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General editor: Lisa Strelein

Front cover: Husking coconuts at Yarrabah, 1931, negative 166108, State Library of Queensland. The entire image is included as Figure 3 in Gary Osmond's paper, "'Pride of Yarrabah' Yarrabah's annual sports days as historical Aboriginal spaces".

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons are respectfully advised that this publication contains names and images of deceased persons, and culturally sensitive material.

EDITORIAL

Over the past few months, the ethics team here at AIATSIS has been ramping up training, coaching and other engagement activities to support the implementation of the new *AIATSIS code of ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research* (AIATSIS 2020). Highlighting ethical research standards and practice is an integral part of the editorial decisions for *AAS*. While many researchers have been familiar with the AIATSIS ethics guidelines for more than two decades, AIATSIS is increasingly playing a significant role in promoting ethical research and engagement by governments, both in policy and program design, and in data analysis and evaluation.

As we put this edition of the journal to press, the Closing the Gap implementation plan (Commonwealth of Australia 2021) has been released, alongside the first report on the progress of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. For the first time, the Indigenous community-controlled sector was involved in decisions about what targets would be set. Beyond the targets, though, the National Agreement established four priority reforms:

- formal partnerships and shared decision making
- building the community-controlled sector
- transforming government organisations
- shared access to data and information at a regional level.

The evidence base that informs these priority reforms is only beginning to be explored and the importance of these underpinning commitments to change is yet to be fully appreciated by governments. The papers in this issue of *AAS* engage with different aspects of this evidence base, particularly in recognising the strength and value of the community-controlled sector, genuinely appreciating how and why community control is exercised, and understanding the difference that Indigenous-led data can make to better outcomes.

'Data for action: the Family and Community Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (FaCtS) Study' by Katherine Thurber et al. is an example of such innovative work. This Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led and governed study, the largest study of its kind to date, aims to improve understanding of family and community safety and violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It provides evidence-based data from diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in self-nominated communities. The information gleaned is a basis for informing effective community, policy and service responses to support family and community safety and to improve service provision for those exposed to or involved in violence.

Heidi Norman goes to the heartland of the Aboriginal community-controlled sector in 'Aboriginal Redfern *then* and *now*: between the symbolic and the real'. Norman investigates Aboriginal people's connections with Redfern using oral history and archival research to show that involvement reaches back well before the flourishing of activism, cultural production and identity in the 1970s that Redfern is known for. Norman examines Aboriginal residents' far-reaching connections with the local economy, and Redfern as a workplace, home and place of possibilities. The fast-paced changes facing the neighbourhood, housing and the Redfern riots feature. As the author notes, the paper 'contributes an understanding of Aboriginal worlds in Redfern … shaped by transformation amidst historical inheritances'.

'"Pride of Yarrabah": Yarrabah's annual sports days as historical Aboriginal spaces' by Gary Osmond examines the changing role of sports days at Yarrabah mission in North Queensland since 1892. It is not the well-worn story of omnipotent oppression by religious authorities (though they certainly aimed to control and manage people). Instead, Osmond shows mission residents exercising agency in repurposing aspects of

religion, sport and social events to develop and support their sense of identity as an Indigenous community. Oral history with Yarrabah residents and mission records document the community ownership and meaning making from this cultural event. Like Norman's paper, we see the significance of oral history in presenting richer, deeper histories of people and place.

The importance of looking to the future in preserving the past is demonstrated in 'Archiving First Nations media: the race to save Australia's First Nations community media and cultural collections'. This timely paper by Daniel Featherstone et al. explores the pressing need to look after collections from the heady days of early Aboriginal broadcasting in the 1970s and 1980s. Preserving, archiving and access are vital for Aboriginal-produced media such as television and audio material, which are often in analogue form and can degenerate rapidly. The authors propose how this vital history can be kept safely, and can be managed and accessed by communities. They discuss First Nations Media Australia's development of strategies to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control of these rich social and cultural heritage collections and how on-country archiving work supports local decision-making processes.

While we are looking to the future, I would like to welcome on board our new assistant editors, Professor Elizabeth Grant from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, Maxwell Brierty (Mitropoulis) from the University of Queensland and book review editor Professor Heidi Norman from the University of Technology Sydney. They bring a wealth of knowledge, critical eyes and ideas to *AAS*. Their handiwork will be apparent in the journal from the next issue onward. We are still seeking expressions of interest for the Editor of *AAS* and we will shortly be issuing an invitation to AIATSIS members to guest edit future editions, contributing to its evolution as a journal that represents excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and scholarship.

Dr Lisa Strelein
Editor

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Data for action: the Family and Community Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (FaCtS) Study

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Abstract: *This paper describes the development, methodology, methods and final data resource for the Family and Community Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (FaCtS) Study. Improving family and community safety is a priority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, and governments, but to date insufficient appropriate evidence has underpinned action. The FaCtS Study aims to improve understanding of family and community safety and violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.*

In the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led and governed study, 18 communities covering very remote, remote, regional and urban areas self-nominated to participate. Although a single approach will not work for the diverse range of communities, FaCtS data provide valuable insight to inform a broad range of effective community, policy and service responses to support family and community safety and to improve service provision for those exposed to or involved in violence. The study also serves as an exemplar of ethical research, demonstrating the application of community-based action research principles, reciprocity and local data ownership. To maximise the benefit that can come from the study, anonymised data will be available to communities, academics, services and government agencies for approved research purposes under Indigenous data governance arrangements.

This paper describes the development, methodology, methods and final data resource for the Family and Community Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (FaCtS) Study. Improving family and community safety has been identified as a priority by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, and Commonwealth, state and territory governments (COAG 2011; DATSIPD 2000; SNAICC et al. 2017). Enduring trauma caused by colonisation and oppression has led to high levels of violence in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (DATSIPD 2000; SNAICC et al. 2017). Acknowledging this unique context, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children are a Key National Priority Area in the current (2019–2022) *Fourth action plan: national plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2010–2022* (Commonwealth of Australia 2019). There is, therefore, a clear need for approaches to improve safety — by addressing intergenerational trauma and lasting inequities — that are appropriate and acceptable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Sherwood 2013; SNAICC et al. 2017; The Lancet Public Health 2018).

Violence takes many forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, economic and sexual violence (Andersson and Nahwegahbow 2010). The World Health Organization defines violence as:

> the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. (Krug et al. 2002:5)

Based on the World Health Organization's definition of interpersonal violence (Krug et al. 2002:6), the FaCtS Study defined family violence as violence between family members (including but not limited to intimate partner violence and domestic violence), which is commonly but not always experienced and perpetrated in the home. Forms of violence included in the study were physical, emotional (including verbal and financial) and sexual violence. The FaCtS Study defined community violence as violence between individuals who are not related, and which is commonly experienced and perpetrated outside of the home; those experiencing community violence may or may not know the perpetrator of violence (see Krug et al. 2002:6).

Violence is among the leading causes of injury and death globally (Haagsma et al. 2016; Naghavi et al. 2017). In the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, family and community violence is a substantial cause of morbidity and mortality. For example, it was estimated to contribute to 11 per cent of the burden of disease among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women aged 18–44 years, more than any other single factor (Webster 2016:4). The FaCtS Study focuses on violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, but it is critical to note that violence is not part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture (SNAICC et al. 2017; Commonwealth of Australia 2019), and that violence is not an issue restricted to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; violence also occurs in the non-Indigenous population.

Existing national evidence about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' experiences of violence is limited to national quantitative surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS), and small-scale localised studies and program evaluations (Olsen and Lovett 2016). The ABS surveys collect data on the prevalence of exposure to physical or threatened physical violence, and the relationship between the people experiencing and perpetrating the violence. Such data have been useful for estimating the prevalence of physical and threatened physical violence; however, it does not capture other experiences of violence, nor does it enable contextualisation of violent experiences, or provide information on service gaps. NCAS collects information on understandings of, and attitudes about, violence against women, attitudes about gender equity and preparedness to intervene when witnessing violence, and includes a small sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (n = 342 in the 2017 survey) (Cripps et al. 2019). While contributing important information, NCAS only considers violence against women, and assumes a conception of gender equity that does not necessarily resonate

with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' culture and may not be appropriate for understanding violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Further, Western feminist approaches can promote punitive responses to violence, which are insufficient and counter-productive to addressing the complex factors that contribute to violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Atkinson 2002a). Family and community violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is understood to be caused by underlying factors such as colonisation and family structure breakdown — rather than gender equity beliefs (Partridge et al. 2018). Further, these data collections were not developed or conducted in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, and therefore have insufficient inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and methodologies.

There has been an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led responses to family violence in the past 20 years (Olsen and Lovett 2016). In 1999 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence released its report on violence in Queensland; this seminal report highlighted the extent and causes of violence and types of violence experienced, and made recommendations to the Queensland Government for change (DATSIPD 2000). Since the report, much work has been done to better understand family and community violence. For example, in recent years, researchers and community organisations have:

- examined barriers to accessing services (Prentice et al. 2017; Putt et al. 2017; Titterton 2017), barriers to disclosing violence (Prentice et al. 2017) and help-seeking behaviours (Fiolet et al. 2019)
- conducted evaluations of local programs (AFVPLS Victoria 2017; Duley et al. 2017; KPMG 2018; Struthers et al. 2019), including drawing out common features of successful programs (Blagg et al. 2018; Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2016; Gallant et al. 2017; Shepherdson et al. 2018)
- developed conceptual models (Partridge et al. 2018), policy frameworks (SNAICC et al. 2017) and practice frameworks examining the causes of violence and how to best address violence (Andrews et al. 2018; Milroy et al. 2018; Partridge et al. 2018).

This body of work underscores the importance of addressing violence and improving family and community safety in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Despite the increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led responses to family violence, we lack a published evidence base on the effectiveness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific approaches (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2016; Gallant et al. 2017; Olsen and Lovett 2016). This lack of evaluation evidence is related to funding constraints whereby funding is often short-term and intermittent, which poses barriers to developing effective relationships between services and communities and comprehensively evaluating programs. In turn, government funding is often limited to models 'proven' to be effective (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse 2016; Olsen and Lovett 2016).

None of the existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific data resources enable a comprehensive exploration of:

- the nature of violence experienced by men and women
- the root causes of violence
- use of existing individual, family and community-level supports and services by those experiencing and using violence (AIHW 2018; Al-Yaman et al. 2006)
- opportunities to improve service responses
- opportunities for violence prevention (Olsen and Lovett 2016).

This information is required to inform approaches to reduce the burden of family and community violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities (AIHW 2018; Olsen and Lovett 2016). Furthermore, it is critical that this information is generated by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of findings (Commonwealth of Australia 2019). Use of Indigenous methodologies is also essential for producing ethical, informed and actionable research. However, to date, no national studies have been Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander-led and incorporated Indigenous methodologies.

Recognising these evidence and methodological gaps, and the importance of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander-led and governed research, the FaCtS Study was funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services to contribute to answering an overarching question: What would it take to effectively address family and community violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities? The key aims of the FaCtS Study were to examine:

- the extent of exposure to violence among participants
- the social impacts of violence, including on relationships, health, wellbeing, education and workforce participation
- the availability, access, usage and effectiveness of services or other supports relating to violence
- what is needed to reduce exposure to, and the effects of, violence in communities.

Methods

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership is critical to generating meaningful data and findings that can underpin action with the greatest potential for impact. In line with this, the FaCtS Study was Aboriginal-led and had an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance structure, and a majority of the people who conducted the study are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The study design was informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and ethical principles (AIATSIS 2012; NHMRC 2018).[1] Given the sensitive nature of the study, the names of participating communities are kept confidential, including in any publications arising from the data.

The FaCtS Study was governed by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Study Advisory Group, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Advisory Groups (CAGs) in each participating community, and the Study Executive Group. More information on these groups and the governance structure is outlined in the appendix.

Study population

The FaCtS Study was conducted in partnership with 18 communities. The study team sought nominations from communities to participate, rather than adopting the traditional approach of recruiting specific communities. Self-nomination was crucial to communities being ready to engage with the study. The opportunity for community self-nomination was promoted through existing research–community relationships, local community organisations and events, conference stalls, and social and traditional media. To nominate, a community organisation was required to complete a self-nomination form and sign a service-level agreement. The agreement outlined the responsibilities required and associated funding provided to the community to conduct the research.

Participating communities were from very remote, remote, regional and urban areas in Australia and represented diversity in terms of the availability of violence-related services in their communities. The study was not designed to be nationally representative. A nationally representative sample was not necessary or desirable to achieve the study's aims (Rothman et al. 2013). The intention of the study was to capture diverse perspectives from across geographic locations and community contexts in terms of age, gender and experiences of violence. Internal comparisons such as these are generalisable beyond the participant sample. Further, it was vital to the community-based nature of the study that communities self-nominated: this precluded nationally representative data being obtained. Further, available resources (funding and time) limited the number of communities that could be included in the study.

Community-based action research

To support meaningful community participation and ensure community benefit from the research, the study was underpinned by a community-based action research framework (see Guthrie et al. 2020:25–6). Within this framework, a strengths-based approach was applied; for example, factors protective against violence and characteristics that support effective service provision were investigated. A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating qualitative and quantitative research components with service mapping.

The development, modification and implementation of the interview schedule and survey instruments were led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The study was purposefully designed to avoid reifying decontextualised

Table 1: Overview of FaCtS Study components

		Community members		Service providers	
Community Researcher capacity building	**Service mapping**	**Community Member Survey**	**Interviews and focus groups**	**Service Provider Survey**	**Interviews**
		Participants			
>30	18 communities	1584	105	98	41
Practical research skills required to conduct focus groups and interviews, and to conduct a quantitative survey of community members, including recruitment requirements and strategies, data collection, and safety and distress protocols.	Identification of services currently operating in the local area that could provide support around the experience or use of violence.	Experience and definition of family and community safety and violence; the impacts of violence; service availability, use and gaps; culture and cultural identity; demographic information; and social factors.	Perception of violence in the community, impacts of violence in the community, resilience and protective factors in the community, what community safety looks like, how safety can be improved, what responses to violence are working, and what other responses to violence are needed.	Availability of services, collaboration between organisations, responses to violence, cultural safety, gaps in service provision, and perceived barriers and enablers to improved service delivery.	Accessibility and effectiveness of current services, service gaps, and opportunities for improved service delivery.

assumptions about violence and its causes. As such, the study was designed to capture information about a breadth of historical, social, cultural and environmental factors and their relationship to violence. Further, it was designed to capture exposure to and use of violence for both men and women, and their corresponding service needs. This recognises that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, regardless of gender, have been exposed to early life trauma or adverse experiences, which may increase their later risk of exposure to or use of violence (Atkinson 2002b). The study did not assume a common definition of violent behaviours but allowed participants to report specific types of behaviours that they had been exposed to, and to identify what they considered to constitute violence.

Study components

Study components comprised Community Researcher capacity building, service mapping, surveys of community members and service providers, interviews and focus groups with community members, and interviews with service providers (Table 1). The Community Researcher and participant recruitment methods varied by community, according to the approach deemed most suitable by each CAG. For example, some communities recruited participants using advertising in local media and/or through existing community groups (such as Elders groups, men's groups and women's groups).

Community members participated in the research by either completing a survey or participating in a focus group and/or interview, and were compensated for their contribution with a voucher. The value of the voucher was at the discretion of each CAG. In most communities, it was $30. In some communities, participants decided to collectively donate their vouchers to a local violence support service. Service providers participated in the research by either completing a survey and/or an interview, but were not eligible to receive a voucher: it was deemed that they were providing information in line with their occupational role and were supported by their employer to do so during work hours.

(1) Community Researcher capacity building

With assistance from its CAG, each participating community identified one individual as a local coordinator to drive the research process at the community level and to serve as the main point of contact for the study team. Communities also

identified (usually two) people suitable to work as Community Researchers, based on their professional, cultural and community experience. While all communities identified local people to be trained as Community Researchers, the FaCtS Study provided the option of having a study team member conduct interviews and focus groups, should a community feel it was not appropriate for a community member to do so.

A training manual was developed for each community and was used by study team members to deliver face-to-face training to the Community Researchers in that community. Face-to-face training involved conducting a training session at the beginning of the visit, which took around three hours. It focused on practical research skills for conducting focus groups, interviews and surveys of community members. It also outlined recruitment requirements and strategies, data collection, and safety and distress protocols for participants and Community Researchers. After this training session, the study team provided ongoing support, which varied based on the previous experience of the Community Researchers. In some instances, Community Researchers were very experienced and needed only occasional support for the remainder of the data collection. In other instances, Community Researchers were supported to conduct their first interviews and focus groups, with advice and guidance provided over the course of several days. Ongoing support was provided to all communities after the initial visit, and the study team visited some communities several times. After the training, Community Researchers conducted quantitative and qualitative data collection, in collaboration with the study team.

(2) Service mapping

The study team worked with each community to identify services in the local area that could provide support around the experience or use of violence. Mapping included a breadth of services, including police, night patrol, legal services, safe houses, shelters, refuges, hostels, family violence or family support services, counselling or mental health services, housing services, Centrelink, Child Protection or Community Services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation and Aboriginal Medical or Health Services. The scope of each service was determined and used to inform potential service gaps in the community.

A desktop review of current services was undertaken by the study team. Initial findings were discussed, updated and confirmed with each CAG. Details on community members' awareness of services and perspectives on their accessibility and appropriateness were captured through the quantitative and qualitative study components.

(3) Community Member Survey

A Community Member Survey (CMS) collected information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' experiences and definitions of family and community safety and violence; the impacts of violence; service availability, use and gaps; culture and cultural identity; demographic information; and social factors. In developing the CMS, the first step was to collate potential items from existing surveys (including ABS and NCAS), with a preference for those that had been validated for and/or tested or developed with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. An iterative process, incorporating feedback from a pilot with one community, was employed to refine survey items (see Guthrie et al. 2020:25–6) and feedback from the study team and the Study Advisory Group.

While it was important that the survey covered diverse constructs, particularly given the insufficient evidence in this field, it was vital to limit its length to reduce respondent burden and to support completion. The longer the survey instrument, the smaller the sample size that could be achieved within the available funding. We undertook a process to reduce the length of the survey to 57 questions so that, on average, it could be completed in a 45-minute time limit. Each community could add up to five questions, based on local needs, to the final survey: these questions were asked of participants in that community only. Four of the 18 communities took this opportunity, adding questions about the local context, attitudes about their community, experiences of and responses to violence, and support systems.

The study goal was to have a minimum of 1500 participants in the CMS across all participating communities, and to capture diversity in age and gender within each community. Broad sample quotas were used in each community to

ensure that there was adequate power to disaggregate data by age group and gender.

Given that the FaCtS Study is about improving safety in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities, it was relevant to include non-Indigenous people: in each community, the CMS included a small number of non-Indigenous community members who had Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander family members. The Community Researchers invited non-Indigenous participants who they considered to be part of the community; in most cases, they were partners of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

The CMS was restricted to people aged 16 years and older. Written voluntary informed consent was obtained from participants. Participants aged 16 or 17 years required additional written consent from a parent or carer. During the CMS consent process, participants were invited to provide their contact details if they were also willing to participate in a focus group and/or interview. Community Researchers and/or study team members were available for literacy support and to answer questions about the study from potential participants.

Participants had the option to complete the CMS face to face with a Community Researcher, on a tablet or through a paper-based survey. Most participants chose the paper-based option. Across all modes of survey completion, participants could self-complete the questionnaire or have the Community Researcher assist with completion.

(4) Community member interviews and focus groups

To capture detailed information and diverse views on family and community safety and violence, and community needs, interviews and focus groups were conducted with men, women and youths (aged 16 to 17 years) in all communities. In addition, some communities specifically sought input from Elders through a separate focus group. Youth focus groups were separated by gender in many communities, according to their preferences. Focus groups and interviews were co-facilitated by Community Researchers and members of the study team. Focus group and interview topic areas included perceptions of violence in the community, impacts of violence in the community, resilience and protective factors in the community, what community safety looks like, how safety can be improved, what responses to violence are working and what other responses to violence are needed.

The focus groups and interviews were purposefully designed not to collect data about individual experiences of violence. This approach was used to protect the participants and Community Researchers from re-experiencing or vicariously experiencing traumatic events being recounted. Protocols were in place to support any participants or Community Researchers who may have become distressed.

The study aimed to complete a total of four focus groups and three interviews in each community, with six to ten participants in each focus group. Where more than ten community members wanted to participate in any given focus group, an additional focus group was offered.

As with the CMS, written voluntary informed consent was obtained from participants. If consent was provided, the interview (individual consent) or focus group (consent from all participants) was audio recorded; if any participant did not want the session to be audio recorded, notes were taken instead. Audio recordings were transcribed by a transcription service.

(5) Service Provider Survey

The Service Provider Survey (SPS) was designed to collect information from staff working in services supporting people using and/or experiencing violence. The SPS focus was on the availability of services, collaboration between organisations, responses to violence, cultural safety, gaps in service provision, and perceived barriers and enablers to improved service delivery. Data were collected through a 42-question online survey. The SPS was developed by the study team based on existing and new questionnaire items and refined through input from the Study Advisory Group.

Adults aged 18 years and over were eligible to participate in the SPS if they were recognised as employees of services located in the community or services that provided outreach support or services for the community. Both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff and non-Indigenous staff were eligible to complete the SPS. Employees of a broad range of services were considered eligible, on the basis that they provided support to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and/or their families who experienced

or were involved in family and/or community violence. Services included police, Aboriginal Medical Services or other health services, education services, women's organisations, men's organisations, rehabilitation and detox-related services, counselling services and other mental health services, shelters and refuges, other housing and homelessness services, legal services, justice and correctional services, family violence services, family support services, night patrols, neighbourhood centres, youth services and other community organisations.

Drawing on the service mapping, a list of potentially relevant services was developed by the study team and CAGs. Where possible, the organisations were contacted via telephone to inform them about the survey and to seek permission and support from the service for their staff members to participate in the SPS.

The survey was conducted by Ipsos, a global market research and consulting firm, using a two-phased approach. In the first phase, an email was sent to 434 potential participants across communities, with an information sheet and unique web link to the online SPS. The survey could commence only after the potential participant confirmed they were aged 18 years or over and provided consent. In the second phase, service providers were followed up by telephone to remind them to complete the survey, identify an alternative contact or complete the survey over the telephone, in which case the participant provided verbal consent.

(6) Service provider interviews

All service providers who completed the SPS were invited to provide their contact details if they were interested in participating in an interview. The aim of the interviews was to capture views on the accessibility and effectiveness of current services, and to identify service gaps and opportunities for improved service delivery. Interviews were conducted with staff from a range of the participating communities. Participants included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and non-Indigenous staff. The interviews were conducted by Aboriginal and non-Indigenous study team members over the telephone using an interview schedule.

Outputs

More than 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults completed the Community Researcher training and successfully completed data collection within a short project timeframe.

Service mapping was conducted in all 18 communities. A brochure with the identified services was shared with communities. The service mapping indicated that all participating communities had a family violence service and an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation. All but one community had a safe house and police services. Most communities had legal services; housing services; a shelter, refuge, or hostel; an Aboriginal Medical Service or Health Service; a counselling or mental health service; and child protection or community services. Fewer than one-third of communities had night patrols. There was some discrepancy between the services identified through service mapping and community members' perceptions on local service availability and/accessibility. This may be for several reasons, including that the boundaries used for service mapping may be broader than how community members self-defined their community's borders; variable or limited service availability (days and times open; outreach services provided versus services based within the community); and barriers to accessing services, such as lack of transport and/or a lack of awareness of services available. As a result, data from service mapping should be used in combination with other data sources and in collaboration with communities.

Completion time for the final CMS was 25–35 minutes for most participants; duration was longer for participants with English language and/or literacy barriers, or if the survey was conducted face to face rather than self-completed. The 18 participating communities spanned all states and territories, excluding the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania, and a total of 1626 CMS surveys were completed (Table 2). The final sample, after excluding ineligible participants, was 1584 surveys. The average number of participants per community was 88 (and ranged from 62 to 105). The sample comprised two communities in major cities (n = 197 participants, 12% of total sample), four in inner regional areas (n = 343, 21.7%), five in outer regional areas (n = 431, 27%), three in remote areas (n = 254, 16%) and four in very remote areas (n = 359, 23%) (Table 3).

Table 2: Community Member Survey participant numbers achieved across communities, and overall

Level of remoteness of community	Number of surveys received	Number of eligible surveys
Major city	93	92
Major city	105	105
Inner regional	62	62
Inner regional	88	87
Inner regional	95	95
Inner regional	99	99
Outer regional	100	100
Outer regional	84	83
Outer regional	99	99
Outer regional	72	71
Outer regional	84	78
Remote	100	96
Remote	88	86
Remote	95	72
Very remote	103	100
Very remote	92	92
Very remote	77	77
Very remote	90	90
Total	**1,626**	**1,584**

Level of remoteness was coded according to the Australian Statistical Geography Standard Remoteness Structure (ABS, 2021).

Table 3: Demographic characteristics of the Community Member Survey sample

Demographic characteristic	Number in sample	% of total sample
Remoteness		
Major city	197	12.4
Inner regional	343	21.7
Outer regional	431	27.2
Remote	254	16.0
Very remote	359	22.7
Age (years)		
16–17	79	5.0
18–24	235	14.8
25–39	446	28.2
40–49	298	18.8
≥50	384	24.2
Not specified, ≥18	142	9.0

Table 3 (cont.)

Demographic characteristic	Number in sample	% of total sample
Gender		
Male	657	41.5
Female	926	58.5
Other	1	0.1
Indigenous identification		
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	1517	95.8
Family is Indigenous	67	4.2
Family money situation		
We run out of money or are spending more than we get	361	22.8
We have just enough	585	36.9
We have some or a lot of savings	489	30.9
Missing	149	9.4
Education completion		
No school or primary school	161	10.2
Year 10	783	49.4
Year 12 and beyond	609	38.5
Missing	31	2.0
Employment status		
Not in paid employment*	811	51.2
In paid employment	570	36.0
Studying	64	4.0
Other	51	3.2
Missing	88	5.6

* Includes participants participating in the Community Development Program (CDP) or the Work for the Dole program.

The mean age of participants was 38 years, ranging from 16 to >80 years (Table 3). The majority (58.5%) of participants were female, 41.5% were male, and less than 1% selected 'Other' for gender. All but 67 participants identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; this 4.2% of participants identified as non-Indigenous but had Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander family members.

A total of 98 service providers participated in the SPS across the 18 communities (Table 4). Almost one-third of participants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (n = 37, 37.8%), and around one-third of participants were male (n = 32, 32.7%). Half of SPS participants were from remote or very remote areas (n = 66, 51.0%), around one-third from inner or outer regional areas (n = 50, 29.6%), and the remainder from major cities (n = 19, 19.4%). SPS participants were employed in a range of roles, including manager (n = 29, 29.3%), coordinator or team leader (n = 20, 20.2%), Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Deputy CEO (n = 10, 10.1%), and case or support worker (n = 10, 10.1%). Participants were employed in services including health services (n = 22, 22.2%), family support services (n = 26, 26.3%), women's services (n = 20, 20.2%), family violence services (n = 16, 16.2%) and youth

Table 4: Characteristics of Service Provider Survey participants

Demographic characteristic	Number in sample	% of total sample
Indigenous identification		
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	37	37.8
Non-Indigenous	61	62.2
Remoteness		
Major city	19	19.4
Inner or outer regional	50	29.6
Remote or very remote	29	51.0
Gender		
Male	32	32.7
Female	66	67.3
Age (years)		
20–29	11	11.8
30–39	11	11.8
40–49	32	34.4
50–59	26	28.0
≥60	13	14.0
Highest level of education		
No school	0	0.0
Primary school	0	0.0
Secondary school	9	9.1
Certificate or diploma	29	29.3
University degree	54	54.5
Job role		
CEO or Deputy CEO	10	10.1
Manager	29	29.3
Coordinator or team leader	20	20.2
Health professional	9	9.1
Aboriginal Health Worker	4	4.0
Case or support worker	10	10.1
Engagement or liaison worker	3	3.0
Administration	6	6.1
Other	8	8.1

Table 4 (cont.)

Demographic characteristic	Number in sample	% of total sample
Which type of service do you work for? (Multiple responses possible)		
Police	6	6.1
Legal service	5	5.1
Justice or correctional service	6	6.1
Family violence service	16	16.2
Family support service	26	26.3
Night patrol or community patrol	4	4.0
Neighbourhood Centre	3	3.0
Land council or homeland association	1	1.0
Prescribed body corporate	0	0.0
Women's service	20	20.2
Men's service	9	9.1
Health service	22	22.2
Rehab, detox or sobering up	6	6.1
Counselling or mental health service	13	13.1
Shelter, refuge or hostel	6	6.1
Housing service	5	5.1
Homelessness service	12	12.1
Youth service	16	16.2
Other	20	20.2

services (n = 16, 16.2%). Not all services were primarily targeting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients, but all provided support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Focus groups and/or interviews were conducted across all 18 communities; interviewees included community members and service providers working in these communities. A total of 56 focus groups and 96 interviews were conducted, with an average of eight audio recordings in each community (range three to 13). Data from 54 focus groups and 90 interviews were eligible for analysis. This included 19 focus groups with females, 17 with males, nine with combined male and female youths, two with female youths, two with male youths, and five with Elders; and 22 interviews with female community members, 17 with males, ten with youths and 41 with service providers. Interviews and focus groups ranged from 30 to 180 minutes.

Discussion

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members shared their experiences and views regarding violence, and provided insights into problems of, and solutions to, violence. This was supplemented by qualitative and quantitative data from service providers. The FaCtS data resource, one of the largest of its kind, represents diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and provides unique and unparalleled insight into a broad range of opportunities and approaches to improve family and community safety. This data resource highlights variation in experiences of violence within and between communities and also experiences that are shared across communities,

which should be considered in local and national policy responses and can support community action to improve safety.

The success of the FaCtS Study in attracting communities to self-nominate to participate, and in collecting extensive sensitive data from participants in a short funding period (three years), is a testament to the principles and approach underpinning the study. The study would not have been successful without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research leadership and community partnerships. The FaCtS Study was Aboriginal-led, and the majority of people governing and conducting the study were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. In addition to the self-nomination process, local community groups played a substantive role in study development and implementation. The commitment to mutual capacity building was essential to recruiting and retaining communities, and to generating meaningful outcomes. Through outlining these processes and this way of working, we hope to support other communities and researchers to adopt community-based action research approaches.

Exemplifying community-based action research

Partnerships between communities and the FaCtS Study team were central to the study and the community-based action research approach. Partnerships with communities contributed to capacity building within the study team. This included:

- establishing and sustaining genuine partnerships between researchers, community members and service providers
- improved research transfer and implementation to community and services
- improved data collection instruments and evaluation methods
- improved understanding of the data needs of community and services
- enhanced interpretation of data based on community members' and service providers' experience and cultural knowledge
- learning community members' and service providers' approaches to research processes.

Ongoing feedback processes incorporated local community expertise and suggestions into the conduct of the study, including for study design, conduct of fieldwork, and interpretation, presentation and feedback of results. This process was integral to study feasibility, appropriateness and acceptability across participating communities.

Community capacity building focused on embedding research skills and knowledge in each community and returning findings from the overarching study, as well as community-specific data. The aim was to provide research skills transferable to other projects, and to support ongoing data-informed approaches to improving family and community safety locally and nationally.

Feedback of findings to communities

Interim aggregate findings from all communities were provided to and discussed with all communities; community feedback informed the interim and final reports to the funding body. The study team is in the process of providing final feedback to each of the participating communities. Each is provided with an overview of findings from the overall study. They are also provided with a community report (around 20 pages), which presents an analysis of community-specific quantitative and qualitative data. Community reports have been developed and revised in collaboration with the CAG and Community Researchers in each community. They are tailored to meet the communities' needs and include analysis of any community-specific questions added to the survey. Feedback from May 2020 onwards was delivered remotely, rather than in person, due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Data repatriation

In addition to providing overall and community-specific summaries of the data, a community-specific CMS dataset will be provided to each community, subject to data infrastructure and privacy conditions. An anonymised file will be provided via secure file transfer. If the community partner organisations cannot meet requirements for secure storage of unit-record data, aggregated data will be provided in the form of frequency tables, with categories aggregated to ensure no small cells (<5) are presented.

The FaCtS Study is the first Aboriginal-led and governed large-scale study of family and community safety in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The rich data resource contains

diverse experiences, knowledge, practices and aspirations across participants and communities, as well as a unifying message of resilience and hope. It provides the first large-scale data on the service and support needs and preferences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. This mixed-methods and community-based action research approach is a best practice model that can be implemented in other community-based projects.

The study team invested a substantial amount of time in disseminating information about the study and in developing relationships with communities. The self-nomination process occurred over 18 months, starting in December 2017. Once a community nominated, a CAG was established and Community Researchers undertook training before data collection commenced. Data collection was completed by April 2019.

Qualitative and quantitative data collection was based on self-reports, which may lead to biases; however, triangulation of data from multiple sources and multiple data collection approaches enabled a more complete picture of family and community safety in these communities.

The primary quantitative data collection, the CMS, was not intended to be a representative sample of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or communities. For example, the remoteness, age and gender distribution of CMS participants does not align with that of the total population (ABS 2018). It was neither feasible nor desirable to conduct a representative sample, given the aims of the study and the commitment to participatory research principles. As such, prevalence estimates are representative of the participant sample only. However, findings based on internal comparisons — that is, relationships between exposures and outcomes — are understood to be generalisable beyond the study cohort.

Further, while the original funding and timeframe enabled a single wave of data collection, the study design of the CMS allows for follow-up data collection and the potential establishment of a longitudinal cohort and/or evaluation of community-specific initiatives to improve family and community safety (Andersson et al. 2010). Participants who were willing to be contacted for follow-up data collection provided their names and contact details; these are securely stored, separately from survey responses, and are not available to data analysts.

The SPS is also not intended to be representative of all service providers providing support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and community safety. Service providers who received an invitation self-selected to participate. The pool of potential participants for the SPS varied across communities by factors including community size, availability of services, and services' capacity and willingness to participate. The SPS may have been received by multiple service providers in a single service, but responses cannot be linked to the service, as the name of the service was not recorded to protect confidentiality and privacy. Data from the SPS should be interpreted with these considerations in mind.

Recruitment for the qualitative interviews and focus groups employed convenience sampling, which has limitations. To address some of the biasing impacts of this sampling methods, the study purposively recruited participants from specific populations, such as young people, men and service providers, to ensure variation across the sample.

Community Researchers enhanced the rigour of the study through their capacity to recruit participants, their in-depth knowledge of the community and the different perspectives they brought to the research questions. Working with Community Researchers has been known to produce a 'more open and sensitive' approach (Smith et al. 2002:198) but can also lead to inconsistency in collected data (Mooney-Somers and Olsen 2018). The ability to collect data in an open and sensitive way was vital to the study, given the sensitive nature of the family and community violence. There is an 'uneven' (Smith et al. 2002:198) nature to some of the qualitative data as a result of variation in and between academic and Community Researchers.

Access to FaCtS Study data

The initial findings from the FaCtS Study have been summarised in a report for the Department of Social Services, *'The answers were there before white man come in': stories of strength and resilience for responding to violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities* (Guthrie et al. 2020). The report contains key findings, a

literature review, an overview of the study and detailed findings on the context of violence, catalysts and consequences of violence, perceptions and understandings of violence, the extent and types of violence experienced, resources to address violence, effective service responses, and implications.

The FaCtS Study data is a valuable resource. It has great potential to be interrogated and analysed to support improvements in services that focus on community safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Anonymised data can be made available to researchers under Indigenous data governance arrangements. The processes for access are currently being developed. Please contact FaCtS.Study@anu.edu.au for more information.

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Appendix: governance

Study Advisory Group

The FaCtS Study had an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Study Advisory Group, comprised of experts from diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and sexual violence services. The purpose of the group was to provide expert advice to the study team about aspects of the study for the duration of the project, including on research questions, data collection and interpretation of findings.

Study Executive Group

The Study Executive Group comprised the Study Director, two additional senior members of the study team and one representative from the funding body. This group was responsible for overseeing the design and implementation of the study.

Community Advisory Groups

CAGs were established in each participating community. Membership and size of each CAG was determined by the community and included Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff from key local organisations, health service staff, violence service staff, police, council members, corrections staff and community members. The partnership between the CAGs and the study team supported the inclusion of community knowledge, needs and preferences into the FaCtS Study, and supported the integration of the expertise of community members and the study team.

NOTE

1 The FaCtS Study was conducted with ethical approval from the following institutions and Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs): The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) HREC (Protocol: EO55-01052017), which provides national approval for research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and from the Australian National University HREC (Protocol: 2017/657). In addition, approval was obtained from regional ethics committees relevant to participating communities: Western Australian Aboriginal HREC (Protocol: WAAHEC HREC 845); Central Australian Aboriginal Congress HREC (Protocol: CA-18-3061); South Metro Health Queensland HREC (Protocol: HREC/18/QPAH/313).

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Aboriginal Redfern *then* and *now*: between the symbolic and the real

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Abstract: *Redfern is an inner-city Sydney suburb readily identified as an urban Aboriginal centre where pan-Aboriginal liberation politics of the 1970s fluoresced, where Aboriginal self-determination in the form of services — legal, medical, women's and children — began, where land rights were recognised, where culture was celebrated and revived through theatre productions, and where people, many just freed from institutional life, recovered a sense of belonging. It must have been a thrilling and exciting time of liberation and becoming, save for the surrounding hostile society and its police force. Yet Aboriginal people's engagement in the local economy is rarely canvassed in the history of this significant place, nor how the changing local economy informed the apparent evaporation of optimism for community housing by the late 1980s. This paper therefore contributes an analysis of a significant urban and political Indigenous place shaped by material conditions and an abiding desire to maintain important aspects of cultural traditions. It contributes an understanding of Aboriginal worlds in Redfern, with particular emphasis on how local economic conditions made life possible for Aboriginal people and how, in turn, Aboriginal engagement in the market economy was shaped by transformation amidst historical inheritances.*

Located a stone's throw from Australia's first colonial settlement and now cultural and economic emerald harbour metropolis, Redfern is a place readily identified as an urban Aboriginal community. The Aboriginal flag mural has been a regular backdrop in popular culture and the site for an acclaimed drama series, eponymously named *Redfern now* (2012, 2013), that referenced both the gritty realism of urban Aboriginality in all its diversity and Redfern as an imagined place. This in part reflects significant waves of migration from the bush to the city in the postwar period and the eventual deeding of several houses by a reforming and progressive government to Aboriginal community control in the 1970s. The dedication of housing over the square of streets that make up 'the Block' responded to activism for housing for the growing urban Aboriginal population, as well as to ideas and aspirations for land rights — at the same time as a major residential development that would have further displaced vulnerable residents was set to commence. But Redfern as a symbolic heart and as a living community did not begin or end with the rise of Aboriginal activism and movements for change from the postwar period or government empathy for Aboriginal activism by the 1970s, or the hostility of the policing state. Instead, I show here how the changing economy, and engagement with it, is a feature of Aboriginal survival.

Place in the literature

Historical accounts of this well-known place and, more broadly, Aboriginal histories of urban and regional New South Wales rarely canvass the economic conditions that Aboriginal people variously engage, shape and are shaped by. With a focus on the working lives and economic engagement of Aboriginal people in and around Redfern, this paper contributes a different analysis of Aboriginal survival and adjustment to the colonial industrial economy and its aftermath.

Aboriginal people generally have been overlooked in historical accounts of the Australian economy. Accounts of Aboriginal society and economy have emphasised pre-colonial conditions and overlooked the relationship that emerged between First Peoples' economic system and society, and the settler economy. Most of this literature, as I detail, relies on theoretical frameworks that narrate traditional worlds dissolving or, at best, where Aboriginal peoples are subsumed into the workforce, retaining minimal cultural responsibilities (Norman in press). Noel Pearson's (2000) influential thesis in his book *Our right to take responsibility* traces a different trajectory of participation in the economy, mostly in wage labour. While primarily an account of cattle country workers and the impact of the equal wages decision, Pearson argues Aboriginal engagement in what he terms the 'real economy', or market, was a sphere where social and cultural obligations, like reciprocity and responsibility, were required. The subsequent post-1970s era, in part a response to and continuous with the equal wages decision, drew Aboriginal people into a system of state welfare that had the unintended consequences of generating, as Pearson says, a welfare 'mentality' that has corroded social and cultural relations. Aboriginal engagement in the economy — and specifically in the urban industrial and post-industrial locale of Redfern — is not a consideration in this literature.

More recent scholarship offers detailed accounts of Aboriginal lives in Sydney over longer time frames. This includes work on contact history, Aboriginal–settler relations and adaptations to the colonial presence (Goodall & Cadzow 2009; Irish 2017; Karskens 2020; Morgan 2006), and continuity, such as the work of Denis Foley and Peter Read (2020), who, in their account *What the colonists never knew: a history of Aboriginal Sydney* elaborate a view of Sydney; for Foley and his explained links of family stories, his memories of Gai-mariagal Country and pre-history, and, from Read, rich and moving stories of people who live/d on and sustain their kinship networks and connections to country along the paths and waterways of the city. Lucy Taska's (2003) industrial history of Eveleigh railway yards in part explores the experiences of Aboriginal workers, while studies focused on Redfern have mostly sought to address the 'untold' story of 1970s Aboriginal activism and resurgence (Perheentupa 2020), urban Aboriginal identity and survival (Shaw 2013), and youth subculture (Morgan 2012).

These histories do not address what I came to understand through many conversations and community networks: that is, the importance of working life, seen through the lens of Aboriginal social worlds, as critical to living in Redfern. It was this sense of a gap in the ways Aboriginal worlds are comprehended that sparked my interest in documenting what I initially described as the economic history of Redfern,[1] and I have teased out a different account of Aboriginal Redfern that places engagement in the manufacturing economy as a central feature of the Aboriginal foothold in the city. As the economy changes, new challenges emerge as to how that presence is maintained.

A long history: peopled landscapes

It is tempting, as much of the work above suggests, to think about a place like Redfern with a focus on the heady political days of post-1970s Aboriginal self-determination. The many services initiated in this place that were taken up nationally and still exist today, the sharing and fermenting of political ideas for liberation and recognition, and by 1973 a form of Aboriginal land rights with the granting of houses in the four-street square that makes up what came to be named 'the Block' carried the shared vision for community control, care and belonging. However, in addition to the political mobilisation and successful campaigns for change, of police violence, curfews and surveillance, a story of Aboriginal social worlds emerges that reveals the processes of almost constant adjustment and survival that were in part made possible by engagement in the local economy.

I start this process by immersing myself in a process of 'reading the land' as one strategy to contemplate this place. The place where Redfern station sits is a high point, a ridge of sorts, that drops away to the south and south-east as swampy marsh lands and sand hills stretch all the way to Botany Bay. To the north of Redfern the land slopes down to a watercourse that flows into Sydney Harbour; it is bordered on the northern side by Cleveland Street, initially called 'Cleveland paddocks', and the 'sand hills' that were the Devonshire Street cemetery, which has been regenerated as a 'native meadow' (Raxworthy 2016).

The briefest of visits to Redfern will leave you curious about the whip of wild winds at the top of the ridge on an otherwise still day. The southern winds from Botany Bay and from the Harbour on the opposite side, seem to collide in furious battle along the high ridge where two tower buildings now stand. The ridgeline, which is obvious to anyone walking the streets today, is explained by a historian of early Aboriginal Sydney, Keith Vincent Smith (2004), who shows that colonial archives reference a path (or trade route/songline) that ran from the end point of Blackwattle Creek at the junction of Cleveland and Abercrombie streets to the northern shore of Botany Bay. The colonial records that Vincent Smith draws from describe a network of well-maintained metre-wide paths across Eora lands. Vincent Smith (2004) paints a vivid picture of this particular track or trade route as the forerunner to Botany Road that ended at Blackwattle Creek and of its flow to the harbour of what is now the site of the Sydney Fish Market. This is by no means a detailed account of this country or landscape, but intended to be suggestive of land as an always-present feature in studies of the past and present.

Another archive, this time from the 1850s, continued to draw me into thinking about this place, Redfern, over the longer time frame. A painting by colonial artist John Rae, *Turning of the turf of the first Australian railway* (Sydney, 3 July 1850), depicts, albeit in the artist's style, an Aboriginal family huddled under their government-issue blankets on the fringes of the opening pageantry. The huddled, caricatured presence of Aboriginal people at the opening of the colony's first railway, which became Redfern, places the family on the site of what we now know as the Block.[2]

The attachment and longer-term affiliation with Redfern and the Block was a point of reference for many Aboriginal families, at least before the Second World War.[3] As I noted in earlier research that touched on Redfern, the presence of several Aboriginal families living along Caroline Street from the interwar period was emphasised and included the Madden, Vincent, Lord, Lester, Hinton, Wilson, Murray, Cain and Pittman families (Norman 2006, 2009). Many of the people interviewed said they lived in private rental on Caroline Street. Sharon Hickey (2007) explained her affiliation with the Waters family, from Botany, and recalled a five-generation family photograph taken in 1945 when the family lived at Caroline Street. Similarly, Aunty Joyce Ingram (2002) dates living in Redfern from the 1920s (Collis 2012).

My own extended Aboriginal family history records revealed several instances of multi-generational travel between Redfern, the adjoining suburb of Waterloo and north-western New South Wales towns (Ruttley 2004). For example, Thomas Tibbey, born in the Hunter Valley, married Sarah Yates from Redfern; their child, Emma Tibbey, was born in Redfern in 1869 and married Thomas Madden, also from the Hunter Valley. They lived in Redfern for several years from the late 1880s and their first daughter, Edith May, was born in Redfern in 1890. The rest of their seven children were born in the Hunter Valley (Maitland, Morpeth and Paterson) region. Records show that Edith May returned to Redfern and that her daughter, Freida May, was born in Waterloo in 1917. Freida May married Charles Ruttley and was buried at Burra Bee Dee Aboriginal Mission cemetery in 1993 (Ruttley 2004). This detail, which references official records combined with personal communication with Aboriginal families, shows the movement of individuals from the city to regional centres — and, at least in the example I detail above, the Hunter Valley and Coonabarabran/Burra Bee Dee Mission as part of extended clan-based Aboriginal networks. At the least, the births, deaths and marriages records reveal patterns of migration from the city to the bush and back again from one generation to the next; in this example, Redfern is a significant touchstone.

Although only a small slice of genealogy, it is suggestive of wider kinship networks that supported the movement of people from the bush to the city and the railways that made this possible. This account resonates with other family stories. Several research participants spoke of the connection between Aboriginal families, living in what is now the Block from the early to interwar period, as hailing from the Hunter Valley/Singleton area and further north-west. James Wilson-Miller (1985) elaborates this connection in *Koori: a will to win*. I have observed his role in the Redfern community referencing Wonnarua cultural artefacts and traditions at important events and ceremonies.[4] Participants in this research speculated that the increasing authority and control of the mission managers at what became the St Clair Mission, located in Carrowbrook between Muswellbrook and Singleton, were reasons for families moving away. The presence of a family member, the possibility of securing private rental, rail transport and adverse circumstances on the mission or reserve saw many families migrate to Redfern. Aboriginal novelist Philip McLaren, for example, explains that his parents moved from Coonabarabran in 1938 to be nearer to his grandmother, who had been living on William Street some ten years earlier (Macquarie PEN Anthology nd). Mrs Sylvia Scott (pers. comm.) also recalled her family's move from the Cowra-based Erambie Mission to Redfern and how they initially lived with family who had lived in private rental on Caroline Street before finding their own privately rented house. The decision to leave Cowra was a complex combination of opportunity, family illness (Royal South Sydney Hospital was nearby) and the desire to escape the government's welfare board control.

There is no material that suggests Redfern was a centre of political activism at this time. However, the many hundreds of Aboriginal people who attended meetings called by Fred Maynard and the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association in Sydney's Surry Hills, a suburb adjoining Redfern, in the 1920s would point to a larger than recognised urban Aboriginal population with strong networks, as historian John Maynard (1997, 2007) details in his study of the association.

Anxiety and erasure: 'Aboriginal camps'

In a 1904 *Evening News* report, there is passing reference to an 'Aboriginal camp' near what was the Camellia Grove Nursery (1797–1865), which originally covered 14 acres on the boundary of Alexandria and Macdonald Town (what we now think of as the suburb of Erskineville) (Salmon 1904:3).[5] By 1890 the nursery was reduced to about one-third its size, with the remaining land converted to housing. There is no indication this site continued as an Aboriginal camp beyond the courtesy of the nursery proprietor.

At Circular Quay and Botany/La Perouse two 'Aboriginal camps' were of growing anxiety to the colonial authority.[6] Both attracted bad press and negative commentary about the appalling conditions, and concerns about immorality and drunkenness of the sailors and others in relation to the Eora. These camps were, in part, motivation for the appointment of the first Protector of Aborigines, George Thornton, in 1881, and his recommendations and a series of other reports and correspondence, for the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board. The board was to manage reserves similar to those operating under the non-government philanthropic Aborigines Protection Association at Maloga and Warangesda in the south-west of the state. The formation of the Aborigines Protection Board also saw the beginnings of an organised approach to the removal of Aboriginal children, and management of the reserves and extension of powers to the board gained significant momentum from the beginning of the 19th century.

As Protector of Aborigines, George Thornton was eager to remove Aboriginal people from Sydney. In his December 1882 report to the Legislative Assembly (1883:3), he wrote:

> One of my first anxieties on assuming the duties of Protector was to endeavour to get all the aborigines away from Sydney and suburbs and back into their own districts.

He reported:

> I am strongly of the opinion that aid of any sort to the Aborigines should be given to them *in their own districts only* [original emphasis]; that they should be prevented from coming to or staying about the metropolis (Legislative Assembly 1883:3).

He asserted that his position 'will … need no argument to support it' (Legislative Assembly 1883:3). Thornton's comments reveal the assumption that the Aboriginal people in the metropolis were from 'somewhere else'. The intention to disperse Aboriginal people from the city saw several residents from the Botany area relocated to Maloga at the persuasion, it was reported, of resident mission manager Daniel Matthews (Cato 1974). At the same time the population at La Perouse, on the southern peninsula of the colony, swelled. The reports of the Aborigines Protection Board and subsequent administrative developments in the early 1880s do not indicate that Redfern (or surrounds) was an Aboriginal camp but the assumption that Aboriginal people within the city bounds were from 'somewhere else' was a powerful narrative and came to be actively pursued by government.

Land grants and subdivision

Like most settled areas of the colony by the early 1800s, land was being rapidly carved up and apportioned to the colonising class. The usurping of land in the settlements — and, in the following decades, of the nearly always violent, moving frontier — occurred without legal basis and with growing recognition of abiding land occupation and ownership. The suburb of Redfern takes its name from one such land grant — 100 acres to William Redfern in 1817 (Ford 1967).[7] Redfern came to Australia in 1802 as a convict, received a conditional pardon in 1803 and was appointed assistant surgeon in 1808 (Ford 1967). By 1842 Redfern's land grant was sold and subdivided into eight sections or lots and proclaimed a municipality on 11 August 1858 (along with several others) as a first measure of the general Municipal Government. At this time the population numbered 6500, although this was about to expand rapidly: the suburb was described as a 'select address' and a 'prestigious inner-city streetscape with housing for the upper and middle classes' with a 'vibrant commercial strip [and] several fine public buildings'; although 'famous for its gardens … it was in … large measure bush country, with sandhills on the outskirts, and swamps in many parts' (Doran 2004:24). Evidence of Redfern's earlier gentrified beginnings are apparent in the remaining three- and four-level terraces overlooking Redfern Park and its 'fine buildings', including the post office and court house completed by 1883 and 1889 respectively.

At the time of subdivision in 1848 the foundation stone was laid for St Paul's Church (1855–1915) on Redfern Street and, as mentioned, the railway station opened in 1855. The choice of location for the first railway was a factor of available space and proximity to bustling Darling Harbour port where wool and wheat could be off-loaded and dispatched for export. By the early 1870s the station was unable to meet the demands of the rapidly growing Sydney railway network and this limited capacity of the first railway saw plans developed for the construction of the 'second railway' by 1880 (State Archives and Records 2013). Construction of the second railway, at what is now Central station, required the existing cemetery and graves to be relocated and other changes made to create the space for the railway.[8] In the meantime, tramlines were built, connecting Redfern with the city by 1879. The tramlines travelled along Hunter and Elizabeth streets across Belmore Park to Redfern.

Industrial history, 1860s–1890s

From the 1860s Redfern underwent considerable change. The natural environment of the Redfern and Waterloo areas/estates supported the colonial use and development of the land from Redfern to Botany. Some suggest that:

> to the casual European observer, the Botany Basin, including Green Square [encompassing Waterloo, Alexandria, Zetland, Beaconsfield and Roseberry,] appeared inaccessible and useless because it did not offer land desirable for cultivation or grazing (Doran 2004:24).

The surrounding suburbs were described as part of an extensive system of sand dunes wetlands covered by heath and scrub. The colonists thought the area a 'quagmire' (Doran 2004:24).

The addition of the train line saw Redfern develop as an industrial city from the 1860s and the derided swampy quagmire reshaped to support several industries along Botany Road. Frith (2004:49) explains that it 'was access to water sources that attracted industry to the area at this time and continued through to the middle of the twentieth century'. For example, Waterloo

Mills wool washing was established in 1848 on Waterloo 'dam' (formerly 'swamp'). The boom in the industries setting up in and around Redfern, including Waterloo and Alexandria, saw 'astonishing growth' in Redfern by 1891. By 1891 the Sydney population had increased from 135,000 in 1871 to 383,283 (Wotherspoon 2010). Housing construction and subdivision peaked in Waterloo in the 1880s with Redfern becoming one of the 'most densely populated' areas of Sydney in the 1880s and 1890s and the majority of manufacturing jobs in the colony were in Redfern, Sydney and Balmain.

The rapidly expanding working-class population was noted by government officials and the Redfern St Paul's Church clergy. St Paul's Church archives show the reaction to the considerable change taking place by the 1870s and 1890s. The church rector, Francis Bertie Boyce, out of humanitarian concerns, ran a campaign to 'abolish slums in Sydney' (Cable 1979). The attention of the inner-city 'slums' from the political class, as Mayne contends, was more informed by middle class projections of the land of 'milk and honey'. The *Report of the Sydney Health Board* in 1876 shows concern about 'crowded dwellings and areas', including Redfern; the report detailed concern about mortality rates and other indicators of disadvantage (Mayne 1980). As Mayne explains, 'some eleven years later the government statistician, Timothy Coghlan, could still recall the middle years of the 1870s with something of a shudder', noting that:

> Sydney was troubled by an extraordinary visitation of sickness; children died, stricken by diarrhoea and atrophy, pneumonia and bronchitis, diphtheria and scarlatina, convulsions and measles. Its children were literally decimated' (Coghlan 1887 in Mayne 1980:27).

Redfern, Alexandria, and especially Waterloo, were the suburbs with the highest mortality rate of any district in Sydney (Mayne 1980:28).

Central to these health concerns was the management of sewerage and waste. In April 1875 the Colonial Secretary appointed the Sydney City and Suburban Sewage and Health Board 'to inquire into and report as to the best means of disposing of the sewage of the city of Sydney and its suburbs, as well as of protecting the health of the inhabitants thereof' (Colonial Secretary's Office in Mayne 1980:28). The Board issued 12 reports between May 1875 and May 1877, endorsing the view that a comprehensive sewerage system was essential to improve public health.[9]

While middle-class concern about urban slums was apparent in the government's response, the Redfern-based St Paul's Church in its newsletter (1915:23) raised concerns about overcrowding and observance of the changes that took place in the parish in different language:

> A great change came over the parish in the [18]80s and 90s. The east of the Railway was a fashionable and wealthy centre. Those people moved away to the outer suburbs, and their places were taken by people with only their weekly wages, but with hearts just as kind. The fine houses are now mostly boarding houses for workmen.

The industrial growth, following the harnessing of the natural resources of the area and its proximity to the 'Sydney settlement', along with less government regulation over housing construction and industry, saw the area become increasingly populated by the working poor. A further wave of industrial development occurred from the 1920s with the steel works and glass factory opening. By the 1940s nearly three-quarters of all industrial activity in Sydney occurred within a six-kilometre radius of Redfern (State Heritage Inventory nd).

By 1945 the Aborigines Welfare Board estimated some 2500 Aboriginal residents were in the metropolitan area; by 1950 the population was estimated to be 3000 and by 1965 some 12,000 Aboriginal people were living in the Redfern area (Broom 1972 cited in Robinson 1993:12; Morgan 2006:47), a rising figure over the coming five years (Robinson 1993:12). As Morgan highlights, other accounts suggest at least 6000 and possibly 10,000 Aboriginal people were living in Sydney by the 1940s (2006:47). These statistics are difficult to accurately assess; however, other population increases point to a rapid acceleration of urban migration from the 1930s.

Until the 1967 referendum Aboriginal people were not always included in official census collection, and population data was collected by police and later the Aborigines Welfare Board

(AWB). The AWB population data (and that of its predecessor, the Aborigines Protection Board) were especially focused on documenting people according to flexible and spurious notions of blood quantum. The AWB data would have been more readily available at the missions, reserves and children's homes, where the board exercised much closer surveillance and control over Aboriginal people's lives, but in the more densely settled urban centres, AWB scrutiny and control could be evaded in the interests of family security and safety. This gap in official data was not addressed by academic inquiry with a very limited field of research prior to the 1960s in urban Aboriginal lives. Most of the broader scholarship was undertaken by anthropologists, but their gaze was fixed to the north and on those peoples who were on the 'other side of the frontier' (Sutton 2021), and historians were yet to be awakened to the Aboriginal story (Stanner 1968). Charles Rowley (1970) brought a social science perspective to the study of Aboriginal lives and included a focus on urban Aboriginal people through a household study; his work was groundbreaking in that it included the legal situation, income, health, education and urbanisation in settled areas.

Oral history accounts

More telling was the way participants for this research described the numbers of Aboriginal people in and around Redfern. 'There were heaps of us Kooris' was a consistent refrain by research participants as they recalled their social life and also working life in the factories. The sentiment was that you were never 'one-out', never 'on your own' in either social situations or working in the factories. In more than words, interview participants conveyed in body language their sense of critical mass. At the least, it would seem fair to say, as participants did, there were 'heaps of Kooris' who lived and worked in Redfern and South Sydney from the war period. And it was the prospect of employment and particularly the existence of relatives in workplaces that were the main reasons cited, or speculated upon, by research participants for their and their family's move to the city.

Another factor cited for moving to Redfern in the postwar period was the hope of finding family. Several examples of this emerged in the research where participants recalled finding long-lost siblings and their own stunned experience of walking through the streets, young, dispirited and newly cast out of homes (government-run institutions), coming to grips with their own blackness and blankness about who they were and where they came from. One research participant recalled their life and feelings at the time by imitating a zombie, arms out stiff by their side, numb and blank, and spoke of a shell-shocked-like demeanour as they walked the streets of Redfern, seeking something they had no words for, or understanding of.[10] Another participant recalled the excitement, as children, in coming across a woman searching for her family, who turned out to be their aunty who they had long heard spoken about. With great excitement they took her home exclaiming, 'We found Rachel'.[11]

Others emphasised the pull to Redfern was the combination of social life and the endless job opportunities that were more inviting than the limited offerings for Aboriginal men in the bush – back-breaking work as shearers.

Aboriginal workers

Redfern and the nearby streets were, in the war and postwar period, abuzz with factories and railway yards. Work was in abundance for locals and the thousands of workers who poured through the gates of Redfern railway. Research participants, Aboriginal people, speculated that the abundance of work meant factory work was blind to colour or creed. One participant, Allan Colliss, explained, 'you were never out of work; Kooris could walk from one job to the next, and the wages were good'. Another research participant reasoned, 'In those days there was no discrimination I feel, 'cause Kooris could get jobs so easy in those days.' Others cited the approach to factories for work involved travelling in groups of threes, all cousins and all looking to be put on together and moving to the next factory if this wasn't possible. Mrs Sylvia Scott, reflecting on her own extended family's move to the city, reasoned, 'I think Kooris relocated to the city from the bush because of the work … it was so easy to get a job in those days'; she explained that back home in Cowra:

> [you] couldn't get a job in your hometown, only house work, you couldn't get a job in a shop or anything. I think that's what it was, that you could get a job in the city.

Participants also spoke with pride about their work and others spoke about the status of their fathers as workers. Pam Jackson spoke proudly of her father's work prowess on the railways and his deep and abiding pride in appearance and presentation. His appearance and that of his contemporaries, who matched their suits with fedora hats, was noted by Pam Jackson: 'all of those men always dressed well, everything coordinated … [they] always wore a tie and hat with a feather in it … they were proud old Aboriginal men'. Dan Rose, speaking about his working life in South Sydney from the late 1960s, recalled the admiration from fellow council workers: his supervisor drew the road gang around Rose's handiwork and said, 'now that's how you dig a fence-hole'. Rose's summation of that encounter referenced his long history, and that of his father, as a hard-working shearer in north-western New South Wales. His story alluded to his family as not only skilled, hard workers, but valued workers. In the new environs of the city this aptitude shone even brighter. Leslie Townsend similarly recalled her uncles being perceived as 'good workers' who were 'never out of work'.

Participants spoke of the ease with which Aboriginal men and women found work in the many factories in and near Redfern. For example, participants spoke of 'Peters Ice-Cream factory, yeah, heaps of Kooris worked there, and IXL too …'; Berlei Bras, Smith's Chips, the Chocolate Factory and others were also mentioned. Sylvia Scott explained that she worked for many years in the postwar period in factories around Redfern, including Francis' Chocolate Factory. Of this experience she recalled, 'heaps and heaps of Kooris worked at the Chocolate Factory, there were heaps of us, we all worked there'. She worked on a factory line and was responsible for manually 'scrunching' the tops of the chocolates: simple and undemanding work, she explained. But there were some significant dimensions to this: one is that Aunty Sylvia worked alongside her siblings in the factory, including one sister who was the forelady (or manager). Aunty Sylvia explained that she would on occasions work until she had a few days' leave up her sleeve and enough savings to kick her heels up. She recalled with devilish laughter that she was 'sacked three times' from the Chocolate Factory. This anecdote alone gives some insight into the abundance of employment, the regard for Aboriginal workers and, of course, the charisma and charm of Sylvia Scott. She also recalled how the factory owner was generous in his dealings with the Koori community. When Murawina Aboriginal childcare opened, the grandson of 'old Francis' took over and he continued the generous tradition of supplying chocolate for the Murawina kids at Easter time.

Similar stories were shared by Leslie Townsend. Leslie recalled growing up with her grandmother Leila Murray and grandfather, a Pittman from the South Coast. Like other participants Leslie recalled with delight the bounty that came with factory work: one of her uncles worked for 'Smith's Crisps' and a weekly highlight was her uncle coming home with packets of chips. Such delight was shared by many participants. Others recalled that their employment at the meatworks meant that all of the Kooris had their fridges stocked with meat.

Economic activity in Redfern was apparently not limited to low-skilled labouring on the factory floors. In the case of Aunty Sylvia, she worked alongside her siblings, one of whom was the forelady. In another example, at a fruit and juice preserving factory on McEvoy Street, returned Aboriginal serviceman Reg Madden was second in charge. Don Jarman recounted the significant influence Reg Madden had on his early life. As a 15-year-old white boy, Don Jarman recounted the terror, in the closing moments of the Second World War, of beginning factory work and the affirming role Reg Madden played in integrating him into the factory workforce. Jarman recounted his instructions to his children to ensure that Madden was mentioned at his funeral as one of five most influential and significant people in his life. Jarman recalled the throngs of men pouring out of Redfern station, of the dangers of the factory — including the chilling recollection of a machine crushing a fellow worker's leg, of working alongside grown men and of sharing the factory floor with women. He recalled Madden as a quiet, dignified and strong man who effortlessly carted large sacks of sugar upstairs and across

the factory and whose Aboriginality, and that of his wife, was canvassed among other workers in hushed and quiet exchanges. For a young Don Jarman, who grew up in a sheltered religious family in the austere war years, the senior factory floor worker, former soldier and picture of masculinity — Reg Madden — was his role model.

Sylvia Scott spoke of her uncle who owned and ran a fruit and vegetable shop along Hugo Street in the postwar years and of what a few decades later became Aboriginal land. The shop was next door to a fish and chip shop where Mundine's gym is now located. The business, as Scott explained, was purchased with compensation money from a farming accident. Pam Jackson spoke of her Aboriginal family and of other families who owned their own homes along Hugo Street; Leslie Townsend's grandparents purchased a house along Walker Street, which remains in the family today.

While these examples are but a few, they reveal an unchartered account of Aboriginal people in Redfern, at the least as workers, as managers in the factories, as home owners and business owners, and as significant references for kin and non-Aboriginal people alike. Much of the commentary and research relating to Redfern has focused on place as an urban community in the post-1970s civil and cultural rights movements for change. The above examples serve to tease out Aboriginal people's engagement with the industrial economy.

Structural economic change

The light-manufacturing sector, where many Aboriginal participants in this research worked, declined dramatically from the early 1980s. As the manufacturing sector became increasingly automated and cheaper labour was sourced in the developing economies of South-East Asia, the labour opportunities, which Aboriginal participants referred to as being in such abundance, evaporated. The transition to the service economy and white-collar work was for many Aboriginal people — for reasons of racism, skills and capacity — unavailable. At the same time, the pan-Aboriginalism that flourished from the 1970s emerged in a more systemic way; with ongoing resources, some working-class Aboriginal people shifted to the positions created in the Aboriginal service sphere — such as land councils from 1983 and state government positions in the delivery and coordination of Aboriginal services.[12]

The evaporation of low-skilled work and absence of recruitment to the new economy saw many of Redfern's Aboriginal residents excluded from the economy. This structural economic change away from manufacturing and attendant labour demand, and the social networks this enabled, coincided with the circulation of debilitating drugs and apparent disinterest on the part of the state to respond to what developed as a major social crisis.

Heavy drug use saw ambulances regularly charging through the streets, and deaths, sometimes thought to be as high as one person per week of heroin overdose, caused alarming consternation among Aboriginal people. In my observation, police patrols — from the distance of fortified cars around the streets of the Aboriginal community-controlled Block — while a hovering, menacing presence, were also apparently ineffective in stemming very open, very public drug dealing and use. The media castigated the police and government for allowing a 'no-go' zone, beyond the reach of the law; others were suspicious the neglect amounted to a form of genocide (Richard Phillips, pers. communication, 2006). Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Housing Company, Mick Mundine (2013), reflected candidly on the impact of heroin dealing on Redfern and the Block in the late 1980s and early 1990s in a media interview:

> When the drug trade came in it just crucified our community. We had young people dying everyday. *Dying everyday*. We had deaths. One person was killed. [The Block] was a lawless vicious place; it was a vicious cycle; and it was vicious.

As the CEO of the Aboriginal Housing Company responsible for most of the housing that makes up the Block, Mick Mundine (2013) continues to avoid sentimentality about place or belonging and contends that those residents who were against relocation (as houses were being abolished for proposed and, as it turned out, long-awaited redevelopment) in the 1990s 'were really the drug dealers and the criminals and drinkers'; he said, 'it got to the stage where Aboriginal girls were selling

themselves for drugs … the last drug bust was of 10 Aboriginal women'. While Mundine's comments are focused on the immediacy of the issues that informed how the Aboriginal Housing Company managed its complex housing assets with limited income and resources, he does highlight concerns shared by Aboriginal women's organisations at that time. A point I return to later.

The 2004 Redfern riots

It was perhaps little surprise that in 2004 the inner city suburb of Redfern, an easily identified urban Aboriginal place and seat of the post-1960s social and cultural movement for change, went up in an incandescent riotous blaze. Continuing through to the early hours of a Sydney summer morning, it was a perfect alliterative and image-generating storm: orange, pink and green flares scuttled between the retreating police on one side of the railway bridge and the mostly young Aboriginal people on the other. Armed with hastily crafted rubble missiles retrieved from demolished houses and firebombs, the young insurgents took the inexperienced police by surprise.[13] Images of a police officer collapsing unconscious as a brick missile penetrated his protective riot gear and of retreating police huddled together behind flimsy shields while nearby buildings blazed were repeat cycled on the nightly news.

At the time of the riots, several sections of the Block were (at the least by superficial observation) an epic-scale picture of depressing failure. The houses that formed the estate of the Aboriginal Housing Company were either partially demolished or occupied as squats hot-wired to the electricity mains. Several houses continued as Aboriginal family homes, but any idea about upkeep or maintenance seemed far from the picture. This depressing chapter of the far more optimistic post-1970s self-determination and successful land rights campaign for land and houses is a far more complex story. At the least, the lack of external funding, the state of the existing housing stock and the absence of a rental revenue base to continue repairs haunted the ambitions of the Aboriginal Housing Company from its inception in 1973. But the story of Redfern in the past few decades has been more complex than the ambitions or otherwise of the organisation responsible for maintaining houses.

The still and moving images of the alliterative 'Redfern riots' are underscored by deeper imaginings about place and belonging and relationships of power. The riots were sparked in the first instance by the death of an Aboriginal teenage boy and perceived culpability of the police (United Nations 2014). While accounts differ, in the most tragic of circumstances, he was fatally impaled on a fence. His family assert police pursued him while riding his pushbike (United Nations 2014). The anger at his loss was real and palpable. The showdown with the police that followed connected the injustice at the loss of a young life and police (or state) power, surveillance and oppression. This was evident in the response by two young Aboriginal female insurgents who defiantly spoke back to the camera's gaze to close the nightly news grab: 'If we can beat the cops in Redfern, we can do anything.'[14] Their sense of triumph over the police in Redfern suggests the possibility of a much wider pushback. In the symbolic space of Redfern — where, on one hand, modern Aboriginal politics is said to have fluoresced and, on the other, where tradition clings on the edge of a global metropolis — lies the possibility of recasting colonial frontier violence.

The Redfern riots created a dramatic pause for reflection on the circumstances that gave rise to them. At the local level, what followed was that several leading Redfern Aboriginal community advocacy and service organisations stepped up and were more active and vocal. The state government also accelerated a host of initiatives in Redfern, as did the local government, the City of Sydney.

One response: community leadership

At the community level, leading Aboriginal organisations, in a rare show of unity and solidarity, came together and, as part of their response, convened several open-air community meetings on the Block in the weeks and months following the so-called riots.[15] At these meetings honest and open conversations took place about chronic intra-community issues. Criticism was levelled against members of the community who perpetrated abuse, and others who failed to intervene; tough stances were taken on domestic violence and the perceived related drug use and dealing. There was a strong sense that the

riots gave expression to a much deeper despair and the need for strong and effective local-level Aboriginal leadership. Members of the Mudgin-Gal women's organisation were key players in raising concerns about intra-community dysfunction. They started their 'Enough is Enough' campaign against sexual and domestic violence at this time with a rally in 2004 on the Block: '[m]ore than 100 women attended to hear speakers declaring time and again that "enough is enough" and exhorting listeners to take responsibility for ending this behaviour' (Mudgin-gal Aboriginal Corporation nd:6).

The state government and local government (City of Sydney), already with plans in place to 'rejuvenate' the suburb, saw within weeks of the riot the Redfern Community Centre open its doors and several other state initiatives spin into existence. Foremost among them was the Redfern Waterloo Authority and its renewed emphasis on the economic revitalisation of Redfern and Waterloo as the means to address social problems. Several initiatives were already under way at the time of the riots but a new level of intensity and purpose inflected the launches and statements.

Economic revitalisation

Like many nearby inner-city post-industrial working-class residential areas that have transitioned to middle-class residential 'villages' and leisure precincts, Redfern is belatedly and somewhat differently joining this charge. Many of the old local barber, hardware and shoe repair businesses, run by then-newly arrived war-time Jewish, Greek and Lebanese migrants, are fast giving way to yet another shabby chic coffee shop and the occasional cocktail bar. Even members of the rugby league side, the South Sydney Rabbitohs (owned by Hollywood, albeit patriot, Oscar-winner Russell Crowe), synonymous with David and Goliath struggles over a more than 100-year history, are wearing Armani suits.

The riots, or at least how they were represented and interpreted, referenced the loss of foothold in the real economy and crisis in public policy. The optimism, even idealism, of the 1970s communalism to achieve change and carve out spaces of difference — as an urban community and site of the fluorescence of radical ideas, actions and impetus for change that took on a pan-Aboriginal and national character — appeared to be in tatters. This narrative of the policy failure of self-determination and its characterisation of the broader failure of progressive ideology in Aboriginal Affairs administration was being prosecuted in media and policy debates (Neill 2002; Sutton 2011). But this would be to see Redfern only through the lens of the past four decades. It would suggest that the optimism for bringing about change was recruited at that time and existed within that realm of ideas, rather than being born of particular material, economic circumstances that predated the 1970s cultural and social movements for change and which have the possibility to continually inhabit place. This paper has highlighted material conditions as central to comprehending Aboriginal worlds in this particular place.

NOTES

1 I was awarded a NSW Indigenous History Fellowship in 2006, then auspiced by the History Council of NSW. As you can see, I have been working over and deeply engaged with this research for many years!

2 Rae's painting featured in the Eora: *Mapping Aboriginal Sydney 1770–1850* exhibition at the State Library of New South Wales from 5 June to 13 August 2006. Librarian Melissa Jackson pointed out the coincidence of the presence of Aboriginal people on the site of what became Aboriginal land in the early 1970s and known locally as 'the Block'.

3 This is not to downplay the majority white Australian and many other ethnic groups who also share attachment and have long histories in the area and who lived in communion with one another.

4 For example, for a respected Elder's funeral in July 2012, James Wilson-Miller oversaw the placement of a possum skin rug, loaned from a collecting institution and from the Wonoruah people, over the coffin.

5 City of Sydney historian Lisa Murray explained the significance of the gardens and nurseries of Redfern in her talk at the sesquicentenary of the proclamation of Redfern as a municipality, 8 August 2009, Redfern Town Hall.

6 Both attracted bad press and negative commentary for government about the appalling conditions. The related commentary variously is concerned about encouraging drunkenness and immoral behaviour, and more broadly 'that much more must be done … for the Aborigines before there can be any feeling of satisfaction that the Colony has done its duty by the remnant of the aboriginal race' (Sub-Inspector Johnston to The Superintendent of Police, No.

4 Police Station, 28 January 1881, in Legislative Assembly 1883:4).

7 An interesting but unrelated detail of William Redfern's life was his tenure at the Native Institution at Parramatta from 1814 under the direction of Governor Macquarie. The school outlined ambitions to 'improve', 'civilise' and uplift (Ford 1967).

8 One example of the removal of headstones to make way for the railway was that of Cora 'Queen' Gooseberry. She was found dead at the Sydney Arms Hotel in Castlereagh Street on 30 July 1852. The publican paid for her burial and headstone in the Presbyterian section of the Sandhills cemetery (Central Railway), which was later removed to the pioneers cemetery at Botany (Vincent Smith 2005).

9 First, Second, and Third Progress Reports in V & P (NSWLA), 1875, Vol. 4; Fourth to Eleventh Progress Reports in ibid., 1875–76, Vol. 5; Twelfth Report in ibid., 1876–77, Vol. 3., cited in Mayne 1980:29.

10 Former residents of the Kinchela Boys Home spoke with me about their recollections of finding their way to Redfern through a haze of shock and befuddlement. I have chosen, in general, not to recite the names of people in these stories as the account is less about biography and more a sense of how people perceived Redfern and their place in it.

11 This account was shared with the author by Ms Leslie Townsend in relation to the reunion with her aunt. She recalled that, as children, stories of cheering and yelling all the way home to report that they had 'found her' walking the streets of Redfern. I have changed the name here to Rachel in order to preserve the story of this encounter and 'finding', as a story owned by the family.

12 The New South Wales Government, led by Neville Wran, conducted an extensive inquiry in the 1978-80 period that culminated in two reports (Keane 1980, 1981). One mapped out a plan for Aboriginal land rights and the second canvassed the causes of Aboriginal social and economic disadvantage. The state government formally adopted self-determination as a policy and embark on a radically expanded program to address Aboriginal disadvantage. This included, among many initiatives, the development of the Aboriginal Housing Office and Aboriginal education initiatives.

13 An internal investigation later concluded that the police were unprepared, did not have sufficient protective gear and that helmets were found to be too big for some officers (Mercer 2005).

14 Author's journal entry, February 2004.

15 These gatherings, which I attended as a concerned community member, were key moments in community 'real politic'. The conversations and debates also contributed to the development of this research.

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‘Pride of Yarrabah’: Yarrabah’s annual sports days as historical Aboriginal spaces

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Abstract: *Annual sports days have featured in Yarrabah in North Queensland since the Church of England established the mission in 1892. From at least 1917, sports have been held to commemorate the mission’s birthday and are tinged with religious associations. The foundation sports day competitions include a mixture of footraces, quaint recreational activities and traditional Aboriginal events such as fire lighting and spear throwing. Imposed on inmates of the mission as a colonial event, they are now embraced by residents and celebrated as the ‘Pride of Yarrabah’. The literature on religious missions and Indigenous people in Australia and globally reveals degrees of agency exercised by mission inmates and their historical appropriation of religion and associated activities. Drawing on voices of Yarrabah residents and on the empirical mission record, this paper explores the annual foundation sports days as historical Aboriginal spaces and argues that community ownership and appropriation of this mission-imposed cultural event speaks to processes of Aboriginal cultural adaptation to colonialism.*

The excitement in Yarrabah was palpable even before the running races began. Kids ran amok on Jilara Oval while the Anglican Church officials set up their sound system beneath a tin awning decked in plastic bunting. Christian pop music blared, Bishop Arthur Malcolm — a proud Yarrabah son and Anglican dignitary — said a prayer, and the 2018 Yarrabah foundation sports day was off and running with nine barefoot men contesting a 100-metre sprint race. Dozens more footraces continued until lunch, with separate events for all age groups from kindergarten through to those aged 20–24. Enthusiasm and entries mounted as the day progressed. Impromptu rugby league games and practice for the three-legged races occupied a lunch break, and the excitement continued with egg-and-spoon races, the frantic three-legged contests — including one for ‘grannies’ — and sack races for all age groups. The anarchic program was peppered with serious footraces — including a 75-metre event for senior men and the blue-ribbon 150-metre dash and men’s open 220-yards.

What I witnessed on 18 June 2018 was Yarrabah’s annual sports day, an event whose pedigree dates to the establishment of Yarrabah on 17 June 1892. On that date, Reverend John Brown Gribble established the Yarrabah mission (initially called Bellenden Ker after a nearby mountain range) on behalf of the Church of England, 16 kilometres by sea and, today, 60 kilometres by road from Cairns in North Queensland (Denigan 2008:2–3). Sports days in Yarrabah, documented since 1895, have been central to

foundation commemorations since at least 1917.[1] These annual events have included myriad activities, as indicated in a church report (*Northern Churchman*, 1 August 1941, p 16):

> There were races to suit every taste — long-distance, flat races for those who liked hard work, thread the needle, book races, boomerang and mirral [woomera] throwing, etc. for those who prefer testing their skill: a lemon race for those cleanly folk who are fond of washing their faces; for the adventurous ones there was a greasy pole to be climbed.

Aquatic events such as boat races have disappeared from the contemporary program, but footraces, traditional Aboriginal activities and novelty competitions continue.

This paper examines the history of the Yarrabah sports days as both Aboriginal and colonial spaces and their significance to local Aboriginal people as a site of community pride. The importance of these sports days to community is hard to overestimate. In 1990 the *Yarrabah News* (vol. 62, nd [July or August] 1990, p 2), edited by a young local Aboriginal man, Darren Miller, argued that the annual sports day represented more than just sports — it was 'a day of existence'. Miller was referring not only to the celebration of Yarrabah's founding, but also to its continued existence as a proud Aboriginal community. The sports days marked that community identity and spirit (Bishop Arthur Malcolm, interview, 2018[2]). Continuity of the annual day over time, and of specific time-honoured sporting events held on that day, is the 'Pride of Yarrabah' (Uncle Bryce Barlow, interview, 2019).

The foundation sports day, so treasured by locals, is unique among Aboriginal missions and settlements in Queensland for its continuity over time. Many of its activities, however, were shared with other settlements throughout Australia and the British Empire. Walter E Roth (1902:24), the then Northern Protector of Aborigines in Queensland, wrote that missionaries and settlers had introduced running races, high-jumping and other Western games in the north during the previous few years. Further south, the Barambah Aboriginal settlement (Cherbourg) held a sports day in 1925 with 34 events — virtually identical to those held at Yarrabah — from footraces to sack races to a treacle bun-eating contest.[3] Canadian historian John Matchim (2018:116–17) also reports footraces at the Grenfell Mission in Newfoundland and Labrador, and sack and obstacle races, along with greasy pole competitions, at a mission in Canada in the 1920s.

We can easily read the Yarrabah sports days in this context as a colonial and church domain. This is obvious through the event's commemoration of the mission's establishment, which, as Bishop Malcolm described it in his opening remarks when interviewed in 2018, was the 'foundation of the gospel coming to Yarrabah'. The colonial government sanctioned the establishment of the mission as part of a policy that contributed to the dispossession of Aboriginal people in North Queensland. The colonial presence is also evident in the continued role of the church and in the nature of the day itself — its inclusion of competitions like egg-and-spoon races and other events are redolent of Victorian picnics. In the description from a church official in 1941 cited above, paternalistic colonial discourse is evident in the references to competitors who display the virtues of industry and cleanliness.

Yet Yarrabah owns this event. Yarrabah has not been under church control since 1960, when the state government assumed authority, and has been a self-governing community for more than three decades. Today, the locally elected Aboriginal Shire Council supports the sports days. Attendance is entirely voluntary. The church presides, yes, but the bishop is a local Aboriginal elder. Aboriginal cultural competitions like spear throwing and fire lighting have long featured alongside the arcane British-influenced events and competitive footraces. This is not just a colonial space, but also an Aboriginal one. Like 'Indian Sports Days' in British Columbia in the early decades of the 20th century, Yarrabah sports days were 'complex social spaces' (Downey and Neylan 2015:442). The lived reality of Yarrabah's sports days supports the argument made by Canadian scholars Allan Downey and Susan Neylan (2015:443) in the context of British Columbia that sports 'defy simple characterizations as either colonial intrusion, or conversely, vehicles for Indigenous cultural persistence'.

In their seminal work, scholars Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (1988:4) argued that

the relationship of Aboriginal peoples with Christianity was a 'neglected subject'. This situation has changed remarkably since then (Schwarz and Dussart 2010:1), yet little research exists on the dynamics of sport in Australian Aboriginal Christian missions (Tatz 1995:405–06). Yarrabah may be a single example, with a unique sport history in the form of its continuous annual sports days, but that singularity and focus begs analysis because of its importance to Yarrabah people. Historians Patricia Grimshaw and Andrew May (2010:3) deconstructed missions as a 'unitary category', arguing for consideration of the particular political, economic, social and geographical contexts of individual missions. Much scholarship has focused on the struggles between various arms of the church and state in Yarrabah (Hume 1988, 1991; Loos 1988, 1991), but social dimensions, including sport and related dynamics between Aboriginal people and missionaries, are overlooked. These dimensions offer the potential to contribute to understandings of Aboriginal cultural adaptation to colonisation and its agents.

Mission historiography has neglected sport, with some exceptions such as football at the Catholic mission in the Tiwi Islands (Frawley 2005; Ward and Crocombe 2009) and the New Norcia cricket team in late-19th century Western Australia (Reece 2014). Perhaps this is because sport has often been seen as something 'on the lighter side', as the official diocesan church history described the early popularity of football on the Yarrabah mission (Rowland 1960:95). As Yarrabah people attest, however, the annual sports days played an important role in community life and identity. Sport is not alone as an example of introduced missionary practices that have been adopted at various times and for various periods. Others include brass bands, choirs and Christianity itself. The Yarrabah sports days, however, deserve special focus because of their continuity over time alongside a broader sporting culture in the community and beyond. This paper offers an analysis of these sports days, examining their history first as an event introduced by Christian missionaries and then as a highlight of community identity as expressed by Yarrabah residents. Through archival documents, press reports and oral history interviews, it argues that a complex relationship exists between colonial and Indigenous ownership of this annual event that speaks to local and broader processes of Aboriginal cultural adaptation to colonialism.

Ethics and methodology

This paper emerges from an ongoing project, supported by the Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council, in which I am collaborating with the community in research that is driven by both empirical and oral history methodologies. In initial discussions, interviews and yarning with community members that shaped my research direction, the annual foundation sports days emerged as a key interest area for Yarrabah people. More broadly, this paper acknowledges the twinned historical and contemporary importance of sport in Indigenous communities (Judd 2015:186; Maynard 2012:987).

During my first visit to Yarrabah in March 2018, for the Queen's Baton Relay prior to the Commonwealth Games at the Gold Coast, I met Aunty Hope Patterson, a respected elder and granddaughter of Pompo Katchewan, an Aboriginal man who accompanied John Gribble on his landing in 1892. Aunty Hope invited me to the daily elders' meeting, where Pamela Mundraby, coordinator of the Indigenous Knowledge Centre, facilitated a yarning session with three elders. These women identified the annual sports days as a topic of key interest to them and I agreed to pursue this research topic empirically, as well as through interviews, and to report my empirical findings to them (Aunty Millie Maywee, Aunty June Noble and Aunty Patricia Fourmile 2018). I have been doing this informally during each of my subsequent visits, bringing copies of newspaper and other reports and photographs and discussing these findings with them and other residents.

The voices of Yarrabah residents are vital. In the early historiography of missions worldwide, the dominant voice belonged to the missionaries and churches. This paper benefits from the proliferation of church and other official documentation of life at Yarrabah. The Australian Board of Missions' *Missionary Notes* (1895–1910) and its *A.B.M. Review* (1910–74), the Church of England's *North Queensland Notes* (1909–69) and the *Northern Churchman*, and the journal of the Diocese of North Queensland (1904–85),

coupled with missionary writings, chief protectors' and superintendents' reports, and other official correspondence, all offer glimpses of sports days and insight into their rationale.

By adding local Aboriginal perspectives, this paper honours Indigenous research methodologies that mandate guidance by, and inclusion of, Indigenous voices. This helps remedy the 'wicked problem' identified by Katherine Ellinghaus and Barry Judd (2020:56, 58) of historians 'never reaching beyond dusty [archival] boxes' to engage with the communities about whom they are writing. In this respect, it is inspired by historian Lawrence Bamblett's (2013) analysis of the former mission community of Erambie in New South Wales, which identifies the importance of sport to his community's identity and the importance of community voice in understanding Aboriginal sport history. My research aims not only to 'reintroduce the converts back into the dialogue' on mission life globally (Austin and Scott 2005:3) but also to value those voices as indispensable.

Few written sources from within the community offer insight on the meaning of sport. The *Aboriginal News* (originally the *Yarrabah Times*), published in Yarrabah from 1905 to 1910 with two teenage 'half-caste' boys, Wilfred Brown and Edgar, as compositors, offers some sport commentary but its voice was modulated by the missionaries (*Northern Churchman*, 7 August 1905, p 10). The *Yarrabah News* (1960s–90s) (called *Yungkiging Gorineeh*, 1966–69) began under strict non-Aboriginal supervision but increasingly reflected local opinions and views; *Yaburru*, a Yarrabah Christian Youth Centre newsletter published in 1984, was similar. Various life writings by Aboriginal Queenslanders, including those by Yarrabah people, add to our understandings of sport, but often these are marked by silences on recreational activity (Osmond 2019a).

Following an analysis of the origins and history of the sports days, this paper engages with local elders — through six individual interviews, one yarning session with three participants, and many informal conversations — in order to listen and hear. In all of these encounters I followed the precepts of yarning as an Indigenous research methodology, most importantly by allowing open-ended conversation without formal, specific guiding questions (Bessarab and Ng'andu 2010). Yarning, which is developing as a popular and versatile methodological guide across a number of disciplines, most commonly in health research but also in history, is significant because it is a culturally appropriate, conversation-based approach (Dean 2010; Geia et al. 2013; Osmond and Phillips 2019; Shay 2019; Wain et al. 2016). It emphasises engagements where the role of researcher and researched is not starkly delineated in a dialogic exchange and where Indigenous meanings are foregrounded and honoured. As such, it has the potential to yield findings that are not possible via traditional data collection, formal interviews or archive-based research (Osmond and Phillips 2019).

Church control: sports days and missionary meanings

Brock (2000:169) identifies three types of missions in the 19th and early 20th centuries: indirect evangelising with absent or itinerant missionaries; village-based enterprises with a partly itinerant Indigenous population; and 'the Christian village with the ever-present missionary'. Yarrabah was the third type, governed by the church from 1892 to 1960 with resident missionaries. Reverend John Gribble died in 1893, and was succeeded by his son, ER (Ernest) Gribble, who managed Yarrabah until 1909; Ernest, a stockman and drover, was made a deacon in 1894 and ordained as a priest on 1 January 1899 (Halse 1996). At the time of state takeover in 1960, Yarrabah had been run by the Gribbles for 18 years, the Australian Board of Missions for 26 years and the Diocese of North Queensland for a further quarter century.[4] The Queensland Government ran the community directly until the mid-1980s, when councils were elected, but ultimate control rested with an appointed executive officer until 1990 when the local Aboriginal Shire Council assumed governance on equal terms to white councils in the state (Miller 2016). The church did not abandon Yarrabah in 1960, however: under the terms of the handover to government, the Anglican Church was protected as the only church allowed in Yarrabah (Loos 1991:79) and spiritual direction continued, led by the Brotherhood of St Barnabas (Bush Brotherhood of Queensland) (Bacon 1964).

Under the Queensland *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*

(hereinafter, the Act), the government forcibly moved people to Yarrabah from all over the state, individually by decree and collectively following the closure of missions at Bloomfield River in 1901 and Bogimbah on Fraser Island in 1904. In 1898 the government declared Yarrabah a food distribution centre for Aboriginal people in the area, which helped increase the population from 60 in 1897 to 222 in 1904 (Halse 2002:41; *Missionary Notes*, 18 May 1897, p 35; 20 May 1904, p 36). The Gunggandji, the traditional owners, dominated the Yarrabah population (Oberlin-Harris 1920:332), followed by Yidinji, the other main group from the wider geographic region. As a result, the Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council (nd) notes that 'most local residents can claim both traditional and historical ties to the area'.

Yarrabah was one of 12 religious missions controlling Aboriginal people in remote areas of North Queensland — and one of four founded by the Anglican Church (Loos 1991:73). As at most missions, the attitude of the church combined 'concern and contempt' (Loos 1988:100), and its practices reflected the 'ethnocentric arrogance and inherent racism' of missionaries (Corner 1994:53). While its religious mission aimed to save, 'civilise' and evangelise, it is clear from church publications that government policy to deport Aboriginal people — 'sweepings from all parts' — made it 'largely a penal colony and reformatory' (Oberlin-Harris 1920:332). Anthropologist Lynne Hume (1991:18) describes the oppressiveness, details responses by inmates (which included escape attempts and various forms of resistance) and claims that many Aboriginal people outside Yarrabah equated it with 'prison' (see also Loos 1988:115). This equation existed within Yarrabah, too. Henry Fourmile (1993:114) recalled, 'We were just treated like animals.' Betty King (cited in Denigan 2008:38), born circa 1923 and raised in Yarrabah, lamented, 'It's hard to believe that people could actually treat others like the way our people were treated.'

While missionary rule was oppressive, the religious trappings of the church appealed to many inmates, and Yarrabah was an exception to the broader Australian 'mission failure' to convert Aboriginal peoples (Schwarz and Dussart 2010:3). Yarrabah is unlike many other missions in the north and west of Australia, where Aboriginal people 'rarely converted to Christianity or abandoned their traditional laws' (Craig 1980:66). Why did Yarrabah people take to the church? The authoritarianism of the mission in imposing Christianity offers a partial explanation, but Aboriginal people at Yarrabah also accepted the church for their own reasons. Here, conversion was a 'calculated exchange — an attempt by Aborigines to accommodate their own beliefs with a system that offered obvious material advantages and guaranteed their survival' (Craig 1980:67). The fact that 84.6 per cent of 2559 Yarrabah residents declared their religious affiliation as Anglican in 2016 indicates something of the enduring appeal (ABS 2016). Many factors explain this spiritual and economic bargain at Yarrabah, which is explored below, but one factor was the way that sport, especially the annual sports days, fostered community identity and allegiance to its religious overseers. But why did the church engage with sport in the way it did, and how?

Three factors help explain the use of sport by the church in Yarrabah: ideology, recruitment and fundraising. Ideologically, Gribble and later missionaries shared the beliefs of politicians in establishing and maintaining Aboriginal settlements throughout Queensland, which focused on protection, regulation and control (Kidd 1997; Osmond 2019b; Phillips 2018). To this was added religious zeal, specifically aimed at the 'evangelization and elevation of the Aboriginals by the preaching of the Gospel and teaching them habits [of] industry' (ABM 1899). This would be achieved by 'gathering' Aboriginal people into communities, protecting them from European 'evils', and 'by getting them to take an interest in themselves as a people and cultivating self-respect' (ABM 1899).

Missionaries saw sport as one way among many to achieve these ideological ends. J Oberlin-Harris (1920:336), chaplain at Yarrabah in 1918–19, included developing '*esprit de corps*' (literally 'spirit of the body', or team spirit) through activity as one means for building self-respect. Gribble encouraged activity of various sorts, and a degree of initiative and autonomy, through the establishment of a court, a newspaper, a Church Lads Brigade — a 'kind of Boy Scouts with an Anglican twist' that merged militarism, religion and

obedience (Halse 2002:66) — a brass band (Cole 2014), a rifle club and other organisations semi-controlled by Aboriginal people at Yarrabah.

Gribble (1930:122) cited cricket and football along with these other activities as examples of developments under his reign that helped inculcate self-respect. His biographer, Christine Halse (2002:42), argued that Gribble 'considered it the ruin of missions to ignore the importance of games in building character and a good home life', and encouraged cricket, football, and daily gymnastics and drill using Indian clubs. In an appeal for donations of footballs, Gribble noted:

> Foot balls are usually scarce with us and they help not only in maturing the body by healthy exercise, but give healthy thoughts and interests and save loafing in spare time, which always and everywhere leads to evil. (*Aboriginal News*, 1 January 1910, p 5)

The Queensland Home Secretary, who attended the annual sports day in 1925, approved of the results of Gribble's program — 'The inmates as a result of the years of training have achieved a fairly high state of civilisation' — and noted that 'the sports were entered into with a heartiness and enjoyment that indicated genuine contentment'.[5]

In its civilisation ambit, sport was tethered ideologically to muscular Christianity, a philosophy that originated in the 19th century in which sport and physical activity were linked to notions of Christian manliness, virtue and imperial duty (Mangan 1986). Imported from England to Australia in the 1850s, muscular Christianity spread through educational contexts (Brown 1987). Several Queensland chief protectors and superintendents were sporting enthusiasts from their school days, during which sport was steeped in the muscular Christian ethos. Ernest Gribble was one of these: 'reared in the evangelism of British imperialism' (Halse 2002:65), he excelled in cricket and rugby at King's School in Parramatta, New South Wales, in 1883–84 (Halse 2002:10). He introduced football to Yarrabah, and in 1898 reported on a 'great football [rugby] match' at which he umpired (*Missionary Notes*, 22 June 1898, p 1). For clergymen like Gribble, sport was not simply a masculine pursuit that reinforced religion but also a strategic means to appeal to potential congregations (O'Brien 1993:440).

Sport also served Gribble's recruitment aims: despite the forced relocation of many Aboriginal people to Yarrabah, he travelled through the region to entice others to come voluntarily. Recreational activities assisted in this. On Boxing Day in 1895, only three years after the mission was established, 'quite a lengthy program for *our* sports' (emphasis added) was held, including canoe racing, footraces, jumping, sack races and spear throwing; the mix of European and Aboriginal events was deliberate, as was the prize:

> The great events are the canoe races, the men have been busy making canoes for some time past. The first prize is to be a tomahawk. Our great aim is to have a counter attraction to the sports and regatta in Cairns, and thus bring all our people together every year. (*Missionary Notes*, 15 January 1896, p 3

A pattern of Christmas sports was quickly established. Early resident May Smith's oral history confirms that, under Gribble's administration, Christmas was the main time for sport (Thomson 1989:58). In 1897, when about 60 people were 'permanently settled' at the mission, Gribble scheduled 'our sports and a great cricket game' at New Year (*Missionary Notes*, 15 January 1897, p 3; 18 May 1897, p 35). In 1897 more than 200 Aboriginal people visited the mission for Christmas, where they were given dinner and gifts and took part in sporting events on Boxing Day — foot racing, jumping, walking, the greasy pole and tug-of-war (*Missionary Notes*, 15 January 1898, p 2; *Gympie Times and Mary River Mining Gazette*, 25 January 1898, p 3). In these and subsequent annual yuletide sporting events, we see the template for foundation sports days (*Aboriginal News*, 1 January 1907; 15 January 1908; 1 January 1910, p 3). Gribble later used this tactic at the Forrest River mission in Western Australia — he recalled that at Christmas there in 1915, 400–500 Aboriginal visitors from nearby tribal groups attended a sports day that included footraces and spear throwing (Gribble 1930:191). While sport alone would not entice Aboriginal people to move permanently to the missions, it was part of a strategy to present mission life as an attractive alternative to an often

perilous existence among settler populations with their moral vexations such as drink, opium and gambling (*Missionary Notes*, 21 September 1904, p 88; *North Queensland Notes*, nd [likely April or July], 1921, p 810).

Sport also provided a handy tool for fund-raising and promotion of the mission. Yarrabah seldom played football or cricket with nearby centres like Cairns for profit or promotion, as happened regularly in the southern government-run settlements (Osmond 2019b:539–40), but Gribble regularly appealed for sporting equipment alongside donations of goods and funds through the national press and internally through church publications (*Aboriginal News*, 1 October 1906; 15 March 1907; 15 August 1907, p 6; 1 January 1910, p 5; *West Australian*, 16 November 1914, p 5). By 1905 football had become a feature of Yarrabah mission life with assistance from St Mary's parish in West Maitland, New South Wales, which donated a ball that gave 'great pleasure' (*Northern Churchman*, 9 October 1905, p 5).

Sport became a way to assess the mission's success, allowing Gribble to make broad public appeals to keep Yarrabah operating: church reports from the early decades of the fledging mission emphasised that it faced genuine economic and health hardships imposed by disease, cyclones and the challenges of establishing an infrastructure for greater economic self-sufficiency. The *North Queensland Notes* (January 1931, p 1733), for example, trumpeted the links between sport and success:

> one has only to be amongst them [Yarrabah inmates] in their hours of recreation and to see what zest and pleasure they enter into the games of football and cricket to know that they are a really happy and healthy community.

While reports of football games and assorted other sports emerged regularly from Yarrabah in the early years, they were not a feature of the earliest Foundation Day celebrations, which were more solemn affairs. Typically, in the first decades, these occasions involved church rituals only, with a service at the site of Gribble Senior's beach landing and sometimes with a rifle drill accompaniment (*Missionary Notes*, 15 July 1897, p 69; 17 July 1899, p 71; 20 August 1900, p 79; 17 July 1902, p 65; 29 July 1904, p 69; *A.B.M. Review*, 1 July 1913, p 91; 1 August 1914, pp 105–06).

In 1917, on the 25th anniversary of Yarrabah's foundation, the missionaries introduced sports to the sacred, replacing the Christmas sport tradition and establishing a pattern that has been followed ever since. On Saturday, 16 June 1917, race heats were run over various distances, including a 150-yard 'Mission Championship' that would become an honoured tradition. Both women and men competed in later years, but whether women raced in 1917 is unknown; while girls and women played football in the early decades, and under Gribble performed drill with Indian clubs, sport was largely a male preserve, like it was in the government-run Aboriginal settlements and among the white settler-colonist population in general (Phillips 2018). Following devotions on the Sunday, race finals were held on the Monday, along with other competitions. These included Aboriginal cultural events: throwing of spears, boomerangs and 'merrows' [woomeras] and pipe-lighting races involving 'native fire sticks'. Obstacle races, 'flatty' [small boats] races, long and high jumping, pole vaulting and bun-eating contests for boys, with the buns smeared with golden syrup, complemented the program (*ABM Review*, 1 August 1917, p 106).

The emergence of footraces as the major event, celebrated with a special mission championship race, was not random. Running races were part of colonial enculturation, as Roth (1902) noted, and they appealed to many Aboriginal people throughout the colonies. Queensland produced many notable Aboriginal 'pedestrians' (professional runners who competed for prize money) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Sport historian Murray Phillips (2018:208–11) analyses official concern and displeasure with this and the ultimate censure of the activity because of its associations with money and gambling. Several outstanding professional runners were relocated to Yarrabah from southern Queensland — in particular, brothers Alick and Jack Morgan and Albert Henry (who was also an outstanding cricketer) from Deebing Creek in 1907–08 (*Queensland Times*, 12 May 1909, p 4; Thorpe 2004). The Morgan brothers illustrate official

attitudes towards pedestrians. The chief protector described the siblings as 'incorrigibles' on their removal from Ipswich to Yarrabah (Queensland 1908:15); a report by the Cairns Police Magistrate clarified that 'they had been making money by racing … and would not work' (cited in Evans 1969:92).

James Noble, a Yarrabah identity who would become the first Aboriginal man ordained by the Church of England in Australia, was also a notable runner in his youth (*Northern Miner* (Charters Towers), 12 November 1897, p 3). Originally from North Queensland, Noble was raised and educated in Anglican households in New South Wales and Hughenden in north-west Queensland. Concerned about the company he was keeping as a sprinter, the Bishop of North Queensland sent him to Yarrabah around 1897 to prevent him 'drifting into evil habits' (*Missionary Notes*, 21 December 1909, p 156; Higgins 1981:4). The concern with running was not the activity itself, but with its associations: Noble was therefore free to run at Yarrabah, and May Smith recalled him as one to watch at Yarrabah sports days (Thomson 1989:58). The presence of talented sprinters like the Morgans, Henry and Noble no doubt spurred interest in the pursuit, which has been the mainstay of Yarrabah sports days ever since.[6]

The quality of Yarrabah runners, combined with the other events, lured tourists to the sports days and intensified their role in fundraising and reputation-building during the early 20th century. Visitors from Cairns travelled by boat to Yarrabah to witness the events, which 'were as interesting … as any sports in Norman Park [Brisbane] could be' (*Cairns Post*, 6 July 1920, p 2). Corroborees and tours of the dormitories and sawmill augmented the positive impression left by the sports. By the 1930s, the annual sports days were key to attracting visitors to the mission (*Cairns Post*, 24 June 1933, p 3; *Cairns Post*, 25 June 1936, p 12). In 1938, 200 tourists attended the event (*Northern Herald* (Cairns), 25 June 1938, p 23). These day-trippers contributed to the mission economy, both through entrance fees and by purchasing curios.

Tourists excepted, the annual sports days were mostly a closed community affair. Occasionally outside communities joined the competitions, such as Cairns cricketers and Gordonvale Boy Scouts in 1940 and a group from Lockhart River in 1944 (*Northern Churchman*, 1 April 1940, p 14; 1 March 1944, p 14). The date has rarely deviated from June; the 1943 event, for example, was moved to January 1944 because so many men were away filling labour shortages caused by the Second World War (*Northern Churchman*, 1 March 1944, p 14).

The church continued to organise annual sports days in the following decades, including after 1960 when the government assumed control of the community and the church lost control over secular activities. At this point, community interest in the church waned. The next two decades were 'dark years' for the church in Yarrabah (Harris 1994:873), and 'the religious trappings of the mission years lost their significance' for many residents (Loos 1991:84). A mission chaplain who returned to Yarrabah in 1968 was 'disappointed by the paucity' of regular churchgoers, later estimated as only six people (*North Queensland Notes*, December 1969, p 9; *Yarrabah News*, November 1984, p 5). Church attendance was still low in the late 1980s. Teresa Livingstone, a self-described 'senior citizen' of Yarrabah, praised the community for a successful sports day in 1988 but lamented the fact that only 30 people attended a coinciding religious event to commemorate the pioneering missionaries (*Yarrabah News*, July 1988, p 2).

The sports days suffered as a result of waning interest in the church. Although the town council and its social and welfare committee sponsored the annual events in the 1980s, the church continued to raise funds and donate prizes, especially for the 150-yards Foundation Race (*Yarrabah News*, July 1985, p 1; June 1987, p 2). Nevertheless, fewer people volunteered or financially contributed to the event. In 1985 the Sports Committee appealed for community members to 'show a little more consideration, and help raise money by selling things or doing raffles …' (*Yarrabah News*, June 1985, p 4). The inference is that people still turned up on the day but that few contributed to its organisational success. Vandalism and poor behaviour marred the 1985 event — someone lit a fire on the running track and a fight broke out (*Yarrabah News*, July 1985, p 1). Children loved the event, but young adults shied away. A local reporter lamented, 'It was a disappointment

on the part of some Committee members not to see more young runners competing in what can be considered as their races' (*Yarrabah News*, June 1987).

The growing availability and popularity of other sports in the 1980s also diminished the importance of the annual sports days, especially for younger people. Clubs and schools organised various sports, Yarrabah opened a large sports complex in the mid-1980s and in 1987 the Yarrabah Community Council appointed a community sports coordinator (*Yarrabah News*, April 1985, p 1; July 1987, p 7). Rugby league football, in particular, grew in popularity, with Yarrabah men playing for the nearby Babinda Colts from 1978. A road connecting Yarrabah to the region was opened in 1972 (Zalewski 2007:93), thus facilitating these types of contacts; a four-wheel drive track opened in 1962 for power-line maintenance but was impassable.[7]

These new athletic opportunities affected the annual sports days in various ways. Sometimes, timetables conflicted. The 1990 sports day, for example, was 'a moderate success, considering most residents went to another sporting venue' (*Yarrabah News*, vol. 62, nd [July or August], 1990, p 2), while in 1996 primary school children were unable to participate because the Gordonvale sports day coincided (*Yarrabah News*, June 1996, p 4). More generally, competition from other sports diluted the significance of the annual event because it no longer held a virtual monopoly. The effect was to decrease the scale of the sports days: by 1986 the event was pared back from two days to one (*Yarrabah News*, July 1986, p 1) and in 1998 some events were cancelled 'due to financial restraints' (*Yarrabah News*, June 1998, p 1).

If these were 'dark years' for the church, they were also gloomy days for the foundation sports days. Still, they did not die. Given the missionary-colonial history of this annual event with the church, whose grip on Yarrabah was weakening, why did it survive? Why did local Aboriginal people continue to support it at all? Their continuing interest, and the ability of the event to thrive again as I experienced it in 2018, demonstrates that as well as being a church and colonial imposition, the Yarrabah annual sports days are also an Indigenous space. In the following section I analyse why this is so.

Aboriginal ownership: an Indigenous space

Anthropologist Daniel Craig (1980:142) captures something of the colonial dimension of the Yarrabah sports days and how they represent the displacement of traditional Aboriginal culture: 'Races, tossing brooms, and throwing coconuts have replaced the native arts.' He writes as an outsider, however, emphasising the seeming absurdity of English picnic-style games. But this external perspective underestimates the broader meanings that many locals ascribe to the day. As *Yarrabah News* editor Darren Miller (mentioned above) expressed, the annual sports day was also 'a day of existence'.

The aunties whose yarning with me initiated this paper expressed one dimension of the sports days' importance, reflecting nostalgically — 'They were the good old days' — while keenly anticipating the next annual event. Nostalgia does not preclude critical perspectives: nostalgia for aspects of the past is common in the former settlements, as well as in the missions, and exists alongside negative memories (Hume 1991:23; Osmond and Phillips 2018). As scholar Reena Tiwari and colleagues (2019:24) note, 'Survivors' relationships with the mission landscapes can be a complicated mixture of fondness and revulsion.' Meanings can be found in this complex mire of emotion and memory: as historian Laura Rademaker (2016:138) persuasively argues in the context of Aboriginal missions, 'nostalgia sheds light on people's most valued experiences'. In this section, I examine meanings and Aboriginal ownership of the sports days, drawing on the voices of Yarrabah elders.

For many, as Uncle Richard Thomas noted (interview, 2019), the foundation sports days combined respect for the church and Aboriginal pride. Mission foundation and Aboriginal culture are 'all part of the package', said Uncle Bryce Barlow (interview, 2019). This sentiment expresses not only religious faith and loyalty to the church, but also the deeply enmeshed relationship between the church and Yarrabah community. Yarrabah was one of the first Australian church missions to encourage Christian leadership within its inmate community (Harris 1994:505). Early missionaries imposed Anglicanism, but the active and significant involvement of Aboriginal and other non-white figures diluted strict divisions between white clergy and black parishioners.

Willie Ambryn (a South Sea Islander) and Pompo Katchewan (an Aboriginal man) arrived with John Gribble in 1892 and helped attract Aboriginal people to the mission. The Bishop of North Queensland licensed Aboriginal lay readers, and several Aboriginal organists served in the early mission (Gribble 1930:117; Harris 1994:505–06, 877). Throughout the 20th century, the church ordained Aboriginal priests and deacons from Yarrabah, including James Noble, the first Aboriginal person to be ordained by the Church of England in Australia (Higgins 1981) and Arthur Malcolm, the first Aboriginal bishop (Morton 2005). Sister Muriel Stanley from Yarrabah, trained by the Church Army, was a highly respected nurse, hospital matron and welfare officer (Loos 1991:78). Through such active involvement, Yarrabah people transformed an imposed religion into something both 'Aboriginally-oriented and acceptable to themselves' (Hume 1988:250), akin to the experience of reconciliation of traditional Aboriginal belief systems and Christianity that also occurred elsewhere in Australia, for example at Galiwin'ku, Elcho Island (McIntosh 1997:286).

Yarrabah people remember and honour their ancestors and peers who served the church and represented their people, which helps explain the merged pride in church and community. The two are not easily separable. The replacement in 1974 of an aging white priest with a local man, Father Arthur Malcolm, who helped revive flagging interest in the sports days, demonstrates the link (*Yarrabah News*, November 1984, p 5). Father Malcolm, now Bishop Malcolm, is one of at least four Yarrabah people to reminisce about the sports days in writing (Morton 2005:18–19; for the others, see Thomson 1989:52, 58, 60–2). Born in 1934, he has a long-term perspective on the event as both an Aboriginal person and as a churchman. He confirms that the annual sports were much smaller and less important when he returned in 1974 than in 1952 when he went away for religious training. He also argues that while the event is bound up with the religious origins of Yarrabah, with mass an integral part of the celebrations, the sports days are ultimately all about community spirit (interview, 2018).

Elders unanimously echoed and elaborated on Malcolm's memories of community spirit on display around the sports days. Uncle Alfred Neale (interview, 2019), who was born circa 1925 and arrived in Yarrabah in 1930, recalls that no tribal divisions were evident during the well-organised sports days during his youth. The spirit would 'boost your morale up', he said.

This civic spirit manifested in various ways, including community-wide preparation. Women sewed shorts and decorative rosettes for the occasion. Many elders, now in their seventies and older, fondly recall memories of these special uniforms. Aunty Hope Patterson (interview, 2019) recalled that the women made satin shorts on pedal sewing machines for male runners. The shorts were multi-coloured and often decorated with coloured ribbons on both sides. All the runners wore white singlets, usually with a rosette or a bright ribbon on the chest. The men only wore the colourful running shorts on the annual sports days. The effect, recalled the aunties in our yarning session, was 'like a big rainbow in the field'. Elders recall that this colourful dimension diminished in the 1970s, but many Yarrabah people who lived away 'after the Act' would 'come home' to Yarrabah for sports days for reunions (Uncle Bryce Barlow, interview, 2019).

This focus on male runners reflects the importance of the footraces, especially the 150-yard Foundation Day race. This event was the 'Pride of Yarrabah' (Uncle Bryce Barlow, interview, 2019) and winners enjoyed the honour for the following year. Henry Miller was a repeat winner and twice was named the All-Round Sports winner on Foundation Day, and was honoured with a plaque. The Native Affairs annual report for 1962–63 recorded his first victory: 'The championship cup was won by Henry Miller, aged 17 years.'[8] Seventy-one years old when we met, Uncle Henry takes a quiet pride in his sporting achievements, and the community remembers his fleetness of foot.

The importance of the sports day to the community meant that race outcomes were not left to chance. Runners trained, and trained vigorously, starting a few months ahead. Uncle Henry (interview, 2018) recalls running on the beach at 5.00 or 6.00 am daily, followed by a rub down and cold shower. His trainer was Uncle Esau Miller. Other runners had different trainers. Uncle Bryce Barlow, born in 1942, who assisted in Henry

Miller's preparation, remembers that all the serious runners had trainers from the 1940s onwards. Training commenced in April, with runs in the morning, as Uncle Henry recalls, and again in the evening. The training also involved push-ups and other exercises (Uncle Bryce Barlow, interview, 2019). Uncle Alfred Neale (interview, 2019) claims that trainers had 'secret tactics'. The smell of liniment lingers in many memories.

Training for the Yarrabah sports days has a longer history than living memory recounts. As early as 1900, the *Missionary Notes* (5 January 1900, p 3) reported that 'the lads are all very busy training for the different foot races, or practising jumping, etc.' in preparation for the sports on Boxing Day. Athletes made 'great preparations' again for this event in 1907 (*Aboriginal News*, 15 January 1908, supplement), and in 1921 the *Northern Churchman* (1 August 1921, p 11) observed that 'Men and boys prepare for them [the annual sports] for some time before the festival.' Prizes changed over time, from utilitarian items like the tomahawk awarded in 1895 to small cash prizes; most were gendered male prizes — for example, knives, fish hooks, hymn books, handkerchiefs, pipes, belts, writing paper, shaving brushes, scissors and thimbles (*Northern Churchman*, 1 December 1909, p 12). Uncle Alfred Neale (interview, 2019) recalls cash was the reward for first place in major events, while runners-up received cooking utensils and other practical items. Today, small envelopes of money are distributed (Figure 1). While the church today donates most of this money, collected through fundraising activities, as it did in the early years of the mission, for many years money was deducted from men's wages for this purpose (*Northern Churchman*, 1 August 1927, p 7).

Pride, prizes and prestige account for some of the enthusiasm, but links to community and continuity over time also gave meaning to Yarrabah people. The annual inclusion of traditional Aboriginal sports and activities from the earliest sports days helped inmates to shape these festivities as an Aboriginal space. Like on most of the government settlements, the Yarrabah missionaries encouraged rather than censored spear and boomerang throwing and corroborees. Settlement administrators saw in these activities a means of raising money at public exhibitions,

Figure 1: Prize envelope, 2018 (source: author)

including at high-profile rugby league matches (Sherwood et al. 2020). Yarrabah rarely played football against major centres in the early decades, but did perform corroborees in Cairns and for tourists visiting the mission (*Cairns Post*, 28 May 1928, p 5). Gribble, noted the Cairns *Trinity Times* (21 November 1906, reprinted in *Aboriginal News*, 15 July 1907), did not 'set his face against any of their native customs *that are good* … [and] encourages the corroboree' (emphasis added). 'Good', we can assume, meant both lucrative and harmless: in permitting corroborees, the Yarrabah missionaries overcame their initial suspicion of satanic influences manifest in the ritual (Loos 1988:108–09). Spears, boomerangs and other traditional weapons were allowed at Yarrabah: May Smith recalled that Gribble encouraged traditional weapon making to allow people to hunt for food to supplement rations (Thomson 1989:52).

Aboriginal inmates maintained these activities as a means for cultural continuity, and took pride in their inclusion in the sports days' programs alongside bun-eating contests and sack races (Figure 2). Uncle Alfred Neale (interview, 2019)

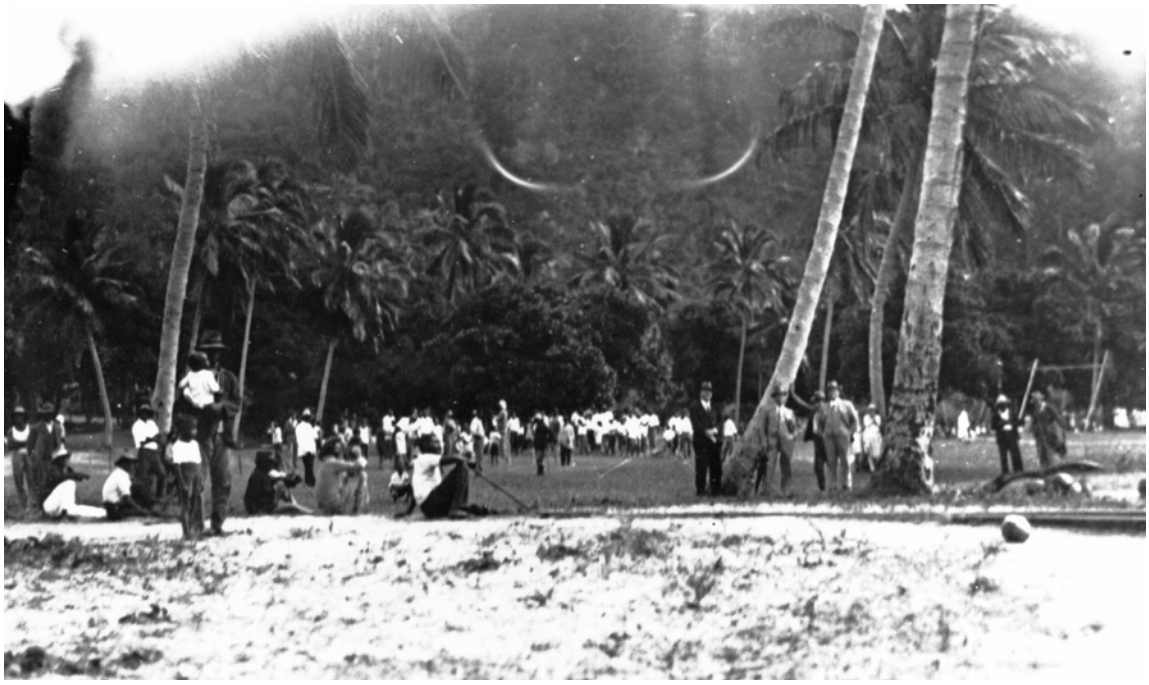

Figure 2: Sports carnival at Yarrabah, June 1933; negative number 53376
(source: State Library of Queensland)

Figure 3: Husking coconuts at Yarrabah, 1931; negative number 166108
(source: State Library of Queensland)

noted that the 'cultural events were very important to the old people'. Spear, boomerang and mirral throwing regularly featured, as did coconut husking with teeth (Figure 3) and 'kangaroo' races. A favourite event still run today is the pipe-lighting race, in which competitors start a fire using a kookal stick (firestick) and coconut fibre or grass, light a pipe and run a set distance with the pipe in their mouths. The aunties recalled that locals made shell necklaces, woomeras, spears, feather sprays, baskets, pandanus mats and fans to sell to tourists at stalls, which also helped maintain traditional culture. Corroborees typically ended the day's celebrations, and food has been an important cultural rite. Yarrabah people originally harvested turtles for sports day feasting, and when they were scarce bullocks were killed instead (*Northern Churchman*, 1 August 1941, p 16). Continuing the tradition, organisers applied to the departmental director for permission to slaughter a bullock for the June event in 1979.[9]

Cultural continuity involved more than simply carrying on or adapting traditional arts. For many people, these events evoked ancestors. Uncle Richard Thomas (interview, 2019), for example, felt the spirit of the 'old people' when spears were thrown in competition when the events were still held at the old sports grounds near the church. Gribble (1932:28–32) reported a legendary spear fight at that location in 1893, which older people no doubt remembered first-hand when Uncle Richard was young. Several people recalled that interest in the sports days dipped when the location shifted to a new sportsground in recent decades, suggesting that the event's flagging fortunes after government takeover had a deeper cultural explanation than disengagement with the church and greater competition from sports like rugby league.

Another way in which the sports days can be seen as an Aboriginal space is the community inclusion of respected elders alongside giddy children and swift runners. Elders participated in two ways: as spectators and as participants. Interviewees recall older people cheering from the sidelines of races, beating cane fronds to keep children from interrupting the action (Aunty Hope Patterson, interview, 2019). The grannies' race that I witnessed in 2018 has a long history (*Yarrabah News*, June 1997, p 8), and the aunties in the yarning session were gleeful in their memories of such races.

As an Aboriginal space, the sports days were all-inclusive. While the most prestigious events were aimed at men, women have participated since the early years. Women raced canoes in 1904 at the Boxing Day sports (*Missionary Notes*, 19 January 1904, p 2). Rose Colless, in an interview recorded in the 1980s, recalled, 'The women had their flattie boats, they had their sailing boats. The women competed … They all had their flatties there and they'd race each other' (Thomson 1989:60–2). Women also competed in footraces as early as 1908 (*Aboriginal News*, 15 January 1908, supplement, np). While the missionaries reported in 1920 that girls and women regarded many of the field events as a 'joke' (*Northern Churchman*, 1 September 1920, p 4), in 1936 'they were just as ready to run as the men and boys' (*Northern Churchman*, 1 August 1936, p 20). By the 1960s, women and men champions both received trophies for sports days.[10] Uncle Henry Miller (interview, 2018) remembers that older women had a walking race with a book on their heads. This event, as much as any, symbolises the dual significance of the sports days: while events like this one for older women evoke etiquette classes and colonial values, the participation of all sectors of the community indicates community ownership.

Concluding discussion

This localised case study was spurred by the interest of Yarrabah people. For them, the topic has great meaning specific to the experiences and histories of Yarrabah people. Yarrabah's sporting and colonial past also has a broader relevance, which lies in its commentary on cultural adaptation to colonialism by Aboriginal people through two separate, but here interrelated, areas: sport and religion. Sport is well understood as a cultural practice introduced by settler-colonial society and encouraged in government settlements and religious missions for a host of ideological and practical reasons. A growing chorus of Indigenous voices and expanding corpus of academic literature explores how and why Aboriginal people embraced sports, examining economic motives, personal agency and empowerment, collective identity and pride,

and community building (Broome 1995, 1996; Osmond 2019a, 2019b; Tatz 1995). Likewise, knowledge of how and why Aboriginal people responded to religion is increasing.

In Yarrabah, the annual sports days mark a powerful and continuous coalescence of sport and religion. Introduced by colonising missionaries as tools of civilisation and assimilation, they were appropriated by local people as a symbol of Aboriginal community history and identity. Yarrabah's experience reflects the agency of Indigenous people worldwide in the face of missionary control (Brock 2000:159–60) and, more locally, supports historian Peggy Brock's (1993:3) argument that Aboriginal Australians were 'active agents in their interaction with the colonisers'.

Robert Kenny (2007:340), in his study of Nathanael Pepper, a Wotjobaluk man from Victoria who converted to Christianity in 1860, argues that Christianity did not diminish converts' Aboriginal identities. While Christianity did have a major, defining impact on Yarrabah, and decimated many aspects of culture, language and identity, a strong Aboriginal identity has prevailed. This identity prevailed both despite religious and cultural impositions and because of it. The Yarrabah sports days provide an example of how Aboriginal people appropriated one such imposition. This embrace and ownership helped ensure survival, not in terms of original nations or even traditional culture, but in terms of creation, preservation and maintenance of a communal identity based on shared experiences (Brock 1993:3, 166). In this sense, this case study has bearing on sport on other Aboriginal former mission communities and invites deeper investigation of how communities used and made meaning of sport and other introduced cultural forms.

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NOTES

1 Because St Alban's Day in the church calendar falls on 22 June, five days after the Yarrabah mission was founded, Alban became the patron saint of the mission and the annual sports days held to commemorate these two events have been variously referred to as foundation sports days, St Albans Day sports and St Albans-tide sports. For simplicity, I will refer to them as sports days.
2 Details of interviews are provided in 'Oral histories' at the end of this paper.
3 Queensland State Archives (hereinafter QSA), Item 336145, 'Barambah — Miscellaneous', Sports Meeting 3749, 1925.
4 QSA, Item 508806, 'Administration — Yarrabah — Hand Over — Church to State', minutes of meeting between Queensland Government and Church of England authorities, 18 February 1960, p 6. Church jurisdictional control of Yarrabah was complex: from 1892 until 1910 it was run by the Sydney-based executive council of the Australian Board of Missions, from 1910 to 1937 by a Brisbane-based committee chaired by the Archbishop and from 1937 to 1960 by the Diocese of North Queensland (Loos 1991:77–8).
5 QSA, Item 716214, 'Visit of Hon. J. Stopford, Home Secretary to Northern Aboriginal stations', 1925.
6 Bookending these achievements, Patrick Johnson, whose mother came from Yarrabah, has held the Australian athletics record in the 100 metres since 2003.
7 QSA, Item 504648, 'Administration — Annual reports — Yarrabah', 1962 General Report.
8 QSA, Item 504648, 'Administration — Annual Reports — Yarrabah', Annual Report to the Director of Native Affairs 1962–63, p 4.
9 QSA, Item 508863, 'Administration — Yarrabah — School Sports', Memo from Yarrabah Manager to Director, DAIA, 8 June 1979.
10 QSA, Item 504648, 'Administration — Annual Reports — Yarrabah', Annual Report to the Director of Native Affairs 1963–64, p 4.

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Archiving First Nations media: the race to save community media and cultural collections

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Abstract: *Since the 1970s First Nations media organisations have been established across remote, regional and urban Australia, and have been broadcasting and producing media in and for their local communities. Many of the resulting community-managed audiovisual collections have yet to be digitised or archived and are often stored in substandard conditions. With UNESCO's deadline of 2025 for digitisation of analogue media rapidly approaching, these rich social and cultural heritage collections are at high risk of being lost.*

Since 2013 First Nations Media Australia (FNMA, formerly Indigenous Remote Communications Association) has worked closely with member organisations and national collection agencies to develop a First Nations Media Archiving Strategy and to support community organisations develop the capacity to manage their collections according to best practice. FNMA is committed to keeping strong community control of media collections and recordings, and believes that the relationship between media production and access to archived recordings is intrinsically linked to the processes of self-determination and to social, cultural and economic sustainability and benefit. This paper explores the ways in which on-country archiving work enables local decision-making processes, which are considered critical to future collection access and use. The paper discusses how First Nations media organisations are often hampered by a lack of funding for the equipment, software and training needed for preservation work and ongoing management of community collections.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people communicate with each other and their neighbouring clans through a variety of spoken languages, sophisticated sign language, gesture, iconography and other semiotic systems such as sand drawing (Ellis et al. 2019), and have developed their own community-based media organisations over the past 40 years.

> Aboriginal community broadcasting is seen as crucial for the promotion of Aboriginal culture and languages and the communication needs of Aboriginal communities. Throughout the 1970s, Indigenous broadcasting began to grow. This growth came from the community sector, but it was not until the 1980s that more widespread community broadcasting began to develop. (Ormond-Parker 2019:8)

In 1983 government representatives travelled to Papunya, a small community in the Northern Territory, on a fact-finding mission about the introduction of satellite technology to remote Australia. Media magnate Kerry Packer was interested in expanding his television network to 'the bush' and the government saw an opportunity to collect votes from remote areas (Molnar & Meadows 2001). Local Aboriginal people were questioned about how they might use satellite technologies in areas previously technologically quarantined from radio or television signals.

With the impending launch of the AUSSAT satellite, communities were concerned about the impact that exposure to mainstream television might have on language and culture (Buchtmann 2000:59). There were fears that satellite technology might allow for spying on cultural business conducted on sacred sites (Bell 2008). In an interview with Faye Ginsburg (1991:97), a founder of the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA), Freda Glynn, remarked:

> TV is like an invasion. We have had grog, guns and diseases, but we have been really fortunate that people outside the major communities have had no communication like radio and TV. Language and culture have been protected by neglect.

In order to reduce the potential impact of television, remote communities sought both control over incoming content and inclusion in the production of broadcast material. Training programs in video production were established in the remote communities of Yuendumu in the Northern Territory and Pukatja (Ernabella) in South Australia in about 1983–84, with a focus on recording local community and cultural content. This led to the establishment of the Warlpiri Media Association and Ernabella Video and Television (EVTV) and the beginnings of remote community media.

In 1982 United States communications researcher Eric Michaels (1986:xiv) began a three-year Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies fellowship in Yuendumu to 'assess the impact of introducing television to remote Aboriginal communities'. Rather than adopting an ethnographic approach, Michaels took an action research approach, working with community members including Francis Jupurrurla Kelly and Kurt Japanangka Granites to develop a video production program with a cultural maintenance focus. Michaels (1986) documented the outcomes in his report *The Aboriginal invention of television in Central Australia 1982–1986* and numerous journal articles and monographs.

From late 1984, both Yuendumu and Pukatja set up local television broadcasting to be able to broadcast to the community. Warlpiri Media pioneer Kurt Japanangka Granites (in Bell 2008:89) described the role of Warlpiri television:

> The satellite was a threat to the Aboriginals, but now we have our own TV and video, we can put our things on too. We can fight fire with fire … Now that we've got our own equipment we are able to do this ourself instead of Europeans doing it for us. Europeans only show what they want to show, not what we want to show.

The Australian Government responded to concerns raised by Indigenous leaders by appointing Eric Willmot from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to lead an investigation by the Task Force on Aboriginal and Islander Broadcasting and Communications into the potential impact of satellite television access on remote communities. The recommendations in the task force's report, *Out of the Silent Land* (1984:vi–xiii), included:

- the coordinated introduction of satellite radio and television reception and re-broadcasting facilities to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- the provision of facilities to allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to control programmes broadcast in their communities; and
- the encouragement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander broadcasting in radio and television production.

These recommendations became the rationale for the Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS), now known as the Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Service (RIBS). The rollout of BRACS began in 1987 to 81 Indigenous communities across central and northern Australia, with sites gazetted as community broadcasters under a new special class licence (Turner 1998:7). Following initial issues with implementation of the scheme due to inadequate operational funding, training and support, the BRACS Revitalisation Strategy was established in 1993 and an additional 20 sites were granted licences.

Despite ongoing challenges, the remote media sector grew to 103 BRACS sites nationally by 2001, with eight remote Indigenous media organisations established as regional hubs to support them. These organisations supported BRACS communities to document local cultural, social and political events to share on community television and radio, while managing regional radio networks to broadcast news, activities, music and stories across their regions. Since the early developments of remote media and pioneering organisations such as CAAMA, the First Nations media sector has grown substantially across remote, regional and urban Australia.

Development of the First Nations media industry

In 2001 the Indigenous Remote Communications Association was established as the peak body for the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media and communications sector. In late 2016 it transitioned to become the national peak body for First Nations media and was renamed First Nations Media Australia (FNMA) in 2018.

FNMA supports the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media sector in Australia through representation, resourcing and capacity-building activities. Its membership includes not-for-profit, community-controlled First Nations media organisations, individual broadcasters and media producers, freelance filmmakers, and journalists. FNMA's activities include industry updates, networking events and meetings, annual awards, policy development, research and data collection, content sharing, and leadership in promoting digital inclusion and community access to locally relevant media services.

First Nations media organisations provide primary information services to their communities, and broadcast locally relevant news and information (often in language) about community services, local events and health promotions. This role helps to strengthen cultural identity and inclusion, and contributes to the emotional and social wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The portrayal of positive and identifiable cultural role models carrying out a range of activities in their communities is particularly important for younger generations, who form a significant part of the community audience. First Nations media also serves to strengthen and retain Indigenous languages, particularly in remote and regional Australia. The strong links between language and economic development in remote communities create a remote business development focus for the Australian Government and provide a policy framework for Indigenous languages and arts funding (Commonwealth of Australia 2016).

The industry contributes a First Nations perspective to Australia's national dialogue and educates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences and the broader community about cultural awareness, political matters relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and social, health and economic issues. In particular, First Nations radio is an essential component of truth-telling processes and allows for the expression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, perspectives and opinions on contemporary issues. First Nations voices posit a positive representation of First Nations issues as compared with the negative

Figure 1: Valerie Martin, Chairperson of Pintubi Anmatjere Warlpiri Media (PAW), with a statement from the FNMA 'Our Media Matters' campaign. (https://firstnationsmedia.org/our-media). This campaign aimed to highlight the core values of the First Nations media sector and promote its essential role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. (© 2017 First Nations Media Australia)

stereotyping that continues to be prevalent in mainstream media.

A 2017 study of the Social Return on Investment of First Nations broadcasting services, commissioned by the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet and conducted by Social Ventures Australia, found that for every dollar invested in the sector, $2.87 of cultural, social and economic value was returned (Social Ventures Australia 2017). It found that First Nations broadcasters and media producers provided a local and trusted voice and delivered demonstrable outcomes in terms of audience reach, employment outcomes, strengthened social cohesion, language maintenance and cultural resilience.

The First Nations media sector employs around 500 people nationally, more than 79 per cent of whom are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (FNMA 2020). The scope of the First Nations media sector includes:

- **Radio:** Over 230 radio broadcast sites coordinated by 35 licensed, community-owned, not-for-profit organisations
- **Video & film production:** Production of culture and language-based content for broadcast and online distribution
- **TV:** National (NITV [National Indigenous Television]) and regional (ICTV [Indigenous Community Television[1]]) TV services; [as well as] local TV services (Goolarri TV at Broome, Larrakia TV at Darwin)
- **News production:** National, regional and local news and current affairs services for broadcast, as well as print and online news media, including:
  - National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS) and its National Indigenous News and Weekly News-in-Review
  - Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association's news service, including its Strong Voices program

Figure 2: Sylvia Nulpinditj, broadcaster, film director and cultural consultant at Yolngu Radio (© 2017 First Nations Media Australia)

Figure 3: Naomi Moran, General Manager of *Koori Mail* and Chairperson of First Nations Media Australia from May 2021 (© 2017 First Nations Media Australia)

  - Koori Radio's news and current affairs programming
  - NITV News and The Point
  - Print media including *Koori Mail* and *Land Rights News* (NT)
- **Print and Online:** A national newspaper (*Koori Mail*) alongside a strong web presence of journalistic sites such as IndigenousX, *National Indigenous Times* and indigiTUBE, a dedicated online platform showcasing aggregated content complemented by an app streaming 24 radio services. First Nations media organisations have a strong social media following and publish content online daily. (FNMA 2020:2–3)

Collectively, First Nations radio broadcasting services reach 48 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, including 100,000 people considered very hard to reach (FNMA 2020).[2] In remote communities local First Nations radio rates highly, with 90 per cent audience share (McNair Ingenuity Research 2016). In 82 sites across the country, First Nations radio is the only radio service available (29 community licensees, 50 Temporary Community Broadcast Licenses [TCBLs] and three retransmission sites); at a further 16 locations, First Nations radio is the only local service available, alongside retransmitted national services from other locations (Australian Communications and Media Authority 2019). Television services and online services complement this and add to audience reach.

While broadcasting remains the core media activity, the First Nations media industry has diversified significantly to embrace a broad range of mediums and platforms to communicate, connect and share knowledge across radio, film, television, print, online and mobile services. The media landscape has changed due to convergent technologies, disrupting previous divisions between screen, broadcast and online media outputs, with audiences increasingly accessing online streaming services and on-demand content. With more media channels and sources of content, audiences are increasingly fragmented and selective.

While continuing the primary task of radio broadcasting to local communities, First Nations media organisations have diversified to become multi-platform producers and distributors, sharing news and stories via social media, podcasts, websites, and First Nations online platforms such as indigiTUBE (www.indigitube.com.au) and ICTV Play (https://ictv.com.au). This has required new technologies, skills and daily workflows, but has been a critical change to ensure the sector continues to reach First Nations audiences via the devices or platforms they prefer to use. The indigiTUBE platform, which was re-launched as a national platform in 2018, provides on-demand access to an array of First Nations-produced media content — video, music, podcasts, news, language content — as well as live streaming of 28 First Nations radio stations from around the country, enabling these services to be accessed from anywhere in the world.

While convergence has enabled broader audience reach and multi-platform sharing of content, the shift to digital production and sharing platforms does create a challenge in reaching people with poor connectivity and where there is a cost burden to access essential media services. This necessitates the continuity and expansion of radio broadcasting to reach First Nations audiences, particularly in remote and regional areas. The shift to online and cloud-based content sharing platforms has also created new challenges for cultural content management.

Recording and preserving history

Media production is a dynamic and evolving means of maintaining and preserving Indigenous knowledge and recording a living history of aural and visual culture and language in modern formats. From the early 1980s to the present, First Nations media organisations have provided a record of Indigenous languages, cultural knowledge, traditional skills, community events, family histories and oral histories. In this way, First Nations media makes an ongoing, active contribution to the maintenance and protection of Indigenous knowledge.

There are now hundreds of First Nations audiovisual collections across the country in media organisations, art centres, land councils, language centres and schools. They collectively contain hundreds of thousands of hours of community-generated media content. First Nations community collections represent a unique set of audiovisual resources produced by and for

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, managed by cultural custodians according to local cultural protocols, and maintained on the countries to which the cultural and social content is directly connected (Huebner and Marr 2019; Ormond-Parker and Sloggett 2012).

Over a period of about 40 years, the First Nations media industry has amassed archives of nationally significant content, much of which is stored on magnetic tape such as VHS and Super-VHS video and audio cassettes. This kind of magnetic tape is quickly degrading, which means that collections that are not digitised are at risk of becoming unplayable by around 2025 (National Film and Sound Archive 2017; Ormond-Parker 2019). The analogue media collections are valuable for sustaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language revival and maintaining cultural heritage, and for inter-generational knowledge transfer. They are also a unique source of information for researchers exploring First Nations media history. However, there are also cultural concerns to be considered, alongside the urgent need for digitising heritage media collections. Since 2013, FNMA has been advocating for funding and support to ensure that these historic community-produced collections are digitised and available to the communities and future generations, while highlighting the need for local oversight of this process to ensure items are managed according to cultural protocols.

In response to community concerns and the urgent requirement to transfer materials from degrading magnetic tape formats before 2025, FNMA established a reference group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and industry experts from across Australia, including national collecting agencies such as the National Film and Sound Archive and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (Ormond-Parker 2019). The reference group, convened by FNMA Archive Project Manager Susan Locke, created the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Audiovisual Collections Plan to preserve and manage community collections. This plan has the broad support of First Nations media organisations and partners throughout Australia. In addition, progress has been made on creating methods and standards for media collections, metadata and cataloguing, and the management of collections in a manner that ensures culturally significant and sensitive materials are maintained within communities and under the custodianship of cultural law keepers and senior knowledge holders.

Keeping media collections on country is essential from the perspective of the cultural custodians of the collections and the communities represented in the collections. Many collections contain sensitive cultural content in relation to secret and sacred objects, sorry business and community ceremony such as song and dance. The protocols for viewing these materials (whether analogue or digital) can only be managed by local people. As such, there is a need to keep the original media ideally, within community and on country to ensure future cultural integrity of access. In this way, the media itself becomes a sacred object that needs to be maintained locally by cultural owners, just as they have protected the legacy of their ancestors for millennia.

Accordingly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander producers, media organisations and custodians are often reluctant to allow digitisation of culturally sensitive material. Reasons for this include concerns about protecting cultural knowledge and the risk that the digital format may make items accessible to larger audiences beyond community practices of control and ownership (Ormond-Parker et al. 2016). Often the cultural sensitivities relating to these recordings mean that sending them to a centralised government collection agency is culturally inappropriate and not an option. First Nations communities mostly advocate the need to retain control of their collections under the oversight of traditional cultural custodians or senior knowledge holders. This has required the development of culturally appropriate on-country archiving, which enables local decision making and policies about access, media handling and the identification of cultural metadata for cataloguing of new digital media.

FNMA has recognised that this presents an opportunity for the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in culturally meaningful roles such as community archive workers, who are needed to coordinate the extensive and time-consuming work of digitising, cataloguing and managing community access and sharing of

digital media protocols. Employment opportunities in managing the collections affirm the value of cultural knowledge and language proficiency, and contribute to the wellbeing of people engaged in work with the collections. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Audiovisual Collections Plan (developed by FNMA in partnership with the National Film and Sound Archive, AIATSIS, industry experts and traditional custodians) articulated the infrastructure and human resources needed to undertake the urgent digitisation work.

On-country archiving that includes local decision-making practices about access and media handling has proven to be the most cost-effective option. However, FNMA is aware that digitisation processes are being hampered by a lack of funding for the equipment, software, training, employment and other support needed to manage the digital preservation and conservation of cultural materials (Ormond-Parker 2019; Ormond-Parker and Sloggett 2012).

Many collections are significant because of their association with seminal Aboriginal media producers such as Kurt Japanangka Granites and Francis Jupurrurla Kelly from the Warlpiri Media Association (Michaels 1986, 1987), John Macumba and Freda Glynn from CAAMA, Simon Tjiyangu and Pantjiti McKenzie from Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Media (PY Media) and Tiga Bayles from the Brisbane Indigenous Media Association. By leading the establishment of First Nations media organisations, which have prevailed as hubs of production, broadcasting and safekeeping of local historic collections, these producers and broadcasters, along with many other pioneers around the country, have been instrumental to the development of Aboriginal television and radio throughout Australia.

The media collections represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and have been created in accordance with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander needs, wishes and cultural protocols. They differ from collections made by non-Indigenous people about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Therefore, the collections have a high value for the following reasons: education and intergenerational transfer of knowledge (Kral 2010); documentation of cultural stories, sites, songs and rituals (Ormond-Parker and Sloggett 2012); cultural and personal affirmation; language teaching and revitalisation (Thorpe and Galassi 2014); social, cultural and linguistic research (Ormond-Parker and Sloggett 2012); and research into the history of First Nations media.

These collections — such as CAAMA's, which has more than 50,000 hours of video material and tens of thousands of audio, music and photographic records and PAW Media's collection — are now a significant part of Australia's national distributed collection of social and cultural audiovisual heritage. Yet to date, the vast majority of these collections have had little or no structural support for their preservation.[3] FNMA posits that the preservation, conservation and cultural enhancement of these Aboriginal and Torres Strait audiovisual collections is vital for the following activities: social and cultural heritage of local communities; provision of economic and social benefits to local communities; contribution to the cultural heritage of the nation; and historic evidence for land rights or native title claims.

The looming deadline of 2025

There is now unifying consensus among audiovisual archivists internationally that magnetic media tape that fails to be digitised by 2025 will in most cases be lost forever (National Film and Sound Archive 2017; Ormond-Parker 2019). This is because:

- analogue video and audiotapes, as well as early digital tape formats, will be effectively inaccessible due to the practical inability to maintain analogue playback systems
- the last generation of fully experienced analogue-to-digital-transfer broadcast engineers will more than likely be retired from the media industry
- this generation of media producers may not have been given opportunities to strategically share their knowledge with the newer generations of digital engineers.

Adding to these concerns are the equally important issues of magnetic tape deterioration and degradation due to environmental extremes and lack of archival storage facilities. The specific chemistry of magnetic tape gives the tape a life span of between ten and 30 years in optimum climate conditions. Archival conditions are storage

environments for analogue and digital tapes maintained at about 20 °C with 40 per cent relative humidity (Bigourdan et al. 2006). Given the heat, dust, dryness or humidity in many remote communities, where audiovisual collections are typically stored in boxes or cupboards rather than secure, air-conditioned facilities, this presents a significant challenge for the long-term preservation of media broadcast materials. For instance, some media has been transferred to DVDs, giving a longer life span for the tape's content. However, optimum storage for new formats, as well as obsolete formats, is required to ensure the integrity of the media and a life span that is not limited by the declining availability of analogue equipment and, in this case, DVD players.

The value of establishing broadcast media archives in light of the looming 2025 deadline means that the preservation and conversation of analogue media has become a necessary priority for FNMA and First Nations media organisations.

Digitising culture

First Nations community media organisations face technology and resourcing challenges that must be addressed as a matter of urgency. There is an urgent need to:

- digitise irreplaceable culturally and linguistically significant media
- support the creation of community archives through an industry best-practice digitisation service that will ensure at-risk media objects are preserved and conserved into the future
- build capacity and skills for broadcasters and staff working within community media and arts organisations so that they are able to manage their collections of audiovisual and audio media.

By its very nature, the content in First Nations community media archives is regarded as culturally sensitive. The events, stories and people captured represent cultural knowledge and, in many instances, involve community people who are deceased. The media therefore needs to be managed according to inherent cultural ethics and protocols, meaning that the cultural archivists are provided pathways for determining what, and under what conditions, the media can be accessed or used for other purposes. This includes repurposing of content in contemporary media productions such as documentaries, films and podcasts. For instance, Pintubi Anmatjere Warlpiri Media (PAW, formerly Warlpiri Media) used its own archival material in its documentaries *Coniston* (2013) and *Yarripiri's Journey* (2017) about the Jardiwanpa fire ceremony songline, and the Mulka Project, an arts and cultural media production facility based in Yirrkala in the Northern Territory, has used repatriated film footage from AIATSIS in contemporary local productions.[4]

The need for careful management must apply to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media collections. Most require a collection audit, as well as processes for digital conservation, ongoing cataloguing and the inclusion of invaluable cultural metadata and descriptions. Any external environments in which handling and digitisation take place must take into account the need to establish trusted relationships between the First Nations broadcasting organisation and mainstream or non-local archivists.

> We've already got the access platforms; now it's about how to bring all of that old content back to life so that it can be made available to the community, keep the cultural and language maintenance going. Hearing the old languages spoken the right way from the early recordings is really important in helping to revitalise languages. As well as just knowing about the history of their communities and the old people's stories, the work that's been done in those meetings over the years, making all of that available. (Featherstone 2020)

To secure a culturally safe plan, FNMA wants to enable cultural custodians to be directly involved in the digitisation of their media, and to build the skills needed to undertake this in-house and on country where possible. This is particularly the case for media materials that cannot be taken outside of the organisation or away from community control. As a general rule, commercial digitisation services do not provide for these critical components and cultural considerations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media digitisation.

FNMA has made significant steps to support First Nations media organisations to develop and strengthen their capacity for collection

Figure 4: Simon Fisher, Senior Media Archivist at PAW Media, reviewing archival photographs of Warlpiri people for PAW Media (© PAW Media)

Figure 5: Leonard Hill from AIATSIS presenting Simon Japangardi Fisher, Valerie Martin and Elizabeth Napaljarri Katakarinja from PAW Media with an award for language/culture production at the 2018 First Nations Media Awards in Sydney for the film *Yarripiri's Journey*. (© 2018 First Nations Media Australia)

preservation, and supports them to determine the digitisation priority of individual analogue media. This includes identifying digitisation priorities and workflow for the most important items in collections, as well as conducting an inventory of, and cataloguing, analogue collections. Communities are also given technical support to set up onsite digital storage of preservation masters and access copies with automated back-up, as well as options for secure cloud-based storage. FNMA is working towards establishing an effective and safe digitisation facility in Central Australia and access to a mobile digitisation kit for media that cannot be taken off country. FNMA can provide up-skilling for archive staff in digitisation and cataloguing, with both non-accredited and accredited training options available. It can support repatriation consultations with national and state collecting agencies, and can establish appropriate online platforms so communities can consume content online.

Building community capacity

Since 2015 FNMA has been working to build archiving capacity and skills in the First Nations media sector by running workshops to introduce digitisation, cataloguing and on-country management of collections. One component of this work is the development of skills workshops through national events and festivals. For example, the biennial Remote Indigenous Media Festival brings together more than 120 people from remote communities throughout Australia to share, learn and celebrate. The event is described as a festival because it celebrates and showcases media content produced during the year, and because it recognises excellence in remote media production across a range of mediums. Evening screenings, dance performances and cultural site visits form part of the learning environment for delegates across one week.

The festival's daily schedule primarily focuses on skills development. Delegates spend the week developing one skill area, such as digital photography, news reporting, podcasting, drone

Figure 6: Delegates at the Remote Indigenous Media Festival, Waiben (Thursday Island), September 2019, participating in a week-long archiving workshop (© 2019 First Nations Media Australia)

cinematography, animation, music production or digital archiving. Most remote media organisations bring a team of delegates to disperse across a number of skills workshops, which means that the team returns to the community with a range of new skills and expertise.

In 2019 FNMA ran digital archiving workshops at the festival on Waiben (Thursday Island) and at its national industry conference, Converge in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). These workshops were designed to spark interest in the process of archiving, provide information about online tools, and help participants develop skills to test equipment and analogue materials to ensure that the content can be safely transitioned to a digital format without damaging the original. Workshops also equipped participants with the required skills to set up and use the Mukurtu digital archive software (described below).

Workshops form a continuing part of FNMA's leadership role in archiving. FNMA is collaborating with universities to provide training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander archivists, including establishing a nationally accredited skill set of practical units relevant to archiving and digitisation. In addition, FNMA has developed an online toolkit containing an extensive collection of training resources, which are organised under six key steps — Plan, Prepare, Catalogue, Digitise, Share and Preserve.[5] The toolkit guides users through the steps of archiving, including collection management plans and cultural plans, digital formats and metadata recommendations, stabilising and safe handling of physical media, counting and cataloguing the collection, planning for required physical media players, digitisation, digital storage, community access, disaster management and an archiving policy bank, which has templates to adapt to organisation needs.

In 2019–20 FNMA undertook a project funded by the Australian Government's Indigenous Languages and Arts program to review and trial an appropriate and affordable archive platform for use in the First Nations media sector. FNMA opted to trial the Mukurtu platform, which has been designed specifically for First Nations collections; it has ongoing development and support through Washington State University but, being open source, has no licence fees, making it a relatively sustainable option for organisations without recurrent archiving budgets. FNMA has established a hub-and-spoke version of the Mukurtu platform and is currently providing training and support to First Nations media organisations to establish community access archives on the platform.[6]

Having collections available online enables community access to historical audiovisual content, allows family and community histories to be shared, and supports cultural and language maintenance through seeing cultural performances and hearing storytelling and the way languages were spoken by previous generations. It addresses the ongoing demand on media organisations by communities for access to old recordings of sports, music and cultural events held over the years, as well as photographs that are not available on other online platforms. It also ensures that metadata for each item is documented while the people involved in the productions are able to assist in the process.

There is a need for ongoing work to facilitate the digitisation and preservation of First Nations community collections. This includes:

- supporting visiting archive workers to use a purpose-built digitisation facility and its equipment
- streamlining the digitisation process for media objects that can be brought to the digitisation facility by running multiple digitisation stations for multiple formats
- lending and supporting use of relevant digitisation equipment to participant organisations for media that cannot be taken off country
- supporting the cataloguing of archive collections
- supporting appropriate and secure storage of digital preservation masters and access copies.

To address the lack of digitisation equipment and skills in the sector, FNMA successfully applied for funding through the Australian Government's Aboriginal Benefit Account to establish a First Nations digitisation facility in Alice Springs, to be established by mid-2021 with partnership support from AIATSIS. The facility will support the digitisation of First Nations community collections and provide a dedicated facility for on-the-job training in digitisation and archive management, as well as providing a kit for community-based digitisation. FNMA has also commissioned a three-unit Vocational

Figure 7: (L to R) Former FNMA General Manager Daniel Featherstone with Lyndon Ormond-Parker (Australian National University), Scott Roxburgh (Wadeye RIBS), Andrew Dodd (University of Melbourne), Cornelius Mollingin (Wadeye RIBS), Patrick Mercer (University of Melbourne), Francisco Bunduk (Wadeye RIBS), Clare Richardson (University of Melbourne), Luke Pearson (IndigenousX), Sharon Huebner (Australian National University) (© 2019 First Nations Media Australia)

Training Package for community archive workers to gain accredited skills in digitising analogue video, audio and photographic materials.

In addition, FNMA increasingly focuses on the need to capture and preserve the disparate collections of historical news bulletins and current affairs programs, which collectively tell the stories of communities across the continent. Mainstream and non-Indigenous media organisations rely on their archived news and current affairs collections to provide historical context for breaking and ongoing stories. So, too, First Nations broadcasters and media production companies benefit from having useable, searchable, accessible collections from which to augment their daily programming. There is a great deal of work ahead because news programming is often the least archived, being produced and aired under acute deadline pressure and often considered too time consuming to properly archive as the next wave of deadlines arrive.

FNMA is starting to focus on building news and current affairs capacity and sharing in the sector, with particular focus on remote communities and regional areas. As mainstream media withdraw correspondents and local news services from regional Australia, FNMA sees an opportunity for First Nations media organisations to fill the void, telling more of those stories and building capacity of journalists to tell the stories from their communities from a First Nations perspective. Having more First Nations journalists and spokespeople helps to address the misrepresentation and under-representation in the media landscape. FNMA is working with First Nations news services across the country — including NITV, the National Indigenous Radio Service, the *Koori Mail* newspaper, CAAMA, ICTV, IndigenousX and other local news organisations — to support increased content sharing between organisations, systems for contributions or stories from community journalists around the

country, and an aggregation platform to enable organisations to collate locally relevant news bulletins from local, regional and national sources.

Conclusion

Archiving the remarkable media collections of Australia's diverse First Nations can only be achieved by addressing several demanding tasks together. Understanding and observing sensitive cultural protocols is as essential as the technical skills of managing both obsolete and new media formats. Providing national digitising services is just as important as caring for material that cannot leave remote communities. Developing the skills and jobs to undertake the archiving of contemporary material is needed as much as saving content that is decades old. This paper also notes the pressing need for adequate funding to ensure archiving work occurs in a timely manner and stresses the critical nature of the 2025 deadline, when it is feared much of this widely dispersed, but fundamentally important, material will be lost. Imagine how profound the loss would be if, through neglect, we failed to protect the recorded sounds of more than 25 First Nations languages, the reflections of cultural custodians, the thoughts of senior law men and women, the meaning of women's ceremony, the aspirations of Indigenous children, the music, the creativity, the joy, the news, the very life stories of our First Nations people.

This paper sets out the nature of a problem that needs urgent attention and hints at what could be lost through inaction. In outlining the complexities of the issue, the authors seek to demonstrate the many tasks that need doing but also the depth of the thought and preparation that has already occurred. The work that has been done by individuals and FNMA is based on strong community connections and thorough knowledge of the sector and its needs, and collectively this work provides a solid foundation upon which to undertake the protection and preservation of these most precious cultural assets.

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NOTES

1 The ICTV satellite service reaches 240,000 remote households.
2 There are several large population areas, including Adelaide, Hobart, Canberra and many regional centres, where no dedicated First Nations radio service is available. FNMA advocates for licences and resources to fill these broadcast area gaps.
3 This remains the case for most collections; however, FNMA is building its capacity to support media organisation with training, online platforms and digitisation support. The National Film and Sound Archive are now assisting CAAMA.
4 For examples of local media production by PAW Media, visit the organisation's website (www.pawmedia.com.au/productions). For examples of local media production by the Mulka Project, visit the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre website (https://yirrkala.com/video-the-mulka-project/).
5 The toolkit is available on the First Nations Media Archiving Resources Toolkit website (toolkit.firstnationsmedia.org.au).
6 See the First Nations Media Archiving website (archive.firstnationsmedia.org.au).

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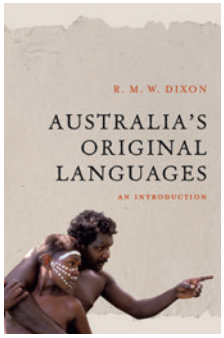

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Robert Malcolm Ward Dixon 2019

Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, viii + 196 pp

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As many readers of this journal will know, Robert Malcolm Ward (Bob) Dixon is a giant of Australian linguistics. He first came to Australia in 1963 to study Indigenous languages of north-eastern Queensland for his PhD project at London University. The resulting book, *The Dyirbal language of North Queensland* (Dixon 1972), was not only one of the most comprehensive and insightful grammars that had been published for any Australian language, it also had a major impact on linguistic theory around the world, through the challenges it posed to aspects of the then widely accepted theory of syntax that had been proposed by Noam Chomsky (1965). Chomsky and his followers believed that all human languages share a common syntactic basis in certain underlying structures that are hard-wired in the human brain, and that the syntactic differences among languages are relatively superficial, resulting from the application of more-or-less language-specific rules that partially transform the underlying structures.

Dixon's study showed to the contrary that the kinds of underlying structures that had been posited by Chomsky for English and all other human languages were not found in Dyirbal, and that its syntax was based on other structures, which, while quite unexpected from a Eurocentric viewpoint, were delightfully logical and systematic in their own terms. The book played a significant role in helping to shift the balance in linguistics away from over-generalisation based on speakers' intuitions about their own languages to new fieldwork-based studies of a wide range of the world's languages. That shift happened to coincide with a rapid expansion of the Australian university system in the late 1960s and 1970s, which included the creation of new departments of linguistics, and a big increase in government funding for research focused on Indigenous Australia.

One result of all these convergent trends was a big increase in the quantity and quality of research being done on Indigenous Australian languages at a time when quite a few of them still had fluent speakers. A leading role in that process was played by Bob Dixon, who headed a linguistics department at the Australian National University from 1970 to 1990, supervised many PhD theses on Australian languages by students who went on to become professional linguists and supervise others, and has continued with his own research on Australian languages till the present, publishing copiously on them.

Although those publications have included several book-length introductions to Australian languages, and to particular aspects of them (e.g. Dixon 1976, 1980, 2002), this is Dixon's first general introduction to the languages that is intended for a wide audience, including readers with no background in linguistics. In keeping with this aim, Chapter 1, 'Many different languages', begins with a ground-clearing preamble that will be unnecessary for the linguistically informed, explaining that the Indigenous languages are every bit as complex of those of Europe and at least as diverse in their vocabularies and grammatical structures; and that before the intrusion of Europeans in the eighteenth century there were approximately 250 distinct *languages*, not just 'dialects'. Dixon exemplifies these points by taking a single simple sentence, 'This dog ran', and contrasting the corresponding sentences across three European languages, then across three Australian ones, and between the Australian and the European ones (pp 4–5). He then gives further examples of vocabulary differences across Australian languages, and of differences between them and English regarding speech formulas such as 'hello', 'good-bye', 'please' and 'thank you', which are not as directly translatable, but rather more culturally specific. This is followed in Chapter 2 by more discussion and exemplification of dialect difference versus language difference.

In Chapter 3, 'Language doing its job', Dixon discusses some ways in which Australian

languages are related to other aspects of Indigenous Australian lifeworlds. These have included technologies for human subsistence in particular natural environments. As an interesting example, Dixon describes the Dyirbal people's way of processing nuts from the black bean (*Castanospermum australe*) tree, which are highly nutritious but poisonous in their natural state, and have to be baked, sliced and soaked in running water to make them edible. There were well-developed techniques for doing this, with specific associated vocabulary through which they were taught (pp 20–1).

The chapter continues with a discussion of special speech varieties that are associated with male initiation rituals, and with various kinds of verbal art. As an example of the latter, Dixon describes four types of Dyirbal song poetry. Two are genres of corroboree songs, which deal with everyday topics such as hunting pigeons or being stung by a hornet, and are accompanied by dancers who enact what is described or alluded to in the song. Genres of this kind are common across Indigenous Australia, but they differ in detail from place to place. A local feature in Dyirbal is that there are two named corroboree genres — Marrga and Gama — which differ from each other in the number of lines in the song, the number of syllables per line and the stress patterns within lines. Likewise, there are two named genres of Dyirbal love songs that have similar themes to ones found elsewhere in Indigenous Australia — personal feelings of love, happiness, jealousy, revenge etc. — but which differ from each other in their metrical forms.

In Chapter 4, 'Nothing primitive here', Dixon starts with William Dampier's famous 1697 account of the Bardi people of north-western Australia as the world's most primitive. He contrasts it with Captain Cook's later, better-informed account of the Guugu Yimidhirr[1] people on the other side of the continent, and goes on to take apart the notion of the primitive as an overall attribute of Indigenous Australian cultures. A spectacular counter example to that notion, as has often been noted, is provided by Indigenous Australians' highly elaborate kinship systems. Dixon provides a good introduction to these in Chapter 5, 'Knowing who your relations are'. In Chapter 6, 'Who are you talking to?', he goes on to show how kin relations are linguistically reflected not only in how people are referred to and addressed, but in distinct speech varieties that are (or were) used *in the presence of* a certain kind of relative: one's actual mother-in-law or someone else in the same kin class.

In chapters 7–10 Dixon goes into more detail about the sound systems, grammar and vocabulary of Indigenous languages. These chapters provide a very good introduction to the subject, and much more detail to fill out the picture of diversity that is sketched in the first two chapters. If there is one problem with the book as a whole in this regard it is that technical linguistic terms and conventions are occasionally used without explanation for non-specialist readers; examples are 'nominative singular' (p 5), 'genetic' (in reference to relations of common origin rather than to genes, as in popular usage; p 126) and the unexplained use of symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (p 16).

Chapter 11 provides a very good introduction to the techniques of comparative-historical linguistics, and the various conclusions that have been drawn from it about genetic relations among Australian languages. Dixon's present, conservative position is that there are about three dozen Australian language families, and also 'a fair number of "isolates"', languages for which no genetic link with another language can be established' (pp 137–8). Chapters 12 and 13 provide good accounts of the changes that Indigenous languages have undergone as a result of the speakers becoming bilingual in English, and of the rise of new creole languages in which the vocabulary is derived mainly from English but the grammar and semantics are strongly influenced by the pre-existing Indigenous languages.

The book as a whole is an engaging and timely new introduction to Australia's original languages, and a credit to its author as the person who has done more than anyone else to enable the 50 years of new research on which it is based. It would serve well as a text for senior high school students or in introductory-level courses for tertiary students, and for the general public.

NOTE

1 Dixon's spelling is used here. 'Yimithirr' is also widely used.

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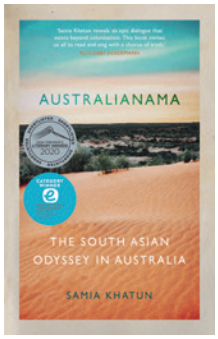

Australianama: the South Asian odyssey in Australia

Samia Khatun 2019

University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld,
ISBN 978 0 7022 6262 3 (pbk),
285 pp

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Although primarily 'a history of South Asian diaspora in Australia' (p 4), a significant part of the scholarly innovation promised by Samia Khatun's *Australianama* relies on what the author suggests she does with Aboriginal histories. Namely, Khatun claims to develop 'techniques for writing histories of migration that refuse to participate in the ongoing discursive erasure of Aboriginal peoples' (p 19). To achieve this, she connects the experiences of South Asian migrants and Aboriginal peoples as subjects whose epistemologies as 'colonised peoples' (p 8) are systematically devalued by European Enlightenment modes of thinking. Treating those subjugated knowledges seriously, Khatun suggests, offers radical possibilities for responding to our 'contemporary moment of escalating racism' (p 23) by 'render[ing] visible alternative axes along which we might glimpse new beginnings' (p 24). This is a text, in other words, that not only recapitulates the now very familiar critique of Enlightenment epistemes, but actively attempts to suggest and model another way to write history.

Many excellent reviews have already documented the significant merits of *Australianama*, including its theoretical and empirical contributions and its innovative construction as a historical text. Having personally found Khatun's work inspiring in many ways, I do not disagree with the thrust of these reviews. Rather, here, I give substantive and critical consideration to Khatun's use of Aboriginal stories in her history, and question the extent to which her work challenges the coloniality of the historical discipline, as she sets out to do.

Khatun makes her primary contributions to Aboriginal history in Chapters Four and Six. In the former, she analyses four different historical narratives centred on Beltana, a settlement in the Flinders Ranges on Kuyani Country, in order to reconstruct the 'dense conjuncture of knowledge traditions' (p 90) that South Asians encountered in colonial Australia. The first two stories reflect contested conceptions of land — the European story of the wool trade set against the creation of Kuyani country by mura (Dreaming creatures). The last two stories reflect contested conceptions of memory — one couched in narratives of European 'progress' and the other deeply intertwined with Wangkungurru Dreaming tracks related to red ochre. These contestations, Khatun suggests, reflect the 'numerous tracks that converged at every site of settler colonialism' (p 105) and the epistemological complexity that is too often ignored within mainstream Australian historiography.

In Chapter Six, Khatun offers an honest reflection on her schooling by an Arabunna Elder, Reg Dodd, who takes her and some others on an on-country camping trip. Khatun's initial motivation for meeting with Dodd was to gain a greater understanding of Arabunna language and culture, so as to make sense of the numerous stories told in Arabunna that offered 'startling, detailed accounts of encounters between South Asians and Aboriginal people' (p 130). By the end of her trip, Khatun develops a new understanding of Dodd's knowledge as a form of historical practice, and another example of a non-Enlightenment mode of thinking:

> Arabunna country was a history book that Reg could read. For him, part of living there was to be able to nurture an intimacy with land that in fact constituted a relationship to

> knowledge quite distinct from Enlightenment epistemes. (p 140)

Khatun's serious attempt to incorporate these Aboriginal stories into her broader history of South Asian migration to Australia is certainly innovative. As the renowned Aboriginal historian Bruce Pascoe, quoted on the back cover, notes, 'Khatun offers a new basis for storytelling, knowledge and history.'

Yet, despite regular references to Aboriginal histories, one cannot help but feel that Khatun's engagement with the broader field of Indigenous studies is somewhat shallow. For example, in Chapter Eight — the book's conclusion, in which the author issues her theoretical call-to-arms to embrace non-Enlightenment epistemologies — Khatun misses numerous opportunities to connect with Aboriginal concepts and theories. Informing the reader about how the *Kasasol ambia,* a book of Bengali Sufi poetry which Khatun uses as a central motif throughout her text, was designed for performance and listening, rather than for 'silent, modern reading methods' (p 172), she encourages the reader to recognise the 'shimmering multiplicity of things it can mean to hear books' (p 185). But Aboriginal cultures are another obvious reference point for rich traditions of aural transmission, and a concept like dadirri — a Ngan'gikurunggurr and Ngen'giwumirri word meaning 'inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness' (Ungunmerr 1988:9) — is an example of the kinds of concepts that Khatun could have used to enrich her account.

At another point in the chapter, Khatun uses the *Kasasol ambia* to illustrate her argument that we must approach 'every moment in time and place as an intersection of as many intellectual trajectories as living beings that converge there' (p 179). Yet Khatun's account would have been strengthened by reference to something like Torres Strait Islander scholar Martin Nakata's influential formulation of the 'Cultural Interface', which articulately describes how a complex, multi-layered set of intersections works to profoundly shape 'the theoretical and the structural and institutional frameworks through which people are understood, explained and regulated' (Nakata 2007:199). Other gaps throughout the book, such as Khatun's curious omission of any scholarship by Indigenous women (e.g. Moreton-Robinson 2000) in her critique of 'imperialist narratives about non-white women' (p 144), will also be glaring to those familiar with the theoretical landscape of Indigenous studies today.

Khatun's engagement with primary sources representing Aboriginal perspectives is also rather limited. In Chapter Four, Khatun's main sources are a handful of accounts mostly published in colonial sources — such as a settler writing using the pseudonym 'Coollannie' in the South Australian newspaper, the *Register* (pp 96–7) — and two oral histories recorded and translated by linguists. In Chapter Six, Khatun's work is again underpinned by reference to two Aboriginal stories recorded and translated by linguists, and buttressed by reflections on her seven-day camping trip with Dodd. Although at various points in *Australianama*, Khatun's use of non-English language sources is promulgated, she sheepishly admits in the opening that:

> I speak none of these Aboriginal languages. Nor do Aboriginal knowledges form part of the repertoire of inherited knowledges that I draw on in my reading of South Asian-language texts. (p 19)

By the academic (and colonial) standards of the discipline of history — which, barring a few notable examples (e.g. Hokari 2011; Rose 1991), rarely emphasises the need for close relationships between non-Aboriginal historians and the Aboriginal communities that they write about — this may indeed be highly innovative. But Khatun's use of a small handful of translated oral histories and her comparatively brief relationship with an Aboriginal elder surely cannot be understood as upending the problematic relationship between 'researchers' and Aboriginal communities as we know it, and about which she is also evidently aware (p 131).

Khatun's inclusion of Aboriginal epistemologies in her account seems to be driven more by a desire to avoid exclusion (which would replicate the 'systematic erasure of Aboriginal people and knowledges from English-language scholarship' (p 131) than an attempt to write Aboriginal history on its own terms. As Khatun explains, her journey into reading Aboriginal texts began through her participation in university

anti-racism activism (p 19). It was while doing this that Khatun met many Aboriginal people who informed her about their family connections to migrants from South Asia (ASAA 2020). Of course, to note that Khatun's standpoint comes from her own quite differently racialised experience is not itself a criticism. As a non-Indigenous Asian Australian whose university training is in Australian history, I too approach the field of Aboriginal history from a similar standpoint. The issue, however, is one of intent and execution. Why has Khatun decided to so pointedly include Aboriginal perspectives in a history ultimately centred on South Asians, and has she lived up to her intention to ensure that this history of migration does not repeat the colonial erasure of Aboriginal peoples that characterises so much of Australian history?

Ultimately, Khatun's ambitions in this regard stand at odds with the substantive content of *Australianama*. To be sure, Khatun has not ignored the presence and place of Aboriginal people in the story of South Asian Australians. But her theoretical engagement with Aboriginal cultures and epistemologies, as I have shown, remains limited. Nor does Khatun interrogate the complex relationship of non-Indigenous people of colour to Indigenous peoples as complicit colonisers and/or fellow colonised. Her cursory references to this topic are often tepid and non-committal, such as her suggestion that relations between South Asian and Aboriginal people were 'riven by various asymmetries' but nonetheless a 'long relationship of coexistence' (p 132).

This is not to diminish in any way the impressive work that Khatun has done with South Asian stories and language sources — a review of which is beyond the scope of my own research background. Nor is it to diminish the more general theoretical concept and ambition that her work embodies, which truly is unique in the present landscape of Australian historiography. But it is to suggest that, at least in its contribution to Aboriginal history, we should heed well the last words Khatun quotes of Arabunna Elder Reg Dodd: 'Well what you have is a good start … You have to realise you are just beginning to understand these stories' (p 181).

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Black, white and exempt: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives under exemption
Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 224 pp
ISBN 9781925302332 (pbk)

Inge Kral and Elizabeth Marrkilyi Ellis 2021
In the time of their lives: wangka kutjupa-kutjuparringu: how talk has changed in the Western Desert
University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, WA, 272 pp
ISBN 9781760801489

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i-Tjuma: Ngaanyatjarra stories from the Western Desert of Central Australia
University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, WA, 276 pp
ISBN 9781760801533

Brian Butler and John Bond 2021
Sorry and beyond: healing the Stolen Generations
Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 240 pp
ISBN 9781925302745 (pbk)

Anne Maree Payne 2021
Stolen motherhood: Aboriginal mothers and child removal in the Stolen Generations era
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