery *Yepenyi/Awumpan* Art Gallery.

2017: Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyung ceases operation of Yepenyi Awumpan Art Gallery and relocates to Cairns to commence full-time PhD studies at James Cook University, Cairns campus.

2019: Sheridan Nyrlotte (eldest daughter) gives birth to author's first grandson Lucas Waukmatha[148] King-Teitzle.

2019: Wikway families re-enter discussion with Oresome Mining re proposal to access tribal country at Arniyum. There is a strong consensus among (the majority) of families (Kelinda lineage) to protect

[148] Great-grandfather of FWGO. Lucas W is sixth generation down from Waukmatha (Old George) of the Mbaiwum/Trotj.

Arniyum (and nearby Ngorinum – both with sacred *nyim nyim* story places) from access, tampering and potential destructive outcomes resulting from proposed intrusive activity on country.

2020: Justice Athailpan (middle daughter) marries Thainaquith descendant Phillip Mango at Kumraja (Rocky Point).

2021: Sheridan Nyrlotte gives birth to author's second grandson Archer Mambroong[149] King-Teitzle.

[149] *Mambroong*: translates 'Strong' (Alngith language).

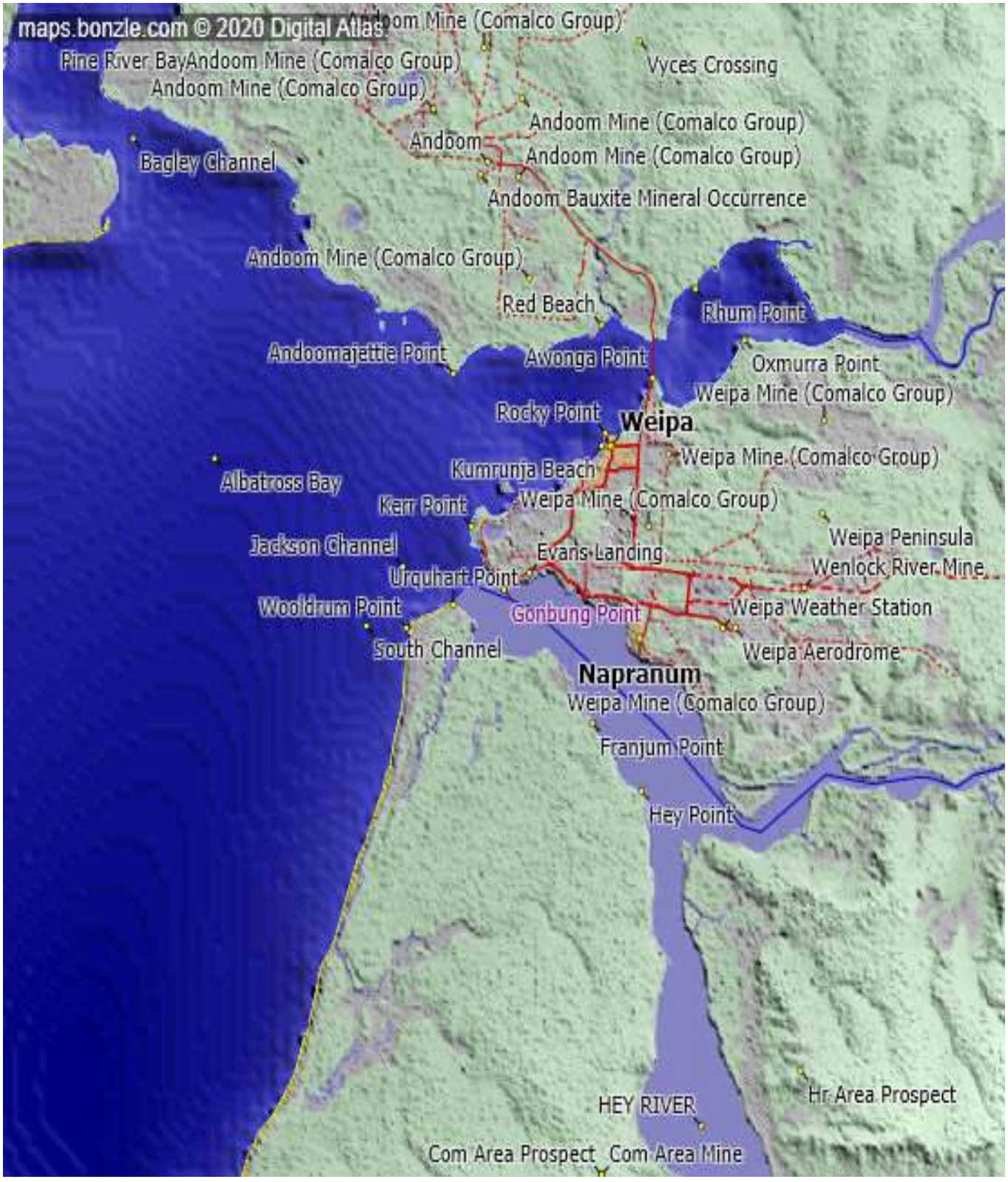
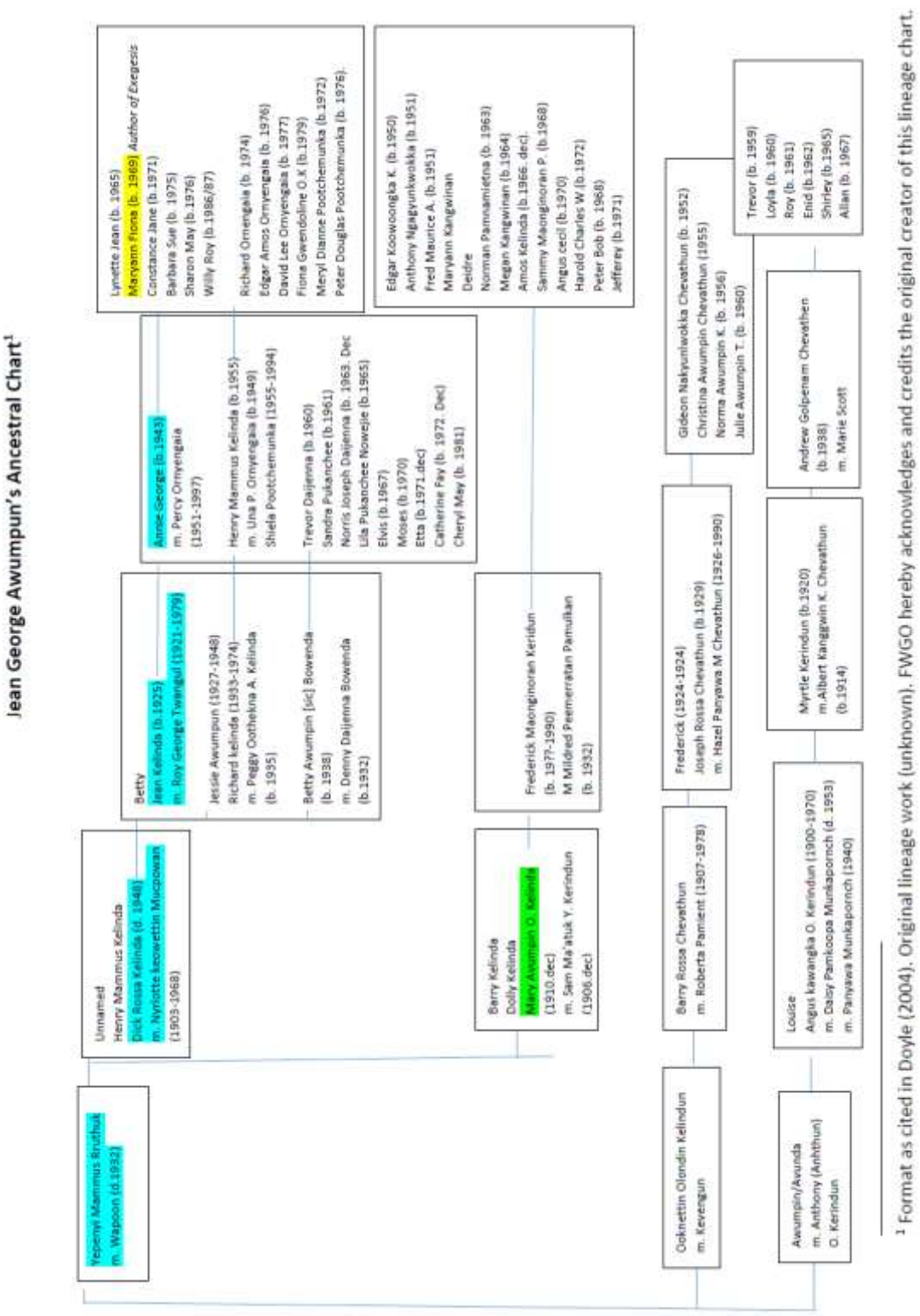


Figure 43: Map of Weipa, Napranum and surrounding areas. Motmot and Cumbin Dreaming: Gonbung Point rests on the north side of the Embley River. Bung Point (here indicated as Urquhart Point) rests on the south side. Note portion of country mined or is under the threat of mining.

Lineage Kinship Chart



[1] Format as cited in Doyle (2004). Original lineage work (unknown). FWGO hereby acknowledges and credits the original creator of this lineage chart.

Figure 44: Lineage Kinship Chart

FWGO Constellation of Relationality Methodology © 2021

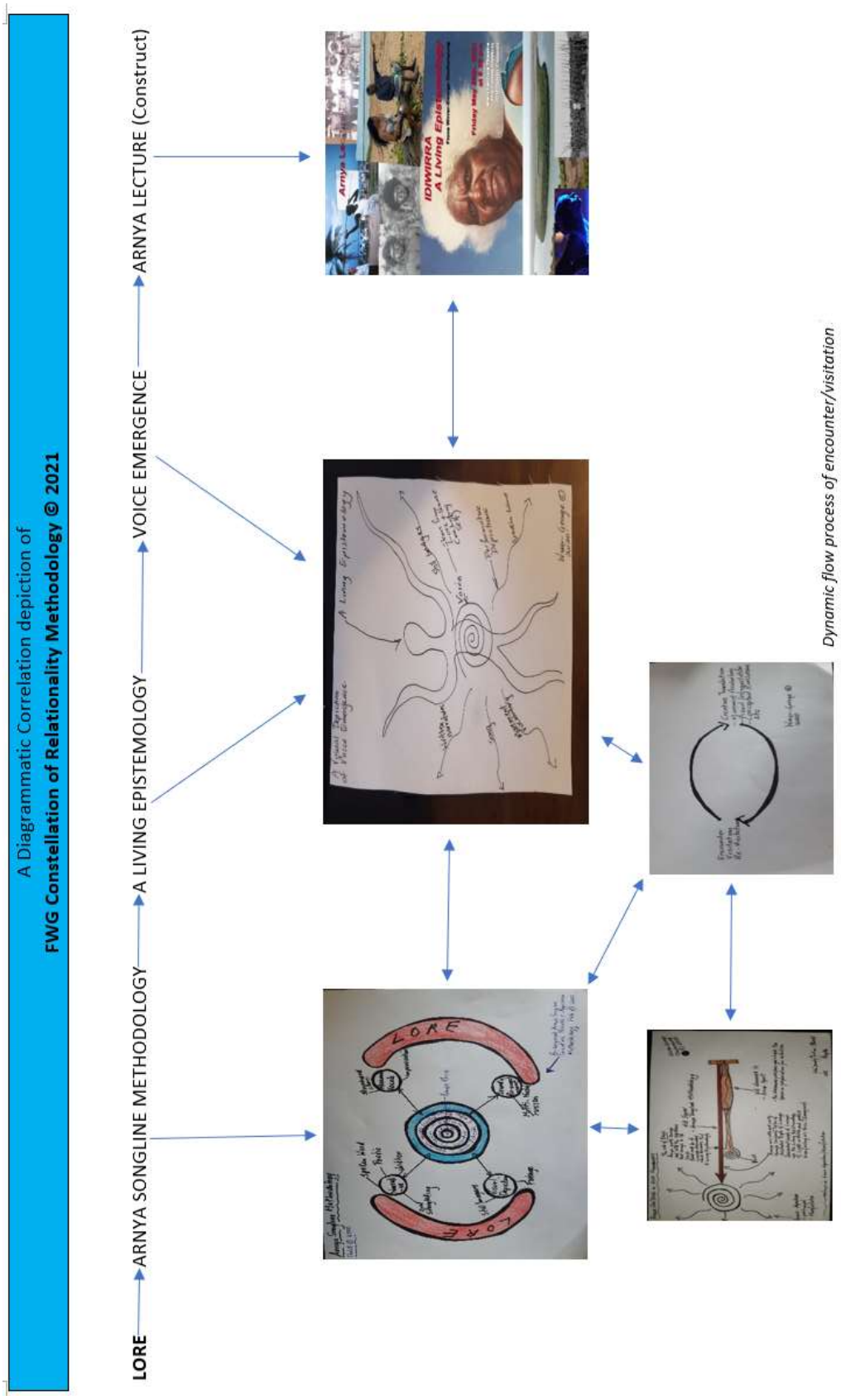


Figure 45: FWGO Constellation of Relationality Methodology © 2021