Curtin University

Kaarl–ka–Nyininge, A Place to be: We're sitting here around the fire.

A Creative Anthology of Nyoongar Women's Oral Histories of Brookton

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DECLARATION

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), updated in 2014.

This study is based on a true account from, and remains true to, the stories that have been told to me.

Elizabeth Hayden

Date: 7 November 2024

ABSTRACT

My sister Janet took me by hand and said, “Come with me.” We walked down a corridor and as we walked, she showed me many windows. We peered into and through and within each of those windows there was the story of *Kaarl-ka-nyininge*, “A place to be: We’re here sitting and yarning around the fire.”

Nyoongar people have been fierce in their resolve to counter the impacts of colonisation. It is their stories that reveal the resilience of Australia’s First Nations peoples and their ongoing experiences of racism and ostracism in Australian society.

This thesis is a creative anthology of stories about the lives of *Nyoongar* people living in and around Brookton (*Kaarl-ka-nyininge*), Western Australia, from 1930 to 1970. This thesis is a collection of stories, both my own and those told to me by my sister, Janet. Janet passed on her stories to me as her right as the *Nyoongar* Matriarch, *Djennaburra*, and they capture the lives of our family. They speak about our mother and father and our grandparents. In particular, our grandfather, who was a larger-than-life character and whose story is central to this thesis. The thesis is a testament to a *Nyoongar* Matriarch, *Djennaburra*, my sister Janet, who has patiently, awaited the opportunity to speak and share her stories of her people to a wider audience. Included in the thesis are video recordings, artwork and photographs that form the central basis of my work emphasising the immersive and powerful experiential nature of Storytelling.

The thesis also presents and describes a *Nyoongar* cultural framework to engage in reconciliation. Central to the framework is ‘belonging.’ Through an analysis of stories, a cultural framework has been devised that provides a cultural map to understanding the ways of acting, knowing and being *Nyoongar*.

The thesis is written using a Storyteller’s voice. The characters in these stories share their voices of who they are; my Elders and ancestors including my sister *Djennaburra* Janet Hayden, my mother Martha, my grandfather, *Doorum,* and me, Elizabeth. Brookton, or *Kaarl-ka-nyininge,* is central to these stories for it holds both the memories and context for the stories told. A once silenced history is now being told, so others can bear witness in their journey to reconciliation.

CULTURAL WARNING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respectfully advised that this thesis and its appendices include photographs, video, audio and quotes of deceased persons, which may cause sadness or distress and in, some cases, offend against strongly held cultural beliefs and protocols.

I have used the term *Nyoongar* to refer to the Nation of Aboriginal peoples of the South West of Western Australia as the Stories and Truth Telling held within this thesis took place on *Nyoongar Boodja.* At times I also refer to clan groups that make up the *Nyoongar* Nation to respect the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their relationship to Country. Generally, to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across this unceded great continent I use either Aboriginal or First Nations, and Indigenous when referring to First Nations peoples globally.

Wherever possible permission has been sought to share these Stories.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge the people who have had an impact on this research coming to life through my journey that has brought me to the completion of this thesis.

I wish to acknowledge the Story Holder, Janet Hayden (dec), who held these stories until she passed them on to me.

Janet took me by hand and said, “Come with me” and she walked me through a corridor and as I walked, she showed me many windows to peer into and within those windows was held the story of *Kaarl-ka-nyininge*, “A place to be: We’re here sitting and yarning around the fire.”

I acknowledge the Elders who passed these stories on to Janet: Norman *Doorum* Bennell, grandfather, and Kate Bennell (nee Collard), grandmother to Janet and I, and Martha ‘Didley’ Bolton (nee Bennell), mother, and Francis Charles ‘Doongie’ Bolton, father to Janet and I, and also other family members.

I acknowledge Professor Angus Buchanan, Professor Courtenay Harris, and Associate Professor Michael Wright for returning my dream of completing my PhD; Dr Michelle Webb for her Cultural Advice, and special thanks to Margaret O’Connell for travelling with me through this PhD. Thank you to Lynn Roarty and Dr Helen Flavell for editing assistance.

I acknowledge and thank my husband James (Jim) Hayden for his love, patience and the support that he has given to me over the years as I pursued a PhD: from those days when I was stranded on the Tonkin Highway, sitting in tears because I had no idea what was wrong with the car, to taking care of the children when I wasn’t there. To my children: Bevan, Shaneen, Reuben, Marcus, and Lee, who said, “I was eight years old when mum started this journey.” To my children who have stood with me in this journey, I loved you then as I love you now. While I could say this PhD was for me, it was very much for my family to see what could be achieved if we set goals.

I would like to also acknowledge Janet’s children: Roger Hayden Senior, and his support for me to complete what his mother gave me to write; and John Hayden (dec) and daughter Geri Hayden for their encouragement. Especial thanks to Josey Hansen (dec), who chauffeured Janet and I around during the telling of these stories. Josey gave so much of herself supporting Janet and I, for which I’m forever grateful. Honouring the generations that came from the Brookton Reserve, such as Roger, who, for example, pulled out the photos and said, “Mum gave this to you, Aunty Liz, she wanted you to carry this through.”

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to Jade Dolman/Jacobs who said yes to painting my PhD. Further information on my collaboration with Jade and the creation of the artwork is provided on p. 6 and 7.

Shaneen

Mother, I am extremely proud of you and your accomplishment and your achievement and your perseverance to never give up. Travelling every day to Perth from Northam then back home again. Doing the Bridging course at Curtin University. The struggles that you endured on your journey never stopped you from your goals. A Godly woman. A woman of integrity, humility and grace. I am in awe of you Mum. You have showed our people you're never too old to study and if you have a dream, follow it, chase it, grab hold of it because dreams do come true. You are a testament to your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. I know this would not have been possible without the love and support of your loving husband and your children, who have stood by your side through the whole journey.

Mum, I love you dearly and am so proud of you.

Ngun kwobidak yok.

Ngun Koort djurrip.

Lee

Firstly, I want to say how proud I am of your accomplishment of finally finishing your PhD.

It's been a long road to get to this point and I'm really proud of you. I remember when you first started this journey of your studies at university. We were living in Northam and you were travelling to Perth each day, then come home and do Mum duties. I was in year six at this stage so not really understanding how the travel and studies could impact you, yet, each Friday night you would never miss sitting up with me to watch the Wildcats play on GWN (TV station). Our time, just you and me.

Julius and Ashlee are super proud of this great achievement and Britney is in such awe, that her Grandmother is famous.

Mum, I thank you for everything you do for me. I'm glad I get to call you My Mum. You are the glue that holds us together and keeps us connected. You are the pillars of strength in our lives and we are grateful for the many sacrifices both you and Dad have made for us children. To see how hard you have worked to complete your studies and achieve your goals with the challenges you had to overcome, is truly inspiring. I just want to say I am so proud of you.

I love you Mum.

Your baby son,

Lee

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Balga	Grass tree, Xanthorrhoea
Ballardong	One of 14 Nyoongar clan groups from the Darling Scarp area east of Perth city
Barmintj barrl	To hit that one.
Bibbulmun	A name given to Nyoongar people, sometimes called a subgroup of the Nyoongar Nation. Others use the term as an alternative to Nyoongar.
Boodja	Nyoongar term for Country or Land
Bulyada maam	A reference to God or godlike figure.
Djiti-Djiti	Willy Wagtail.
Elder	Highly respected clan or family leader who has earned the right to be called an Elder.
Kaarl	Fire or hearth
Kaarl–ka–nyininge / Karlkarni / Kalkanni	A place to be
Kaatajin	Thinking or Knowledge
Kep	Water
Koolungahs	Children
Kweeya / kooya	Frog

Matriarch	A respected status for women Elders, who have responsibility for those that follow her. Nyoongar Country is Matriarchal Country.
Mia mia	Shelter or Home
Moort	Family, Kin
Mummaries/mummaree / djanuks	Little hairy creatures
Munartj/monartj.	Police officer
Nitja djinung	Here - look
Ngarma	Rock based water holes connected with the Wargyl.
Nyoongar, Nyungar	Nation of people from the southwest of the state known as Western Australia. Nyoongar Boodja covers an area from beyond Esperance to south of Geraldton and out east to Southern Cross.
Unna	Meaning true - a confirmation added to the end of sentences.
Wadjellas, Wodjellas	A slang term used to describe white people, most often settlers of Anglo-Saxon descent.
Wargyl	Dreamtime serpent or snake
Wierrnitj	Something sacred that is bad to touch. It is a feeling of weakness from a worn-out point of view.
Wilman	One of 14 Nyoongar clan groups from the Gnulla Karla Boodja area.

NAMES OF PLACES AND PEOPLE

Doorum, Grandfather, Norman Bennell

Djennaburra, Janet Hayden (nee Bolton) (dec)

Domber, Ray Bennell

'Didley', Martha Bolton (nee Bennell)

'Doong', Frank Bolton

Boolkarrnitj, Pop Felix Bennell

Kararrtj, Pop Bertie Bennell

Uncle Tom Bennell

'Nugget', *Pindan* Garlett

Sarah Isaacs

Pumphreys Bridge, near Narrogin WA

Rusty Bridge Reserve, Kweda Road, Brookton WA

Jurakine/Ridgways almond farm, near Kokeby WA

Dale, west of Mount Kokeby WA

PREFACE

> "…there is a knowing and understanding that research, practice, and methods are an extension of self, tribe, and community, whereby the knowledge bearers like Elders hold ancient theory, methods, and science" (Crouch, et al., 2023, p.2).

For too long, our stories/First Nation's stories have been told from a Western Colonial mindset that fails to tell the truth of our stories/of First Nation's stories. Historical accounts of Country, people, and Land were always told by the 'colonising Other' who believed they held the truth of this Country at the point of their pen, without any real inclusion of Aboriginal truths. This research seeks to tell the story of our people that has never been told from our viewpoint. It will recount the story of a *Nyoongar* Matriarch who has patiently held her stories, awaiting an opportunity for them to be captured and shared with her people and a wider audience, and for them to be passed on to those who are family, who are part of these stories of Country/place, family and culture handed down to her from her Elders. The key message of this research is to illustrate to readers the importance of the history of our people, as captured in a series of stories by this woman, *Nyoongar* Elder *Djennaburra*, her *Nyoongar* name given to her by her Old People.

This thesis validates the key message within a *Nyoongar* cultural framework, demonstrating the meaning and message of 'belonging.' The research focuses on the *Nyoongar* people who resided in and around the town of Brookton in Western Australia during 1930 to 1970. The stories are set within the cultural framework *Kaarl-ka-nyininge* or *Kalkarni*.

They are my stories to tell. They are stories passed on to me by my sister. They capture the lives of our family. They speak about my mother and father and my grandparents. In particular, they tell of my grandfather, a larger-than-life character who you will meet very soon in these pages. In addition, you will access a series of video recordings that not only offer a (re)telling of some of these stories, but also immerse you in these stories to convey my Elder methodology explained further in Chapter Four. These video recordings are listed in Appendix A.

I am the Storyteller and author, and I have used an autoethnographic approach to investigate these oral histories as a practice of Truth Telling. I critically reflect on these stories through an Indigenist research lens (Moreton-Robinson, 2013), and in doing so I have developed a cultural framework through which to understand the importance of place and belonging. I have done

so in my position as a *Nyoongar* Elder, as a Matriarch, and through my very close and intimate connection to the Country on which these stories took place. I hold these stories with great care and love, and in my role as Elder, I have shaped a methodology that I embody and enact through a series of cultural immersion events on Country; an Elder methodology.

This thesis is written using a Storyteller's voice. The characters in these stories share their voices in my telling of them – my Elders and ancestors: my sister Janet Hayden, my mother Martha, my grandfather, *Doorum,* and me, Elizabeth. Together, our voices call back the history of Brookton, a *Nyoongar* telling of the place I call home, *Kaarl-ka-nyininge*. A once silenced history, now told for others so they may bear witness in their journey to reconciliation.

As this historical research is from a *Nyoongar* standpoint, cultural ways of knowing, being and doing are embedded throughout. The thesis also contains creative mixed media works. You will be invited to watch videos filmed on Country and with my family (Appendix A), to read interviews with the artist Jade Dolman who created a work representing the thesis, and to review historical artifacts (photos).

The thesis embodies an innovative relational research practice demonstrated through a unique collaboration with the supervisory team (Michael Wright, Courtenay Harris, Marg O'Connell and Michelle Webb) bringing greater authenticity and legitimacy to the Stories through on Country immersion experiences. For me as an Elder and the orator, the Stories come alive through their retelling, connecting the audience with Country and the Old People. The thesis, therefore, recounts research activities undertaken between 2021 and 2024, including on Country visits with the supervisory team and a doctoral presentation on Country at Brookton. These are listed in the Appendices. Circular repetition and rhythmic flow are evident in the thesis consistent with oral Storytelling practice. As a result, some of the thesis content overlaps and repeats.

When reading, think about the capitalisation of words like Family, Country, Land, Storyteller, Voice, Community, Truth and Truth Telling – these are powerful reclaimed words (van Toorn, 2006). I have purposefully used lowercase and uppercase to place greater emphasis/meaning within the context of what I am speaking about. In some cases, I have italicised place names and family members' names. As a representation of oral Storytelling the thesis does not bend to western academic conventions (Hogarth, 2022).

Throughout the Storytelling, places significant to our history are referred to. Below is a map (Figure 1) of the South West of Western Australia to guide the reader in understanding these

locations, along with a map depicting *Nyoongar* clan or family groups across the state (Figure 2).

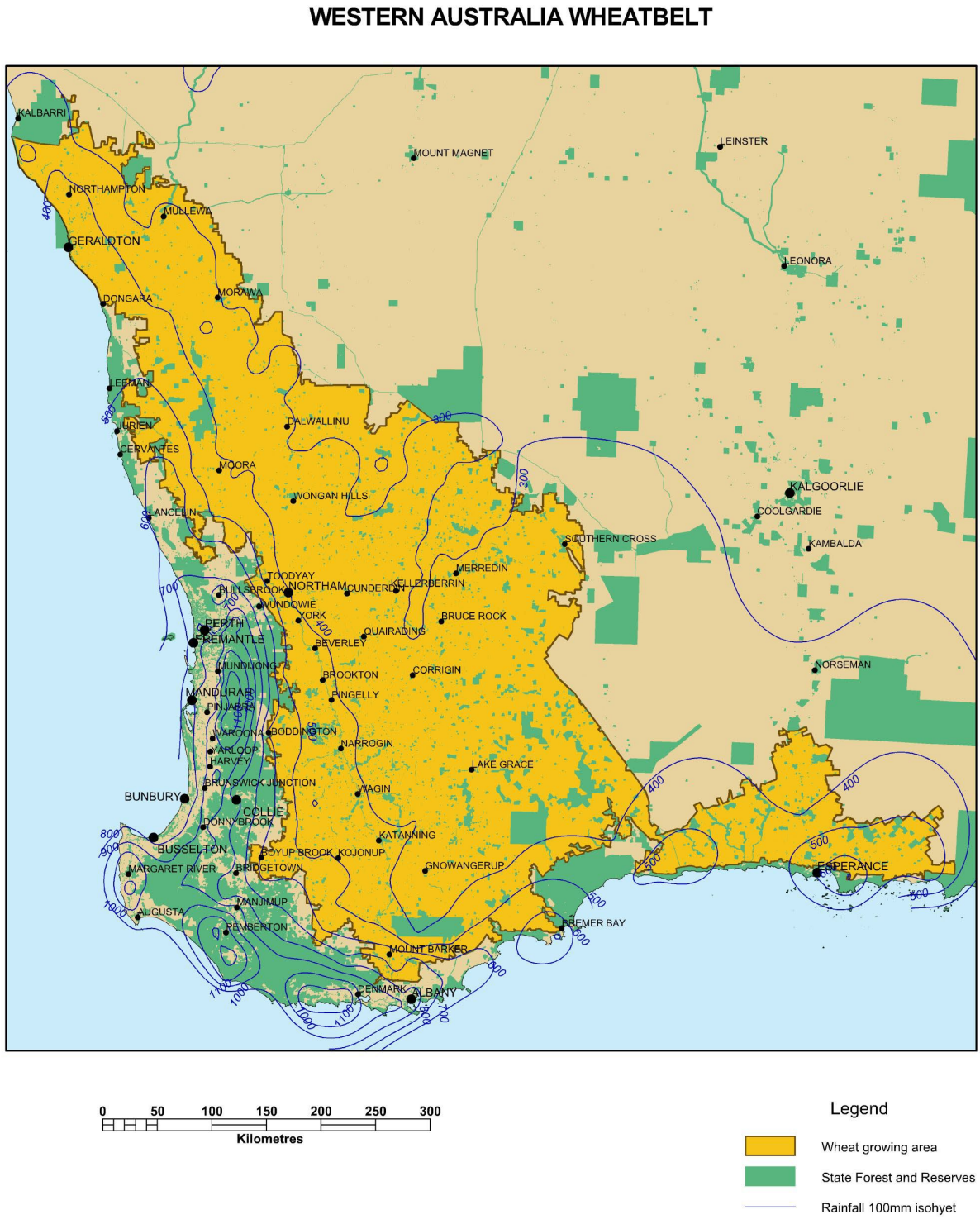

Figure 1. Wheatbelt region, South West of Western Australia. Image sourced from Western Australian Government - Department of Agriculture and Food, 2016 (Accessed https://catalogue.data.wa.gov.au/dataset/wheatbelt-of-wa-dafwa-031/resource/a8e4e13d-9cb4-45f5-a853-46538f52b4f2).

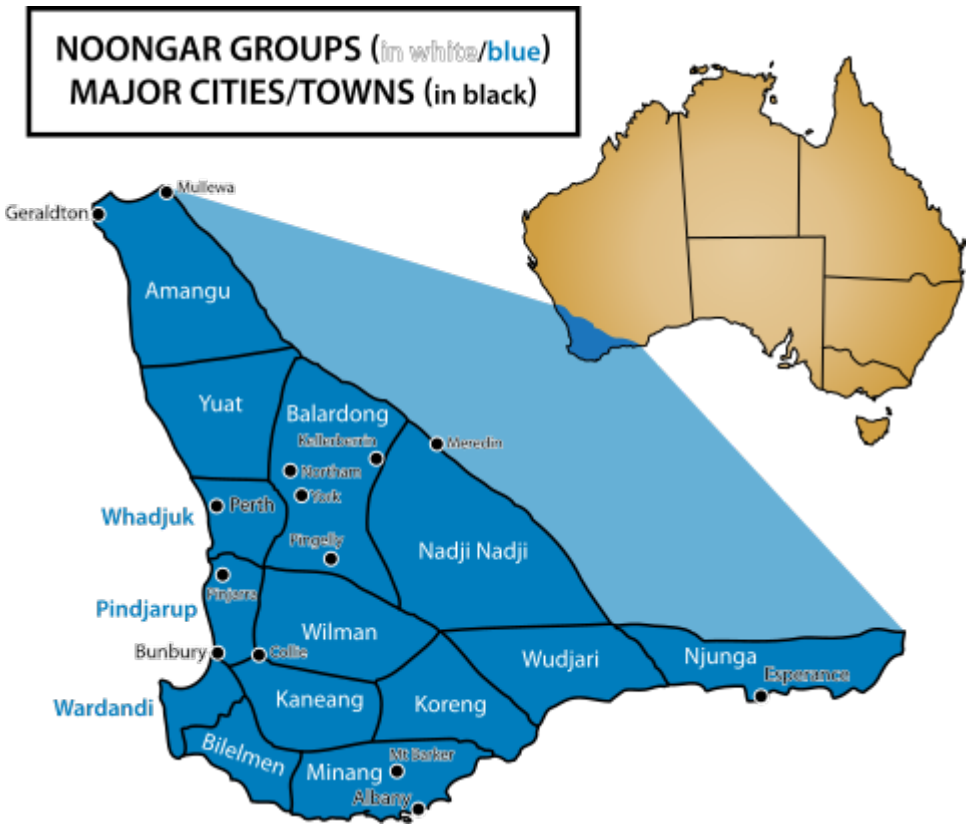

Figure 2. Nyoongar groups located in the South West of Western Australia. Image by Brooke Ottely, 2011 (Accessed https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Noongar_regions_map.svg).

ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis commences with my cultural positioning and introduces my *Nyoongar* standpoint (Nakata, 2007).

As an Introduction to this study, Chapter One explains the thesis title, 'a place to belong' – people's need to belong somewhere and to belong on, and to, Country. You are then introduced to the two senior *Nyoongar* women Storytellers and the impetus for writing these stories. From a critical reflection on these stories comes the hypothesis: What are the pillars that explain the cultural framework of belonging?

Chapter Two provides a justification for undertaking this research. It tells of these stories and forming a sense of belonging to a place. It offers an historical reference to some well-known Aboriginal voices, often seen as 'the firsts,' advocating and resisting the dominant western paradigms that have for over two hundred years governed our lives. It frames these histories to illustrate the importance of our histories and voices as key to progressing healing and reconciliation, through Indigenous standpoints. Through Janet and myself, our shared stories set the scene for a framework of belonging shaped by culture, family and Country.

Chapter Three states the theoretical overview of this thesis and the conceptual frameworks that underpin the ensuing methodology. Numerous First Nations scholars have developed theoretical frameworks to describe what we live everyday, in a way that enables us as First Nations people to claim a space within the academy and use our voices to promote our ways of knowing, being and doing. In this chapter, I make sure to acknowledge the origins of these scholars, an important and necessary protocol across our cultures.

Chapter Four explains the methodology. As an Elder and Matriarch in my Community, I shape the methodology for this research in ways that highlight the strength of connection through stories, validated by ancestral knowledges passed on to me by my forebears, and held within Country to be enacted through my very being when my feet are firmly grounded on the lands on which I grew up.

Chapter Five explains the historical and contextual background of Brookton during the years of 1930 to 1970, and in the present, including events and key figures. This information has been researched through several historical text sources, local history records, and the Department of Indigenous Affairs (now Aboriginal Affairs). The chapter tells the stories of Brookton, demonstrating a cultural framework of belonging that is shaped by family, memories

of the past, the land and its stories, and the people who share this land with me, including non-Aboriginal people such as Brookton locals and scholars at Curtin University. These stories are originally told to me by Janet, my older sister, who in these pages is known as *Djennaburra yok*, the barefoot girl. Some of her experiences I have shared, and others are my own. Where Janet tells the story, you'll see these are indented in the main body of the text.

Chapter Six is a compendium of stories told by Janet and myself that interweaves our experiences of Brookton, *Kaarl-ka-nyinginge*. The stories introduce the people most dear in our lives, the experiences we shared together and the learning, love and challenges we faced as Brookton *Nyoongars*. The stories are interspersed with family photos and images mostly of the 1950s which help to bring to life those wonderful characters of the time.

Chapter Seven is a summary of the thesis findings developed using the six pillars that form a cultural framework of belonging. The stories shared in chapter six are revisited in this chapter to highlight the importance of these interrelated pillars, which serve as a map for me as an Elder and demonstrate my Elder methodology in action. Academic sources are cited to reinforce the validity of my Elder methodology.

Chapter Eight forms the discussion chapter of the thesis. Unconventionally, it uses a series of critical reflections on the six pillars to demonstrate the relational research practice embodied by the thesis. The reflective writings from a family member (artist Jade), members of my supervisory team (Courtenay and Marg), and the film-maker Poppy are included to foreground the impact of the six pillars and how they grow a sense of belonging and wellbeing when approached through the Elder methodology.

Chapter Nine, the concluding chapter, discusses the impact of the Elder methodology and Truth Telling for future generations highlighting that young people belong somewhere. How they articulate their sense of belonging and grow stronger in their cultural identity can be held in the authority and cultural role of Elders.

A Note About Jade's Artwork

Jade is a Nyoongar artist, who is related to me as her great-great grandmother, Yuleen, is my grandfather's sister. When I commissioned Jade to create an artwork for my thesis, I provided her with a subset of the stories that form this thesis. Jade developed the artwork in response to these stories. You will notice several story elements which Jade mapped out as shown in Figure

3 below. In addition, you can view the short timelapse video of the artwork in development (see Appendix A).

Figure 3. Jade's hand-drawn overview of the story elements that are present in her artwork. Used with permission.

Figure 4. Jade's completed artwork presented to Elizabeth Hayden (Aunty Liz) on Country at the Brookton Reserve, 2024.

CULTURAL POSITIONING

> *Kia! Noonuk dwank Karrtadjin barlange warnginje. Barrl nitja wanganinge ngulla moort.*

This is the language of my grandfather *Doorum*, my mother's father. He was a *Nyoongar* of the *Balladong Bibbulman* Clans who used to tell us to listen all the time. It was the only way to learn. Translated, these words say, "You with your ears, listen and hear and understand what this one here is saying. This one is talking about our people."

A *Nyoongar* identity:

> *Ngun nitja Dilbirrt. Didley, Doorum's Yok. Ngun mother darr wanginje. Nitja ngun Ballardong Yorga. Ngun Boodja Ballardong Wilman. Ngun Doorum, Dilyaan Moort. Nyoongar Boodja. Ngulluka Katjin Kweeya.*

I am Elizabeth Hayden. I am *Dilbirrt*, named of my mother's tongue. I am a *Nyoongar* woman of the *Ballardong–Wilman* Clans of the Southwest of Western Australia. This Country is known as *Nyoongar* Country, *Nyoongar Boodja*. I am the *moort* (family) of *Doorum*, my mother's father and *Dilyaan*, my father's mother. My grandfather's totem is *Kweeya* (*Nyoongar* for frog).

My mother gave birth to me on a train while travelling to a hospital to seek a safe place to birth me. She was approximately 11 miles short of the hospital when I arrived. My father was so distraught and concerned, he took off his shirt and wrapped me in it.

I have been a community worker and advocate for many years before gaining a degree in social work. As a professional, I worked in the areas of psychiatric illnesses, Aboriginal mental health, Aboriginal legal services, with the Department of Communities, and in non-government community counselling services.

This is the story of my *moort*.

CHAPTER ONE: THE STORYTELLERS

Elizabeth, Storyteller and Author

Photo 1. Me, Elizabeth Hayden, aged 14 years.

I was working as a domestic as a 14-year-old. My mum was in hospital and was where I met Mrs Doney. Mrs Doney was worried about taking care of herself once out of hospital, so Mum recommended me. I believe Mum saw this as a way of protecting me from welfare[1] by sending me out to work. I was sent out on my first 'domestic' job, working on a farm out of Narrogin for Mr and Mrs Doney. This was for a short period of time. One of their sons was a soldier in the Vietnam War. During that time the Doney family were good to me. The following years saw me in and out of 'domestic' employment. During that time, I felt I didn't have much of an education. I had done my primary school education and after three months into high school, I left school altogether.

[1] The Bringing Them Home Report (1997) documents the national inquiry into the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children known as the Stolen Generation (https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/projects/bringing-them-home-report-1997).

In 1965, I applied for and was accepted into the Gnowangerup Bible Training Institute run by the United Aborigines Mission Board, where I studied for three years and graduated. In 1968, I married James (Jim) Hayden, a fellow student who was also studying at the Institute. On graduating, Jim applied to go to the Wongutha Mission Training Farm in Esperance to work with young people and was accepted. For the next 20 years, Jim devoted his life to his family and the ministry of teaching God's Word, the Bible, to *Nyoongar* people. It was during this time at Wongutha, in August 1969, that Bevan was born in the Esperance Hospital. Then in 1972, Shaneen, our only daughter, was born in Kellerberrin where Jim was Pastor to the *Nyoongar* people. In 1974, Marcus was born in Pingelly where Jim had taken up a post with the Pingelly *Nyoongar* Church. During this time, my sister-in-law, Jim's sister, asked me to look after her three-year-old baby son Reuben until she could come back and pick him up. She never returned. She passed away from a brutal domestic violence attack and Reuben became our fourth child. In 1977, Lee Travis was born at the Pinjarra Hospital. Jim and I now had five children.

Those were hard and difficult days. There were days when we only had weetbix and milk to feed our children. There were days when the children would have damper scones for their lunch. There were hard days but there were also good days. There were times when Jim would have the opportunity to gain employment and I was happy in my role as wife and mother. The Aboriginal churches where Jim ministered had little finances and they gave what they could. We were happy with what we got.

During these years of supporting Jim and growing our children, I always felt incomplete because of my poor educational background. There was a growing hunger in my heart to 'get an education,' as I would think of it in my mind.

In 2004, we moved to Northam and the opportunity came for me to further my education by applying for and being accepted into the Aboriginal Bridging Course at Curtin University. I was overjoyed. From the start of Semester 1 in February 1988, I travelled to university from Northam to Perth every day, with my family supporting me. In September of that year, we moved to Perth and I completed the Bridging Course with Distinction. So began the furthering of my education. From the Bridging Course I applied, and was accepted, into the Bachelor of Social Work, which I completed in 1992.

To me, research meant studies, and studies meant you could increase your knowledge and education. In this way you gain a degree to validate the learning, and with a degree you are

equal to, or even better than, those you meet in your life's journey who have never recognised your knowledge nor acknowledged your expertise.

No one in my family had ever gone to university before and gained a degree. This was a first for me and my family. They had supported me all through my journey through the Aboriginal Bridging Course and through the Bachelor of Social Work.

I thought that once I gained my degree, I would go back to community and wave my degree in the faces of non-Aboriginal people who attended meetings I had attended. During my time when I was a member of the Northam Progress Association, Chairperson of the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation, Member of the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Consultative Committee and represented *Nyoongars* at state level for the Wheatbelt region, I felt I wasn't heard or seen by non-Aboriginal people. Always in conversations about Community and Aboriginal knowledge, the non-Aboriginal people (mostly white farmers from the district) would defer to the white CEO of the Aboriginal organisation, completely ignoring me as if I wasn't there.

On completing and graduating with my degree in social work, I never went back to Northam except for visits to family and attending birthday parties or weddings or funerals. After gaining meaningful employment, I spent the next 20 years in the city. Then a conversation with a friend opened this passion inside me to continue my education journey. In 2011, I applied to Curtin University's School of Behavioural Science and was accepted into the Media, Culture and Creative Arts (MCCA) course. However, prior to entry into the MCCA course I had to complete an honours degree which I passed with second-class honours. It should have been first class honours, but I failed to submit my final piece in the time required to get the points needed. However, I was content as I was now on my educational journey and I wanted – I needed – to write.

While studying I had to choose my research subject, and after deliberation and discussion with the Curtin University School of Behavioural Sciences, I spoke to my sister Janet and asked her if I could do a story of her life. She had done so much in the field of family, being a wife, a mother, carer of her siblings, a daughter, niece, granddaughter, Community politics, Community family issues, and language. She was the complete package that I needed to do a PhD. As a child Janet used to run around barefoot which was not unusual for *Nyoongars*, so the Old People gave her the name *Djennaburra yok,* meaning barefoot girl.

Photo 2. Janet Hayden (nee Bolton), James Hayden, Elizabeth Hayden (me) (nee Bolton). On Country in Kaarl-ka-Nyininge.

In this research I position myself as an Elder, a Matriarch and holder of the stories of my people, passed on to me by my sister Janet, *Djennaburra*. I will be positioning myself as the YARNER, the Storyteller on my Country (*ngun Boodja*), place (*nyin*, here), about the land, the place of *Kaarl–ka–nyininge*, Brookton, and her people, and their stories. I came into this space of incredible privilege and responsibility while studying at Curtin University, when I asked her to let me write her story.

Djennaburra, the Storyteller

Djennaburra, Janet Hayden (nee Bennell), has been the holder of *Kaarl–ka–nyininge's* story from the day she sat down as a child beside her mother and listened to the stories of her Old People. As she sat and listened, she was learning until finally she graduated to become the holder of her Old Peoples' stories, which were endowed upon her and blessed by her grandfather *Doorum* and his brothers, *Bulkanitj* and *Kaaratj*, Elders of the *Balladong Nyoongar* people.

Photo 3. Janet Bolton and Muriel Bennell selling rabbits in Brookton, circa 1950.

Janet had six children. She was grandmother, great grandmother and a great-great grandmother. Her children are very proud of her achievements, as a mother, as a political advocate, a fighter for Aboriginal rights and a downright activist.

She always focused on teaching her grandchildren and great grandchildren her *Nyoongar* language and culture. Often, she took them on trips back to Country and showed them places of significance and spoke of what events took place in her Country with her Old People. She always referred to her Old People and the lessons and histories they had taught her.

Her memory was vibrant, like some organic plant that is ever breathing, ever alive. I often wish that I had greater clarity with my memory, however, I do have a special memory of her, which I recall with much love:

It is winter in our back yard, and we are having a birthday party for one of our grown kids. She is there along with other family members. We have a fire going and as everyone starts to slowly leave a few of us stand around the fire and music is playing. Our brother Rich reaches out and take her hand and says, “let’s dance.” And in the glow of the watery moon the firelight and some spotlight, they waltz. As he did many times at family weddings or birthdays or events – he would always dance with her.

That night was a special memory of my brother and sister, dancing under the moonlight, around the fire in my backyard.

She told stories of family, place and happenings; stories that came alive in her telling, stories that brought images of the past to strengthen and encourage us as a family, as a people. She was generous in her sharing of history. Through her yarning, she has given courage and determination to others to make their voices heard on the landscape of Aboriginal history.

This story is Janet's story, the story of a voice that rose strong and proud from *Nyoongar Boodja,* from *Karlkanni*. Her voice was the strong, brave voice of a *Nyoongar* woman who gave voice to a history, a history that belongs to us, our family, yet is the story of many of our people. This is our history seen through her sharing of stories.

Her story was to be my passport to a PhD but what Janet gave me was so much more than a PhD. She took me by the hand and said, "Come with me" and took me through a corridor with many windows and said, "look there" and as I looked into each window, I saw what she saw, the stories of our people, our land, our culture. She wouldn't let my hand go until I had captured the stories that she wanted me to write about. It was an amazing journey as she pointed into each window, telling me the stories that were through the windows, and I had the responsibility and privilege to tell those stories. She showed me the people. She showed me the land. She showed me the joys and she showed me the pain. What a privilege and what a responsibility. I had no idea where this body of work would take me. When I spoke to Janet about this research being her story she answered, "No, it isn't. This is our story." Little did I know how far her words would carry through this body of work. It has gone from her story to our story to *Kaarl–ka–nyininge's* story. This is our truth.

Janet tells these stories of a particular time and place and with particular people. A time that wasn't supportive of us. In a place of safety and enjoyment. The Reserve[2] mentioned in these stories which was designated land identified by the then Native Welfare and Brookton Shire Council for Aboriginal people to locate to, to keep them 'off the streets' and away from the local non-Aboriginal township, was total life for us. We didn't know anything else then. Despite what was happening around us, we found our place in Brookton. Janet held these stories for so

[2] Aboriginal people were forcibly placed on Reserves which were generally overseen by government 'protectors,' who controlled most aspects of the lives of Aboriginal people. (https://aiatsis.gov.au/family-history/family-history-sources/official-records/mission-and-reserve-records)

long and together we spent our last years together travelling back to Brookton where Janet took me to every single place in Brookton that held a story for us.

This is the corridor of windows that provided us a collection of the stories of our lives. Janet carried a storyline from our mother, from our grandfather, and our ancestors. Now, I pass these on to all the children of *Karl-ka-nyininge*.

And for anybody who wants to read these stories and who wants to acquaint themselves with the Truth of these stories within. Black or white. They will have the blessing of the Ancestors, they will be held in their guilt by the spirit of the past ancestors. There were bad things done in those days, but we aren't holding onto this, instead we are passing on this good spirit today as part of our healing.

This is an anthology of our stories for the children of *Karl-ka-nininge* and you, dear reader, are bearing witness.

CHAPTER TWO: WHY THIS RESEARCH

Introduction

For too long, First Nation's stories have been told from a western colonial mindset that has failed to tell the truth of our stories, of First Nation's stories (Crouch et al., 2023). Historical accounts of Country, People, and Land were always told by the colonisers who held the so-called Truth of this Country at the point of their pen without any real inclusion of Aboriginal truths. This research seeks to tell the story of *Nyoongar* people as told from our viewpoint. It will bring the story of a *Nyoongar* Matriarch to the fore, one who has held her Stories for a long time, as passed on to her from her Elders, awaiting an opportunity to pass them on to be held and shared with her people and a wider audience. The key aim of this research is for readers to gain an understanding of the importance of the history of our people.

This research is about the *Nyoongar* people who resided in and around the town of Brookton during the 1930s and 1970s. The story is set within and around *Kaarl-ka-nyininge* or *Kalkarni*. Through the storytelling, the thesis describes a *Nyoongar* cultural framework to demonstrate the pillars underpinning the *Nyoongar* sense of 'belonging' and 'place.'

Belonging

This work is about Place, People, Land, Time, and Story, all brought together in a flow of words like that of the waters of the Avon River, flowing full and strong, coming together through an Elder's methodology, Yarning from my perspective, my Truth, my way. I firmly ground myself within the volume of this work. I embody these Stories, they are in me, a part of me.

Kaarl-ka-nyininge, A Place to Be

What does *Kaarl-ka-nyininge* mean? *Kaarl* is the *Nyoongar* word for fire. *Nyininge* is a *Nyoongar* word for 'here I am in this place.' Another way of saying this is 'I'm sitting/staying here.' There are many different spellings of these terms, given the oral nature of *Nyoongar* culture, one not often written down except perhaps in the dirt and sand by our campfires.

For First Nations peoples, knowing our Country is central to our sense of belonging, our being. Country tells us who we are and where we come from. It speaks to our ancestry, to our belonging to Country. We cannot talk about Country being land within the context of westernised thinking and beliefs associated with land. Western thinking is about the use of land

and its economic value. For First Nations, Land and worth of Land is connection to Country and the spiritual value *Nyoongar* people place on their Land, their *Boodja*.

As a First Nations woman, when I am coming on my Country, I know exactly the point of entry. There is a sense of knowing, when the spirit of my Land calls to me. There is an invisible line that is crossed and, I know, then I am home. I am on the Land of my mother, my grandfather, my great grandmother and all my ancient ones. This is what my Country does. It tells me I am home. It will always welcome me home because this is where my bloodline is. This is where I will always belong. I have entered *Kaarl-ka-nyininge*. I am home.

Telling Stories About Place

To explain what I mean here by 'Place' is to understand that a place and space where you personally belong is when you're on Country, with Family, within Community. This Place is your Place, your inherited Place if you like, within Family and within Country.

My bloodline belongs to *Kaarl-ka-nyininge*, like the Avon River that runs through it. Going home and presenting my thesis to Family and friends on the Brookton Reserve once more established so strongly for me that Brookton was my 'Place,' the Place which I call my home, even though we own a house in Perth. Brookton is my 'Place.'

I invite you now to view the short film titled "*Kaarl-ka-nyininge*, A place to be," where I presented this thesis on the Brookton Reserve to my Family, my friends and colleagues from Curtin University. This is found in Appendix A. Once you have viewed this short film, return to these pages.

For me, my Place in Brookton brings every aspect of my being to 'belonging to Country.' Country doesn't belong to me, I belong to Country, and when you belong to something, this belonging holds you tight in its ownership and belonging of you. You are wrapped, safe, loved, Country holds you as your People hold you. Your ancestry is in this holding because this is where your People have been for centuries on end. Who else can claim such belonging to Country as only a *Nyoongar* from this Country can? That is what 'Place' means to me.

Speaking with Jade Dolman, the creator of the artwork for my thesis, about place and our shared experience of returning to Brookton for my presentation I describe the connections between Country, Identity, Family, Ancestors:

That's what the Stories are about. They place you in a Place, they place you on Country, but it places you within Family as well. Then from the Family you go on to those practices and what

we ARE as *Nyoongars* and what we DO as *Nyoongars* we don't have to prove we're *Nyoongars* because we ARE, we DO. We shouldn't have to prove. I know for *Nyoongar* People historically, we've had to prove to the government to get this Land claim. We had to prove that we were *Nyoongars*. We had to prove that we had language. We had to prove that we belong to Country. We had to prove that we had culture. And those were the three critical components of the government giving us Native Title and claiming that we actually were *Nyoongar* People. We had to fight *Wadjellas* to prove that we were *Nyoongars* and that's what our Old People done. And it was those connections to Family that way back then they brought us right to the day that we can say we're *Nyoongars* because we know who we are. We know our connections to Land, we know our connections to Families. That's our blood connections. That's why I say that I belong to *Kaarl-Ka-nyingine*. *Kaarl-Ka-nyingine* is my Country and my bloodline and like those rivers that you did, Jade, they capture, that river captures and holds us in place like a pair of arms saying "you belong here" (Interview with Jade Dolman, 1st August 2024).

Throughout this thesis, I return to these themes over and over. In so doing, my voice grows steady and strong. In the telling of these stories, mine and my sister Janet's, I reaffirm my belonging to Country, to *Kaarl-ka-nyingine*, and as I do, I cast the Story net wide for others to also feel that belonging and reconnect and return to their Country, as *Kaarl-ka-nyingine's* children, her *moort*.

However, I first look at the discourses that subjugated and silenced our stories and First Nations activists who pushed back on the establishment and claimed their voices amidst the settler-colonial project.

Aboriginalism and Silenced Voices

The arrival of Captain Cook to the shores of what is now known as Australia in 1788 saw not the birth of a new Nation but the birth of a lie when Cook declared this land 'Terra Nullius' and, in so doing, denied the existence of the original Peoples of and on this Land.

As early settlers colonised the land and established their place here, there began a 'driving off' of First Nations Peoples from their homelands, removing their physical presence from sight and silencing their voices of protest. What followed was a pattern of removal and silence, described by Sir Ronald Wilson as genocide in his report into the separation of First Nations children from their families (Bringing Them Home, 1997, pp. 234-239). Under Australian colonial rule, the voices of First Nations people were silenced, establishing a long-lasting dominant and powerful discourse of domination of the 'Other.'

The word ‘Aborigine’ or ‘Aboriginal’ has long been a word of contention, along with the word ‘Indigenous’ derived from ‘Indigene.’ Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the nation have rejected the term ‘Indigenous,’ seeking to focus more on terms that reflect the original language or clan groups that have thrived and survived across the continent. Yet still the word ‘Aborigine’ or ‘Aboriginal’ continues within the landscape of conversations about ‘Australia’s Indigenous people.’ ‘Aboriginal,’ ‘Aborigine,’ and ‘Indigenous’ are words of descriptive racism that rip across any attempt to build a formula for reconciliation within this Country. As long as the word ‘Aboriginal’ remains, it carries with it the connotations of a racist, aggressive, oppressive, depressive history of colonial control and all that colonialism entails. It has been stated that ‘Aboriginal’ is not a ‘race’ (Australian Law Reform Commission, 2010). With over 250 language or clan groups once thriving across the continent, this rings true (Horton, 1996).

To understand the impact of colonialism and the silencing of Aboriginal voices, Attwood builds on Said’s (1978) theory of orientalism and Foucault’s (1972) discourse of knowledge and power to introduce ‘Aboriginalism’ as a discourse which provides “European Australians [with] a way or ways of knowing *the Aborigine*” (Attwood 1992, p.i). However, it is not so much about knowing about the ‘Aborigine’ as about the management, control and power European Australians hold over a disempowered people through the ongoing process of colonisation.

Attwood (1992) contends that, together, Said’s theory of orientalism and Foucault’s theory of power and control provide a view of the relationship between the production of authoritative and essential truths about Aboriginal people characterised by a mutually supportive relationship between power and knowledge where ‘Aborigines’ are constructed by dominant western discourses that Other and control us, disavowing our agency as First Nations people. As such, Attwood notes that the principal aim of Foucault’s work is not to analyse power, but rather “to create a history of the different modes by which, in our (western) culture, human beings are made subjects” (Attwood, 1992, p. ii).

Aboriginalism denies place, space and voice for Aboriginal people to be heard because within the concept there is a belief that Aboriginal people need to be represented by those who deem themselves more knowledgeable, powerful, those ‘who have voice.’ That is, westerners, who, according to Attwood, believe they “know more about the Aborigine than they know themselves” (Attwood 1992, p.ii).

The view that 'Aborigines' are incapable of representing themselves is heightened by the work of anthropologists and archaeologists who have constructed an identity of 'they,' 'those', 'them,' which is forever in the landscape of Australian history and may never be erased from the psyche of non- Aboriginal people in conversations about the 'Aborigine.' In his discussion of these issues, Attwood seeks to:

> generate an analysis which can explain the constitution of the Aboriginal subject, a history which considers how European power, and knowledge, has constituted Aborigines (and Aboriginality). Thus, in following Foucault and Said, our contention is that power, knowledge and Aborigines are mutually constitutive, that they produce and maintain one another through discursive practices which can be known as Aboriginalism (Attwood 1992, p. ii).

McGhee (2008) also draws on Said:

> To describe the extent to which the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology are implicated in constructing a concept that might be conveniently called Aboriginalism. This word has some currency in Australia and has wide currency in European and North American academic and public thought, based on the model of Said's concept of Orientalism (p.579).

Speaking of Aboriginalism, McGhee is concerned about the negative impact of this discourse on the wellbeing of contemporary and future Indigenous communities (McGhee, 2008). In Australia, Aboriginalism and its implications must be erased to truthfully claim that Australia is 'postcolonial.' As Australia seeks to find a way forward with Aboriginal people who have and are constructed as 'Other,' references to the 'First Nations Peoples of Australia' must be removed from the Australian Constitution. With this, the language and discourse of 'Aboriginal/Aboriginalism' and Indigenous-ism' must also be removed. More broadly, Australia's contemporary history must be recast to include diverse First Nations' voices on our terms, in our languages, and by our self-determined efforts. I stand on the shoulders of many before me, not only my ancestors but others who have walked this Country now known as Australia. Those poets, musicians, writers and artists alike have used their voice and their talents to pursue justice and equality for Indigenous Australians.

Being 'The First': The Dance of Poetry and Politics

At a time when Australia's 'Other' was an invisible presence in this country, the voice of one 'Other' forced itself onto the contemporary frontiers of so-called 'postcolonial' Australia. Kath Walker, aka *Oodgooroo Noonuccal* (hereafter referred to as *Noonuccal*) created a space and a place for herself through her collection of poetry. She was the first Aboriginal woman published in Australian literature, with her first volume of poems, 'We are Going,' published in 1964. This was the first publication of poetry written by an 'Australian Aboriginal,' rivalled only by C.J. Dennis' 1916 *Moods of Ginger Mick* as a top selling book of poetry, immediately making *Noonuccal* a public person (Abbey, 2017). Criticism followed, with *Noonuccal* recalling that "her work was first said to be the work of a 'white person,", and saying "when it became widely known it was my poetry they said it must be the white genes giving her the brilliance" (ANU Press Files (no date)).

For *Noonuccal*, language had now become a weapon. In 1967 she won the Jessie Litchfield Award for literature, followed by many other awards over the next 20 years (Abbey, 2017), and with her newfound voice, she reached a pinnacle of international fame which saw her life take a course it seemed she was destined for. Post the 1967 referendum[3], which she had been involved in campaigning for since the early 1960s, *Noonuccal* used her position, her writings, and her voice to attest to the deplorable treatment of her People. She accepted invitations from many international bodies and took part in an Australia-China Council cultural delegation, while continuing to valiantly fight for the recognition of the 'invisible' people of this land, to have them be seen and acknowledged, through lobbying ministers and other influential people and through her participation in education and the arts (Abbey, 2017).

Through those years of intense lobbying, travelling, politicising Aboriginal affairs, Aboriginal people, within Australia and internationally, the voice of *Noonuccal* could not be silenced. It is as if God himself stood on a mountain and let sift through his fingers the 'soil and soul' of *Noonuccal*, and snatched by the wind, she was spread throughout the globe to be a voice for the 'silent.' The genres of voice that she used were poetry, writing, storytelling. Through fame came political clout. Soon branded a radical, *Noonuccal's* struggles for her People took their toll. *Noonuccal* died on 16th September 1993.

[3]1967 Australian Referendum https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/1967-referendum

The voice of *Noonuccal* has inspired many writers, poets, researchers and average, everyday First Nations people. In research, strong voices are rising from out of the silence and are making their voices heard. One of the ways in which these voices are rising is through Indigenist research.

Indigenist Research, A Tool for the Rise of Silenced Voices

Under colonisation, research on Aboriginal peoples created a plethora of knowledge presented from the 'other side' of our reality. People who studied us knew nothing about us, yet wrote everything they perceived to be the 'truth' about us, the 'Native' (Nakata, 2007).

From within this silencing of Aboriginal voices, in research today there are those who have stated their position as Aboriginal researchers, asserting an Aboriginal worldview and an Aboriginal epistemology within research.

Lester Irrabinna Rigney has ties to *Narungga, Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri* in South Australia. In his paper on an Indigenist research methodology and its principles, Rigney put forward a design for an Indigenist methodology:

> as a step toward assisting Indigenous theorists and practitioners to determine what might be an appropriate response to delegitimate racist oppression in research and shift to a more empowering and self-determining outcome (Rigney, 1999, p. 110).

He further noted that the research academy in Australia was a non-Indigenous construct that excluded Indigenous people, whose "minds, intellects, knowledges, histories, and experiences were irrelevant" (p. 113).

Noonuccal researcher Karen Martin (2003) states that Rigney (1999):

> defines Indigenist research as culturally safe and culturally respectful research that is comprised of three principles: resistance as an emancipatory imperative, political integrity in Indigenous research and privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenist research (Martin 2003, p. 205).

This new epistemology within the academic regime has weedged open a space for Aboriginal people to create a platform from which to speak: looking at our world from our "ways of knowing that reality" (Rigney, 1999, p. 109).

Martin further expands Rigney's principles to include:

- Recognition of our worldviews, our knowledges and our realities as distinctive and vital to our existence and survival;
- Honouring our social mores as essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Aboriginal people in our own lands and when in the lands of other Aboriginal people;
- Emphasis on social, historical and political contexts which shape our experiences, lives, positions and futures;
- Privileging the voices, experiences and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands (Martin, 2003, p. 205).

Martin's own Indigenist approach uses a *Quandamooka* ontological standpoint, which is firmly embedded in her place of being, her ties to Country and clan, and of which she says she is only "articulating what many *Quandamooka* people, for centuries, have already expressed" (Martin, 2003, p. 206).

Among many others who have conducted research within the terms of an Aboriginal Indigenist framework, Dawn Bessarab is a Western Australian Aboriginal woman of *Bard* and *Yjindjarbandi* descent who developed the framework for yarning as an Indigenous methodology. She is joint author, with Bridget Ng'andu, of the seminal paper establishing yarning as a rigorous, legitimate method for the conduct of research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010).

The age-old, ancient practice of oral storytelling/yarning highlights a practice that must be allowed into education and academia in its totality and be recognised as a source of knowledge through the physical aspect of Storytellers telling the 'Other' story. Yarning creates a culturally safe place/space for stories to be told—and heard—and for research to be conducted. Aboriginal science has been developed through millennia by Indigenist research practice. Colonial Australia is still yet to reconcile its ancient Indigenist science and the plethora of Indigenous artists, scholars, researchers, and Elders who have practiced their craft for millennia. In the short period since 1788, western society has extended a conditional hand to Indigenous artists and scholars. The one thing that has been truly a national and international 'Voice' of our 'silent existence' as the Native/Aborigine/Indigene, is the works of art flowing from this Country. Commencing with those by Albert Namatjira, the first recognised and nationally and internationally acclaimed artist, to current contemporary artists identified in the

"Evolving Identities: Contemporary Indigenous Art 13 May - 6 June 2011", exhibited at John Curtin Gallery at Curtin University Bentley (Petrillo et al., 2011).

Over time, the works of artists such as Paddy Bedford (1922-2007), Revel Cooper ((1938-1983), Jimmy Pike (1940-2002), Shane Pickett (1957-2010), Lance Chadd (*Tjyllyungoo*) (1954-) and many more have travelled nationally and internationally, yet the artists themselves, the Native/Aborigine/Indigene, stay in the Community and continue to paint.

Still, their work is testimony to the voice that cries to the world, "This is me! this is who I am. See me. Listen to me." Those voices are there and will not be silenced as their work becomes the 'voice' that speaks to the world.

Oral Histories and Stories

Aboriginal oral historians are not being heard widely enough in the Aboriginal Community and the wider community. Oral histories and stories are being gathered and taken out of those Communities and placed on shelves and in shelves. Some may be never heard of again. Oral histories in Aboriginal Communities need to be a shared experience. Instead, such oral histories and stories are held within museums, government institutions, tertiary/teaching institutions and even Aboriginal organisations, removed from the people whose stories are 'held' in keeping (Thorpe, 2019). The value of those stories will be lost if they are not shared, especially to those whose stories they are. It is significant and vital that *Nyoongar* people recapture this age-old practice, drawing it into postmodern times, into this current space and place to allow a story to be told. A story that otherwise may never be told.

This research adds to the body of work that already exists through thousands of years of oral histories, narratives, storytelling and knowledge creation. It will be available to *Nyoongar* families and others whose interest in oral histories may be rekindled by the promotion of the story of a *Nyoongar* woman who has given herself to the cause of her *Nyoongar* people.

Shared Stories and Standpoints

Within this volume of work, I position myself as the author of this thesis and as further explored in Chapter Three, I base my thesis from an Indigenous standpoint theory (Nakata, 2007). I stand where few have stood, in the position of an Elder, bringing with me an Elder's knowledge and experience to research presenting a new, yet ancestral, narrative, an Elder *Nyoongar* narrative, a *Kaarl–ka–nyininge* narrative, as Matriarch of my people. This is a *Nyoongar* Elder's narrative. This is my voice, and the voice of my sister Janet telling the stories of our People.

Janet, as our Matriarch, passed these stories on and she welcomed me as a student to write the stories of our People, the stories of our Land, the stories of our Culture.

I once said to Janet that this project was about her story, to which she replied, "No, this is your story too. It's our story."

Through yarning Janet brought to life the characters and places she talked about. When we first started this project of writing her story, I tried to get her to tell me 'her story' and at times I would be frustrated because she would always tell stories of other people and not about herself. Then I realised the enormity of what I was not seeing, that her story was your story, was my story, was our story. As I embraced this within her storytelling, I began to see the richness of her history, your history, our history. As we progressed the project, I gained insight into her incredible generosity in sharing stories about people and places.

As Janet started to recount her history, she was taking me by the hand and leading me through a long corridor. As we journeyed, each story was a window allowing me to look into where those in her story took on life. I was transported to that time and place, becoming part of the story. I wasn't just the writer; I was experiencing the story.

Janet's generosity of knowledge and spirit was so heartwarming and encouraging. But that was her life. She was always generous and had a strong spirit of giving. It was exhilarating to have access to so much knowledge. My desire to capture this *Nyoongar* woman's story was crucial to capturing the knowledge, the knowing of our history as a people. Our knowledge, our history, our stories about our people, as told by *us*, need to be written and preserved, and not by the Colonial Others who for too long have written about us while not knowing us.

I thought Janet's story began with her birth at the Old Rusty Bridge Reserve, but I had to rethink this. In fact, Janet's story began long before this, with her Old People, as she often said when she spoke about our ancestors. Our grandmother's heritage could be traced back to England because she was the daughter of an Englishman. Our grandfather's lineage could only be traced back two generations from his parents because there were no written records of our *Nyoongar* people before then. However, we know they have always been on our lands through the oral stories about our people as told to us by our Elders.

This thesis is, therefore, based on an Elder's point of view, and as an Elder, I carry into this work an alternative to the stories told about our People by colonial voices. This thesis takes into its pages the voice of the 'Other,' the voice of *Nyoongar* women. This story is full of Truth,

the story of the *Nyoongar* people, of *Kaarl–ka–nyininge* – otherwise known by non-Aboriginal people as Brookton – through the hearts, eyes and voice of *Kaarl–ka–nyininge's* daughters.

In this chapter, I laid out the path this thesis follows. I introduced its main characters and brought other Aboriginal voices to the fore to show the strength of Aboriginal Storytellers and wisdom holders. Our shared stories set the scene for a framework of belonging shaped by culture, family and Country.

In the next chapter I explain more of *Karlkarni*'s history, the reserves and the political climate of the time, through the lens of Janet's memories.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

Previous chapters have provided an overview of the thesis, background and historical context and introduced the Story Holders of these oral histories in the town of Brookton, *Kalkanni*, and its surrounding area over the last 70 years. As an Indigenous *Nyoongar* female Matriarchal Elder undertaking this research, I am responsible and accountable first and foremost to my family, Community, Elders, ancestors, and Country, and so too in undertaking this research, I needed to ensure that the research methods enacted met these obligations and that the research was culturally safe and respectful. It is important to note that I am arguing here for the *right* to use Indigenous theories and frameworks, since "research for and about Indigenous people must include the cultural context" (p.2, Crouch, et al., 2023).

Based on their relationships with Country, for as Moreton-Robinson (2013) states the importance of 'Country', for Aboriginal people is both complex and full of much deeper meaning;

> the tracks of land to which we are inextricably tied but it is also the term used to denote Indigenous people who have bloodline to that country through creator and ancestral birth. This interconnectedness is the basis of Indigenous sovereignty, which informs our standpoint as embodied socio-cultural and historically situated subjects of knowledge (p. 335).

This theoretical overview chapter therefore introduces the paradigms, standpoints and perspectives used by me as the researcher to enact my voice, the voice of the Other, in telling the history of Brookton. As many non-Aboriginal people have recorded the history of Brookton using their frameworks, this chapter provides the foundations for understanding the cultural research methods that I, as a traditional knowledge holder of this Country, have used in this research. The chapter therefore examines the theoretical perspectives of Aboriginal Eldership, Indigenous standpoint, autoethnography, cultural immersion and *Nyoongar* yarning.

Finally, this chapter will discuss the Elder methodology I enact throughout this research journey. This methodology demonstrates the epistemological approach that I as a *Nyoongar* Elder have used in this process. This approach is aligned with other research undertaken to privilege Aboriginal peoples' voices by using Truth-Telling based on Indigenous

epistemologies and Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing (Ungunmerr-Baumann, et al. 2022). It is important as *Nyoongars* that we determine our research agenda to give a voice to our own unique history and Community experiences and ensure that the research is "empowering and self-determining" (Moreton-Robinson, 2014, p.336; Rigney, 2017). Furthermore, as discussed and supported by Indigenous scholars we also "have not only the right, but a responsibility to develop" our own research methods (Kahakalau, 2004, p.20)

Eldership

Elders are integral to their Community, highly respected, and the 'holders' of traditional knowledges, culture and values (Crouch, et al., 2023). The title of 'Elder' is a "cultural convention" (Crouch, 2023, p.5). Typically, Communities appoint their Elders, and they support the wellbeing of all, responsible for guiding the Community (Crouch, et al., 2023). Each Community, therefore, has a collective Eldership which holds the authority, and when respected, is without question the collective Voice that drives the Community to selfhood and success (Dudgeon, et al., 2022).

Elders' ability and continual responsibility as "cultural keepers" (Iseke, 2013, p.561) has placed them as longstanding researchers of Place and connection to Country, including understanding our relationships with the natural environment (Iseke, 2013). Elders' use of storying expresses the nuances of these interrelationships and teaches future generations about this interconnectedness with Country. Elders' enacting their role in educating future generations not only ensures the sustainability of Culture and Indigenous pedagogies, but enriches Community life (Iseke, 2013).

The research literature reflects the status of Elders and their crucial role in supporting researchers. For example, "Elders are experts, they are our review boards, they are our academics, they're the people that have the knowledge" (Flicker, et al., 2015, p.1150).

With Elders, "there is a knowing and understanding that research, practice, and methods are an extension of self, tribe, and Community", where Elders as knowledge bearers "hold ancient theory, methods, and science" (Crouch, 2023, p.2). For *Nyoongar* people it is our Elders who are our Oral Historians, the keepers of traditional knowledge. In recent times, these historians have become fewer and fewer in Communities, as time is no man's debtor and 'life' is not a tangible lasting substance.

Indigenous Standpoint

Nanda researcher, Steven Kelly, wrote an article about his PhD experiences within the confines of the western academy titled "Navigating the Western Academy" (2018). He points out that the "Indigenous research paradigm is founded on cultural respect and cultural safety embedded in Indigenous ontology (ways of being), axiology (ways of doing) and epistemology (ways of knowing)" (Kelly, 2018, p.25). An Indigenous standpoint has at its foundations a respect that "all 'things' have agency and are interconnected through a system of relationality" (Martin, 2017, p.1392). Therefore, given the centrality of relationships, Chan (2021) argues that "there is no single individual, or mind, self-determined, separated, and autonomous from its ecology, which for us means land, community, and ancestors" (Chan, 2021, p.174).

Indigenous research frameworks have been found to include a collection of Indigenous methods and approaches that inform the research. Foley's (2003) Indigenous Standpoint, for example, is based on the approaches of Indigenous scholars West, Rigney, and Meyer, and further extensive consultation with Indigenous peoples "of several lands" (p. 50). This 'Theory' proposes a "flexible and applicable approach for all Indigenous nations" (Foley, 2003, p.50). According to Foley, the following must be part of Indigenous research: Indigenous-led; apply critical and post-colonial theories; benefit the Community; ensure Indigenous Data Sovereignty; and use "traditional language [as] the first form of recording" (p.50).

Moreton-Robinson (2014), whose work proposes that gender influences the development of a standpoint theory argues the following:

> An Indigenous women's standpoint generates problematics informed by our knowledges and experiences. Acknowledging that our individual experiences will differ due to intersecting oppressions produced under social, political, historical and material conditions that we share consciously or unconsciously. These conditions and the sets of complex relations that discursively constitute us in the everyday are also complicated by our respective cultural differences and the simultaneity of our compliance and resistance as Indigenous sovereign female subjects (p.332).

As western research methods have traditionally been viewed as 'rigorous and objective,' Indigenous standpoint methodologies with practice-based knowledge systems challenge many taken-for-granted assumptions in mainstream research (Crouch et al, 2023; Simonds & Christopher, 2013). Crouch argues there is a place for Indigenist and western research practices

“to achieve balance and to honor the intellectual sovereignty and contextual realities of Indigenous peoples” (Crouch, et al., 2023, p.2).

Indigenous research often corrects the imbalances of colonisation as it works with Community through shared research practices. These approaches, in turn, aim to decolonise the past and create future research pathways (Wright et al., 2023).

Research is transformed when it is undertaken by Indigenous peoples and “they become the researchers and not merely the researched” (Whitinui, 2014, p.460). When privileging Indigenous voices and valuing their lived experience and history, we control the research and the integrity of the research process (Martin, 2017).

Connection to Country and the role of Country in research is pivotal to Indigenous research. Wright and colleagues (2012) in their research on Bawaka Country, for example, position Bawaka Country as a co-author, acknowledging that Country has agency and actively shapes research.

Autoethnography and Indigenous Autoethnography

Autoethnography, a qualitative research method, focuses on the researchers’ subjective experiences and is a “widely accepted method of inquiry grounded in an interpretive paradigm and designed to construct wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings” (Whitinui, 2014, p.461). This approach centres the personal story, as the “personal story matters” (Whitinui, 2014, p.461).

With an emphasis on “engaging Indigenous researchers in rediscovering their voices” (p.456), Indigenous autoethnography is grounded within a resistance-based discourse that aims to address Indigenous peoples’ injustices and challenges, with the view to social change (Whitinui, 2014). Furthermore, Indigenous ethnographies (as opposed to outsider ethnographies) are credited with greater authenticity as they are “more representative of the world they are studying and, therefore, better able to produce authentic representations of that world and its inhabitants” (Butz & Besio, 2009, p.1668).

Inherent to the decolonizing approach of Indigenous autoethnography are “Indigenous axiologies, ontologies and epistemologies” (Bishop, 2021, p. 368). Through Indigenous autoethnography Indigenist researchers can “walk my talk” (Bishop, 2021, p.367), using a research framework centred on the “core structures of (my) Aboriginal ontology” (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003, p. 206).

As Bishop (2021), a *Gamilaroi* woman states in her paper "'Don't tell me what to do' encountering colonialism in the academy and pushing back with Indigenous autoethnography":

> Indigenous autoethnographies cannot and will not be defined or reduced to a checklist. They operate from a different axiology and ontology that does not seek to categorise, classify, or simplify; instead, Indigenous autoethnographies strive to increase complexity. In this way, cultural agency is asserted – bound by obligations to family, communities, Country, and knowledges (p.368).

Bishop (2021) acknowledges that being authentic to this research approach requires "disciplined patience against the tide of 'busy-ness' to allow adequate time for critical self-reflexivity" (p.369).

I, therefore, somewhat rely on western methods and research knowledge systems but also consider epistemological perspectives equally and draw together self (auto), ethno (nation), and graphy (writing). I have also considered our (*Nyoongar*) collective level of connectedness to space, Place, time, and Culture as a way of (re)claiming, (re)storing, (re)writing, and (re)patriating our lived realities as *Nyoongar* people. I have not merely told *Nyoongar* stories, but have shown, through cultural ways including cultural immersion and yarning on Country, how these stories are lived authentically in meaningful ways (Whitinui, 2014).

Cultural Immersion

From a *Nyoongar* perspective, enacting Indigenous research must be conducted on a platform of decolonisation to value the truth and relevance of the stories held by us as *Nyoongar* people. Decolonising our conversations is doing it our way, the way conversations have always been held, on Country, in our space, on our land for over 60 thousand years. Living *Nyoongar*, breathing *Nyoongar*, thinking *Nyoongar*, yarning *Nyoongar*. Māori scholar, Whitinui (2013) supports this approach when he talks about stories being "so much more than merely talking about being Māori, 'native', or Indigenous; rather, it is a journey of (re)connecting with specific cultural sites, spaces, and struggles that relate to our fluid past, present, and hopes for the future" (p.481).

The cultural authority held by Elders ensures that immersion opportunities for all involved have integrity (Crouch et al, 2023). As *Palyku* scholar, Jill Milroy (2013) reflects:

> My mother and grandmother always taught me about the importance of stories in understanding and knowing and that it was through stories that we learn the truth about

> the world. They also taught me that it is not people who are the best Storytellers: the birds, the animals, the trees, the rocks, and the land, our mother, have the most important stories to tell us (p.2).

For storytelling, the concept of cultural immersion involves sitting on Country to ensure that the immersion experience consists of "verbal, visual, physical, and sensual elements that inform dynamic and ongoing dialogues between humans (academics/co-researchers/family members), and between humans and nonhumans (animals, water, wind)" (Wright et al., 2012, p.39).

Yarning and Storytelling

Storytelling as described by Iseke (2013) is a known pedagogical practice that is central to Aboriginal research approaches and pedagogies. Paul Whitinui speaks about traditional knowledge systems being "at the core of our existence as Indigenous peoples since time immemorial" (Whitinui, 2014, p. 456). Furthermore, Whitinui (2014) points out that by "being an oral/aural based society, our ancestors were frequently engaged in opportunities to not only test their knowledge at different times and in different situations, but also to realise knowledge through the art of storytelling" (p.456).

Gainsford & Roberston (2019), emphasise that Indigenous peoples have been purposeful in their use of Storytelling and creating of traditions. It is a process of reclaiming the story, to own the story, rather than to be defined or storied by others. Telling stories is "dynamic and they continue to unfold as they are re-told, heard, and read over and again" (Wright et al., 2012, p.42).

To recall and transfer knowledge through storytelling is both a skill and an art form. The use of storytelling holds and tracks the vast knowledge that has occurred at different times, and in different settings and situations. Storytelling thus can hold people in time and space, through the process of yarning. Storytellers hold specific details of what knowledge stories contain and how Storytellers tell their stories, telling about who belongs where, about Country and about kinship. We need oral histories and historians yarning about our way of life. Our Storytellers have told us where we belong, who we are, where our Country is and how we fit on Country. All this through the art of storytelling/yarning. Within *Nyoongar* Communities, oral historians (Storytellers) have survived generation after generation to continue telling their stories of Land, people, and culture.

These concepts of Country and kinship have been threatened and overwritten by the *Native Title Act 1993* and forced removal and child protection legislation, as well as scientific and anthropological research. This loss of knowledge through the introduction of various legal processes has been very harmful to individuals and families who have no recall of their history, belonging and family.

It is the Storytellers who know when to tell stories and with whom, who can present events in the right order and resolve differences in people's memories of events and relationships, and who can present the really specific stuff/ the relevance of *Nyoongar* history – as my sister Shirley Thorne once said, "Yarning brings the past into the present" (personal conversation, 20 May 2011).

Yarning is the process of telling stories, where stories are held and passed down from generation to generation. Yarning is the practice and protocol of holding the stories. The more you hold the stories, the more authority you hold as the stories develop.

Yarning for Aboriginal people is a method of communication that is as ancient as the people. It is an act of communication which Aboriginal people have honed into a sophisticated tool of communication. Yarning is a legitimate research method and an authentic method that honours the Ancient Wisdom and ways of communication in Aboriginal culture (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). As a methodology, yarning is a practice of passing on and gaining information from the spaces you find yourself in. It is a process of giving/sharing and talking/gathering information. It is more than interviewing or simply telling a story. Yarning captures a whole sense of the person or people involved. It is woven with history and context. It is shared with others and is circular and dynamic. It weaves the social as well as the critical and it privileges Aboriginal voices (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010).

Archibald & Xiiem (2013), in their text on Indigenous Storytelling, introduces us to Elder Dr Ellen White, *Kwulasulwut*, of *Snuneymuxw* First Nations, from the *Nanaimo* area of Vancouver Island, BC. Elder White talks about storytelling as a process for "learning traditional Indigenous stories" and as an "intergenerational pedagogy of learning" (p. 236). By listening to family members use the critical element of structure repetition in the storytelling, Dr White was "trained to be a Storyteller from a young age" (p.236), and talks about the role of repetition in developing a storied memory as being critical. Repetition is part of Indigenous learning and knowledge sharing practices and helps with story recall, which is an important and necessary part of maintaining cultural practice and active links to Country and Family. Furthermore, the

research practice of Storytelling can be the start of a transformative process of understanding oneself for the researcher and the Community (Iseke, 2013). The conversational method is also found within western qualitative research. However, when used in an Indigenous framework, the conversational method invokes several distinctive characteristics reflected in this thesis.

Nyoongar Yarning – *Nyoongar* Oral Histories Through Storytelling

Oral narratives have driven Aboriginal ways of living for many centuries. Aboriginal Elders, our Oral Historians, were – and remain – the libraries of Aboriginal people. They are the source of knowing and use oral histories and stories as tools that bind the fabric of Aboriginal life which are as fundamental as fire, water, land and food. Storytelling, or oral narratives, established for Aboriginal people the knowing and concretisation of relationship to Land, people and belonging, that is, people's relationship to Land (*boodja*), kinship (*moort*) that exists on that Land, and cosmology (*katdjin karrtadjin*), or an Aboriginal world.

There is a need to promote the ancient and wonderful tradition of storytelling, telling our oral histories, our yarning that captures the stories of the lives of our people, our times, our places, giving voice to *Nyoongar* people.

In *Nyoongar* society there are two ways to tell a story.

First Way

One way to tell a story is to yarn about a subject, an object or an event. Within our Community, within our family (*ngulluka moort*) we have a renowned Storyteller, like Hans Christian Andersen, who wove stories not through pen and paper but through yarn-telling. Our *Nyoongar* people would become spellbound by his yarns when he was alive, and since his death, new generations of young people are spellbound by those who are telling and retelling these yarns. The stories are told and retold and the Yarner (Storyteller) himself has become an icon in *Nyoongar* history and is historically engraved in the memory of our yarning.

Second Way

The other way of storytelling is through the Storyteller who is the historian who through yarning tells our stories, our histories, confirming our history, our identity, ensuring that the 'mores of the *moort'* are passed on. These are more than yarns. These are stories told by our Oral Historians of our histories and experiences.

Within Aboriginal history, the process of stories and storytelling were and still are an integral part of Aboriginal society and is a methodology for passing knowledge down to and around

those who constituted family and Community. Storytelling or oral history delivers law, education, family living and planning, kinships, education, health and medicine, art, Aboriginal dreamtime stories, culture and Aboriginal connection to Land and Country. Passing this knowledge down meant someone had to be the keeper of knowledge.

Through Indigenous autoethnography and this oral history, I confirm to a wider audience that yarning and storytelling are legitimate tools, not some fanciful flight of stories of a 'displaced people.'

Storytelling or oral narratives established for Aboriginal people the knowing and concretisation of relationship to land, people and belonging, that is, my relationship to my land (*ngun boodja*), my kinship (*ngun moort*) that exists on that land, and my cosmology (*ngun katdjin karrtadjin*) or my world.

Introducing an Elder Methodology

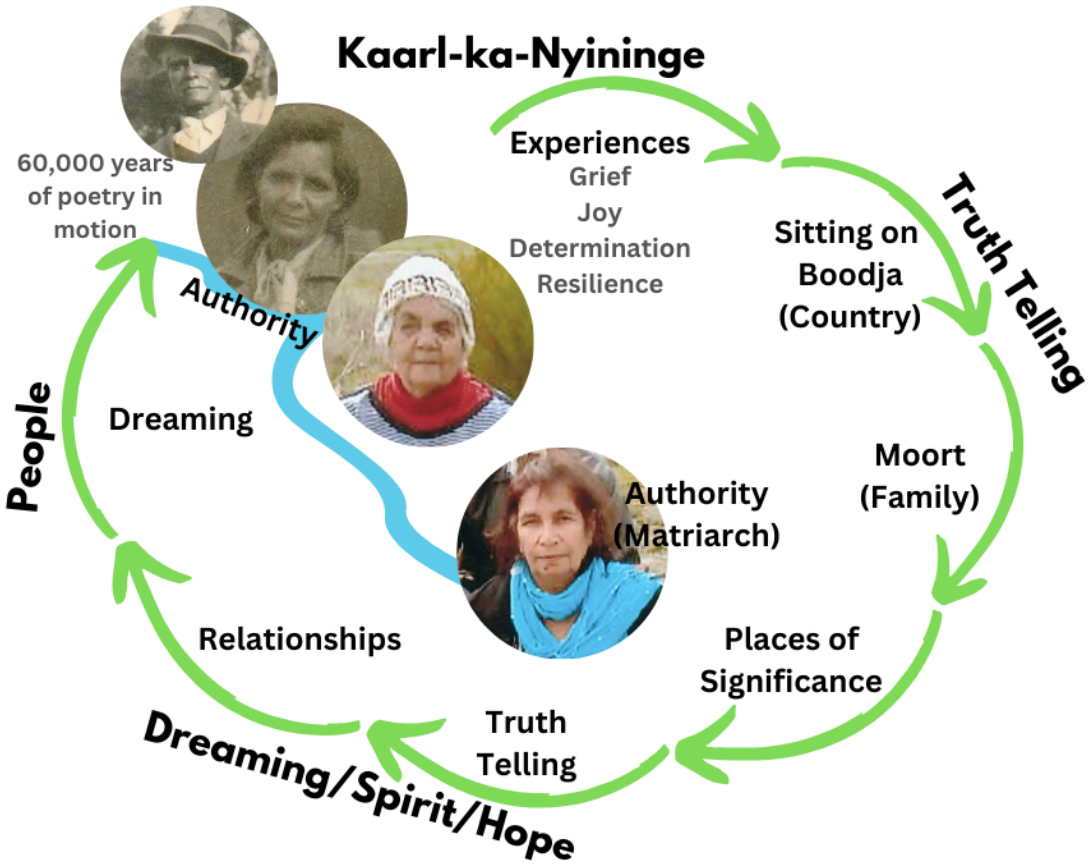

Figure 5. Visual depiction of an Elder methodology.

This research is not focused on collecting and analysing numbers and making meaning of data. As explained above where I outline the paradigms, positioning and perspectives used by me as an Elder researcher to enact my voice, the thesis focuses on the quality and nuances of researching relationally within an Elder methodology (see Figure 5). This research is not about riding into a Community with a pad and pencil, taking data about people's lives, then leaving and going back to the university and writing up my thesis without further thought for the people researched. This is about placing myself in the centre of this research, living and breathing the stories I yarn about (Bessarab & Ng'Andu, 2010).

I, therefore, firmly ground myself within the volume of this work. As Paul Whitinui describes whānau in his article (2014), so too I describe my *moort*, my people, my family, my relations in similar ways. Our introductions start with *Kaya*/Hello, *ngun nidja*/I am here, my name is *Dilberrt*. *Ngun Doorum's yok. Ngun Ballardong/Willeman* of my father, *ngun moort*/my people.

An Elder methodology:

- Decolonises research.
- Develops a cultural framework for the research.
- Adopts a new approach to research.

I apply an Elder relational methodology to capture the content and context of this research drawing on culturally safe, authentic, and validated research methodologies.

To make sense of the research, I approach the work as an Indigenous *Nyoongar* Matriarchal Elder. I cannot work with the way of colonised thinking:

> If the artist does not perfect a new version of his process of doing, he acts mechanically and repeats some old model fixed like a blueprint on his mind (Dewey, 1935. p.52).

I step away from the colonial mindset and trust my own way, my cultural way of doing what I do well, that is, storytelling/yarning, doing it my way and bringing vigour and life to the research through yarning rather than the lifelessness of the mechanical model.

Yarning is telling our Truth. Telling our way of life. I remember clearly the laughter and mirth that rang out at gatherings of my people, as well as those times when the cries of grief and pain rang out. Our people loved, lived, laughed and cried and there are stories of those experiences contained within the pages of this thesis.

This is my PhD, my thesis, my stories, my Truth. I am positioning myself as an Elder, as the holder of the stories of our people, passed on to me by my sister, Janet/*Djennaburra.*

Now my story is set to be told. In this chapter I have drawn a landscape larger than Brookton, but one that highlights the strength of voices in Aboriginal culture. This is self-determination. In the next chapter, I describe in detail the Elder methodology. My standpoint in action, embodied.

While Janet was the key to unlocking these stories, this thesis was to become much more than just a collection of her stories. In this passage from an interview between myself and *Yuat Nyoongar* researcher and co-supervisor, Michael Wright, I attempt to unpack the dance I undertook to bring my voice to the fore. I had to join the dots between my stories and Janet's, and decouple my thinking of and about the academy, without feeling like I was compensating through a theoretical framework in doing so. I have broken away from being 'Other:'

> **Michael**: so, the story then went from Aunty Janet, she was the inspiration for this, but [you've told me that] she said "It's not just my story, it's the story of the Community around me and family and others.".
>
> **Liz**: Well, it started off with her, but then it moved to like the Community because what she spoke about, she talked about all the things that happened in the church life, the school, and going out on the farm…
>
> **Michael**: So I'm trying to bring us back to the question in your PhD now is, is about this Community, this, this Community, which, you know, we often think of as a small town, whatever that means for people, but your story that you're capturing in your PhD is how unique this place was, *Kalkarni*, Brookton, and how that shaped so many people's lives. Shapes who you were, shaped other family as well. And how all these lives were intimately connected, interrelated in those ways. But there was an – I'm trying to get my words out. And please do with them as you will. But it sounds to me when you are talking then before is how all of these lives, all these people living as they did were here because they wanted the best for the Community. Because of these intertwined relationships, these inter-whatever it was, people were here for this Community. And that helped nurture and hold you all in the time you were here.
>
> **Liz**: I think it's also this is the roots of us as black owners. We were here before the *Wadjellas* were here. We were here before them. Grandfather's grandparents were here.

Seabrook came to Monger – and his *Nyoongar* wife because they were married – and he said, “Look, I need some help to bring some... ” Well, they brought horses first. They had to go down round Rob’s Jetty way down there in Fremantle to bring horses back. And those men, which were my grandfather and his brothers, they brought horses back to town, and from those horses and they were used for, for working. But then the farmer said, “I don't have any money to pay you but you can pick out what horse you want.” So those men picked up a few horses and then they were asked to go and bring some cattle back. They were droving because they knew the land, to the beginning of this town, which these fellas have never ever acknowledged, you know, it's time to tell a story about us. What happened to us as *Nyoongar* people, we were always here. And because we were always here, this town grew in its *Nyoongar* capacity.

Michael: So reconciliation is an important part of that story to be told. So people know why this town became the town it was, that it wasn't by any fluke or accident, but because *Nyoongar* people or men that you just mentioned, being very generous in themselves by helping in that whatever it was, the establishment, but that story goes – has not been told or it's not heard or that we've been told? That's [the] important part of this story.

Liz: What it was, was the voice of the Other, yeah, that's the title, to tell our story, the way we saw that story. To say that, you know, Grandfather is the most significant person in this story as far as, apart from Janet, is that he was here before those *Wadjellas* were here. Out in near the Dale area, old grannies lived and that this whole place they traversed. I can't pinpoint a particular place that says this is where they were from the beginning but *Boodjin* is so aligned to that.

To me, the story needs to be told about we were here, *Wadjellas* came along. Relationships weren’t always the best. Relationships were good, relationships soured along the way. But then there was a generation in that, that moved in this town that changed. And it was black and white kids that changed. And then this town went on into a better journey in terms of relationships.

What's the story that I want to tell about this town is that this town is significant to so many, you can go anywhere and they will tell you about Brookton.

Michael: So this is the other story. This is the story that is very rarely told. This is a story that needs to be told.

Liz: This is the Others.

Michael: Yeah, well, this is the story of the Others. This is the story that history forgets to tell. And we need to tell and you're telling it. This is the story of Aboriginal people. This is the story of the first people here. This is the story of *Nyoongar* people. This is the story of the *Ballardong* people here before white people came. And it's also the story of *Nyoongar* people here, *Ballardong* people here after white people were here. And even though there's these crossovers on the occasions during the course of the story, it's primarily the story of Aboriginal people, our story of how we tell it, …how we want to tell it.

Liz: How I think is how Aboriginal people made a difference to this town, was talking to Olive [who is my cousin, and she said], that was our people who worked these lands. They cleared this land. The farmers had their farms and they came and they put up their little plots "This is my, this is my land. This is my farm." The farm was, all the farm the land was never owned by anybody. It was the *Nyoongar* Country. And then they started to put fences up and they claim this then, but our mob cleared the land. There's a place out there on the road to *Boodjin* where the women, the McGuire women, actually planted trees as women they were young women. Father said, "Come on, we're going to plant trees" they all have to go to plant a couple of them, maybe either they were pregnant, or [they were] somewhere else. But they worked the land and the significance of that is that if you work the land you own the land, even though there's no titles to us (Interview, 21 August, 2023).

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will state the purpose and objectives of this research and show how I have used an Elder methodology in my research that has been inspired by my lived experience and the lives of my family, as well as my cultural and intellectual knowledge. I explain the methodology of cultural autoethnography through the research method of yarning and do this by applying an autoethnographic style (first person voice) to deconstruct and reconstruct our stories of lived experience in *Kalkanni*. Cultural immersion occurs through reliving the experiences told firsthand by first person stories. This chapter explores examples of two cultural immersion experiences to demonstrate the Elder methodology.

The Elder methodology is about Truth Telling and in my research the setting is *Kalkanni*, on *Ballardong Boodja*. It is the stories of places, of people, and events. It is a nonlinear process, it weaves in and out of places, through people, time and events. It is important. This is a *Nyoongar* woman Elder's methodology and the process is legitimised through the telling of stories.

The storytelling is rich in detail and the stories ebb and flow and do not always have a linear progression. A story may pause and even stop, maybe there are inflections, both tonal and in topic. What is important is how stories are told and not necessarily the accuracy of their content. Stories are relative, and the storyline may change or be altered according to the time, place and situation. Stories are about ensuring continuity; actors and place remain constant, but what can change or be altered are actions and intentions. Continuity ensures longevity and connection. Stories provide these certainties.

Enacting my Elder methodology has seen western research concepts and terms in this section re-imagined by Indigenous practices. For example, 'data collection' has occurred through the cultural practice of storytelling and yarning, and 'data analysis' is discussed as thematic storying. Furthermore, the findings in Chapter Seven—the research results (stories)—are held in the cultural framework pillars to demonstrate a sense of belonging.

Purpose of the Study

As the author I have positioned myself as an Elder and holder of the stories of my people, passed to me by my sister, Janet/*Djennaburra* (the barefoot girl). The methodology positions

this thesis through an examination of the stories by its people and family (*moort*) and by its setting *Kalkanni* the *boodja*. As I have placed myself at the centre our place (*Kalkanni*), my people (*Ballardong*, *Nyoongar*) and our land (*Ballardong, Nyoongar*). My experience is connected to a deep time story (60,000 years) held and woven together and captured within the Elder's methodology. It has been told from the author's perspective, my truth and my way. The thesis seeks to (re)position autoethnography from an Indigenous perspective. This will be achieved by referring to autoethnography as a culturally informed research practice that is not only explicit to Māori ways of knowing but can be readily legitimated as an authentic 'Native method of inquiry' (Whitinui, 2014).

Objectives of the Study

There is an urgent need for this type of research. The academy has not given recognition to Indigenous research that speaks its own truth. I am a *Nyoongar* woman of the *Ballardong, Whajduk* and *Willman* Clans of the South West and as a senior Elder and Matriarch of my family and clan, I have both the legitimacy and authority to speak this truth. The thesis provides the opportunity for a *Nyoongar* voice to be heard. I seek to bring a different voice to the dialogue about Aboriginal (*Nyoongar*) people, and especially in this instance, a unique *Nyoongar* voice. A voice that embodies our truths, thereby legitimising and privileging our stories and our realities.

Ethics

Ethics was granted for this research project through the Western Australian Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee (WAAHEC) HREC1160 and reciprocal Ethics approval granted through Curtin University Human Research Office HREC 2023-0021. See Appendix B.

Storytelling Case Studies Demonstrating My Elder Methodology

This methodology section retells two events that took place throughout this research project, both cultural immersion experiences on *Kalkanni* Country. These experiences demonstrate how I enact an Elder methodology of storytelling, cultural immersion and autoethnography. Case study one involved taking a group of academics for an on Country experience as the start of their journey to developing their cultural capability as the leadership team of Curtin's School of Allied Health. This is the story that reconnected me back to my research journey and allowed me to complete this research journey. It is also a story that shows how truth-telling can be a transformative process to move people towards reconciliation (Corntassel, 2009).

The second case study consists of transcripts of myself recounting my experiences with one of my supervisors. I demonstrate through this storytelling on Country how my esteemed position as an Elder legitimises me to speak directly from this land, the *boodja* that is mine. As I sit on Country as one of the holders of wisdom, we see how wisdom comes from knowledge and it is that knowledge that is represented through the stories, the pictures, and the dreaming.

Elders Methodology: Dr Michael Wright

> The study approach for Aunty Liz's thesis was co-produced by her and her supervisors, Dr Michael Wright and Dr Courtenay Harris. Given the cultural importance of stories and yarning for Aboriginal people the Elder's storying approach was seen as both authentic and appropriate. As an Nyoongar man, (Michael) I fully supported this approach and was deeply honoured to be given the opportunity to be a supervisor on her important work. My ancestral country is Yuat from the area known as the Victoria Plains that extends from Guildford and includes the townships of Moora and New Norcia in Western Australia. I interviewed Aunty Liz's on her ancestral country *Kaarl–ka–Nyininge.* The interviews were conducted at two sites The Church (as it is affectionately known) in the Brookton township and the Aboriginal reserve located on the outskirts of the township of Brookton. Stories from both places are the source of a rich history spanning decades and generations for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Therefore, the interviews conducted on those places invoked intense and abiding memories; all of which had very deep visceral meaning. It was decided, by both Aunty Liz and her supervisors that given the power and depth of the interviews that they would be transcribed and included and would form the basis for the methods (storying) chapter for her thesis. An Elders methodology of storying, we believe, can be justified if the author is a senior Elder. Aunty Liz is a very senior and highly regarded and influential Nyoongar Balladong Elder and her cultural knowledge and wisdom is highly sought and valued. The storying approach adopted for the research methods for Aunty Liz's thesis is highly innovative and, we believe, is most culturally appropriate in disrupting and dismantling the biases existing in the current contemporary approaches underpinning Western research practices. Aunty Liz was adamant that her thesis should and would confront the colonising approaches embedded in the academy. We, her supervisors, honoured her desires, and feel deeply indebted to be part her PhD journey and the decolonising approaches that are clearly evident in her thesis; thank you.

Case study one

In June 2022, a trip on Country with the School of Allied Health, Faculty of Health Sciences, Curtin University consisted of visiting significant places on *Nyoongar Boodja* Country, which included a visit to Frog (*kooya*) Rock, and *Boodjin/Boyagin* Rock where those who could, climbed to the top.

Nyoongar legend says that if you run to the top of the rock without stopping you will live a long life.

After a quiet lunch in the solitude of the bush, the group travelled to the Brookton Reserve where they shared afternoon tea and sat around the fire and were entertained by *Bigarra* Dancers and *didgeridoo* player Bevan Winmar. That evening everyone shared a meal of kangaroo and damper and other foods. The team camped overnight on the Brookton Reserve.

After breakfast everyone took a walk down to Rusty Bridge which spans the Avon River South Branch, and I told the story of Norman *Doorum* Bennell and how he defied Native Welfare by taking a stand, telling them not to cross the bridge or he would shoot the welfare man and one of the Aboriginal police with the two bullets he had in his shotgun. No children were removed by Welfare that day. Standing together on that bridge was an immersion not only in the place itself, but also in the story and the feelings that arose in its telling.

Similar stories of our people on Country were shared and we spoke about *Nyoongar* life, struggles, and fights to retain our culture and keep our children. With university leaders—*Burdiya* to *Burdiya* (boss to boss) (Wright et al., 2023)—we walked on Country, telling our stories. For those on the journey it was transformative, bringing new knowledge and understanding of *Nyoongar* people with the aim of increasing the School of Allied Health's capacity to walk and work together with us to improve Aboriginal students' experiences and embed our ways of working into curricula.

Autoethnography places me inside this research. And it places the research within my very being. Through the process of yarning on Country, cultural immersion occurs. This allows outsiders to be brought into my world and held through the lens of my experiences. Outsiders share my experiences as insiders, sitting with me, travelling with me, and listening to me tell the stories of my people.

Case study two

The following passage is taken from an interview with Michael Wright (*Yuat Nyoongar* researcher and one of my supervisors) at Brookton Reserve in 2023. I describe storytelling and the protocols inherent in the telling, and equally in the listening. I describe the role of memory, the land that holds both the story and the teller, and the practices that connect the past with the present.

> **Michael**: So Aunty Liz, we are with you up on the Reserve, and [inaudible] a couple of stories, and this is where you grew up and I think the story you're about to tell here is important in that when we talk about methods, and we're talking about an Elder's, a *Nyoongar* research methodology, and how storying is such a key part of any – we talk about catching stories – it's not interviewing, like, as often, you know, the usual qualitative methods that they talked about for research. Storying is rich in detail, but it flows and ebbs and doesn't always follow what would be conventionally thought of as 'this is a trajectory that people go on.' It stops, pauses, and maybe inflections in voice and so forth. Which we won't capture in the Word version of all of this, that's true. But what we can capture in what we're filming today is how you tell that story.
>
> But also, this story is important because you talked about how it's not a given that everyone can actually tell stories, and that there is progression in that, as one ages, as one is young and gets older. So there are points in someone's life, where you have an authority to tell stories. But that's not always a given. And it's something Community talk about, for you, or for members of the Community to do so. But that's not as well understood. But for this, for your PhD, storying very much is, what holds everything. It's everything in terms of what the PhD is about. So your story here is important, about a point in time in your life and your learnings from that. Not just how what was told in the story, but what was for you at that age you were, and what are those key messages you took on board.
>
> **Liz**: Well, there used to be a laundry here. After all the years that we lived on this reserve. The only commodity that we ever had was a tap. They put a tap up here so that we can access water. Don't ask me where we went to the toilet, because the toilets was like behind these bushes. Until finally old Stan Wall said to Janet, "There's an old toilet up on the footy oval because they're building a new one, we'll have that transported" and that became the little red toilet that was the Community toilet for everybody.

And then that went for a while and then we had a laundry put up here. And at this laundry, this was a place where the women spent their time. They'd come up and do their washing and they'd be all yarning and talk about anything and everything, everybody's business, nobody's business. But they had their yarning time. It was, for me, it was just so privileged to sit with these older women and listen to them talk. That was what you did. And one day, we're talking and then they was going off about a particular boy. And then they asked me a direct question. And I was 15 and a half, about, and then before I could even give them a decent answer, they like shut me off, moved on to another piece of conversation like, didn't my opinion matter? And I'm probably got a clue then that as a 15-and-a-half-year-old, you don't have the conversation with older women. That's not your place to communicate.

Just over the road, …just in the back over there, that we used to be our playground. All of us kids, we used to go into that particular bush, we made little cubby houses. And we take a walk to the dump [rubbish tip] was just over here. And we pick up little chips of China. And they would be our little toy plates and cups and blah, blah, blah. And all of us would build a playground over there. Boys would do their thing. I don't know what they did, but they had their games and marbles and stuff. But that's where we played our games, dollies and stuff. That's how we entertained ourselves. Apart from that we just run amok in this bush. This is just beautiful. Freedom. I gotta say there was no fences around this reserve. You could either go here, you could run over that way.

There's a bush over there that carried the most incredible flowers, wildflowers. And there, but here, this was a woman's storying place, I suppose. Where they tell their stories while they're – while they're doing their laundry, doing their washing. And they were amazing, you know, all those women, they washed by hand, they didn't have a machine, they didn't have those curly things what you rubbed in it, they just washed all their clothes by hand. And they didn't just wash clothes, they wash their blankets, grey blankets, heavy blankets. And on a day, beautiful day like this, they'd have their clothing and out on the line. The wind blowing, just such freshness. Yeah, but I learned that day that a 15-year-old has no part in a conversation of women. And that's the rule. That was the rule. We had our little conversation as little kids in our playing, playing our little cubby house things on the, on the middle of the oval here, where there was a space where the marble holes would be. And we'd all sit, we'd all play marbles, and we'd have our conversations. But they were kids' conversations, they weren't adult

conversations. And sitting around the fires around here. There'd be a fire over here, fire over Uncle Ray's and his place, and two old grannies over there that have their fires going. And there'd be stories around the campfire. But it wasn't our place to tell stories, our place was to *listen* to the stories. And that's how you learn what stories will – what happened in the past. And what happened around the place.

Michael: Is there an art to telling a story?

Liz: I think you've got to be a really good Storyteller to capture the audience. Because no use telling a story if nobody's gonna listen (laughs). And I tell you what, we had Storytellers. And the kids, somebody would start a story and they'd walk away and wouldn't finish off, you know, listening to the story. So, yes, there is an art in Storytelling.

Michael: What does memory play? What role does memory – most of the memory in storytelling?

Liz: That's where you get to your *kaatajin*. That's where you get your knowledge from, from the stories that come from there that's passed on, from one story to the next, from one generation to the next. It's a passing on of the knowledge what those old fellas wanted you to know, what the women wanted to share with you.

Michael: So as we know about Aboriginal people, it's an oral tradition. We didn't write things down. So do you think people have a better idea of holding and retaining memory? Do you feel that Aboriginal people have a naturally present part of our natural disposition let's call it. Is that something we can do?

Liz: I think it's an innately – a part of us that we have the capacity to hold the stories because we're telling the stories and we listen to the stories from my – I can remember two old ladies, my grandfather's grandmother, I remember her, and Granny Mabel, which was one of my great – the old grandmother, Grandfather Felix, Grandfather *Doorum* and Pop Bert, but they told stories and sometimes their stories would be repeated, that we held those stories. And the only time you do the stories that – we tell the stories over and over, we, like we regurgitate all of that, that like knowledge. And those kids sitting around listening to those stories, they just, they just sit and absorbed those stories, and you don't realize that they're actually learning history. They're learning about life stories, about family, about how, how those men were hard workers,

how they chop down trees, how they opened up this land. They'd talk about, you know, "we went working out there at that fella's farm, we chopped down all these trees down the street." That's history. And that was, would be, passed on. And in the stories as you listen to him, you kind of grind it till you absorb it into your blood and your mind. And you're able to retell that story, and Christabel will be sitting there and she'll be saying, "You remember, remember, *Doorum*, my grandfather, telling this story about how we used to go out and work." And those stories are ingrained in the lives of our kids. You know, it's, it's something that's – because we're not, we don't, we never wrote our stories down. It was a verbal passing on of knowledge. And you had to learn because you didn't have a book to go to read, the book was the person standing there telling you the story. And you have to read that vignette to slowly turn the page to the next story. And as they told those stories, you listened.

Michael: So what are the qualities necessary in storytelling, both from the listener's point of view?

Liz: You had to be able to not just listen but take it in and understand what the story was about. And visualize, because often the stories would be about a place and a time. And maybe even a season, you know, like we'd be going out shearing at this certain place. And you're putting your mind that there's a place that we went to shearing and there were sheep there and, and those feelings over time, place and activity, I suppose what action was taking place was all part of that storytelling to bring it all together into one story. That story will be one and then another story will be told, in another story, and they are the pages of our life.

Michael: Did the stories ever change?

Liz: Somebody put a slight sweetness or something else to the story [laughs]. Sometimes they'll stretch it a little bit. But the stories, the stories had added something external, but the story is always, the essence of the story always stayed the same. The meaning and the meaning of that story always stayed the same, because there were lessons in those stories you know, we were told – was telling us a story of a horse out in the paddock, is that [it's] underneath the tree and it was a storm on and lightning came and hit that horse, killed him. What was the lesson behind that story? or stealing it from standing under a tree and being killed by lightning? No, that wasn't the lessons,

are the essence that were in the lesson. The lesson was, “Get out of a storm, don't hang around underneath the tree.”

Michael: So what you're saying then if I'm hearing correctly, is that the story just – it's layered and layered and layered with whole numbers of meaning. And it's not just hearing a story and passing over and then writing down whatever it is, which I think sometimes cultures that don't have an oral tradition that Aboriginal people have do, there's so much value in story, stories of value for as is not only who we are, but what we are and where we want to be, and who whatever, and so there’s even a status to those who are asking us that, who are great Storytellers, for example, the ones that are historians, like you say, just the pages in a book. And their amazing memory. I'm just thinking about family members of my own, who can recount – he can, he can just rattle off a whole genealogy of who is who. And their connections and who's whatever. Amazing, amazing propensity for memory, capacity to recall.

Liz: And I think one of the beauties of being on your own land is you can see with your mind's eye who was there, and you can see who was there, and your memory just takes you to that place. And as you sit in that place, you're just flipping through the pages, all this? There's that one, there's that one. And you know, and that's your genealogy. And then, of course, the genealogy, you know, what your connections are, who you connected to? And then not just then with your connections, what are the stories that they're telling you? And what are those stories meaning to you, it's telling you that you belong in a place and space, this is who you are, this is what you are, this is where you belong. And each time you flip a page of knowledge, it's just like a book. You finish a book and you know the story. But when you look at our story, the person's got more stories. More stories to tell beside that one. There's a whole book behind that story. And then there's another book behind that one person. We are our librarians. We are our books, we are our stories. And great Storytellers will have the capacity to tell you, who you are, what you are, where you belong, who’s your mob. And that's a sense of “this gives me my sense of identity. I know who I am, because I can say that's my mob there. That's me, that’s my mob there. And that's where I belong.” And place, this place here just, just rushes at me with all the stories that's filled in this place. Just this one piece of land, besides all the other places around, you know. So many beautiful stories (Interview, 22 August 2023).

Combining yarning, and an autoethnographic lens with cultural immersion brings a deeper understanding of the value of these principles within an Elder methodology that in turn brings transformative change to others.

Storytelling as Data Collection

Storytelling is data collection and framed by the authority of the Storyteller. My sister Janet, a well renowned Storyteller and oral historian, and I, commenced this research during the winter of 2015 when I visited to ask her to let me write her story. She very graciously agreed, and sitting at her kitchen table she said – while handing me a cup of tea – "Well, you better do it before I die, hey." To me she was invincible, and I thought I had plenty of time; time proved me wrong.

She took my hand and as we walked, and as I explained earlier, I felt as if she was taking me down a narrow passage with windows on each side of the wall, and to each window she would point and say things like, "Look, see there, that's where I was born," and with words she would paint a picture of that time and place. That is the beauty of yarning on and about Country.

The combination of yarning, autoethnography and cultural immersion synchronised and became a natural force of energy and vitality that brought such ease to the methodology and the pulling together of this research. Combined, they became like three golden cords that intertwined the stories of Janet and her people and her place and planted themselves firmly in my being to become the writer of these stories of Janet and our people, on our Country.

As I started yarning about the PhD, collectively with my supervisors, we moved from yarning/talking to each other, to a shift in communication moving into moulding the thesis through workshopping, describing the information and stories and how these were passed on, from Grandfather to Janet, from Mum to Janet, then to how I became the holder of the stories (see Figures 6 and 7 below). Now it was my turn to pass on the stories. Through those series of yarns, feeding into the stories that would become my thesis, the workshops brought clarity to the research and the methodology. Because in the storying, the yarning, the going back and forth into the process of cultural immersion through yarning and workshopping, stories started to emerge independent of each other and each story held its place in the research. The workshops assisted with shaping my thesis and clarifying the stories I wanted to tell, and how to tell them.

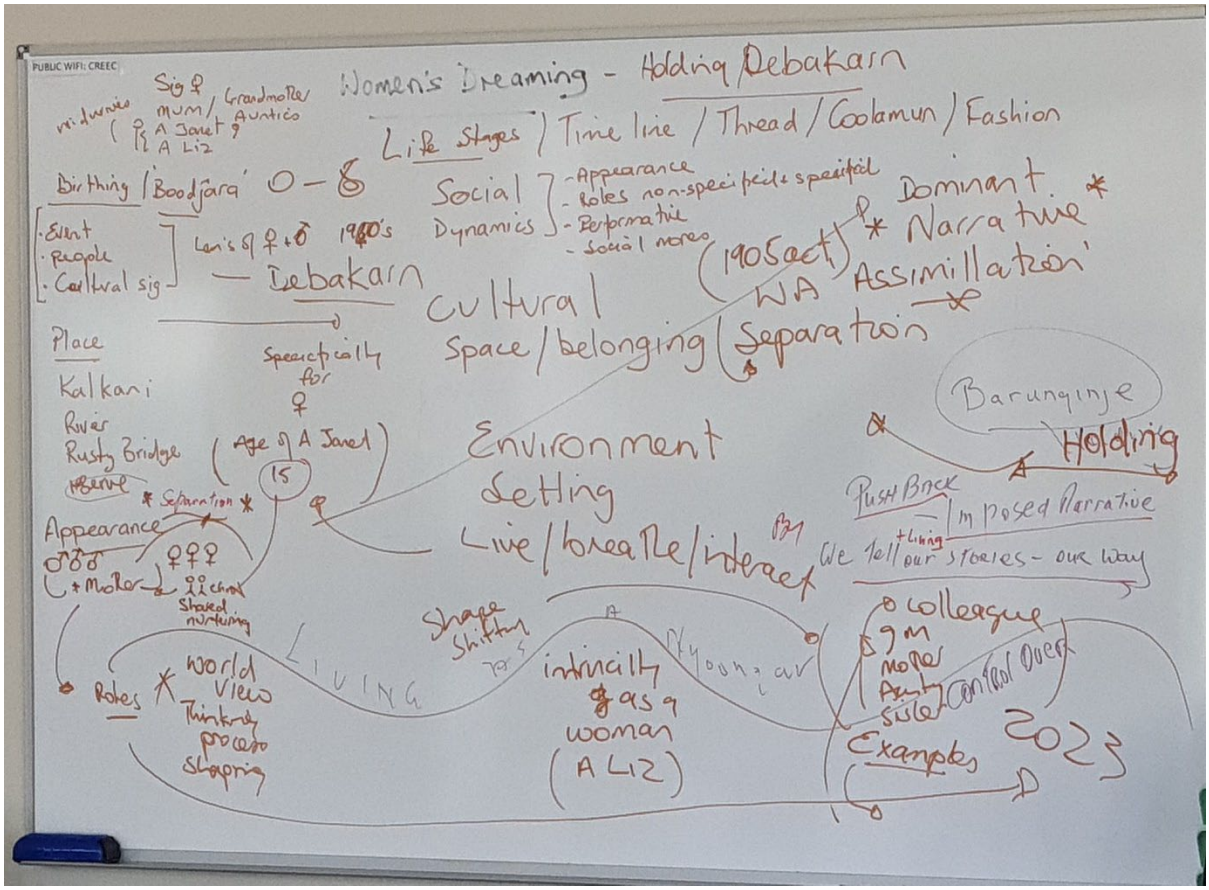

Figure 6. Whiteboarding session to unpack the methodology of the thesis.

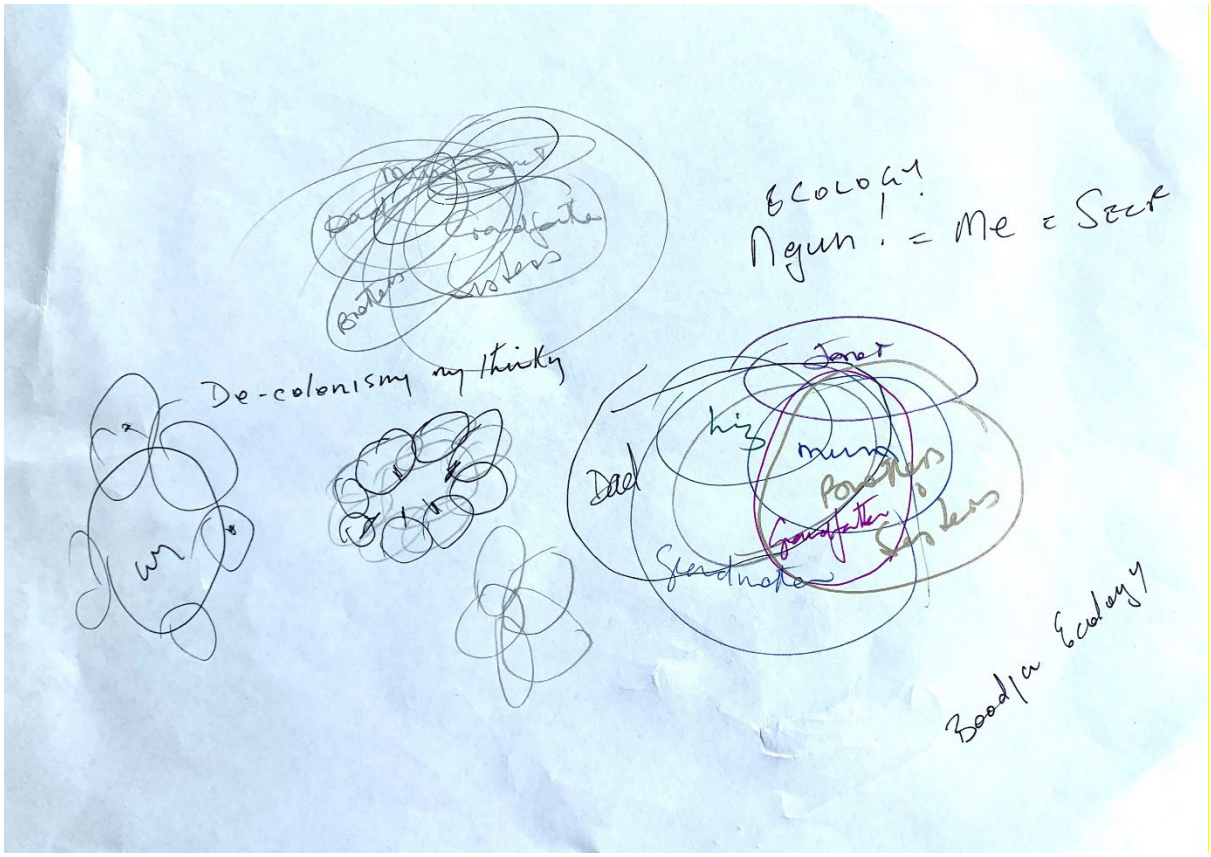

Figure 7. Early hand drawn mapping of my autoethnographic approach to understanding my Elder methodology.

From the workshops with the supervisory team at Curtin University, I then took them on Country for two days to legitimate the place where this storying took place. Once on Country, cultural immersion became a stronger reality and the methodology became grounded in this process.

It was difficult for me to understand and grasp the concept of what my supervisors and others were saying when they told me, "You are the methodology, Liz." It was only when this all came together that I could understand, yes, I was the methodology. I was the Storyteller, I held the time and space where these stories belonged. I knew the characters in the stories, and I knew where the stories belonged, and I knew my place in all of these stories.

I heard my land sing to me in the steady, magical flow of the rivers and waters and I knew my land was holding me, the stories, and I hold the stories that were told to me. And the methodology was telling the story, gathering the story, then going back again and again over all the stories because the stories held the basis of what life was about at that time in the life of *Nyoongar* people, in that space, on that place.

Data Analysis as Thematic Storying

Yarning is the practice and protocol of holding the stories. The more you hold the stories, the more authoritative you are, and the stories are generative. Throughout this PhD process and cultural immersion experiences a thematic 'storying' analysis evolved. The thematic storying analysis led to the development of six key themes that form the six pillars of the cultural framework for understanding the sense of place/belonging.

Chapter Seven explores these six themes/pillars, and through storying, demonstrates how these interweave to create the cultural framework.

However, first, Chapter Six provides the historical and policy context of the Stories and the power and control exerted by the State over all aspects of *Nyoongar* people's lives.

CHAPTER FIVE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND *KAARL-KA-NYININGE'S* STORIES

Introduction

Brookton, *Kaarl–ka–nyininge*, is my hometown. I grew up there and as a child spent many happy hours playing games with my brother, my sister and cousins, along with nieces and nephews. There was never a dull moment as there were many kids to play with. There were games of rounders, bush hockey, brandy, skittles, chasey and others. Places where we lived were many and in different locations. As a child, I remember that out on the farming places where Dad worked, we would live in farmers' vacated houses or farm sheds, and when neither of these were available, Mum and Dad would set up a tent. If the weather was warm enough Mum and Dad would set up a *mia mia* for us for shelter.

Up the top of what might have been Grosser Street going towards Pingelly, many *Nyoongars* had camps, including Mum and Dad, especially up alongside the train line and main road to Pingelly. I believe this accounted for the uprising of whites in town complaining of Aboriginal people living too close to the townsite and wanting to have them removed. This led to the removal of families onto the first Reserve near what is known as Rusty Bridge [Reserve 289, DOLA File Number: 4718/30]. The Lost Lands report recounts this decision made by the Chief Protector of Aborigines, AO Neville (Western Australian Aboriginal Affairs Department, 2004).[4]

Brookton's first Aboriginal Reserve was known as Rusty Bridge by the people who were sent to live there. The land was designated as a water Reserve. On 12 December 1930, the purpose of the Reserve was changed to 'native camping'. On February 1933 the Reserve was declared under the Aborigines Act 1905 and the Chief Protector wrote to the Brookton constable stating: "I shall be glad if you will now take the necessary action to cause the natives to move to the new Reserve." The Aboriginal people of Brookton were subsequently moved to the Rusty Bridge Reserve even though the problem the water supply had not yet been addressed. This issue of the lack of a suitable water supply meant that while some Aboriginal families moved onto the Reserve, many did not.

[4] For further information on A O Neville and the role of 'protectors' in the Stolen Generation of Westen Australia see: https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/projects/bringing-them-home-chapter-7

‘Rusty Bridge’ Reserve

On our visit to Brookton in 2015, my sister Janet described life on the Rusty Bridge Reserve. You can view this story in the home video selections in Appendix A. Janet begins her story:

> You know, people seemed to think that living on the Reserve was a dirty way of life. But I lived with Mum on the Wagin Reserve, the Narrogin Reserve and the Brookton Reserve. Those *Nyoongars* living on those Reserves were clean people. Kids might have been dirty and some had snotty noses but at the end of the day, at bath time, that dirt was washed away. The Reserve held a special place in my life. I grew up on them. I learned from my old people on them. I learned about love and caring and sharing on the Reserves and I learnt fun on those Reserves.
>
> Many babies were born on this Reserve. Mummy and Aunty Muriel were our midwives who delivered the babies of our women. These two women were strong women and Rusty Bridge has two very significant birthing places there at the bridge.

Standing on the road near the bridge, Janet points south to the farm directly across from the Reserve:

> That’s where we had to walk to get our drinking water and cart it back in tin drums. The old farmer had a tank up there past that rise. That paddock was used as a racecourse for men where they would race to see who had the fastest horse or who was the best rider. Ohh, they were fun days. Uncle Clarrie rode his horse and Nuggett had his little pony while others rode good stock horses. In those days there were no cars, instead, our mob got around in their horse and cart.

Photo 4. Rusty Bridge, Kweda Road, Brookton, 2023.

I watched as she stood over at old Rusty Bridge Reserve and gazed around her, talking about the families that lived there and as a child, remembering Grandfather *Doorum's* stand against the Welfare people from Carrolup Mission[5] who came to take his children, Dick, Myrtle and Phil, because, according to Welfare, they were 'too white to live on the Reserve.

Janet spoke about the families who lived on the Reserve at the time: the Bennells, McGuires, Garletts, Nippa Humes, Pop Nung and Mary Garlett, and many others (Thomas,1999). Janet then went on to tell of how a white researcher by the name of Daisy Bates[6] painted a picture of 'natives' being filthy and poor and useless, although she had no idea of the life the *Nyoongars* lived:

> Daisy Bates wrote a distorted view of our people. I remember Grandfather telling me about Daisy Bates. Well, Daisy Bates she came to Brookton and wanted to interview the *Nyoongars* there. Grandfather refused to talk to her and told her to 'git going'. Only Pop Felix spoke with her. Grandfather had great disdain for young white women who

[5] For more about the Carrolup Misison and the stories and artwork of the children forcibly removed and place there visit: https://www.carrolup.info/

[6] Daisy Bates was an itinerant journalist and writer who originally hailed from Tipperary in Ireland. While she was known by many names, she is mostly known as the Daisy Bates who 'informed' the colonised world about the lives and customs of Aboriginal people, especially *Nyoongar* people in the South West.

> dared to present themselves to the Elders of his people and wanting to 'talk' to them about their lives. He certainly had no respect for Daisy Bates.

Brian Lomas details her life in his tell-all biographical text, exposing Bates as the fraud and imposter she was (Lomas, 2015).

Janet then went on to describe how Grandfather met a Scots lady by the name of Mary Jones:

> However, one day I did see my grandfather gain respect for this little Scots lady. I was a child of six when this little Scots lady came to Brookton as a missionary. On a beautiful warm sunny day, she came to visit grandmother and Pop *Doorum*'s place and she was talking to him about salvation and God. I stood as a child and watched as my grandfather swore in no uncertain terms at this little missionary lady. *Doorum* reduced her to tears as she stood in front of him, yet she never cowered or flinched. She stood and didn't walk away from my grandfather. This strength of this Mary Jones earned her the respect of my grandfather, and he was the one she would seek out to do some gardening or chop wood for her in order to assist him financially, as she always paid him for work done. As the years caught up with him, Grandmother would do washing for several of the townsfolk while Grandfather would do those odd jobs of weeding, chopping wood, or other menial tasks that helped to put food on the table.

Photo 5. Mary Jones (centre back) surrounded by the Brookton Nyoongar church congregation. Circa 1950.

Photo 6. Sunday school helpers, Rita and Charles Dyke (right) and an unknown man (left) at Mary Jones's home in Brookton. Circa 1950.

I don't have memories of living on the Rusty Bridge Reserve as it was before my time. Janet's memories and stories of Rusty Bridge are rich and powerful in their truth and poignant in memory of a time of Community, connectedness, family togetherness, sharing and resilience, of the holding on of values and of language, and of being a people pushed by colonial values to separation and dispossession. When Rusty Bridge Reserve was closed, Grandfather was allocated the house opposite the police station in Brookton, separated by the Corrigin train line.

Brookton is *Kaarl–ka–nyininge*, *Nyoongar* land. Never ceded, never given to those early colonial people. But we were pushed off our lands and onto Reserves. When we were in town, we would stay with Nan Kate and Pop *Doorum*. The first house I remember staying in was Nan and Pop's house when they lived down opposite the police station. This is the place of my Tadpole Dreaming where many warm spring days were spent splashing in the clear water catching tadpoles. Many families visited Nan and Pop at this place as it was always busy with plenty of kids running around and playing.

Recorded History of Brookton

Brookton's recorded history consists of numerous government documents and local history records, including *Karlkarni, the Brookton Story* by Athol Thomas published in 1999. The then Department of Indigenous Affairs published the Lost Lands report (Western Australian Aboriginal Affairs Department, 2004). included interviews with local *Nyoongar* oral historians, including Janet who was interviewed in 1997, about the Brookton area and life on the reserves. Janet was an authority on Brookton and the surrounding area including *Boodjin* Rock (or Boyagin as it was known by non-Aboriginal people). Janet was often approached for her memories about the old times, which she would generously share, as did many other *Nyoongars*.

The Lost Lands report (2004) documented the shifting sentiments of Brookton townsite as well as the shifting places on which *Nyoongars* were permitted to live and the fractious relationship local farmers and townsfolk had with *Nyoongars*. These sentiments were very driven by the government of the day, in particular the influence of AO Neville and his segregationist policies that meant many *Nyoongar* families were pushed around and never allowed to settle into a home of their own. Janet was recorded as saying she always felt safe on the Reserve with her family and Community (Reserve 23384), which was gazetted in January 1952 (Western Australian Aboriginal Affairs Department, 2004, p. 55).

According to the report, Brookton's Aboriginal population was at its highest in 1931, which supported the call for the creation of a Reserve. Rusty Bridge became Brookton's first Aboriginal Reserve (recorded as Reserve 289, Kweda Road) (p. 82). As noted earlier, the Reserve had no available drinking water and would often flood when the river rose during the wet times. Nothing was done to amend the living conditions for the next 17 years.

"Between the 1930s to 1950s the water had to be carted to the Reserve from nearby farmers' paddocks or the tanks that supplied the railway" (p.54). The train line then passed out to the east of the campsite at Rusty Bridge some 200 metres away

Over time and up to the Second World War, Aboriginal people drifted here and there around the region, with many returning to Brookton after the war to seek housing and employment. Makeshift camps were created and *Nyoongar* families attempted to purchase houses to ensure a stable upbringing for their children. But again, this saw tensions rise amongst white townspeople.

In 1950, a second Reserve was gazetted near the train line, known as the Brookton Reserve:

> The Brookton Reserve, as Reserve 23384 came to be known, was home to a large and usually stable population over a long period of time. Despite the reserve's rudimentary accommodation and sanitation, it offered security, a feeling of Community, and a sense of identity (p. 55).

Tensions remained strong as the Reserve was closer to town; however, Janet is recorded in the Lost Lands report as saying that she always felt protected from these dynamics living on the Reserve:

> There were a lot of bad things that happened around Brookton. I know that for a fact, but it never affected our lives... In my whole life in Brookton I was protected *(*p. 56).

The Brookton Reserve continued until 1970.

Brookton *Nyoongars* had long term relationships with the local farmers. Farmers provided a seasonal yet steady form of employment so that families like my grandfather's could remain as independent and self-sufficient as possible despite the political circumstances. Janet recalled how the farmers took care of *Nyoongars*:

> [They] didn't care if you had twenty people come and visit. They never worried. Never interfered with them. Just as long as those people respected the laws on that farm... The town never took care of us but a lot of the farmers did... (p. 58).

Janet was an oral historian in her own right. Her stories and recollections were published in numerous reports in addition to the Lost Lands report, including the *Boodjin Storybook* published by the Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management Incorporated in 2015, an oral history report authored by *Nyoongar* researcher Len Collard and others in 2004 for Murdoch University (Collard, Harben and van den Burg, 2004), and the *Register of Heritage Places* published by the Heritage Council of WA in 2012 (amended in 2013, 2015, 2022). Len Collard also recorded cultural bird stories as told by Janet in an interview in 2002, published in the *Westerly* in 2009.

The enduring narrative of First Nations people has been one of a continuation of a fluid nation of people who have resided on this continent as its custodians for over 55,000 years. It is the Earth's oldest, equitable, and sustainable culture, with an estimated 250 First Nations groups (Dudgeon et al., 2020) whose languages thrived for thousands of years prior to colonisation. This narrative remains one of belonging to land, with practices and protocols of traditional law/lore and mores, and behaviours that enhance the wellbeing of this nation of peoples who cyclically lived, loved, worked and died on this land, putting to rest that Aboriginal people were a nomadic people.

The Single Nyoongar Native Title Claim (Government of Western Australia, 2016) repudiated and pushed back on colonialist thinking that *Nyoongars* were a nomadic people who didn't stay on their lands. Janet was key to these early discussions that led to the claim and the settlement. Both Janet and I helped to form the language piece that sits in the WA parliament today. (Preamble to the Act). Native Title proved, by white man's law at least, that *Nyoongars* inhabited *Nyoongar* Country for thousands of years, never moving off their Sacred Homelands. *Nyoongars* stayed on the land that held their stories, held their spirit and held their hearts, and carried their laws/lores, customs, mores, and language. *Nyoongar* Land testified to its people that customs and practices all pointed to *Nyoongars* belonging to *Nyoongar* Country, *Nyoongar Boodja*. On this land *Nyoongars* were living and conducting their own business. Evidence exists of families, clans and nations of people living a prosperous, harmonious life in a safe environment. This is also true of all Indigenous peoples of this continent.

In an address I attended, delivered to graduates of the Perth School of Nursing in 1992 or 1993, Pat O'Shane, the first Aboriginal magistrate in the New South Wales court system, spoke of early colonialists giving blankets and supplies to needy Aboriginal people. The generosity of these gifts was well received according to O'Shane. Then in her speech she said, "Now, let's turn the blankets over." As she turned the blankets over, Pat O'Shane spoke passionately of the diseases and sickness that came with those deliberately infected blankets, revealing a horrible act of injustice to innocent, unsuspecting Aboriginal people. After her address, the amazing Pat O'Shane was left standing alone. As our eyes met there were no words spoken but I will always admire her act of Truth Telling. She told a story. A story of truth. Few acknowledged it for what it was. I look back and admire her for her courage and stamina to stand and deliver that address. Today, I recognise it for what it was: TRUTH TELLING.

Today, we have turned away from the colonial narrative and promoted and sustained our own narrative, an Aboriginal discourse. This is our Truth-Telling.

With the establishment of the dominant nation (the British) there came another narrative, that of colonial displacement. There began systematic attacks, of murder, disease and rape, that led to the displacement of First Nations peoples from their lands, with the British raising the British flag and claiming this continent to be Terra Nullius while the blood of First Nations people ran freely on the beaches and the interior lands. Sir Ronald Wilson in his *Bringing Them Home* report spoke of the acts of genocide perpetrated against the First Nations people of this land by the systemic and brutal removal of children from their mothers, siblings, family, Community and culture (1997).

This idea of Terra Nullius paved the way for the British to claim the land as 'unoccupied' under British Law. This was the new narrative, the narrative of ownership of this land. Much has changed for Aboriginal people.

Meeting Sarah Issacs

Sarah Isaacs lived her life along the Swan, leading into Fremantle. Her clan group was *Wadjuk*.

It was on one of their trips that *Doorum*'s brother, Pop John Bennell, saw Sarah as a young girl and fell in love with her. He took the trip back to the Avon with his brothers herding stock, but on reaching their destination and fulfilling his duty, Pop John steered his horse back to Fremantle and went in search of Sarah. Pop John found her and brought her back to Brookton. Her story continues here with Janet:

Granny Sarah and Pop John had settled in Brookton, they loved each other dearly yet sadly enough they didn't have any children of their own.

On this particular day, all us young people were excited about this movie that was coming to the Brookton town hall and we were all going to see it. There was me, Andy, Joyce, Wally, Beryl, all cousins, *Doorum*'s grandkids. Well, we were talking about this movie this day and unaware that Granny Sarah was listening to us. We talked about the soldiers where, in those days, at the beginning of a movie you would see the film of British Soldiers who came and conquered this land. Granny was indignant that we wanted to go off to a movie and see that part of Australian history of Captain Cook or other British soldiers arriving on this land.

On this day she sang out to us, 'Come here you *koolungahs*, I'll tell you a story, a real story.'

So she began, 'When I was a little girl, we used to travel all along that river there. That big river. We used to catch fish and hunt and we were a happy lot of *Nyoongars*. This day I was with my mummy and our family and I looked out over the water down there at Fremantle and as I looked I saw these big white things and I thought they were big birds.' I said to my mummy, 'look, look out there.' By this time other family members had seen what we thought were birds, but then we all went back to our business. However, these 'big birds' came closer and closer and they were boats. We watched as white ghost figures got out of their boats. They had on their red coats and they were carrying long sticks in their hands. Our people stood watching them come in. Some were close, others were a distance away. Then we heard a bang and smoke came from those fire sticks. Our people started to fall down and didn't get up. My mummy grabbed me and said, 'Sarah, run and hide.' I went running away from those Red Coats with their fire sticks. That day many of my people died on that sand place, the sea. I was lucky and got away with my mummy. 'And now,' she said, looking at us, 'you want to go and see those Red Coats.'

I never forgot that story Granny Sarah told us that day. One day, not long before Andy passed away, I was telling their story to some people and he shouted, 'Jenny, [he would call Janet, Jenny] that story, I thought it was only a dream that I was told that story by Granny Sarah that day. But it's real, and I remember her telling us that story!' 'Yes,' I said to Andy, 'it was true. Granny Sarah told us that story. It was her story.'

> Granny Sarah continued on living with Pop John, and later moved to Pingelly where they spent their days. They didn't have any children but we were always around her, dear ol' Granny. Granny Sarah is buried in the Pingelly cemetery near Pop John.

Within this history of invasion, displacement, dispossession and subjugation, a *Nyoongar* man stood up on Rusty Bridge with a shotgun to ensure his family would not be removed from him. That story, told of my grandfather, Norman *Doorum* Bennell, is also related as part of Truth Telling earlier in Case Study One Chapter Four of this thesis.

CHAPTER SIX: THE PEOPLE, THE STORIES

The stories shared below are rich and full of the voices of my Family, my People, *Kaarl-ka-nyininge's* people. They imbue the six pillars of Country, Family, Language, Position, Place and, of course, Truth. These stories illustrate the strength of *Nyoongar* culture and the strong sense of our belonging. Belonging is made all the stronger when it is a shared sense of belonging. Stories teach us how to listen. Read on now, dear reader, and listen well.

Grandfather, He Kept Us Safe

As *Kaarl–ka–nyininge's* daughters, our lives in Brookton were protected by our grandfather, a well-respected cultural man. Our grandfather was Norman Bennell. His *Nyoongar* name was *Doorum.* His brothers were Bertie Bennell (*Kararrtj*), Felix Soloman Bennell (*Boolkanitj*), and Edward Bennell. Grandfather's sisters were Ivy Bennell-Collard, *Doolok* Bennell, Mabel Bennell-Collard, and Gertrude Bennell-Humphries (*Weenie*). Grandfather's parents were Candyan and John Monger. Candyan's parents were Cleetland and Jenny. Cleetland's Country was around the Dale district and both parents were buried on a site in or near the Dale cemetery.

Photo 7. Back left, Clarrie McGuire, Olive McGuire, Kate (Grandmother), Norman (Grandfather). Front left, Buddy Ugle, George McGuire, Norma McGuire. Brookton Show, circa 1950.

Photo 8. Front left, Anna Kay Bolton, John Hayden, Roger Hayden, Gregory Bennell, Vivienne Bennell, Grandmother Kate Bennell (nee Collard). Middle left, Gloria Bennell, Elizabeth Hayden, Lester Bennell, Richard Bolton. Back left, Olman Bolton, Geraldine Hayden. Back right, man unknown (possibly Grandfather, Norman Bennell), circa 1950.

As young men, my grandfather and his brothers would seek out work which led them to cross paths with a white man by the name of Seabrook. It was Seabrook who settled in the Brookton area and after whom the town is named (Thomas, 1999). Grandfather and his brothers moved freely throughout the area from York, Beverley and Brookton and south to Pumphreys Bridge.

As young men they were not afraid of hard work.

Janet recounted this story told to her by Grandfather about his connection to the Brookton area:

> They used to ride horses them old fullas, Grandfather and his brothers. In the early days, they were hired by a settler to travel with him by horse to Fremantle to bring back sheep from the port. There were no trucks to cart the sheep, only these young men with their horses who skilfully brought these sheep back to the Brookton area establishing the sheep industry there.
>
> They were also hired to bring a herd of cattle from Fremantle port back to the Brookton area on two occasions. At that time there were no roads, only bush tracks. Brookton town was yet to be established then. It was known by *Nyoongars* as *Karrlkani*.

> Grandfather and his brothers drove the cattle back to Brookton from Fremantle. The *Nyoongar* clans lived around *Karrlkani* where many places were considered to be sacred and significant from *Boogin* (*Boyajin Rock*) to birthing sites, the initiation chair, *ngarma* holes, caves with writings, a burial tree, the *wargyl's* water hole and significant rocks to the *Nyoongar* people of *Karrlkani*.
>
> Everyone would go along with Grandfather and Grandmother to Ridgway's almond farm. It was the largest almond orchard in this lower part of Australia. And to do the job, he had to have all his helpers. So he took his sons and he took his daughters, not only as helpers, but also, when I think about it, and remembering how Welfare was actively taking children, he'd just take everybody and we'd all camp there at Ridgway's, and that was like a form of protection as well. That was the one place of work where everybody went. We spent three months out of the year there, three to four months out of the year, having the best time of our lives.

More about Ridgway's appears later in this thesis.

> Grandfather always had work, even when he got old. The old ladies down the street who had houses in the town site, they'd ask, 'Norman can you come and pick some weeds for us and dig out the grass?' so that he'd have a few shillings extra to spare."

Grandfather has always held a special place in the lives of his family. He is a hero, as can be seen in the story of Rusty Bridge reserve and the protection of his family to escape being placed in missions. He'd always worked hard for his family, providing shelter, food, and a deep sense of belonging. Grandfather remained in the Brookton area until his death in 1969.

My Mother, Martha

My Mum, Martha, grew up in Brookton. She is the daughter of our grandfather, *Doorum*. Brookton was the centrepiece. My nephew recently came back from America, and he said it was home, the capital city of the world, centre of the universe. That's what he called Brookton. The family grew up around there, around Pumphreys Bridge – not so much Dale, because although Grandfather grew up in the Dale area, where his parents lived, the family congregated in Brookton because they used to have rations[7] there.

[7] Under the control of the State, Aboriginal people on Reserves and Missions received rations of white flour, sugar and tea. Sometimes rations including cigarettes were given instead of wages. Rations were used as part of the system of control (https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/projects/bringing-them-home-chapter-7)

Photo 9. From left, Olive McGuire (nee Bennell), Ruby Riley (nee Bennell), Martha Bolton (nee Bennell) with children. Brookton Show. Circa 1950.

Mum's nickname was ‘Didley. It was supposed to be ‘Littley’ because when she was little, Grandfather and Grandma used to send her down to the baker shop to get bread. And the two old uncles, they said, “*Doorum*, you shouldn't send that girl down there by herself. She too

little. She's a littley." So the name Littley stuck with her, but then it transformed to Didley. Of course, Dad was Frank. His nickname was *Doong*.

Mum had brothers, Tom Bennell and George Collard, who took his grandmother's maiden name, for reasons which become clear later in the thesis. Uncle Dick, well, his mother passed away, and she was grandmother's sister, so he was Mum's brother anyway. And then there was Phil Bennell and there was Sterling Bennell. Five boys, Raymond Bennell, six boys, right? And then there was Aunty Myrtle who was the youngest. Then there was Aunty Ruby Riley, Aunty Olive McGuire, Aunty Barbara Ugle. A big family unit. We're always seemed to be staying with Grandmother and Grandfather. Just seemed to be that way.

My mother, what an amazing woman she was. One of the stories I share about Mum is when the kids were all younger, when Janet and Olman and Shirley were young. Shirley was a baby and our Dad, Frank, or *Doong* as everyone called him, went out working to a place called Jitarning. Mum was driving a horse and cart in those days. And they went out bush and they built their own camp, set the tent up and then during that period of time there, a couple of days later maybe, all the men went out walking in the bush and had come back, and that night, soon as the fire was lit, Mum had put the kids to bed. They were laying there in the tent when they started to have stones pelted at them. Mum being such a strong cultural woman, she told Dad, "*Doong*, hurry up and go get some more wood. We need to keep this fire going all night." At the same time, she started to build up the fire, and then she started talking, to drive these little whatever they were away, in language.

But in the meantime, from in the tent, Janet started screaming to Mum, "Come inside." What had happened was that some hairy hand had come through underneath the tent to grab a hold of Shirley and had started to pull her out of the tent. Janet and Olman ran and fell over the top of her to stop her from being dragged out of the tent. That's when Mum came in. So she had to keep the fire going all night and look after the kids at the same time, and in her language, she told them to go, but she had to fight them all night.

While this was happening, everybody else went and stayed in their own camps. They wouldn't come out and help, so it was just Mum and Dad. And then the next day, she said to the men, "Where were you?" To Johan Hansen, actually. And he said, "Oh, Didley, we was too frightened to come outside." So she said, "What did you do yesterday when you went bush?" "Well," he said, "this place where we're staying now, it's a bad place. We shouldn't have camped here. We always knew it was a bad place." And so Mum packed up her kids, packed up her

horse and cart, and she went home to Grandfather, back to Brookton. Jitarning is just out of Narrogin (in the Shire of Kulin), so it would have been quite a trip for them to go, just her and the kids. And so Mum was really quite strong in that way.

One of the other things she did was, and this story was told to me by Uncle Cliff Humphries:

> We were going to the Easter convention in the 1970s over at Clontarf, and he was walking along with Aunty Letty, and he looked and saw me. He said, 'Hey girl. Come here and I'll tell you a story about your mum. Sit down here.' So I sat down with him. He said, 'Girl, when we were camping out just somewhere out of Pingelly there, we were on this farm and we all had our campfires going. We had our own tent set up, and then this big wind started to come from the gully area down the bottom, and the wind coming, and it was just coming so fast and made a lot of noise that it was coming. So everybody run, grabbed their billies and camp, and went into their tents. But your mother, she run, she grabbed the shovel, and she filled that shovel full of hot ashes, and she ran toward that wind, and she threw ashes into the wind, and that wind screamed like a woman, and turned away from the camp. That was your mother.' That was my Mum. 'So some of these blokes don't like going bush anymore' Uncle Cliff said, laughing.

That was my mother and she was amazing from the stories I heard. One of the things that she told me one night sitting there around the fire, was about how she had lost two babies when they were very young. One died very young of pneumonia, and the other one was about two or three. Dad was out shearing at one of the farms out east of Brookton-Pingelly, and the little boy followed Dad into a shearing shed, and he found this substance that they used to put into water to clean the sheep and it looked like milk. The little boy drank some of it and was poisoned. Mum said, "This boy is sick. *Doong*, we got to take him to the hospital." Dad went to the farmer, and he said, "Look, can you take me in to the hospital," because they didn't have transport of their own. And the farmer said, "*Doong*, when you finish the sheep, I'll take you into town." That just crushed them. Finally, Dad finished off the sheep. They took him into hospital, but on the road the little one died in Mum's arms. Dad never went back out there again working. So, a lot of tragedy, Mum had known a lot of tragedy, but through it all she was strong.

Mum was the family mainstay in terms of giving us that place of security. I remember, as we were kids, Dad would be working up at Narrogin around the farming area, and Mum would be always, I think, keeping an eye out about the welfare. So, every now and again, she'd chuck

us, me and my brother, on the train and whisk us down to Brookton. We thought it was great. Nothing was behind much of it, but the thinking, I think, was that Narrogin was an atrocious place for welfare, for picking up kids. The truck would arrive and just put them on, chuck the kids in the truck, and take them away, not even telling the parents. We were out at a camp once and one bloke, he tried to tell his story. He made three attempts. The first attempt, when he started to tell this story to my Mum, and he just couldn't get the story out. It took him attending three meetings, like three workshops, for him to be able to say, "When we were kids on the reserve the Carrolup truck came, the mission truck came, chucked all the kids on the back and took us. And Mum and Dad didn't realise what was happening until they saw the truck moving off with all the kids, and they started shouting, the old fellas started shouting to stop and bring the kids back. But the truck kept on going till they reached Wandering Mission." And his mum and dad followed that truck all the way to Wandering Mission. And he said, "When they got there, my mother, her feet were red raw from walking in the hot sun, just red raw." And that's such a painful story to hear.

I was in my thirties when Mum died. I was 12 when Mum and Dad separated, they separated and Mum went her way and Dad just drank too much. She did her thing, and he did his thing. So, Janet looked after Dad when Mum went and left us. When Grandmother died, Janet looked after Grandfather. I used to wonder about the significance of the stories before, but now I'm valuing the significance of these stories and what they mean, what they will mean for people. My daughter-in-law, Lydia, was sitting with me the other day, because she was typing stuff out for me, and she said, "Your grandkids need to read these stories. Your grandkids need to sit and get these papers and read them". She said, "You know, all of us, young people, need to have these stories. A lot of us, we never had that background, you know, we moved or we just didn't have the opportunity to be in this situation. We need to hear these stories that you tell."

Language and its importance to our people forms and informs part of these stories, of course, and I will return to aspects of language later in this thesis. My mother always retained her language. I remember her and one of her brothers having a conversation about what did we call God? And Mum would say "*maam*, that's the word for God." Through her stories, language forms a key part of the findings derived from the on Country trips I've conducted during my doctoral studies.

Our Dad

It's a Friday and I'm sitting in my lounge with Jim (my husband) when Janet pops in. She is on her way to an appointment. She's pulled in to say hello and to bring Jim a pair of shorts and a pair of trackies (tracksuit) for summer wear. She's always got something to bring around.

My three grandchildren, Julius, Ashlee and Britney are down from Newman and as is customary practice, a greeting is given to each child. A story usually follows.

Today, there is a sparkle in her eyes as she tells the kids about her and dad when she was a little girl:

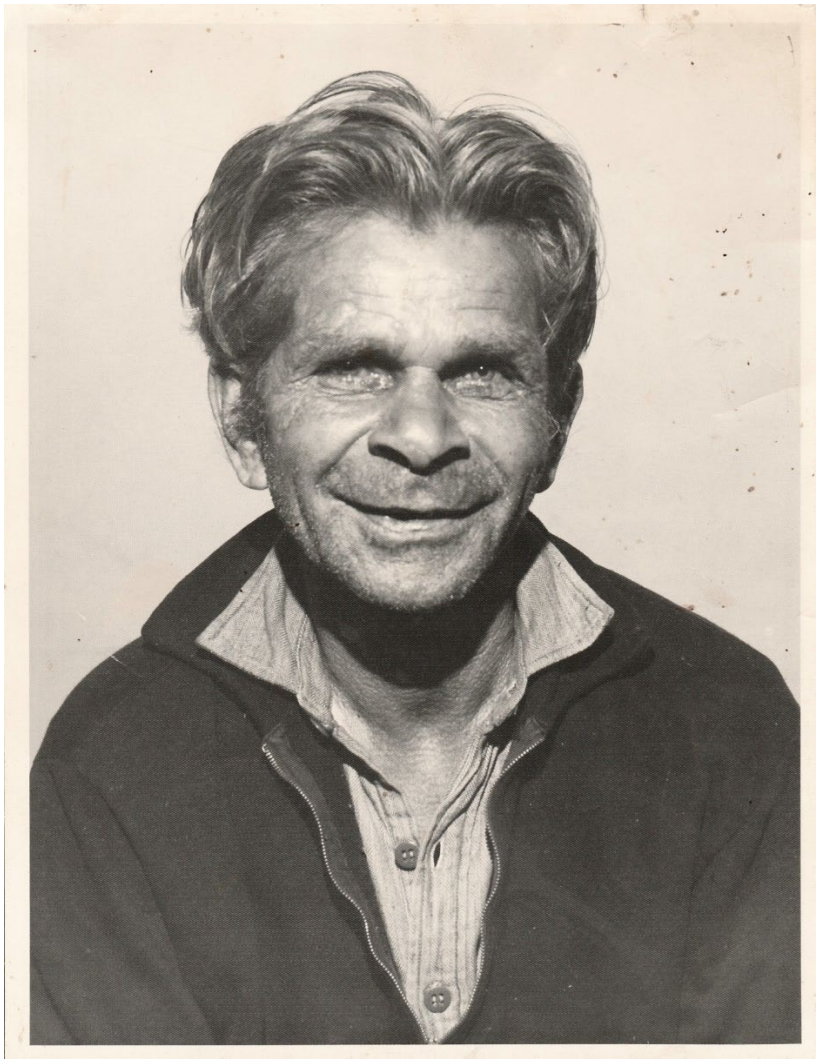

Photo 10. Janet and Elizabeth's father, Frank Bolton. Circa 1950.

I was telling Tynan and Kael that my Daddy used to break in all the wild horses when he was a young man and I was only a little girl. They both looked at me with wide eyes as I told them how he used to ride those wild horses, bucking and snorting, trying to

> throw him off their back till finally they stood still, exhausted from the fight with him. Finally, after breaking them in, he would come over and pick me up and place me on the back of a horse he had recently broken in and he would lead me around on that horse, letting me have my horse ride. He made me feel so very special. I had a lot of horse rides in those days. Grandfather also had a horse named Thunder and kids used to ride him. But he was a quiet old horse.

I remember the time when she told me about the story of when I was born:

> In those days certain hospitals in regional Western Australia didn't permit Aboriginal women to give birth in local hospitals. Because of this, Mum and Dad had to travel thirty miles to the closest hospital that permitted Aboriginal women to give birth to you.

Because of this segregation policy Mum and Dad had to catch the train from Brookton to Beverley. It was post-war so some of the passengers were army personnel.

> Mum didn't make it to the hospital for your birth. Instead, she gave birth to you on the train, in a little siding called Mount Kokeby. She was lucky too because on the train there were two army nurses travelling and one was a midwife.

This is true as it is written on my birth certificate: 'born on a train'.

> When you were born, Dad was so excited he ripped off his shirt and wrapped you in it, then went running down the track to tell the train driver that Mum had given birth to their baby girl.

Photo 11. Elizabeth Hayden (me) standing at the Mount Kokeby train stop, where she was born. 2023.

Janet's storytelling brings alive the people she talks about, as well as a warmth to the heart and a love for those she is telling us about. She is truly a keeper of our histories. She goes on with the story:

> I wasn't there when you were born because Mum sent me off to help Aunty May as she was sick. It was Aunty May who told me, 'You know you got a little sister? Your mum had a little girl.' Aunty May was Dad's sister and she married Mum's brother, Stirling Bennell, aka *Boolyul*. Not long after, I went home to Mum and Dad and saw my baby sister. We spent a lot of time with our Aunties and Uncles.

Janet's Christian Life

At the age of 22, Janet made a commitment to God and dedicated her life to being a Christian. She walked away from the gambling circles and took up this new way of life. Her love for the Lord brought a great commitment to not just talk the talk but for her to walk the walk. Janet had been caught up in the gambling and along with the women playing cards, two-up was also

a big attraction for *Nyoongar* people in the area. It was a social event, a money-making event if you were lucky. It was a meeting place where *Nyoongars* gathered from as far away as Beverley, York, Pingelly, Narrogin and Boddington. Janet had reached a point in her life where she had decided that enough was enough. Her husband, Aubrey, continued playing two-up and was involved in drinking with his peers and some of his uncles. Janet recalled a story about those two-up days:

> Our old Uncle Mac, who was quite a character, was very bold when it came to playing two-up and cards too. He came up from Narrogin one weekend and tossed his money into the two-up school to spin some pennies and make a few bets. He had come with a double-headed penny which he wouldn't let anyone else use. A double-headed penny was a penny that had two heads instead of the normal heads/tails option. He walked away from the game with the other men's hard-earned cash. Janet and Aubrey caught Uncle Mac out. Janet told me that she didn't know how Uncle Mac had got away with it, but he seemed to just play his spins enough to walk away with some money before he'd get caught. Aubrey caught him one day as he had bent over and picked up Uncle Mac's pennies after he'd tossed them. Aubrey didn't tell anyone that Uncle Mac had a double-header. Instead, Aubrey told him that if he wanted to play in this two-up school he had to play fairly and squarely. Uncle Mac tried to convince him that that was how you won, but Aub wasn't having it: 'Not here you don't,' he told him. What was evident here is that Aubrey stood against cheating at the two-up school.

Living on the Reserve was very difficult without regular water and ablution amenities. There was only one tap for all the families on the Reserve to access. Clothes were washed and boiled on open fires and hung out to dry over makeshift lines. The bush was our toilet where the women had a designated area and the men had a designated area. Then came the little red house.

The Little Red House

"For us," Janet said, "being on the Reserve was like herding cattle into a paddock and leaving them there to fend for themselves:"

> In those early days of living on the Reserve there were no ablution blocks; instead, the bush was the toilet. Why do I mention that? Because that was our reality until the actions and discussions between myself and the ol' police officer Stan Wall, or Wallie as we all called him. I was quite angry and disturbed at the lack of amenities and facilities provided by the local government. As the local Protector of Aborigines he was

responsible for the welfare of the ‘natives’ under his protection. And he was always involved in Aboriginal families one way or another in Brookton. He was an officer with integrity and treated Grandfather and his clan with much respect. Speaking with me one day, he said he had spoken to the Council to put an ablution block on the Reserve, but the Council had refused to put the toilets up there. ‘How can they not put a toilet up on the Reserve?’ Well, as the story goes, at the local footy grounds there was a toilet there that was not being used because a new facility was being built. ‘Well, there is a little red toilet sitting at the footy grounds.’ It was a red toilet and Stan Wall made it his business to get that toilet and transport it to the Reserve and set it up for our use. It was placed strategically so that the families on the Reserve could use it, approximately 300 yards from each home.”

It was the first ablution block ever on the Reserve. The little red toilet was a tribute to the work of Constable Walls’ commitment to providing the necessary resources to a Community of people that he cared about. That little red toilet however was mostly used by the kids and us women.

The families living on the Reserve at that time were Uncle Ray and Aunty Margie and all their family, me and Aub and our kids plus two extra kids, Grandfather Olman, and Mum and Dad. Uncle Nugget Pindan Garlett lived further back from our camps on the southern side of the Reserve. The old Pops (our patriarchs) had their camp set up about 100 metres away from Uncle Ray’s camp.

Photo 12. Janet Hayden (nee Bolton), Geraldine, Roger, Aubrey Hayden. Circa 1960.

The Women's Yarning Place

Janet said:

> On the Reserve we had to carry water from at least 200 metres away. Uncle Ray and Aunty Margie were further away and had to carry from a greater distance. And water had to be carried in drums and buckets. Mod cons never existed on Reserves, yet we never saw any Brookton [Reserve] family send their kids to school in dirty clothes, or go to Church in dirty clothes or go to the movies or the dances in dirty clothes. Eventually Welfare built a communal wash house on the Reserve. This was in the early sixties. Before that, us women would wash our clothes in tubs and had water boiling in four-gallon drums on our fires for boiling the clothes. This wash house held a copper for boiling clothes in, taps that carried water to the wash house, and a cement trough to hand wash clothes. There were also showers put in, one for the men and one for the women, with toilets that actually flushed. Flushed. After the little red toilet this was certainly a step up for the *Nyoongars* on the Brookton Reserve.

The communal wash house on the Reserve was where the women spent many a wash day washing clothes and sharing yarns. This time, these wash days, were women's time only and the only thing the men did in that place was provide wood and light the fire to start the copper boiling for washing.

This is the place where the women found time for themselves, where they sat, yarned, laughed, watched over their babies playing, and when children needed, they would be fed.

This was the time when you would hear local gossip. The main characters around wash days were Janet Hayden, Aunty Margie, Joycie and also Janet Collard, who didn't live on the Reserve but was a regular visitor.

I remember when Janet Collard first got her licence and she came over to the Reserve to show the women she had got her driver's licence. I stood as an 11- year-old watching this woman, the first *Nyoongar* woman I ever saw with a driver's licence, with her huge smile, leaning on the window with her left hand resting on the wheel as she sat in the car talking to Janet Hayden, and her right arm resting on the length of the car door as casual as a male driver. She oozed confidence and I swore to myself that one day I would drive like that.

This women's time was a special time and holds special memories for me. Seeing and listening to the women share their stories, share the latest news, laugh at their men, talk about who was running around with who and generally having a great women's time.

I still remember watching my mother and Janet do washing under real hardship. I especially remember the blankets that would need to be washed, and that was no mean feat to wash heavy blankets by hand without hose contraptions that I used to see them leaning into the trough tub in Mary Jones' wash house and in other white families' laundries. I'd help Janet wring out the blankets then hang them out for her under a brisk breeze and warm sunshine. The lines were made from two posts standing at 20 metre lengths and each pole resting on another to keep it upright.

Now today all you do is push a button, throw clothes in the machine, and the washing is all done for you. Then you pull out the washing, toss into a dryer, and away you go.

Friendships

Janet Hayden and Janet Collard spent many days together. They often looked after each other's children and when one cried and needed breastfeeding they would breastfeed each other's babies. This was a common practice with the Brookton *Nyoongar* women who were close. This

practice also bonded these women to each other and their babies and created close, caring and protective relationships.

Aubrey and Andy were first cousins, their mothers were sisters, and as boys they spent a lot of time together. They were very close. Included were also Uncle Dick Reidy and Bernie Henry. As boys these young men would be rounded up by Uncle Tommy Bennell, my grandmother's oldest son, and taken out bush for work, hunting or men's business. This mob went and used to spend a lot of time out Boyagin way (*Boodjin* Rock). These young men followed Uncle Tommy everywhere, and he often called them 'his boys' because of this.

Uncle Tom was the eldest and as such inherited all the knowledge, rules, language and practice of our people. Grandfather gave this to him as his inheritance. He was the 'Keeper of Stories'

Nyoongar Grieving

I travelled to Brookton with the Curtin supervisory team in 2023 and retold this story in the presence of my niece, Christabel, granddaughter to Aunty Margie. I invite you to view the short video that captures this telling and the response from Christabel (Appendix A) . It is a clear demonstration of the power of place, memory and people, the gift of a story of Family.

Janet continues her story:

> You know, I remember when Aunty Margie and Uncle Ray lost their little boy Christopher. We were all on the Reserve and I'll never forget that day when Gloria came over to our camp and said, 'Jenny can you come over to mummy, she's crying.' 'Okay,' I said, and I went to see her.
>
> When I got there, Aunty Margie was sitting on the ground in front of the fire with Miss Jones, the missionary lady. Miss Jones was there with Aunty Margie trying to comfort her. She was sitting with Aunty Margie, and ol' girl Aunty Margie picked up the ashes and as a gesture of grief had thrown ashes all over herself, rubbed it into her face and in her hair. When I looked and saw her there, as I saw her there in her grief and pain, she broke my heart. She was crying and tears streaming down her face and the ash was all over her and over Miss Jones and she couldn't stop crying. I stayed with her for a while, but I had to go back to my place and check on my babies. Our places were within walking distance, about 200 meters from each other. I asked Esther, Esther Quartermaine, Aubrey's sister, to go and sit with Aunty Margie. She went but came

back a little while later and said ‘Jan, you’ll have to go, I can’t stay. I don’t know what to do.’ Then Uncle Ray came over and said, ‘Jenny, you gotta go and sit with Aunty. I can’t do anything with her.’ Poor ol’ Uncle Ray. He was unable to comfort her, and he turned and said to Aubrey, ‘Come on Aub, come with me cause I need to go and get a drink. I can’t see her like that.’ So he and Aub and Tim, Esther’s husband, went off together and I went back to sit with my dear old Aunty. I’ll never forget her, sitting there, heartbroken, with Miss Jones and then me just being there with her. There were no words I could say. I just had to sit there with her. It reminded me of the story of Job from the Bible who sat in sack cloth and ashes because of his grief.

Photo 13. Lester Bennell with his mother, Aunty Margie Bennell (nee McGuire). Circa late 1970s.

For Aboriginal people grieving is not something new. For *Nyoongars* on the Reserve, we saw a lot of deaths and, sadly, children were a part of that grieving process. Being one large Community, we all knew each other and often in death children would sit and weep and be a part of that process.

Marbles

Marbles was a game played both by children and adults. Everyone had their own supply of marbles and the rule was, “do not take another’s marbles unless you won them in a game of marbles.”

Richard and I were the two youngest of Mum and Dad’s children and as children we were practically inseparable. There were times when Mum and Dad were working in Narrogin that Mum would put us on the train and send us to Brookton to stay with Janet and Aubrey. Dad’s itinerant work life meant that Mum would often leave us with Janet and Aubrey, which meant we went to school with our cousins and other family members. Our childhood was a special time as we lived as one big Community on the Reserve. We looked out for each other, and cared for each other.

Photo 14. Elizabeth Hayden (me) with Richard and our friend, Margaret.

So my brother and I spent much of our lives going back and forth between Janet and Aubrey’s place and Mum and Dad’s. I was 12 years old when Mum and Dad eventually separated and

Richard and I went and lived with Janet and Aubrey full time. This was a difficult time for my brother and I, but with Janet's love and care, life was good. Janet and Aubrey provided us with a home and security and protection.

Around that time, Aubrey was given work with a farmer in Aldersyde and the job came with a house. It was a simple house, basic, but it was warm and big enough for Janet and Aubrey's four children and my brother Richard and me. The work was steady, reliable and rewarding for Aubrey. On the farm there was plenty of open spaces with plenty of room to run and play. For us kids, it was heaven. Back then kids made their own fun. There were no computer games, no television to sit in front of. Instead, open space and place were our playground and dirt, plenty of dirt, to draw pictures in smooth hard dirt, playing hopscotch, going bush walking and splashing and jumping in water puddles that got in our way, or playing skittles and brandy.

It was out on this farm that we really drove Janet mad, especially when we played marbles. One of our favourite games was marbles. The first thing about marbles was to find a clear patch of earth where you could dig out four minor holes, similar to golf holes only smaller and closer together. The fifth hole was the last. The rule of the game was to get to the last hole first, become a poison marble and poison all the holes so that no one else could get to them and win the game.

Living on the farm was great fun for us. We'd go searching for tin cans and fill them up with marbles. The bigger the tin, the more marbles you had. However, to fill the tin you had to play others for their marbles. The marble players were Richard, my brother, John and Roger, Janet's two sons, our nephews, and me.

I remember sitting in the dirt with a spoon stolen from the kitchen, using it to dig holes to play marbles. I can remember yelling at the other three to stop playing until I was ready. No one started a game of marbles without me on the throw line.

One time, Janet got so cross with us kids for the racket we made from squabbling over marbles that she came out, got the marbles and threw them all away. Of course, as the marbles scattered, we scattered because if we were caught it meant the switchy stick. And those switchy sticks were so available. Sheoak and gum trees were everywhere and all she had to do was reach up and grab a switchy stick off the tree.

Now in recollecting those times in conversation and recounting our history, Janet said I made most of the noise and she got sick of the squealing and fighting so she punished us all by

throwing the marbles away. Mind you, we would still go looking for the marbles, gather up what we could, then we'd start all over again.

Another day we were being our usual rowdy selves and John and I were playing against Richard and Roger, fighting over the marbles. Aubrey came out with his strap and chased John and I around the yard. John went one way and I went the other. Just when Aubrey stretched out his belt to whack me, I raced under the clothesline. He baulked because he would have got caught in the line, damaging his throat because of his height. John and I stood at each corner of the house to watch which way he was coming to catch us. He didn't chase after us after that. I had a strange feeling, however, that we might get our just desserts that evening. Janet's motto was 'they have to come inside sooner or later' and that was when the discipline was meted out. We knew the motto, but we always forgot in the play what would be waiting for us when we would go in for tea.

Marbles was such a popular game then that even the grownups would play, especially a game we called 'Poison Hole.' Grown-ups though, had their own rules. There were days on the Brookton Reserve that my grandfather, his two brothers, his sons and sons-in-law would play marbles.

No children were allowed to interfere when these games were played. Children could watch (which most of us did) but we were not allowed near the marbles or to interfere with the concentration of the men. Even the women would sit around and watch these games. Not for the skill of the players but for the antics and behaviours that often reduced these grown men to children. If they lost the men would throw the marbles as far as they could, cursing and swearing as the marble flew through the air. Many arguments took place over marbles.

As marbles flew from the marble games so too would pennies be sent flying through the air if monies were lost in the two-up game.

The Two-up School

There were two major two-up schools held for *Nyoongars*, one in Brookton and one in Mount Kokeby. These were specially held during shearing time as that was a time when money was plentiful. People travelled a long way to play two-up.

Shearers who had money would come to the two-up circle and lay their money on the ground. Our father and our two brothers were shearers and they, together with our uncles, inevitably found their way to the two-up school.

I remember Dad putting money in a bank tin I had and someone smashing it open just to take my money out to gamble (about 10 or 20 pounds) which was a lot of money in those days.

As kids we were told to stay away from two-up because it was sinful. Most of our families were churchgoing people. However, the two-up school drew many people together. Even those who were churchgoers came, not to gamble but to stand around yarning and meeting up with family and friends. Often people would come to Brookton from as far away as Narrogin and Wagin to the south and as far away as Beverley, York and Northam to the north. The cars would be parked everywhere, including a horse and cart owned by Uncle Nugget and with his brother Uncle Gilly, who was the town's Storyteller. He told stories that could stretch the length of the train line that the Indian-Pacific[8] travelled on. Everybody loved his stories.

The atmosphere of a night game of two-up was incredibly powerful, with images that burnt into the memories of us all. There'd be the two-up circle with the players and the betters and the watchers around the two-up ring. Then there was a small circle of people who, alongside the gamblers, kept the fire going (and were paid for doing so).

Our brother Richard and our cousins would make a few bob by gathering whatever tyres they could find and stacking them up for the night when people would gather and the pennies would fly with the smoke and sparks from the tyres.

There were old men and young men shouting out their bets, the light of the fire reflecting on the pennies making them shine like stars in the night, the new crispy pound notes, some men standing, some on their haunches, one knee on the ground close to their bets, their eyes sparkling with the expectation of winning the toss, or winning from a side bet.

Kids would be running around, dogs wagging tails around their owners or chasing the kids, with laughter ringing out over the chill night air, while women with their babies wrapped up against the cold waited for their men, sharing stories with each other around their own campfires built for them by the men to ward off the night chill.

Some women would be hoping their man would make a win while others would be hoping their man wasn't losing his weekly wages at the two-up school. And through it all, the spiral of black

[8] The Indian Pacific rail journey covers 4352 km between Sydney and Perth (Indian Pacific - Rail Journey Sydney to Perth).

smoke and the smell of tyres burning filling your nostrils, but you never left until the family was ready to leave.

Tadpole Dreaming Hole

Grandfather and Gran, or Nan and Pop as we'd call them, used to live down near the police station, south side of the line that went out east. I always call this place my 'Tadpole Dreaming Hole,' because of where the water ran and the tadpoles we used to catch.

I have very fond memories of my tadpole dreaming hole. There were always a lot of kids around Nan and Pop's and during winter and spring the water would be running past their place and flowing into a little catchment area, and this was where the tadpole were. It was a kid's heaven when it came to waterholes and tadpoles. On beautiful warm spring days you would find the kids in the waterhole catching tadpoles.

We kids used to live in the water after the rains. Water ran right past the house and we'd jump the little creek, slide in the slippery mud slide, and catch taddies. Then at other times, we would just ramble around in the water on a warm fresh spring day and count taddies or catch them and put them in glass jars to watch them grow into frogs. Because Grandfather's totem is the *kweeya* (frog), I think that all the tadpoles were emptied back into creek because I can never remember one taddie making it to frog status.

Today, my Tadpole Dreaming Hole is dried up as the waterways that fed into it are also all dried up. Cut off from the main spillways by roads, train lines and power poles.

Every time we have taken our kids and now our grandkids back to my home Country, I point out my Tadpole Dreaming Hole. They can't see anything special about the place as it's just a dry mud pan now, but when I look with my memory, I see free *Nyoongar kooloongahs* (children), free little spirits playing in the waterhole, laughter ringing out, pants rolled up and skirts tucked into bloomers, happily playing with no fear of a truck and a white man coming by and stealing those kids from an old *Nyoongar* man, *Doorum*, who, standing tall and straight, sniffing at the wind, watches and sees where all his *kooloongahs* are.

I can only wonder now what his thoughts were when he saw his grandchildren playing so free and happy in *kep* (water) *kweeya* (frog) *kaatadjin* (thinking/dreaming).

The Avon River

The Tadpole Dreaming Hole ran straight down to the Avon River which was a source of great pleasure for the family in those early years.

Janet tells the following story:

When we were kids, Mum and Aunty Muriel used to take us down the river and they would catch turtles and gilgies. Mum never missed catching turtles. The Avon used to be clean, clear and a wonderful source of food, including ducks which we would catch if we were clever enough. It was down at the Miley, the same river, where we used to go swimming. We had no swimming pool as kids so the Miley was our waterhole. It was there that Aunty Dorrie went swimming with the younger boys, one being her son Wally. While she was swimming we could see these ripples moving towards her. We shouted out to everyone to get out of the water but she didn't hear us. She later told us that she could feel this thing wrap around her belly and felt it slide along her legs. That was ol' *Wargyl* (water serpent) swimming with us that day. No one got back in the water. The Miley is where we all learnt to swim. You'd see ol' Pop *Bulkarrnitj* slip into the water, then he'd roll on his back and he'd just float on the top of the water, face up to the sky, soaking in the water and the sun. Those oldies taught us how to float on water.

Photo 15. Group of young Nyoongars at the Miley just outside of Brookton townsite.

Living With Family on the Reserve

Janet's political interests started while living on the Brookton Reserve. By this time, farm jobs had dried up and her husband Aubrey was one of the few men who held a job that wasn't seasonal at that time. He had been working on the CBH, a grain handling company operating in the Wheatbelt, working on the wheat bins. Because there were few houses available to Aboriginal people in those days, you either lived on the Reserve or further on the outskirts of town, where you made a home from whatever materials were available.

By this time our grandmother had passed away and Grandfather wouldn't stay with any of his daughters or sons but made the choice to move in with Janet and Aubrey and their family. On the Reserve she had access to her Old People: Grandfather, his two brothers *Boolkanitj* and *Kararrtj* as well as Mum and Dad and several uncles and aunties, who continued expanding her cultural and family knowledge, so she wasn't lacking in any way.

Living in a tent with six kids plus her young sister and two brothers no doubt posed some hardship for Janet, but she never complained. Living on the Reserve meant closer access to extended family, support of each other and protection. It seemed her life was intertwined with her Old People and young people.

While on the Reserve, however, Janet had attended a meeting with a Native Welfare Officer from Narrogin who encouraged her and her husband to fight for a house and move off the Reserve, as she deserved better. Janet never did ask for much. Family, a roof over her head, food for her and the family, and love was more than enough for her but, as government began to increase housing in Brookton, she and her husband acquired a 'transitional' home built by government specifically for preparing *Nyoongar* people to move into mainstream life, so they moved off the Reserve and into this house at the top of White Street. Grandfather, children, and sister and her two brothers, all moved.

This transitional housing consisted of concrete floors and tin walls. In the summer they were intolerably hot and, in the winter, freezing cold. However, we managed to keep cool in the summer by trips to the pool and in the winter, keeping the tin fires going or big open fires out the front, side or back of the house, wherever the firemaker chose to light the fire. Many happy memories are carried with us from early living on and around the farming districts of Brookton, Beverley, Mount Kokeby and other places the family followed after work, then always returning back to the Brookton Reserve. Moving to White Street brought a toilet under one roof, a bathroom/laundry and a fire/stive inside the house for cooking. Wow! This is how the white folks did it.

Over the years, Janet and Aubrey saved enough to purchase their own home at 21 White Street. At that time there were only a few properties that belonged to Aboriginal families. Janet and her husband and family were all very proud of having their own home.

As a young woman Janet found it easy to enter the world of politics. Living in Brookton Reserve in a two-bedroom home with one room consisting of a tent and the other of tin and hessian bags, with no electricity, no running water and no sewage, life was difficult. Cooking

on an outside fire made Janet aware that she didn't share the luxuries of her white counterparts in and around town, where she spent her teen years working with white families. Early Australian setter life is often glorified in the movies and yet Janet and her family were forced to live that reality at a time when Australia was settled and housing established, yet didn't make a place for Aboriginal families. So, seeing so many injustices in her lifetime, Janet's life in the political arena was one of advocating. This included housing, education, employment, imprisonment, health and other concerns of land, land usage for hunting traditional foods and the use of wetlands. Her voice was also used to raise awareness that child sexual abuse was not a cultural practice as advised to her by several judges when she sat as a Justice of the Peace. She bitterly contested this argument, as well as advocating that domestic and family violence was an unacceptable practice in the Aboriginal Community.

In her hometown, Janet was encouraged to sit for a seat in local government. Her attempt to enter local government was thwarted by the then local councillors who changed the local boundaries so that Janet would not have the majority of the Aboriginal vote.

It was in 1967 that another incident took Janet into a long and hard struggle, and that would take her all the way around the state representing Aboriginal people and their issues. She was interviewed by a television network, along with one of our brothers, and being asked to comment on what the Referendum meant to them and what change would come with the Referendum.

Janet smiles as she talks about this interview. She told the camera crew that she and her people were expecting many changes in better housing and better health and better education – three major concerns for Aboriginal people in the 1960s. However, she told the crew that at that time she could see little change.

She and our brother had already spent time in many conversations with Government representatives about what the Referendum would do for her people: "All they did was take away the word 'Native' people from the flora and fauna references from within the Constitution but never put anything back in its place."

So really, we lost our existence as a race of people through the Referendum. "And today," she said, "we're still talking about the Constitution and what changes will come. This time I hope our humanity is returned to us."

She continues:

> Several years later I became more involved in Aboriginal Affairs when I attended a gathering of *Nyoongar* people in Bunbury organised by the government. This was an outcome from the Referendum, and Aboriginal people gained a voice with the government. At that meeting I was elected to be a delegate to represent my people in the area of housing. Another *Nyoongar* woman was also elected to be a delegate to represent education for Aboriginal people. She and I were the first *Nyoongar* women to enter into Aboriginal Affairs at that level, representing *Nyoongar* people at a political and government level. Coming as a Country representative into the state body gave me a voice for the people of the southwest and I sought to represent my people and my position with strength, dignity and a powerful voice.

This body, known as the State Aboriginal Advisory body, was dominated by Aboriginal men, but so strong and effective was her voice that she was eventually elected the Chairperson. As she says,

> A lot of women who entered in the government advisory body didn't stay long. Women who tried to be elected from the city were unable to break in because men dominated the city representation. Later, several women from the Pilbara and Kimberley regions and you, yourself [looking at me] joined the advisory body and those women were a powerful voice at the state advisory body for their people.

In attaining membership as a representative to this peak body, one had to go through a process of elections starting at a local level, being elected from a local Aboriginal Corporation, to being elected from a regional body, then to being elected to the state government committee which became the State Advisory Council to government.

Janet speaks quietly and with composure as she tells of the struggles of representing Aboriginal issues at this level. She tells of the respect given to her by the men from around the state of Western Australia (WA) who represented their people, who regarded her with respect, not patronage. She mentions with fondness the names of people who sought her advice and her voice to speak for them. "One time one fulla got up and said to me, 'I want to marry you.'" She laughs fondly at this memory. "Well brother, my husband owns a shotgun and you gotta get past him." She laughs again.

She speaks with passion when she tells me that the WA State Advisory Council shaped the contours of Aboriginal Affairs in the state. Janet didn't sit on any national body of representation, like the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee and National Advisory

Council, or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). However, her position and place on the State Advisory Council dramatically contributed to changing government perceptions of Aboriginal people and their needs.

I asked Janet about some of the most significant people who supported her on her journey into Aboriginal Affairs and this was her response:

> Well, of course, Grandfather and all my Old People, including great grandmother Eadie Barnett. Then there was mum and dad, Olman, and Rich. I did a lot of things with Rich. He did so much for Aboriginal housing you know! People don't realise what he did for Aboriginal housing. Then there was Constable Stan Walls from Brookton Police. He was so instrumental in helping *Nyoongar* people in Brookton. There was Mr Bill Pennington. Old Mr Pop White and old Mr Doug Marsh, you know, these two old white gentlemen I mentioned came all the way to Narrogin to my induction as a Justice of the Peace. Such respect they gave me.
>
> When I was lobbying for a position on local council, I knocked on old Granny Rose White's door and she invited me into her house for a cup of tea. Then she said to me, with Jenny Collard as my witness, 'Janet, do you know that you are a princess?' I looked at Jenny Collard, caught completely by surprise. 'Do you know that you belong to royal blood? Your grandfather Norman (otherwise known as *Doorum*) was the last king of his people.' 'Well, she astounded me.'
>
> While I was on the State Authority I had really good support from some strong and good people. Some of those people still call me today to have a yarn and see how I'm going.
>
> While I was on the Aboriginal Police Relations Committee, I did a lot of travelling and some of those meetings were very tough. Meeting with Aboriginal people who had a relative die in custody brought a lot of anger out, but those same people showed me a lot of respect. I think I saved a lot of *Wadjella* heads in those days. The Catholic Church was also very supportive of Aboriginal causes in those days.
>
> I have represented Aboriginal people under a state Labor Government and a Liberal Government.
>
> In our own mob there were men and women like Maureen Kelly from the Pilbara, Phyllis McGuire from Bunbury, Senator Herb Parker and his son Slim, Reg Birch, Ken

> Colbung, Neil Phillips, Ivan Yarran, Richard and Olman Bolton, Lenny Colbung, Leah Bell, yourself and, of course, Rob Riley.

All these people helped at a political level to shape the Affairs of Aboriginal people here in Western Australia through their representation and voice at that level. Many people came from other states to meet with the Advisory Council. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people came to discuss Aboriginal issues with this body. Janet was proud of her achievements in this area. She sat on many Boards representing Aboriginal people. She was nominated for many awards, yet she sees them only as a means to promote the needs of her people. She has been a passionate advocate, championing her people's rights at a time when a woman's place was considered to be subject to male authority, yet she wasn't of the docile mould and made statements and changed the perception of the role of Aboriginal women in Western Australia.

I am also proud of her achievements as I have sat with her at many meetings and witnessed her ability to challenge government on issues concerning Aboriginal people. She spoke fondly of those days and often reminisced about events from her political heyday.

Josey's Story

In 1964/65, Janet and Aubrey took on the full-time care of our sister Thora's children. Thora had been in an abusive relationship and left her partner. She took her two children, Josey (now deceased) and Shane, to Brookton and asked Janet if she would care for them.

By this time Janet and Aubrey were living at 21 White Street. Their son John had married and moved out of home, and the boys, Roger, Glen and Shane, and the girls, Geri, Josey, Charni, Tina, were still at home.

Janet shares this story and I also recorded her telling this story on a visit to Brookton in 2015. You can view this recording in the Appendices.

> Josey and Shane were enrolled in Brookton Primary School along with the rest of the children. After a traumatic time of being with their mother and experiencing the violence, the children started to settle and were getting on well in school. Shane was a dark-skinned child with beautiful wide brown eyes and jet-black hair. Josey, on the other hand, was fair skinned, blonde and blue-eyed. At that time, Aboriginal people were still being watched and mentored by the Welfare. One day they came up to the top of White Street where were we living and asked where Josephine Bolton was, because they had come to remove her from us. Well, I gave them the lot and told them to get out

of our yard and they were not taking any of my kids. Grandfather *Doorum* was there that day and he drove them with a stick and they took off and got into their car and left. I thought that was the end of it – they'd left and Josey was alright. But unbeknownst to us, without being told, the Welfare went to the school and asked to see the principal. Meanwhile, a message was passed on by the principal to Josey's teacher that the Welfare had an apprehension order to remove Josey, and she needed to send someone to get me to the school asap.

It was two of our boys, Roger and Athol, who ran all the way home to the top of White Street and said I had to come to the school right away because people had come to take Josey away. I ran all the way down to the school and when I got there the Welfare was waiting for Josey to be handed over to them for her to be taken. And Grandfather was right behind me. By that time Stan Wall, the local police officer, was called by the principal and he told the Welfare straight: 'This is my town,' he said, 'I'm the Protector of the Aborigines in this town. You don't take any child from this town, so you need to leave.' Well, they left. Those papers were signed by an officer by the name of Keith Maine.

Well, when they left, I went to Josey's classroom to see where Josey was and the teacher was standing there and she was as white as a ghost. I said to her, 'Where's Josey?' And the kids moved back and the teacher took her out of a cupboard where the teacher had been hiding her. She and the kids pulled all the books out of a cupboard and told Josey to get in and hide. The Welfare people came looking for her in the classroom, but she wasn't to be found in the classroom. The kids were all sitting reading and didn't give away her hiding place. I got her and took her home with me in case they came back to the school, but it seemed our policeman sent them on their way. They didn't come back for Josey again. Josey had no memory of hiding in that cupboard. That period is a blank in her memory. Growing up, Josey was in a meeting where Keith Maine was also present and I told him, 'Keith, this is the girl you wanted to have taken away from me.' 'No,' he replied, 'I didn't do that. I don't recall that at all.' 'Well', I said, 'You were the one who signed the paper for her to be removed. Your signature was at the bottom of the letter.' Josey said of that day that she felt deep anger welling up inside her.

Photo 16. Josey Hansen (nee Bolton) with husband Rick Hansen in 2018.

Vivienne's Story

Janet's gentleness and tolerance made her a favourite of many. However, do not equate gentleness with weakness. Janet was never a weak person. There were times when I have seen her as fierce as a lioness fighting for what's right and for her people. My cousin, Vivienne Hansen (nee Bennell) permits me to share this story, a further demonstration of Janet's strength and resistance.

Vivienne's mother was Myrtle. She was my mother Martha's sister. These were two of *Doorum's* daughters.

Grandfather and Grandmother had the responsibility of raising Vivienne and her brother Greg because by the time Greg was about two, Aunty Mrytle had entered a relationship with Uncle Rob Riley and they got married and lived in Dumbleyung. So, she left her two oldest children with her parents, Kate and *Doorum*.

When they were both quite young, Grandmother passed away (Kate died in July 1958), leaving *Doorum* to care for Viv and Greg. He did his best, moving in with Janet and Aubrey on the Reserve to have Janet's support. Grandfather wanted Janet to keep the two children; however, one day a letter emerged after Grandmother's death stating that Viv and Greg were to live with our Aunty Olive and Uncle Clarrie McGuire, Olive (who died in 1966) being *Doorum's* oldest daughter. So Viv and Greg moved in with Aunty Olive and Uncle Clarrie. Viv attended Brookton School and on finishing school took up a job in Narrogin. It was one weekend on a trip with a cousin to Quairading that she met and fell in love with a young man by the name of Morton Hansen. Viv never went back to Narrogin nor to Brookton until she returned to introduce Morton to Uncle Clarrie (Clarrie died in 1968). This relationship produced a beautiful boy named Russell. Russell was about 4-6 months old when he became ill with bronchial asthma and was placed in Pingelly Hospital.

During Viv and Greg's early years they were under the watchful eye of the Native Welfare, which caused the following events to happen. Baby Russell had been in hospital for several weeks and Viv made constant calls to enquire about her son and when he would be well enough to come home. One time, Viv was at the local post office making a call to the hospital asking about bringing her son home, when she was told, 'No, he's not coming home.' With these words ringing in her ears she dropped the phone and immediately ran all the way to Janet and Grandfather. When she got there in distress, Janet was alarmed and asked her what was wrong. 'They won't give me my baby,' she sobbed. With that, Janet said, 'Alright, come on Tobe (Aub's nickname), let's go up there.' They put Viv in the car and drove to Pingelly Hospital. Janet got out of the car, took Viv inside, and into the children's ward. She picked up baby Russell out of the cot and handed him to Viv and proceeded to leave. The hospital staff said to Janet, 'You can't do that.' And Janet said, '[Expletives], you just watch me.' Janet told the staff they weren't keeping this baby and told matron and Welfare to come and see her and Grandfather. And, with mother and baby they walked out of the hospital, the baby safely returned to his mother.

Shirl's Birthday

October 2015. Today is my sister Shirley's birthday. She is the third eldest. Her *Nyoongar* name is *Bilyee*. Janet is picking me up and I'll drive us over to Shirl's house for a cup of tea and yarn and take her a present. As she pulls in home, she comes in and sits on the lounge. I had just got up from a catnap.

"Oh, I'm tired" she says, "I felt like having a sleep before but thought I can't, me and Liz have to go over to Shirl's. It's her birthday." She sits down and we have a brief yarn.

"You want to come over to Rottnest with me? You and Jim?" she asks. I laugh out loud. Not for what she said but I know Jim's emphatic refusal to get off *Nyoongar boodja* to sail on *kep* (water). It is one of the things he will never do.

"What?" she questions, looking at me.

"Jim will never put his foot on a boat, but you can ask him."

Jim walks in the door just at that moment.

"You want to come to Rottnest for a couple of days?" she asks.

"Me? No thanks, not me," Jim replies.

"Why not? It'll be a good opportunity to get away from everybody."

"I don't think so." Jim shakes his head in the negative.

"Well, think about it. It'll be good for both of you."

"Well, I'll think about it, but I don't know. We'll see," Jim replies.

By now I have shoes on and ready to go to Shirl's when I ask Janet, "Jan, where did Dad break in those horses?"

"Oh," she replies, "All over the place. Brookton, Pingelly, Beverley, Wagin. Wherever someone had a wild horse or horses and wanted them broken in, they'd get Dad. Boy he could ride those horses." She is silent in her thoughts.

She laughs at a memory:

> You know, in the fifties, Dad got his citizenship right which entitled him to enter hotels, walk the streets after six,[9] live with and like white fullas. But the one thing that citizenship rights did to *Nyoongar* people was to ban them from Reserves and stop them from mixing with other black fullas. Well, one day the police came to the Reserve looking for Dad. The police officer said, 'Frank, you know I have to remove you from the Reserve. You can't stay here, that's the law.' Dad told him, 'Look, my wife and kids are here, I'm not leaving them.'
>
> By now Mum had joined the argument, and did she say some choice words. I remember standing there looking at this policeman wanting to take Dad because he had citizenship rights which allowed him to 'be white,' with all those privileges, yet denied him access to his family. Dad wouldn't be separated from his family, so he said, 'F…. the citizenship rights, I'm staying right here with my family,' and he threw his citizenship papers at the police and said 'Here, keep it, I don't want it if it means I have to leave my family.'
>
> People would assume that Dad could have got a house in town for him and his family, but having citizenship rights only went so far and didn't always mean you could just get a house in town off the Reserve because even the governments wouldn't allocate town houses to *Nyoongars*, and the white townspeople didn't want *Nyoongars* in town, and that's documented in that book I gave you (Western Australian Aboriginal Affairs Department, 2004, pp. 57-8).
>
> Today I feel so proud of Dad for what he did. He threw away his right as an Australian citizen for mum and his kids.

Janet's relationship with Dad was a special one. Her love for Dad and his love for her was so obvious. We all loved Dad and he loved us all, but her relationship with him was special. She was his eldest girl and Dad certainly let everyone know that.

Our Dad had strikingly blue eyes, blond hair and fair skin. Grandfather Frank, his father, also had fair skin and fair hair, as did dad's brothers. *Dilyaan*, grandmother, Dad's mum, had brown eyes, brown hair and was a beautiful smooth brown skinned woman. Most of us kids follow our maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother for colour. However, no one saw the colour

[9] Aboriginal people were under a curfew and required to be out of the Perth city and other town centres by six o'clock in the evening (Kaartdijin Noongar).

of your skin in our families. Dad didn't see himself as a white man even though he could have passed as white. He loved his wife, loved his kids and that was all that mattered.

I remember as a kid after Dad would spend the day from dawn until the afternoon shearing sheep for farmers around Brookton, after tea, he'd be sitting in front of the fire and he'd sing out to me, "Lizzie, come and pull these prickles out." I used to love that call, and I'd get the needle and he'd hold his hands out and I'd feel for the sharp little burrs that were in his hands, lodged there from grabbing and holding the sheep all day. So there I was pulling prickles out of his hands in front of the warm fire with only a kerosene lamp to see by, while he and Mum would yarn about family and work.

"Okay, let's go," Janet's voice cuts across the memories and we head out the door to go to Shirley's. She hands me the keys to drive her car. "Stop over at your little shopping place and we'll buy some flowers." At Shirl's we share hugs and kisses and birthday wishes and I walk into the house to put the kettle on and make a cup of tea.

"Any fig jam? And butter? I'm sick of eating margarine. That's all those kids buy at home," Janet tells Shirley.

"What, she want cream too?" Shirley smiles, turning to me coming into the house.

"I think she does," I reply. So, Shirl brings out the *butter*-butter, fig jam and cream, with the brown bread. Every time Janet visits Shirl's, she always has fig jam waiting for her.

It's a lovely visit, and after some yarn spinning and photo sharing Janet's ready to go home. At times she tires easily and though Shirl would like her to visit longer, she's ready to go home and rest. Jim is outside when she drops me off. "Now don't forget Rottnest" she tells him, and with a wave she is off.

How I love her. She has seen so much in her lifetime. She has loved many people, she has lost loved ones, and she has fought battles and at times lost some but won many.

Bennell's Flat

> Well, we're here in Brookton, says Janet. Well, just outside of Brookton on the Perth road where we're looking at Bennell's Flat and what value it is to *Nyoongar* Country. It was given to Grandfather John and Grandfather *Doorum* and all the boys, Granny Felix, Granny Bertie and them all, 'cause they worked down here clearing this land for the farmers. Because in those days they didn't have the money to pay the ol' people, to

pay grandfathers and them. So the deal was made with the Brookton Shire – with the farmers – would be given this land here, and it was named Bennell's Flat, and that was the early 1900s. And I had old people like ol' Doug Marsh, Frank Whittington, and ol' Grandfather White and Grandmother Rose. These old people were the ones who told me not to let this land go because the Brookton Shire made a deal that was made to swap this land for some other land. And when the Shire approached me I said no, because these old white fellas were very adamant, the land, they said not to swap it because it was given to Grandfather *Doorum* and his ol' father and the boys.

I feel like it's coming home here. Bennell's Flat always been special to our *Nyoongars* and I think if we give this away we're giving the last of our heritage away. We don't have much left, and with the land that's been taken over by farming and enterprise, *Nyoongar* people don't have any land in the South West that they can call their own. And Bennell's Flat is one place I really believe that belongs to us and we have to make sure that it is never touched, never gets taken. A lot of it's virgin land, and it's a beautiful place and always very special to us. So I think what Liz and Jim and I – coming back here to this here it's like coming home really. It's very special. And after them old people I remember them coming to the house two old gentlemen were there, old Frank White and Doug Marsh and they told me straight out. Old boy said, 'Janet, please don't you swap that land for nothing. That land was given to your old people.' And the special feeling that they said about the land, I really believe it's really special for *Wadjellas* to come up and say things like that yeah.

So, Liz is over there taking photos and little Lizzy is taking photos and Jim's gone walkabout. We're into Brookton now, going home to Brookton now to do some stories. 'How [do] I stop this [talking about stopping the tape recorder]?' Because here we are at Bennell's Flat. I'm just telling Lizzy, 'This run here, this road that goes here.' With the run from York, Beverley, Dale right through to Williams, and that use to be the Dale run, they used to call it, the ol' people. And the thing about it was, it was so special – you start off in York, you'd find yourself going right through to Williams and there's places, there's ol' camping grounds, right through. And daughter and I, Geri and I did a run and I showed Geri all the old Reserves and old places where the ol' *Nyoongars* used to stop.

Ol' Grandfather Cleetland and his ol' wife Granny Jenny, they lived all their – most of their married life at Dale. They reared all their family up around that area. They only had two daughters, and they reared them up along there, they never left there, they died there. Grandfather Cleetland was born in Serpentine and Granny Jenny in Southern Cross. He had to leave his Country because he did something wrong. Crossed the law and he had to go find a woman from another area. He wasn't allowed to have anything to do with his own people, the *Bibbulmun* people, so ol' boy came this way. He went walkabout and found Granny Jenny and that's where we, the whole clan, the Bennell's clan originated from, and many other clans in the same thing. So you have to look at where these two ol' people, how special they were and what they meant to our ol' *Nyoongar* people and all the names, we could go through hundreds of names of families and how they came out of it. Their two daughters had 16 children between them. Altogether that's where we all come from.

So later on we'll start talking about or Lizzy [will have] got all the names of the families [and] we'll record that as well. This is good because when we come home here, Dale is special. Dale is always special to our *Nyoongars*, especially those who have an affinity with Bennells and how the family came about. So okay, this is grandfather's Country, this is our *ngulla moort kaya ngulla moort* oh.

Brookton Reserve

Sitting on the Reserve at Brookton, Janet tells us about our brother-in-law, Clarry Kickett, and what happened in the early 60s when living on the Reserve.

Janet starts her story:

Oh well, we were camped over there close to the railway line, and was over the roadside Uncle Ray and Aunty Margie had their place. Well, this was about 9 o'clock at night. Aubrey had been out working on the CBH out Aldersyde and he was tired as he had just come home from work. We'd had supper and Aub was sitting back resting, when Mum comes in through the door. She had seen what was happening and rushed to tell Aubrey, Enid's brother. Clarry had started belting into Enid. He had her dragging around by the hair on her head.

'Aubrey, do you want your sister to get half killed over there?'

'Where?' he asked.

‘Kicketty got her by the hair draggin’ her around outside there,” Mum replied.

Well, Aub jumped up. He went over there, and he just said ‘Kicketty.’

When Kicketty turned around, he hit ‘im. King hit him. Dropped ‘im. And at the same time Uncle Ray was comin’, runnin’ with a *dowark* (stick) from the other side for ‘im, but Aub had got there first.

‘You don’t belt womans on the Reserve’, Uncle Ray said, as he measured him with his stick. “We don’t fight womans.”

And that was how it was at that time. No man was found fighting their woman on the Brookton Reserve. It was a safe place where respect was for women.

Oooh, yeah and well, at that time, old Uncle Ted (Hayden) was here staying with us for a while. Ol’ Hayden, Ted Hayden, ol’ Pop. We’d gone to Beverley and ol’ boy wanted to come with Aub for a ride to Brookton so we brought him back with us. We’d left ol’ Nana Lena down there in Beverley and Aub brought him up here with his cordion (accordion). ‘Ol’ boy had a cordion, unna Jim?’ she said, turning to Jim.

‘The cordion he had,’ she said, making a sound like a screech, along with hand motions of playing the cordion. ‘Riiiiinge, Riiiiiiinge, he’s playing,’ and she laughs. ‘Ooooh,’ I said to mum, ‘look over there, he’s crooning to you Mum and Aunty Margie. Two old *Ngooljahs* (in-laws),’ I said. He crooning to my Mum and Mum was laughing. ‘You watch,’ she said ‘n’ *Dombar* will plug him in a minute.’ Well, round and round they all were, with Kicketty just running after Aubrey and Uncle Ray giving him the lot about fighting womans. Well, Kicketty runned, and he grabbed the guitar – umm, cordion, just put his foot on the thing, and it just went wiiiiaaaaarrrrr. He just ripped it clear in half, ripped it in half. Well, when he tore that cordianne in half, ol’ boy just went, ‘oooohhh.’ When I heard that I said, ‘That dear old man.’ Then I runned from here then (here she was sitting watching everything) to stop ‘em. Aubrey was standing there and said, ‘Well you said to me not to hit ‘im anymore,’ but Uncle Ted said ‘yeah, yeah, hit ‘im boy, hit ‘im.’

This reminded Janet of another story:

Well, no, it couldn’t be, it couldn’t be any better ‘cause that was the time I had that broken jaw. That was the time when ol’ Ken hit me. Ken Garlett. Anyway, Aubrey and

them at that time was, him and Uncle Ray (*Dombar*) and Dad, was all waiting for Ken. Couldn't be any better. They had to come up to the Reserve, Ken and Vera – there was four or five of them, they'd come up looking for Uncle Ted, they wanted to take him back to Beverley.

They chase Ken down that road, and they couldn't catch that big tall man, they couldn't catch him. I could hear Aubrey saying, "I'll kill you, I'll kill you. You wanna fight a woman, you so 'n so bastard." Well Ken, he said, 'I never hit her, I never hit her.' I said, 'You hit me alright."

"Why did he hit you?" Liz asks.

Because Uncle Phil, that time when he went, would be looking for a fight, so they – Ken and others took it out on everybody who went there. More or less Uncle Phil got me [a] broken jaw. Nahhh, they were funny ol' days. Uncle Ted spent about a month here with us and he had no 'cordion.'"

Janet stops the story to say grace for the meal and after giving thanks, continues:

No, he always had his 'cordion and could play it lovely, you know.

To Jimmy she says, 'Your old nanna was a 'cordion player, unna, ol' Granny Louise?'

Jimmy says, 'Yeah, yeah, she played it.'

Cause I remember 'im saying, says Janet, he said, 'Ooh we grew up on a 'cordion. We never had a guitar. Nobody had a guitar. We had 'cordions.'

Jimmy said, 'old Dad played the cordion, unna,' about Uncle Tom referring to the other brother of Ted and Reg, who was Jim and Aubrey's father. 'I never ever heard him.'

Janet says, 'Ohhhh, oldie was solid, we used to love listening to him. I'd look for my two boys Roger and Nobby and there they'd be over there with their ol' Pop.' She stops, makes clarification. 'Ohh, it was Roger and John,' correcting herself. 'They used to be over there. Roger was only as big as a button, but he was right there with ol' boy. He used to be (live) with Aunty Lena. Yes, ol' Pop. Yes, he used to love the boys. Sitting down, they used to sit down there, Lester on the side and Claudie on the side. All the little boys lined up and sitting down in a circle. Lovely ol' man. We used to have some lovely happy times.

Then Janet went silent. She is in that memory space, many years ago.

“The only time I saw violence on the Reserve was when Wordgy was here and he kicked up one night and he wanted to fight everybody”, I said.

“Yeah”, said Janet, “he was like that. He wanted to fight everybody. He was like that.”

She starts another story:

> I was only thinking about Lesley last night, Lesley Bolton. This is where she got that polio the time Aunty Ethel and Uncle Cecil had a camp/house over there underneath that tree. Janet points to the tree. And Mum and Dad was here and me and Aub was over there. Aunty Margie and Uncle Ray and ‘em all was there all around the Reserve. That was when little one got sick. One day Lesley was talking to me and said she couldn’t remember anything. I said, ‘Well, what do you want to know about it?’ ‘Well,’ she said, ‘I wanna know if my mummy and daddy let me go and if they loved me.’ ‘Well,’ I said, ‘that’s it.’ And she was cryin’, tears running down her face. This was just before she passed away. ‘Les,’ I said, ‘Look. Your Mum and Dad wasn’t allowed to touch you because you had that polio there. I remember that ol’ policeman coming up here, ol’ Stan Wall, ‘n wrapping you up in a blanket, and they took you to Beverley. An’ my Mum was in the motor with you, and your Mum was holding you as she cried all the way there, an’ your Dad. When they go there, they wasn’t allowed near you because in those days polio was very, very contagious.’
>
> An' we on the Reserve was all in isolation. No one was allowed off the Reserve. We had to stay on the Reserve for nearly two weeks and that doctor had to come and check the kids, ‘cause no one was allowed to leave there. I said to her then, ‘But you, you know you were special. You were loved. They loved you.’ I said to her, ‘But your Mum,’ ‘she couldn’t love anybody because your father.’ I told her, ‘Your father, my uncle was too cruel. He was a cruel ol’ man.’ Them Bolton brothers they was no good. They was very violent men to their women. I said ‘Right up until your mother died,’ I said, ‘she always used to talk about how cruel your father was’ I sat down and she had a tear in her eye. She said, ‘Well, no one ever told me that.’ I said although James was the eldest he would have had his own stuff happening and couldn’t tell Les things. I said to her, ‘Well, they don’t know. Your sisters, they wouldn’t know, and James never came our way until he was an adult. Martha would probably remember a little bit about it. She wasn’t very old. Ally wouldn’t be much different. He was up and down with us all from

Narrogin and Brookton.' 'Oh well', she said, 'I didn't know where I got sick from.' I said, 'You caught it from Brookton there, whatever it was. It started off with you having the flu.' Then I said that was it. It was so unusual; she was the only one.

I said to Janet that she must have got it from somewhere else.

'She had to', said Janet. 'She never got it from here, well, that's what they ol' *munartj* said, ol' Stan Wall'. 'No,' he said she'd had to catch it from somewhere else because all our kids here was good, 'n they isolated us for two weeks. Nobody got sick, 'n John was my baby. 'Yeah, dear girl,' I said to her [Lesley], 'Nah, don't say nobody loved you. You were special,' She grew up with a notion that nobody loved her.
I said, 'saw a photo of granny Mabel (Bennell clan) the other day, so much like Aunty Hazel. Aunty Hazel looks like her now,' laughing.

'Oh yeah,' said Janet. 'Danny brought it over and said 'You know who this is?' I took one look at it, 'Oh I know that face, can't mistake that face, that's a Bennell face. You can't mistake that face. They all got that same face.'

After we had finished lunch, Janet said:

Yeah, this is where Esther and Tim had their camp here unna, this the tree. Yeah this ol' tree still here. Yeah that's where they had their camp there. It's a wonder it's still standing. Esther and Tim was underneath it, they had the only camp underneath it 'n Richard and Flo there. That little shed there, that's Richard and Flo's little shed.

Jim said, 'Where did Bonny build his caravan?'

Oh way down further down, almost where that road is there. Yeah, yeah, he (referring to Bonny) wanted to be on the Reserve but then ol' Stan Wall said 'No you gotta get off the Reserve'. But ol' boy always camped there, he always took advantage of the Reserve.

"Not like some other people who wouldn't live on the Reserve," I said.

Don 'n Chummy was the same, they came and lived there for a while. From here about 150 metres, there, that's where Uncle Mervyn and Aunty Jane had their little camp. That's where Belinda was born. Belinda the oldest unna, Wendy was born. I remember us sitting under that little camp there with Wendy bran' new baby. Nah, ol' Stan Wall came and told him he had to get off the Reserve, I remember that from up the top there

at Aunty Margie and them's camp. He said, 'You Collard boys, you have to get off the Reserve, because, umm you been having reports.' And Sydney said, 'Who reporting?' He [Stan Wall] said, 'Oh well, we just getting reports,' he said, 'to make sure you're not on the Reserve,' 'n Uncle Ray standing there umm, 'n ol' Sydie reckon, he said. 'Well, see that fella there,' he said, 'see me, see her there, that's Mum' – he's pointing to Mum. 'We all come from the same grandfather and grandmother. We three are all Collard, you putting me off then you put them off too.' And ol' Stan said, 'No, they not registered as white, you are.' 'Nuh, [expletives] fine, well, not I'm a f…, well not.' He ripped ol' Stan up. Then Mervyn came across, 'Yep, me too.'

They was reporting all the time. And me and Mum sitting down here, Dad at the back, smoking his smokes – having a cigarette out the back there 'n the horn blowing over there – this is about 7 in the morning – bruuum, bruuuum, bruuum. Dad got up. 'That's ol' Gints,' he said. 'Freddy looking for me. Freddy Collard, young Freddy.' 'What? You can't come on the Reserve?' – Mum started shoutin' out at Ginty and Freddy drove up the road and come back, and Dad was on the road waitin.' 'Righto *Doong'*, Mum said, 'if they can't come on this Reserve 'n pick you up' – 'cause ol' grandfather Eva used to pick up Aubrey on the Reserve here, 'oldies used to always come on the Reserve.' I said, 'How dare they, they black,' I said to Mum, 'Who they think they are?' Ohhh, Mum was callin' them I don't know what'. Ol' Ginty, he was shouting 'I'm sorry niece, I'm sorry niece!'

I said, 'Mum he can't even go and see his old sister across the road there.' Well, he's never gone near Grandmother. Only one ol' brother used to go there, only Uncle Charlie. He was the only dear old brother, used to go across to see Grandmother, cut across here, we used to laugh, he used to sneak across here. He'd sit all day with us yarning with Uncle Ray 'n Granny Felix and them all. Then late afternoon he would go home. That's what Gary reckon – Gary his boy, he said 'Unna, we wasn't allowed on the Reserve, but we used to sneak up there with Dad.' 'Oh dear.' Janet throws her head back and laughs as she remembers those days.

I asked: "Where did Grandmother and Grandfather used to have a camp? They had no camp on the Reserve."

That's the last when she passed away there, we was at Eva's, remember? When she passed away. I remember being at the old house when they took her from home. Uncle

Dick took her up the road to Pingelly to the hospital. She was delirious, dear old Grandmother. You know, on a warm sunny day I could smell her bread cooking and taste that fresh home bread. Grandmother used to make Christmas puddings, yes, she used to love her cooking, our Nan.

No, she had fun – them oldies used to spoil him, early in the morning I looked for him, Nobby my black boy, he was only about that high. I was lookin' for him this morning. I thought, where was this kid, I thought he mighta went over to Aunty Margie's. I really took no notice, I didn't know what I was doing. I come back here, I was standin' here, I said, 'You kids, where baby gone?' 'Oh, we dunno,' they reckon. Anyway, I took off down to Granny Felix, I can hear 'em laughing down there, Granny Bertie, Granny Felix, Uncle Tom and Granny Mary. Well, when I get down there, there he sittin' in the middle with a big mug of soup, having a good feed of soup. An' Granny Felix said, 'He had his feed, Jenny, don't worry about him. He come eat all our soup here.' That soup was always on the side of the fires. I said, 'Come on baby, let's going for some weeties.' 'I'm full', he reckon, 'I'm full'. He always had his overcoat on, no pants underneath, like that kid at home (referring to little Bev). He'd go to the toilet there. He'd take his pants off and leave it there at the door. That little red toilet down there. He'd go to the toilet, 'Pants,' Aunty Margie would sing out, 'Hey Janet, look here, *nitja djinung*. Hey, pants there.' He used to be in that dirt over there,' pointing to where she and Aubrey had their camp, 'him and Elvis. I got a photo of him 'n Elvis, you wanna see the colour of them, they absolutely filthy. Elvis, with snotty nose, runnin' down the road here no pants on and Nobby at the side.' 'Where you get this photo from?' I said to Nobby, and he said 'Never mind where I got it from.' I said, 'Well, then you don't own this photo,' 'Ooh mum,' he said, 'this only one I got of me 'n Elvis'. I said, 'Oh snottie-nosed lookin' kids, yeah, they grew up together.'

Janet's memories of these times are a reminder for me of when the family moved off the Reserve to follow the men who had work on the surrounding farms.

Often during the shearing season the Reserve mob would take the whole family off the Reserve. This was because transport was minimal, so the farmers would accommodate the shearing teams and their families, letting them stay in their machinery sheds, or if they had an additional cottage they would live there. Others would pitch tents, as was the case with Janet and Aubrey when they worked at Peck's farm.

For most of the year there was plenty of work for the Brookton men. Farmers needed help with seeding, harvesting, shearing, post cutting and fencing. In the early days, Grandfather had a contract harvesting almonds in the Mount Kokeby district at Ridgways farm, which meant that all of us living with Grandfather at the time were packed up off the Reserve and spent the almond season with him in Mount Kokeby. This meant we were taken out of Brookton school and sent to the Beverley school, which was closer. I can remember the Ridgway's truck pulling up at Grandfather and Grandmother's place and we would all get onto the truck with all of our belongings packed up too. This contracted work lasted for many years. They were wonderfully happy times at Ridgway's during the almond picking season. The kids were free to play and the Avon River was our playground. The older kids looked after the younger kids while the adults worked, that was the one Community rule that we lived by.

The farm work lasted for quite some time and then as the work dried up Aubrey looked for other opportunities. He began work at Cooperative bulk Handling, or CBH.

Horse and Carts and Nyoongars

In those early days no Nyoongars in Brookton owned a car. A cart and horse became the means of transport. As a child of four I still remember travelling in a cart and horse with Mum and Dad and several other family members on our way to Mount Kokeby for work. It seemed like everyone at the time had a horse and cart. Most *Nyoongars* owned a cart and horse in Brookton. Grandfather had a horse and cart, Janet and Aubrey had a horse and cart, Uncle George had a horse and cart, Uncle Tom and Aunty Muriel had a horse and cart, and so too did Uncle Nuggett.

It was a warm day with the sun shining, however with a mild breeze blowing. Probably everything we owned was packed into the cart as Dad's work was very transient and he went wherever work was available to provide for his family. We were just five miles out of Brookton heading north towards Mount Kokeby when a sporty car of some sort came travelling up behind us. The car was full of young white people, girls and boys. I remember clearly the face of the white girl who was sitting in the front seat as she was laughing at the antics of the male driver. He would drive right up to the back of the cart and slow right down and follow us for a few minutes then fall back and then come back at the cart again. The driver did this for some time and finally Mum picked up an enamel mug and measured the car, intimating that she would throw it at them. They still continued, laughing at us as if we were a joke. Then, coming up suddenly, they swooped around us and took off on their journey. As I recall that event, I think of what could have happened if that horse had bolted. We would have all been thrown out of

the cart or crushed. I remember the anger on Mum's face at the disregard these young people had for us. I never heard my mother, or my grandmother, swear around us. Mum never swore; however, that day I think maybe Dad said a few choice words.

Janet tells the story of a cart and horse that was given to her and Aubrey. Of course, Aubrey paid for the cart and horse. He had bought it off an Uncle in Brookton:

> Well, here we were waiting for our cart and horse but it never came. I told Mum and Dad and Grandfather *Doorum* as well that ol' Uncle was to give us the cart and horse. Paid for an' all. Well ol' Uncle wasn't parting with the cart and horse and in the end Mum went and ripped right into him and told him to give us the horse and cart because it was paid for. He was a cheeky ol' Uncle, but he ended up giving us our transport.

One day the cart broke and I remember as a six year old sitting on the edge of an upturned cart as Aubrey was repairing the wheel. A few of us kids were playing around where Grandfather and Grandmother had their Railway house, further up from where they had the previous house at Tadpole Dreaming Waterhole. That was around 1952/53.

Janet shares a short story of Uncle George *Nungy* Collard, Grandmother's second oldest son. She commences her story:

> He was traveling back from working down Pingelly way and just out of Brookton that little creek, it is usually a small creek, but when it rained it would cause a bit of flooding. At that time there was no bridge built and this day the river was flooded. In his horse and cart, on his own, Uncle George went to manoeuvre his ol' horse around the swollen stream and a bit off the road – no bitumen in those days – as he took the horse off the road, cart and horse went sideways and ol' boy rolled/tipped his cart and both cart and horse and Uncle George went into the stream. He came back home and killed himself laughing telling his story. He was a dear ol' man.

Janet continues her story of Uncle George:

> Grandmother nearly lost him when he was a baby. She had two boys before she met and married grandfather *Doorum*, Tom Bennell (who took grandfather's name) and Uncle George. She was in a relationship with Uncle George's father, who was a white man, and he wooed Nan and took her to the city with him. While there, he deserted her and her baby, who became very ill and was placed in hospital. So, she was alone in Perth, the father of Uncle George had deserted her, and her baby was sick in hospital.

This was at the time when, if you were of Aboriginal descent, the government had control of you and your children. Baby George was reported to the Welfare. Grandmother's father, Pop Collard, was a white man and her mother was Aboriginal. In the meantime, Pop had been told of grandmother's plight. They were trying to take her baby away from her and she was fighting them, she was leaning over the cot where Uncle George was and wouldn't let the *Wadjellas* touch her baby. She was fighting for her baby when Pop arrived, and he took Grandmother and her baby out of the hospital and took them back to Brookton. Not long after, she caught the eye of a tall, handsome *Nyoongar* man. *Doorum* was captivated by Kate Collard and, falling in love with her, he asked her father for her hand in marriage. Pop Collard said, 'If you marry Kate, she has a dowry.' The dowry was a spring cart and a horse. The horse was a beauty.

Well, they got married and started their life off together. Again, in those early days, our people would have to travel to wherever there was work available. After a while, old Nan and Pop Collard said to Kate and *Doorum*, 'Baby George is too young to be travelling about with, so leave him with us and we'll look after him, and you take Tom'. Tom was three or maybe four. Well, they came to this arrangement and *Doorum* took Tom and he became registered as Tom Bennell, while Uncle George had the name Collard after his grandparents, Grandmother's maiden name. Grandfather took Uncle Tom and taught him everything about Grandfather's culture: his language, law, Country, and family. These were the key pillars that Grandfather built his life on.

Continuing her story of Uncle George, Janet says:

It wasn't so long ago, a few years back, that Uncle George and Uncle Dick were having a conversation and he made mention of 'our Mum' talking about Kate and her calling George 'George.' Uncle Dick was raised by Grandmother because his mother had died when he was still on the breast, and being Grandmother's sister, she took over raising him and she became 'Mum'. Mum, our mother, used to help Grandmother and even was wet nurse to Uncle Dick.

Anyway, in the conversation Uncle George became angry at Uncle Dick, and said, 'You need to show more respect to me, Dick. I'm your Uncle.' 'What are you talking about?' said Uncle Dick. 'We both go the same mother. Katie is my mother and Katie is your mother.' Well. Uncle George wouldn't have any of it until he learned the truth, that

> Katie was his mother, not his sister. 'Well,' Uncle Dick said to Janet, 'ol' boy went and he cried wicked. He always thought mum was his sister.'

Old Uncle Nugget Garlett/Pindan/Pindown was another ol' *Nyoongar* in Brookton who had a horse and cart. He had a little ol' horse, black and small. Ol' boy always made his camp on the outskirts of the other *Nyoongars'* camps. He had a camp at the south side of the Reserve when all the *Nyoongars* stayed there, and he made camp out west of Brookton on farmers' land then, in his final years, he made camp on the east side of the Cutting, coming into Brookton on the right hand side of the bush there. He always travelled in his horse and cart. He would also carry rabbits on the back of his cart and come into town and sell them to *Nyoongars* and *Wadjellas*.

He was one of the babies who lived on the Rusty Bridge Reserve where Janet was born. He was very much an alone old man. Uncle Nugget never had family. Oh, he had a sister and brothers but they all never stayed permanently in Brookton. He and Uncle Gillie Garlett were the two oldies, brothers who stayed together. However, Gillie would often take off and leave Brookton and ol' boy would be on his own. He'd come into town when *Nyoongars* was playing two-up and tie his little horse up on a tree and join the two uppers for a game of two-up. The men loved him and the women feared him. Kids were terrified of him. He used to tell the older kids that he had a little *mummaree* living with him in his camp and because the *mummaries* were feared, we all feared him. He would travel in his cart from Brookton to Mount Kokeby and on to Beverley where family relations were. Nuggett was iconic to Brookton, travelling around in his cart and horse and whip that he never used on his horse. He was a dear old man, one of our oldies.

Photo 17. Uncle Nugget with his horse and cart. Circa 1950.

Then one day, Ford cars entered into the lives of the Brookton *Nyoongars*. Uncle Clarrie had a T Model Ford. Aubrey and Janet bought a Ford, Andy and Janet bought a car, and cars started popping up in people's front yards. Brookton *Nyoongars* started to prosper, evidenced by regular employment, secure homes, secure families and secure cars.

Many people attributed this 'wealth' to people starting to go to church and being blessed by God. Certainly, the Bennells, Boltons, McGuires, Collards and Haydens became God-fearing people.

Families started to buy their own homes. Uncle George and his wife Aunty Tim became home owners, as did Andy, Uncle George's oldest son, and his wife Janet. In time, Janet and Aubrey bought their first home at 21 White Street, Brookton.

Grandmother and Grandfather's home was home to many. I can remember Pop Charlie, who is Nan's brother, staying with us down near the house opposite across from the police station for a while. We were always with Nan and Pop. How they coped with us all is a testimony of their love for all family.

When Grandmother died, Grandfather was absolutely lost. His daughter Olive wanted him to move in with her and her husband who had by then got a state housing home. However, he chose to move in with Janet and Aubrey and us kids on the Reserve. At the same time two children, a boy and a girl, lost the security of their grandparent's care and were placed with

their aunty and uncle. They were not allowed to live with Pop on the Reserve because they were too white and they were told that living on a Reserve was an untenable situation for them.

Pop Felix (*Boolkarrnitj*) and Pop Bertie (*Kararrtj*) also had their little corrugated tin camp on the Reserve. At any one time, and often on so many nights, as these three brothers got together the yarning would start and everyone would gather around. Aunties and uncles and us kids would be there, sitting around that fire, listening to the stories of our past, stories of ghosts, and stories of *djanuks* and *mummaries*. Stories of our people, of our land and the journeys these Old People took. Some of these stories were so scary, yet we wouldn't leave the story circle until the stories were finished and the oldies would rise, chuck some wood on the fire, and everyone would start heading off home to their own camps and beds. The fire would have had black boy (*balga*) thrown on so we would have been 'smoked' for protection because the stories included stories of these *mummaries* who came at night and worried our family who were always concerned about the welfare and wellbeing of the children.

Our life on the Brookton Reserve was full of life events. We would go to sleep with a fire going at the front of our camp and we awakened to a fire going in front of our camp. The fire had many purposes, with the main ones being for cooking, warmth, and of course protection against those things that were harmful to us as *Nyoongar* people – the *Wierrnitj*.

Janet's Wedding

It was a hot summers day in January 2015 when Janet, Josey and myself travelled to Brookton to capture a story of Janet's and follow the path she walked that day many years ago that took her to the altar where she married the love of her life, Aubrey Hayden. You can view the home video of this story as you read on.

Earlier we had visited the Reserve and gone back to the plot where Grandfather and Grandmother had a railway house given to Grandfather because of the work he was involved in during the war years. Although not a solider, he was involved in Army work of keeping train tracks open for use and transport and general work associated with the railways.

As we pulled the car over to the side of the road, there in front of us was the old white gum tree which used to be home to little wrens. As a child I stood under this tree as a baby bird fell out of its nest. I was only five. I smiled at the memory while I took photos of the tree.

Janet had already started walking toward the grounds where the old house once stood. It had been knocked down many years before, leaving nothing but the memories of those who used to live there. I wondered what she was thinking as we approached the outskirts of what was once the yard. There was never a fence put up to mark out a yard, but we were always aware of where our boundaries began and where they ended. These were the invisible lines in the sand that delineated our living space, playing space and exploring space. Grandfather never put rules on us about where we weren't allowed to go as we could play anywhere, but within safety boundaries for our protection. Near the home was a stream that in summertime ran dry but with winter rains came a steady flow of water that saw us kids regularly playing in.

Near this place is where my Tadpole Dreaming time was. In the winter the little stream would run like crazy, as if trying to run away from the many little feet that used to follow its flow to where the tadpoles would be trapped in a type of lagoon. In this season there was plenty of green grass to play in, but in summer, like today, grass was withered and dead and only dust was around the house where we would stand around playing marbles. At the back of the house there was a high tank standing at least three stories high. The boys used to climb up and sit around the edge, freaking the mothers and aunties and Nan out, and Grandfather would threaten to belt their hides with a strap if they didn't get down. They would just laugh and wave back at everyone standing on the ground looking up at them. It really was a miracle that no child fell down and broke their neck or was killed.

At this home place, Grandfather watched over his family, ensuring that no Welfare Truck came and tried to remove his children or grandchildren. I told the story earlier of how, 10 years before, the Carrolup Truck had come to town to the Rusty Bridge Reserve to remove his children. Now his family had increased to include grandchildren, which made him more diligent in guarding against the threat of Welfare on his family.

Photo 18. Aunty Myrtle holding me in her arms, with her family. Myrtle was one of the three children grandfather had saved from the welfare at the Rusty Bridge Reserve.

Today, under the scorching heat, we walked on our memories. You can now view this recording in the addendum. And as Janet, Josey and I walked around this bare patch, memories came back of an area of land that saw so many of our people being busy going about family business. Grandfather ever watchful over everyone, Grandmother Kate busy cooking to feed everyone, while adults were constantly coming and going, yarning and laughing and sharing Grandfather's and Grandmother's space in wonderful harmonious enjoyment. It was from this

space, this place, that Janet began her walk to the altar in very unconventional fashion. As she tells the story of her wedding day she laughs at the memories as they come flooding back.

“Well,” says Janet, standing in the place where the old house used to stand:

> Well, in town there’s a Catholic church and the Church of England. Grandmother Kate of course, being the traditionalist she was, was thoroughly English in belief and practice. She had a great love for the Queen and the Royal Family and for her, her place of church was the Church of England and she always took us, her grandchildren, along to church with her.
>
> This was where we were and where I walked from in my beautiful, pure white wedding dress, over the dry creek bed, up that little rise, over the Corrigin train line, past the police station and those several houses, and on to the Church of England. Grandmother was dressed in her Sunday best, and we had all you kids walking along with us. Dust was kicked up properly from all those barefoot kids walking me to my wedding. There was you, Richard, Thora, Tommy, Gloria, Norma. Ohhh, all you kids. I wasn’t driven to the church in a car, I walked to the church. Only Grandmother was there escorting me to the church, and all you kids.
>
> I had to lift my dress up out of the dust, no bridesmaid was there to help me. Well, can you imagine walking on a dusty pathway and not getting your wedding dress dirty? Barefoot kids running around me, kicking up dust, running along, their sweaty hands reaching out and touching my dress, little hands dirty from dust and sweat and heat as it was a very hot day. We walked past the police station and the old Constable was standing out in his front yard. As we went past, he sang out, ‘All the best Janet, good luck,’ smiling at Grandmother and me and the kids.

Janet pauses in front of the police station under the shade of an old gum tree, sheltering her eyes from the sun. I can hear from the tone of her voice that it is a happy memory she is reliving.

“Where did you get your wedding dress from?” I had asked her in a previous conversation. There wasn’t a bridal shop in Brookton and Mum and Dad rarely went to Perth where she would have had to go to get a wedding dress.

> Well, Mum went to the post office one day and found this book with a picture of a wedding dress in it. There was an order coupon in it for mail order. Mum bought the magazine and brought it back home and excitedly showed me and Grandmother the

dress in the magazine. It was a beautiful dress and I fell in love with it. So Mum sent off the mail order and we waited for the dress to arrive. When it came, I tried it on and it fit me perfectly. Funny thing that dress, it was borrowed by a few other women for their wedding as well. It was like the 'company's' wedding dress.

Aunty Myrtle was supposed to be my bridesmaid that day and she had happily agreed. Dad was of course to give me away. On the day of the wedding we were all up early with Mum and Grandmother singing out to me, 'Come on Janet, today's your wedding day, time to get up.' The day was already starting out to be a warm day. So it was going to be a hot day.

I was excited as this was my wedding day. This was the day I was marrying the man I loved. There were other girls who wished they were marrying him, but he asked me to marry him. I looked at my wedding dress. I can still feel the softness of its silky ripples as I touched the softness and was so glad Mum had found this dress and bought it. As I got ready for this day I had no thought of where this relationship was going to take me. I loved him and he loved me. That was all that mattered that day. I had no idea of the heartache I would face in coming years as I sat on my bed, staring with girlie wonder at my beautiful wedding dress. Grandmother was absolutely wonderful that day.
For whatever reason, Mum and Dad and Aunty Myrtle decided they had to go to Beverley that day. So Grandmother and I waited, preparing food, getting kids ready with baths and clothing them. I had no idea why they had to go to Beverley. I found out later that they had gone to buy a camera and films to take photos of the day. They got a ride in the only taxi service in the town and went and left me and Grandmother. Grandfather was there but it wasn't too much his thing and he more or less stayed in the background. I got you and Rich ready. I think Richard must have dressed you, because you had a romper suit pants on and when I really looked at you in the church it was so funny because you had your suit on back to front. By early afternoon I was getting pretty anxious and grandmother was getting worried: 'I don't know where your mother and that Myrtle is but you better start getting ready,' so I got myself ready and there I was in my wedding dress. No clicking cameras, just me, Grandmother and all you kids. Then there we went, walking with Grandmother and all you kids to church.

We were late getting to the church because we had waited and waited for Mum and Dad and my bridesmaid Aunty Myrtle. Walking up to the church I could see family but no

Mum and Dad, and no bridesmaid. The minister had allowed time to wait for Dad's arrival as he was to walk me down the aisle. Family were milling around waiting, then the Minister said to Grandmother and me, 'We can't wait anymore, Janet. We'll have to start.' I had no arm to hold and no bridesmaid to go before me. Walking into church I asked Kathy Henry to walk me down the aisle and I grabbed Lonsie her sister, who was dressed in a beautiful purple dress and hat to match, to be my bridesmaid, then I was set to walk the aisle to marry Aubrey.

Standing down the front was Aubrey with our cousin Andy Collard, his best man.

Well, we got married and when we walked out of the church, there was Mum and Dad with Aunty Myrtle. Ohh, I was so wild with them. Anyway, Aub and I got into the horse and cart, no big limousine for me to ride in, no, a horse and cart, and we drove off, with all you kids running after us. Ohhh but it was so funny. After that we went home to Grandmother's and Grandfather's where Nan had prepared a lovely afternoon tea for us all. It was a lovely day.

The Painting Gallery on the Reserve

Brearley is a *Nyoongar* of the Southwest. He lives in a little country town in the southwest of the state. As a child, Brearley was placed in Carrolup Mission. This was through no fault of his or his parents. It was simply Welfare policy of the day. During this time Brearley started painting. He is one of the 'Child Artists' whose artwork was later taken from the mission and purchased by an overseas buyer. The buyer took the collection overseas and it was never seen in public again until recently when negotiations saw the art of the collection returned and displayed in Western Australia.

It is this 'Child Artist' style that Brearley paints.

Brearley has a brother named Warrick. They live together. They have a sister named Margaret. Margaret married 'Fisher' and with her partner gives birth to a little girl. Brearley and Warrick love this child and when Margaret comes to town they perch the little girl on their shoulders and carry her around everywhere, visiting their mob around the Reserve and walking down town and buying things for her. Of course, when one goes to town, they all go to town, nearly all the Reserve mob. It was a time of wonderful inclusion and laughing and joking around stories. The fire is the central place where stories are told.

One autumn night, while sitting around a fire and sharing a drink, an argument broke out and Brearley rose up and struck his brother a fatal blow. Brearley was placed under arrest and saw out a prison term for the act. On his release from prison, Brearley was assisted to gain accommodation and was given a little hut on the Reserve. It was here that Brearley continued with his painting, and on visiting the Reserve one day, I saw Brearley sitting outside his house, facing the late afternoon setting sun. I was fascinated to watch his hand holding the paintbrush, stroking the page patiently, deftly, ensuring the colours were right. He was aware of this wide-eyed child eyeing his painting and in a soft voice said to me, 'There's more inside,' indicating towards the little hut. I went inside and there all around the wall was displayed paintings of sunsets, paintings with kangaroos and other bush animals, but mostly sunsets. There were beautiful, bright sunsets. There were dark, shadowy sunsets. There were night scenes, but always sunsets. There, on the Reserve, was the first Aboriginal art gallery. It was an honour to walk into that hallowed place and see that artwork. I was proud he was my Uncle.

But loneliness and probably the death of his brother and subsequent time in prison brought Brearley, as with many others, to self-medicate to get through the day. Brearley gained a lust for the taste of cheap wine. Slowly, the love for wine stole away from the love for painting and Brearley hardly painted in his later days. One evening after a bout at the local pub, Brearley was going home. He was surprised by the blare of a siren behind him. He slowed down looking behind and there was the local police officer sitting in his car, smiling at Brearley:

'How you going mate.'

'Not too bad boss, not too bad.'

'Where you heading?'

'I'm going home boss, going home.'

'Well Brearley, you know I'll have to charge ya mate.'

'What? What for?'

'Cause you're driving while you're drunk.'

'But boss I'm not driving a car. You know I don't drive a car. So how can you charge me?'

'Well Brearley, driving a push bike is just the same as driving a car. And you're driving that push bike while under the weather.'

‘I’ll have to get you to get off the bike and push it home mate, okay?’

‘Okay boss, okay.’

Next day, Brearley catches up with the local men, and sitting around yarning he starts by telling them about being picked up by the police last night. They sit around yarning and laughing at ol’ boy’s run in with the *monartj*.

Photo 19. Brearley Bennell, the Carrolup artist (right) with Henry Bennell (left). Boodjin, circa 1960s.

Yarning Up Old Loves

There are so many stories that Janet has told me, so many. How do I capture them all? I fear that in writing the stories of family and events I miss out on her story, although these are her stories, her experiences, her life spent with family. But I want to capture her story and to stay true to the purpose of this writing, that is, to tell Janet’s story.

Janet’s relationship with Aubrey began when she was 15 years old. At17, he had come with his father Reg Hayden and his brother Tom to do some work on a farm out of Brookton. Reg was married to Connie McGuire whose family clan was the Bennell’s, and she was born and raised

in Brookton. So then, everyone knew that Reg and his son Aubrey was family. There were aunties and uncles that he knew in town. Connie and our mother were first cousins. Her mother, Nellie McGuire (nee Bennell), was Grandfather *Doorum's* sister. It is important to know the family relationships and family kinships.

Janet, Shirley and I, with Josey and Kerry our two girls, were on our way to Fremantle Hospital one day to visit Scrubby and see how he was going. It was a cool winter's day and with Josey driving we talked together on the drive there.

Janet starts, "I had a phone call last night from someone you know and we had a good old yarn. Then he asked me how were you".

"Who? Me?" I reply.

"Yes, you. He said 'how's my old sweetheart? How's she going'? He must have been at the pub I think and was a but tiddly. I said to him, "You know she'll kill you, and he laughed".

I was indignant that he would phone her and talk about me. I responded, "Yeah, well, you know it wasn't him that I wanted. It was his brother that I thought I wanted to marry, once, but our dear mothers sat over a drink in the pub and discussed our relationship and said we couldn't be girlfriend and boyfriend because we were related, and so that ended that."

Yarning away with Janet and Shirley, Janet says, "Well, you know, Toby wasn't my first choice for a boyfriend." Then Shirley adds her piece saying, "Well, Harry wasn't my first choice either." I was quite astounded to hear these two sisters of mine talk so frankly about their husbands. Yet I could understand in some ways. I admit that at the age of 16 I was in love with this boy from my hometown. I thought I was madly in love with him and was absolutely broken hearted when he left town.
"Well," Janet said, "I was in love with this other young man, prettiest eyes, who wanted to marry me, but he had to go away for a while. He was gone a long time and I thought he forgot about me and I thought he wasn't coming back. Then Aubrey came home to Brookton and we started going together. He asked me to go to his family, so I went with him to Doodlakine." I learnt later that he had been looking for me, but by then it was too late. I was with Toby. But that was all Mum's doing, you know. It was like she'd arranged the marriage for me.

"Yes, well, that's what it was like for me too", said Shirl. Janet carried on the conversation, "Mum masterminded our relationships and our partners. I know she wanted me to marry Toby and she was happy when we finally got together."

It was hilarious sharing these stories between us, me, Janet and Shirley, three sisters in a car driven by Josey along with Shirley's daughter Kerry.

For me, growing up with Janet and Aubrey gave me a glimpse into what I thought was the perfect marriage. I saw Janet on her wedding day, although it was vague in my mind because I was a young child. I remember an Aunt saying, "Well, there they go on their honeymoon." All this amounted to a happy relationship in my mind. Aub was a hardworking *Nyoongar* man and Janet was a loving mother to his children. Then more kids started coming. John, then eldest, then Roger, Geraldine, Glen, Charne and Tina, her baby. They did everything together. I saw the perfect couple with the most beautiful children and I said one day when I have kids I want them to be as good looking as Janet's kids. Well, my kids are good looking kids too, just like their Dad.

Pompee – Keeper of the Gate

There is a remarkable characteristic of Janet's which I must talk about, as it has been reflected in every aspect of her life: her incredible generosity of spirit. She is such an inclusive-spirited person. As I take this journey of writing her story for my thesis, she has told me so many stories that are about others and their stories that she has stored in her memory, and I am amazed at how those stories become so interwoven and always end up with her telling me about her connection to the story and her place in that story. Here are two examples of her connectedness. This is her story:

> Aub and I were in Merredin with the family. John was a baby at that time, and we were up with Aub's ol' Mum and Dad at Doodalkine. While we were there, the boys, Reuben and Aub, wanted to go to Merredin to play two-up. So we all got in the car and off we went to Merredin. When we got there, there was a big two-up school. A lot of people meant there was a lot of money to win. So off Aub went to the two-up school and left me sitting by myself in the car with the baby. I somehow became conscious that this ol' man kept watching me, and he seemed to be coming closer to me and my son. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Rueben watchin' this ol' fella. Aub was nowhere in sight. I started to feel a bit uncomfortable and worried, as I had never seen this ol' man before. You could see he was an old tribesman. Before I knew it, he was standing next to me. My heart was beating fast and I pulled my baby closer to my breast as I looked up and saw him standing there beside me.

‘What’s your name girl,’ he asked. I stared at him, frozen with fright and all I could say was ‘Bennell.’ ‘Oh, okay. You right.’
As he walked away, Reuben came rushing over. ‘What did the ol’d fulla say to you?’

‘He asked who I was.’ Reuben then went on to explain that he was a tribal man, an old border watcher, a *Nyoongar* Gatekeeper. A Gatekeeper is one who watches who passes from one tribal border to another.

Fifty-two years later, Janet and I were attending a South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) Elders meeting at the SWALSC office in Cannington. At that meeting were Merv Abraham (dec), Sealan Garlett (dec), Aunty Veronica McGuire (dec) and her daughter Dorothy, May McGuire, and Faye and Arthur Slater (dec). There were also others, making a total of around 11 Elders.

That day, Arthur came in during the lunch break so excited and waving a piece of paper. ‘Janet! Janet!’ he said, ‘look at this, look at this ol’ fulla.’ He was pointing his finger at the paper in his hand. She was bemused by his excitement. ‘See,’ he says, ‘this is my ol’ great grandfather. The girls in the office found it in the archives. It’s a picture see, of him. His name is Pompee, that’s all they know him by.’ He placed the picture in front of Janet and to her amazement it was a photo of the ol’ man who had approached her and her baby at the two-up school in Merredin.

She shows me the picture and in an excited voice says, ‘Well, whatta you know Liz, that’s that ol’ fulla I was telling you about who was in Merredin and asked me who I was. When I told him Bennell, he said ‘you right girl’ and he walked away. ‘Look at that,’ she said, as she stroked the photo. As I watched her, I could only imagine the memories that photo of the old man evoked. She was barely 17, just had her first baby, and was confronted by an old tribal man while she was by herself. Then there would be the memories of Aub, her young handsome man, the father of her child, off playing two-up while his older brother, Reuben, kept an eye on her.

Then in the second conversation Janet said the following:

Recently, while passing through Bassendean, I pointed out an old house and told my daughter that was the house where her great grandmother used to live. My daughter said to me, ‘Mum, how come you never told me this a long time ago?’

> I told her that I did tell her a long time ago. I told her, 'You just don't listen when I tell you anything. You never listen when I try to tell you something. You're too busy running around, stuck on your phone, or that Facebook thing.'
>
> This was a defining moment, when a *Nyoongar* oral historian was reminding her daughter of the importance of listening when she was telling her of her history.

As I listened to Janet speak, I was acutely aware that her story had to be told. She was not only one of our last oral historians, she was also one of a few language experts left. I knew I had to tell her story.

In 2007, a profile of Janet was published in the West Australian Weekend newspaper, and I quote:

> Janet Hayden has a mountain of reasons to feel bitterness towards mainstream Australians. But the plucky *Nyoongar* Elder who grew up in WA's south-west was remarkably forgiving when speaking in an interview as she told of a personal journey that might/could have occurred in darkest, apartheid South Africa. However, she sees no point of being bitter about her harsh experiences (Saturday July 7th, 2007).

This article briefly captures the spirit of Janet Hayden. She was a wonderful forgiving person whose capacity to give of herself is captured briefly in her sharing of her life to give back to her people a little of what she sees as their rights as the First Peoples of this Country. The giving of herself began when she first took on the care of two of her siblings, children who she became 'Mum' to. Then followed a further four children of one of her cousins, totalling twelve in all. With recognition by the Welfare Department as a 'suitable carer,' Janet and her husband went on to become foster carers for nearly 200 other children in need of care. These children are among those now referred to as the 'Stolen Generation' (HREOC 1997). Rather than growing up in an institution, Janet and her husband gave these children a home environment and care that was rare in those days.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS: A 'STORIED' CULTURAL FRAMEWORK OF BELONGING

Introduction

The findings of this research are captured in the stories that form this chapter and the bulk of this thesis and are shaped around six pillars representing a cultural framework of belonging. These pillars include Country, Place, Position, Language, Family and Truth and can be seen in the short film included in this addendum, *Kaarl-ka-Nyininge, a place to be*. I introduce these stories first by casting a lens over these pillars, and just as the waters of the Avon River lap against the rocks, so the theoretical aspects of these pillars join with the experiences that come alive in these stories.

Pillar One: Country

Country IS Brookton, *Kaarl-ka-nyinginge*

For First Nations people, knowing our Country is central to our sense of belonging, our being. Country tells us who we are and where we come from. It speaks to our ancestry and to our belonging to Country.

Styres (2011) refers to land as first teacher. She states that "land as teacher is a contemporary engagement with Indigenous philosophies derived from a land-centred culture and based on very old pedagogies" (p. 717).

She suggests that:

> [W]hen land informs reflective practice, pedagogy and storying, everything starts with and returns to the land, self is not/cannot be set apart from the interconnected and interdependent relationships embodied in land. Storying is a discovery and creation of self in relationship; it is a process embedded in an examination of past experiences in relation to present and future actions. If in fact we teach what we know in relation to who we are, then it follows that we must know our stories (pp.718-9).

For Indigenous people, we cannot talk about Country being land within the context of Westernised thinking and beliefs. Western thinking is about the use of land and its economic value. For First Nations, land and the worth of land is connection to Country and the spiritual value Indigenous people place on their land, their *boodja*.

As I told the Rusty Bridge story to the Curtin University supervision team, I spoke about the DNA of my ancestors connecting deep in the land:

> **Liz**: That's the Rusty Bridge Reserve, yeah. And so here is a reserve where we all camped when we went off Brookton. There's a great – this is where the graves are, that's opposite. So DNA, the DNA went from the right to here, but that's not where all people were, the older people, I don't know where they were buried.
>
> **Michelle**: Can you tell me more about the DNA? What do you mean by that?
>
> **Liz**: In this in here, lays my grandmother, my grandfather, my – we can't trace the ancestors beyond those because they buried them somewhere. But in that ground as that body decomposes, and it goes into the ground. I don't care if they're in the coffin or nothing then, that DNA is flowing. And it comes out in that land.
>
> **Michelle**: That's the yarn you need to preface Country as the main character with. That's exactly it. That's your blood, your bones, your flesh, your spirit, all this stuff. And then it nurtures you and your grandkids and your other kids and then they nurture and it's that tenuous cycle of nurturing.
>
> **Liz**: So these old fellas went down here and up here and this blood is flowing over that Country.
>
> [inaudible]
>
> **Liz**: So here we have Cleetland [grandfather's great-great grandfather], Jenny and then their two children and one of the [inaudible]. Monger married the first one and she died and then he married the second one. That's our beginning. But before that, there's two names that I've seen that are Aboriginal women, that's our bloodline in that Country. So, I mean, Brookton encapsulates the Bennell line. That's the story of Brookton. That's the story. That's where mum and dad are, yeah, they're in this cemetery. And my grandmother and my grandfather, and that's in us as both people want to go back with their bloodline, but our bloodline goes beyond that. Yeah. And those people. that's what I mean, that I am, I am Brookton (Focus group, 11 July 2023).

As a First Nations Woman I know the stories of my land. When I am coming onto my Country, I know exactly the point of entry into my Country. There is a sense of knowing. Then the spirit of my land calls to me. There is an invisible line that is crossed, and I know then I am home. I

am on the land of my mother, my grandfather, my great grandmother and all my ancient ones. This is what my Country does. My Country tells me I am home. It will always welcome me home because this is where my bloodline is. This is where I belong, where I will always belong. I have entered *Karl-ka-nyininge*.

Pillar Two: Place

My place in Country, my place in Family.

- What does place in Country mean to me as a woman?
- What does place in Family mean to me as a woman?

To explain what I mean here by 'place,' it is to say that a place and space is where you personally belong when you're on Country, with family, within, in my case, *Nyoongar* society. This place is my place, my inherited place if you like.

Wooltortona and colleagues (2020) talk of the joy of place tied with one's responsibility to care for a place. As *Nyoongars* we do this as family. We also share this experience with non-Indigenous people, those who choose to learn and journey with us and help us to care for Country, in an iterative process that is "slow, transformative and continuous" (p. 918).

My bloodline belongs to *Kaarl-ka-nyininge*. In 2023, I travelled back home to present my thesis on the Brookton Reserve. Once again, this established so strongly for me that Brookton was my 'place,' the place which I call my home even though we own a house in Perth. Brookton is my 'place.' Why is this? I wondered. Styres (2011) reminds me that storying is a crucial component of understanding one's place in the past to be in the present. Thus, place is an essential element for belonging.

For me, my place in Brookton brings every aspect of my being to 'belonging to Country.' Country doesn't belong to me, I belong to Country, and when you belong to something, it wraps you tightly in its safekeeping where you are safe and loved. Country holds me as our people hold me. My ancestry is in this holding because this is where our people have been for centuries on end. Who else can claim such belonging to Country as only a *Nyoongar* from this Country can? That is what 'Place' means to me.

Pillar Three: Position

Who I am and my role as a senior Aboriginal woman, along with Janet as a senior woman, both in Brookton Community speaks to 'Position' as a pillar. I set out my cultural positioning at the

beginning of this thesis. It is cultural protocol, as Bishop agrees (2021). As Indigenous peoples our worldviews are very different and our forms of introduction are based around family – "who's your mob?" – and your position within family. As Bishop states, "this shows your ancestral connections to Country. It centres relationality and allows other people to connect to you via Family, Country, Kinship, and Law/Lore" (pp. 373-74).

As an Elder and Matriarch I take on the responsibility handed to me by my older sister, Janet, my mother and father and my grandfather, *Doorum*, to not only hold these stories of our family and our Country, but also to seek out those to whom I can pass on and share these stories (Crouch, et al., 2023).

Wooltortona and colleagues (2020) connect with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (United Nations 2011) and recognise the strong links between place and language. They say that 'language enlivens place,' bringing together story, narrative and verse to animate the life-giving forces the land offers and to remain interconnected and in relationship with land.

Pillar Four: Language

It makes sense then that language is the Country and expresses the sounds of the Country – it communicates Country. For *Nyoongar* people we have always had language. It was never lost and it was passed down by the Old People. Our stories hold the language together with us, the characters of those stories. Styres (2011) considers that teaching, a role held by Elders and inherent in storytelling, is a 'storied act.'

Over generations, while language was retained, language was also lost. It was held dearly in trust by those who were language holders, and it is now held in those who have been taught by their Elders. Language is now also held in books, libraries, people, positions, and private collections, and artifacts that capture the voices of our oral historians, such as my sister Janet. While it was and still is an oral language, many in today's generation are turning to textbooks to learn *Nyoongar* language. Again, I turn to Styres (2011) and her explanation of the way collective groups share stories as a relational act:

> Culture sharing groups who have verb-centred language systems think in terms of how we relate to and are interconnected with one another and to the geographical space that holds the language (p. 720).

There is a gentle revival and our young ones are taking up the challenge to bring language back to their families through stories and returning to Country.

Language forms in the land. It grows and takes shape as people interact and move across the land. It responds to the things we do and the journeys we take, often together, as the ensuing stories demonstrate. Collard and others (2004) describe how stories of Country *want* to be told, just as in Janet's story of the *djiti-djiti* told in Collard's article in the Westerly. Janet also shared with Len Collard the story of his grandfather, 'Nutty' Tom Bennell, a story about a '*bulyada maam.*' It was a story about our *moort*, being destined to be the 'Keeper of the Stories.' Such keepers of stories are held by the land and by the people of the land.

When Native Title was being challenged, *Nyoongars* had to prove that they had always had their language, they always had their stories. The *Nyoongar* Nation had to prove to government that they held onto language, their land, their cultural practices, customs and protocols. In proving all these things, Native Title was granted. Language was a significant part of the proof to claim native title. The oral histories were testimony to the enduring connection to the Country and its stories. Having language gives you the authority to say, "I belong in this place."

The story of my mother, Martha, is a powerful example of the inextricable link between Country and language. She spoke language with authority, and no one questioned her; they respected her.

Pillar Five: Family

I come from a long line of strong people in my family, with Grandfather as our protector, and my mother a cultural woman, well-respected by many. My sister Janet was a renowned oral historian, sought after by *Nyoongar* and *Wadjellas* alike, especially about the *Boodjin* area and about Brookton in the old days. Family is also about position and place, interlinked as always with Country. Stories tie us together with Country and with each other. We play many roles in Family. You must earn your role and children grow up to take on those roles handed to them by their forebears and they too then become part of the Story. Our memories are strong and clear when we tell stories together and share these with our children and grandchildren. I echo Michelle Bishop's (2021) claim to be a sovereign woman, self-determined, unceded. Bishop reconnects her epistemological investigations through an Indigenous autoethnography, pushing back on western research paradigms, in ways that strongly resonate with me:

> Indigenous autoethnographies cannot and will not be defined or reduced to a checklist. They operate from a different axiology and ontology that does not seek to categorise,

> classify, or simplify; instead, Indigenous autoethnographies strive to increase complexity. In this way, cultural agency is asserted; bound by obligations to family, communities, Country, Knowledges – 'where storytelling can spiral into a bigger pattern, an interconnectedness that recognises and links together infinite experiences across time and space' (Bishop, 2020 in Bishop, 2021, p. 369).

There is indeed a pattern to holding and sharing stories, and knowing your place, from growing up around stories to being gifted them, as Janet did to me. I told a story to my supervisor, Michael, at the Brookton reserve when he interviewed me about life on the reserve and the role of storytelling. I detailed this in the methodology section above as an inherent process of learning and understanding, through *Nyoongar* yarning. I told him about the time I worked with the women washing in the laundry. It was a copper washer in those days, heated by fire:

> They'd [the women] come up and do their washing and they'd be all yarning and talk about anything and everything, everybody's business, nobody's business. But they had their yarning time. It was for me, it was just so privileged to sit with these older women and listen to them talk. That was what you did. And one day, we're talking and then they was going off about a particular boy. And then they asked me a direct question. And I was 15-and-a-half about, and then before I could even give them a decent answer, they like shut me off, moved on to another piece of conversation like, didn't my opinion matter? And I'm probably got a clue then that as a 15-and-a-half year old, you don't have the conversation in with older women (interview 22 August 2023).

Being around our Storytellers, we learnt to understand the yarning process, knowing our place as kids and then being given greater responsibilities to tell stories as we got older. As kids we would tell our own stories, playful stories. This helped us to learn the skills of storytelling. Our responsibilities increased and we were later entrusted with cultural stories that helped us to understand Country, Family and Law/Lore.

The roles that we play in family are all about receiving the story when you are in a conversation. So there's places that storytelling allows you to fit into. You need to earn your role, because you have to show respect to the storying that's coming along, and if you don't pay attention to it, you don't learn the stories. So, while you're busy playing as a kid, and there are stories told, "Oh, well, that's fine," the kids are told to go and play. But then comes a time when the kids are more grown up and they want to be a part of the story, so then they're embraced within that storytelling or conversation.

Just as with our family tree, stories map our existence within the land, the place of our experiences, voiced and shared. As Matriarch of my family, I feel strongly responsible for sharing these stories, so that others may feel the connection and their interlinking themes and contexts. I am acutely conscious about who I speak for, how I speak, and to whom.

Pillar Six: Truth

Looking at the past in Brookton, what supported Aboriginal people then to have positive lives and experiences? The truth will start with the women, the non-Aboriginal women, to start the Truth-Telling and reconciliation process in the town of Brookton. And this is why.

Doorum was our protector. He and his brothers and sisters provided us with a safe life on the Reserve. It was through this protection that we enjoyed what I experienced as an idyllic upbringing. We were shielded from much of the racism, persecution and disenfranchisement dealt out by the government of the day and Welfare in particular.

The employment provided by the farmers gave *Nyoongar* families a form of self-determined life. And there were mostly positive relationships with farmers over many decades around the Brookton area. Some of the non-Aboriginal farmers included Ken Hall, the Mills, Yeos, Evas, and others. Ridgways, Pecks and other farms have left me with wonderful memories of being a child growing up and playing for months around these farms. In 2023, as part of my thesis development, I returned to visit Ridgways and spoke with Dee and Nooky Ridgway about recording the stories Janet had shared with me. Nooky's forbears kept Grandfather employed for years and Nooky still runs the farm today, though without the almond trees now. They were generous in spending time with me, recounting memories their parents and ancestors had of those times. I walked with Marg, part of the supervisory team, across the bare paddock where once the massive grove of almond trees had been, the largest in the southern hemisphere at that time. I showed her the small stone house where we would live for the almond picking season and how we would play down by the river nearby. I am very grateful that Dee and Nooky could spend time with me. It is these ongoing connections and relationships that will help us to build a reconciliation journey as we share these histories together. They offered these images from past days at the farm.

Photo 20. Elizabeth Hayden (me) with Nooky at Jurakine-Ridgways farm near Mount Kokeby, 2023. This is the two-bedroom house we would stay in when grandfather took us to Ridgways.

Photo 21. Almond trees at Ridgways near Mount Kokeby. Circa 1950s.

In the words and reflections of Megan Davis (2022), “Truth Telling is a journey of coming to terms with the past” (p. 25). In her essay, Davis cautions us to consider the journey of truth as a part of, not the whole of, reconciliation. Reparation and restoration require Truth Telling to set the context and transition to a shared understanding of the past, at least in the case of Australia’s colonial settler history:

> Truth processes are intended to allow citizens to help shape a shared narrative that enables people to achieve a sense of peace and security – this, in turn, allows them to trust the state and to imbue state institutions with the threshold of legitimacy required to move forward (p. 27).

I shared some reflections in an interview with Marg about my hesitation in bringing non-Aboriginal people and *Nyoongars* together in a truth-telling space. This event stems from generations of support between non-Aboriginal and *Nyoongar* locals in and around Brookton:

> It's scary hey – what if they [the non-Aboriginal people] reject…reject this story…? I’ve gotta see with these *Nyoongars* too, “Will you share this time?” Because what I want to see happen in Brookton – my struggle is that I see Brookton not the way – it used to be a wonderful world. A wonderful cohesive space where we Blakfellas, we got on well together, you know? There's a comment that my Uncle made in one of the stories about one man belting his woman on the Reserve and he said, “We don't belt our women here.” That is the truth of that Reserve, you know. Arguments yeah, were still there, but there was no bashing of women on the Reserve. My Uncle made that statement – I love that statement. The other thing is that the people who really contributed, I think to – not the development of Brookton but, yeah, provided a place for Brookton *Nyoongars* to really find their place in the town, not just on the Reserve, but in the town was that the farmers made place for them with work. They didn't give them handouts. They gave them work, to make life better for them. And the men grabbed those opportunities, and the women grabbed those opportunities because the hospital, the matron in the local hospital, she employed Aboriginal girls. Very few people did that in any town that you go to, but the Brookton Hospital employed Aboriginal girls, and they – that made a difference to them. They got money to go and buy what they wanted to buy. In those days there were dances happening all through that southwest with girls wanting to be…[inaudible]. If they wanted to go to a dance they would go to their mothers and say “We want a dress to go to that dance.” And

> because they had the jobs on the farm, they had money to go and buy what those girls wanted. And they didn't want [for] anything, those girls. And that to me says there was a great sense of pride and love. And that's why I want to connect this start of the story into the end of the story that says, “You guys are the descendants of the people of the farming industry who gave jobs to my mob and created a better opportunity for our people.” But also, it allowed them to move into the town and not stand back and say, “I don't have a place here.” And they found a place in this town, and they stamped themselves on Brookton forever. Brookton would be the centre of the universe, the capital city of the world [laughs] (interview 28 February 2023).

A key feature of truth-telling is the safety and respectfulness of holding. I shared a story about the Brookton policeman with the supervisory team, Michael, Courtenay and Marg:

> I was just thinking of that word, Marg, 'cause that holding – because those between the non-Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people, there was a real holding of, of those people. There was this... I haven't put it in yet, but there's a young girl, she's playing with one of my Uncle's daughters not from there. They came visiting and she was playing in the puddle. And then if – the kids got up and ran away, but she couldn't move, and then they had to go and get a police officer who came there. She actually had polio, poliomyelitis, and she couldn't move. So the police officer, who was just an amazing man, he did a couple of amazing things. He came with a blanket, wrapped her in the blanket, which I thought was just absolutely, you know, it could have been for his protection, but I don't know whether it's important, but he wrapped her in the blanket and took her to the hospital. And then they took her on down to Perth, but doing that in itself was a real gesture of respect for the people as well. But then he isolated the Reserve for two weeks. Everybody on that reserve couldn't move, they had to stay on the Reserve. And people, I don't know how, Janet never said how they were fed, but they had to be looked after. Yeah, so, but everybody was clear that she actually came in with the bug or whatever it is. She came in with it from somewhere else she caught it, but it didn't affect anybody in that space, in that town [Brookton] (Interview, 6 September 2022).

Corntassel and colleagues (2009) suggest that “processes of restorying and truth-telling are not effective without some larger community-centred, decolonizing actions behind them” (p.139). Telling our Truths means bringing us all together.

The Discussion in Chapter 8 will provide an overview of how the Six Pillars can be understood and contextually applied. Utilising a novel approach of interpretation between myself and some supervision team who have accompanied me on my journey, we have engaged in a two-way process of discussion and analysis. Using reflective articles as discussion pieces we have engaged in conversation on what constitutes Truth-Telling.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION

Introduction

I yarned with my supervisory team about this thesis journey, saying: "I've taken you on the journey but you've also taken me through the PhD. Is it cyclical or 'this way' – each one of you have put your feet on my Country and have journeyed with me to do what I wanted to achieve with my PhD."

The Country has absorbed you as the stories are introduced to you on the Country. The Miley, for example, and the stories that have introduced us to the Miley so we feel connected once we get there in person. I've been held by people and then I've held others in this journey. My trauma, my tears - I'm just floored by what's come here in the form of a thesis.

It is important to bring in non-Aboriginal people so we can find a place where there's no guilt, yet there is Truth Telling and an acceptance of walking along together and not to carry burdens of guilt or Aboriginal people's burden of blame and shame. Rather, this journey is a celebration of those who held the stories of the past and passed them down for today's readers and listeners.

What follows is a series of reflective pieces I requested from members of the supervisory team and of family members and friends who have walked this journey with me. These reflections present an array of experiences that highlight the six pillars. Country, Family, Language, Place, Position, and Truth Telling are very present in these reflections. They offer a revisiting of the stories through an embodied experience on Country and with Family. They present an expanding and inclusive journeying rather than a linear learning experience, let's say.

My supervisor, Courtenay, revisits her Scottish heritage in a way, I think, she would not have done had she not been on Country with me in Brookton. Jade, the artist, sits herself firmly within these Brookton stories as if she is there, reconnecting to her past, her grandfather and her identity. Marg reflects back to me the very body through which my voice speaks these stories. It is a physical, visceral act, deeply connecting me to my past, my ancestors, my place, *Kaarl-ka-nyinginge*. Poppy, the film-maker, reminds me of the holding necessary to be a Storyteller and that I must hold myself as I hold those who listen. This is my deep and enduring responsibility as an Elder.

Below are snippets of their reflections.

Jade

Jade: It was such an honour. Like this is just the best type of project I could ever imagine. It just makes everything seem so insignificant compared to this project. Yeah, I think it gives me so much to the painting stories and our culture and especially being such a powerful Matriarch in our Community. It means a lot to me to be able to do that. And yes, it was very scary. I'm thinking, I can't do these stories justice. I'll try my hardest. I thought, you know, I'm gonna just overthink it, so I might as well just do something. I kind of just had to start somewhere. But I did feel like there was a lot of pressure because this was so important to me because I knew how important it was to you. Yeah, and I just wanted to make the most of that opportunity and try to tell the stories or visualize your stories as much as I could. Yeah, and it really painted itself. Like I don't really think I actually did much. I just, I just took things out of your story. And just put them into a picture. Yeah, and like in the exact way that you mapped it out. And in the order of your stories. I've just put little drawings and just Yeah, added them on, added them on your map. Yeah. So I really feel like it just happened naturally. I didn't actually have to put in that much. Just kind of Yeah, just came.

Liz: I'm very honoured, Jade, for what you said there in honouring me and how you described that. …I thought that's just very, very true, beautifully done. Simplistically done, but so you know when something so simplistic is just so what's the word? It's just awesome. Elegant, elegant, awesome. Authentic. Yes. Honestly, perfection comes from simplicity. You know, and, and that's what I felt that this painting was and when you handed it to me, I thought she's captured all my stories on this artwork, which is really what I wanted, and you've captured it within that timeframe of living on that reserve on that Brookton reserve which I just love that place. I love the town, but I love that reserve more than anything.

Jade: Yeah, it was really special to be able to read your stories and to hear them from you as well. And so when I was painting them, I felt really absorbed in the story. I could like hear the kids playing like you explained that so well that I could, I really was taken back there. And I felt like I was there. And I just tried to capture that feeling of what it was like if I was just sitting there amongst everything that was going on all the activities and how that would have felt and just tried to put the feeling into colours.

Liz: But then you experienced it. You had the kids dancing and laughing and chattering and heard the stories and you were on place, on country which I thought was just, I'm so glad you came.

Jade: Yeah, and it almost feels like memories that I have now. Going to Brookton was such a spin out for me, I was like, Oh, these are the places that I've already been in my, in my head. [laughs] And I'm like, oh, okay, I can see Yeah, this was over there, this is over here.

In Jade, I found that we can bridge the gaps, if we choose to bridge the gaps, and we can make relationships that work. I think that's important, because often there's talk about a generation gap.

I felt that Jade had the capacity to listen, but also to capture. You have to really have that listening skill to be able to capture what you want to represent, either through an art form, or through verbal form, whatever form that you want to present. And she did that so well. When I look at the artwork, I see that she captured every story, practically that I told. And it takes a really good skill to do that. And that she listened. And I think that's a real core component of relationships, to listen. I think that would be the key alongside of that very strong respect factor, and then, well, there's the young people. I think that what that did was it connected her back to her grandfather. Oh, that was more strength. And she found a place of ownership in that conversation.

Courtenay

I am Courtenay, a *Wadjella*, of Western European descent, who was born and lives on Whadjuk Nyoongar boodja.

One of the biggest learnings for me is about connection to Country and how integral this is to life. I observed that Aunty Liz always made so much more progress with her writing and work when she was on her Country. Whenever we visited *Kaarl-ka-nyininge*, and sat on Country, sometimes around the fire, you could feel that the Country welcomed us and the work we were doing. When Aunty Liz would tell stories on Country they would flow from her – it really felt like a spiritual experience. The stories and Country would come to life, and the voices were so clear for all of us to hear, leaving a lasting impact and full sense of belonging. I have been so inspired and more

> appreciative of the opportunity to connect to Country and now focus more of my time to further understanding my family's connection to Country. Recently I visited Scotland to find out more about my beloved Papa's Country. This time was very emotional for me, my Papa passed in 2005, and being on his Country helped me to feel the very strong and loving connection I have always had with him. It was a time to relive and connect with memories and stories and feel connected to him. I know that I would not have sought out this travel and felt this sense of Place and self if it had not been for Aunty Liz and the experiences I have shared with her, on her Country.

I'm really struck by Courtenay being inspired to reconnect to her Scottish heritage. That was really quite powerful and it's just so beautiful how she says it. She describes how the on Country experience felt spiritual. Perhaps if we hadn't come to the conversations around Country, Place and Family, in Brookton I wonder if her Scottish experience might have been different for her.

I also connected back to Jade, in having that storytelling experience and sharing this with others. I think it's that capacity to draw a line straight from your own mind, while you're engaging in somebody else's story, then you're going off on this line of thinking, thinking about your family and your connections, and then you're holding, holding this space so you can experience something similar when you go to your own Country, as Courtenay did, and your own People and your own Family. That's what Jade has done too with her grandfather (Cedric Jacobs Snr, dec.), her connection to Aboriginal culture is through her grandfather.

I can really value Jade saying that because to me, telling those stories, is just something that I do when we go home with the kids, we tell a story. So for her to capture it in that sense, I always feel like when I'm home and we're talking around the fires, it's a real spiritual thing. It satisfies your soul. It satisfies your soul when you do that, and you can only satisfy your soul when you do those things that you – I can't put my finger on it – you just have to experience it to know it.

And as I'm reading Courtenay's reflection, I note a lot of feeling words, observing, spiritual, inspired, emotional, loving, connection, and this language makes a difference to the whole process, changing that mindset. For example, when I used to be in my angry stages of life, I used to think you needed to change the psyche of the white people for them to understand us. And I think that process happened here with Courtenay. Her psyche was touched and it enriched her time back in Scotland much more, I think, than if it was just a trip, and I just imagine her tramping all over that country. And never mind, this is my Country. This is my people. And I

like the notion that she feels, that I've inspired not just her, but the whole Curtin School of Allied Health and while I can't, I can't imagine that. I just think that it's amazing really to have such an impact on the school.

See, I love the fact that what she was doing was she was changing the whole framework. She did it with so much ease, with as much ease as I am easy telling those stories. And I think when we're doing that, from the time Michael said here, this is Courtenay, I need you to meet Courtenay. And Courtenay said, yeah, we can do that. From that point on, there was a magical, spiritual dance that started between me and the School of Allied Health. And Courtenay laid the music to make the dance happen. I think she laid the music, which I think was truly awe inspiring.

Marg

I am Margaret O'Connell, a *nyidiyang yok* named after both of my grandmothers, Margaret and Joan. I was born in Boorloo-Perth and grew up in the southwest on *Nyoongar Boodja* in Pemberton. I now live in Boorloo with my husband and two children near Galup-Lake Monger.

I think the way that Aunty Liz is telling this through her thesis, the way she's telling this is not just through voice but her whole Self, her full body. Voice comes from a body, voice comes through vocal chords and vocal chords are connected to muscles and nerves and brain and mind and it's held in a structure, a skeletal structure contained within skin and bone and muscle and hair. That body that holds that voice stands on a Country and it reaches out and it feels the Country around it, the air whipping around the shoulders and through the hair, the sun making the eyes squint, the taste of the bush lingering around the tongue, the smells permeating the nose, the feel of the rocky Country underneath one's feet or sitting on a rock and feeling the hardness and the coolness. As Aunty Liz walked over the rocks to the water at The Miley it was almost like she was stepping back in time to be that young girl playing in the water watched by the oldies, playing with her cousins and feeling again those days that stand out as special experiences for whatever reason. The stories are indelibly linked now inside her body not just in her mind but in her whole being and that in itself is such an authoritative standpoint, that is, to have that lived experience so directly aligned and cast in the landscape.

I love the way that Marg brought it into me; she literally identified what ‘me’ is, what I am made up of, made of flesh. Stories are indebtedly linked now inside my body, not just my mind, but in my being itself.

It encapsulates what an Elder holds within themselves, everything I mean, into the core of your being. We hold, we hold our truths, we hold our stories, just as I said in my introduction that this is my thesis. It's my story. It's my truth. Marg goes on to say:

> The person who held those memories [the stories] was standing right in front of me offering those memories to me as a way of saying, “I trust you with these stories because you're here with me and you're walking on these rocks with me,” while looking at the water coming down the rocks and knowing that that's come further up along the Avon River and flowing around the town of Brookton connecting everything.

Poppy

> When Aunty Liz called to ask if I could help with something, I said “yes,” and she started laughing cos she hadn’t even said what the thing was yet! Turned out she wanted me to film her PhD presentation at *Kaarl-ka-nyininge* where she grew up. I was so happy and felt so lucky that she asked me. Aunty Liz always makes me feel loved and seen and cared for, and that makes me want to be around her as much as possible. She lifts my spirits and makes me feel held and shows me how to take more time to look after myself.
>
> I first met Aunty Liz at Galup (Lake Monger) working on the Galup arts project which she’s guided since 2020 alongside Nan Doolann-Leisha Eatts (dec.), Aunty Glenda Kickett, Aunty Lois May, Uncle Darryl Kickett and Uncle Ted Wilkes. She gave so much love and care to that project and helped make sure it was done in a way that felt safe and good.
>
> She is also an incredibly powerful speaker. When she was part of the Galup Elders Talk at Perth Festival in 2021, I remember her saying “We have to heal the land, we have to hold ceremonies, we have to walk on the land as Galup [the performance] is walking on this land and tell the story, and that’s a part of the healing. We have to walk on this land and tell the truth.” Those words still echo in my memory. When I think of her speaking, I hear her wisdom, her love and her laughter all rolled into one. I remember watching her write notes just before she spoke that day. She wrote “deep scars, running rivers” and used those images to talk about intergenerational trauma and the flow of

truth and healing that needs to come. She can speak about the most difficult things in a way that everyone understands because she speaks from her heart.

I love Aunty Liz, and I feel so lucky to know and learn from her.

I like what Poppy said about we have to hear the land. We have to hold ceremonies. We must walk on the land as Galup (the production) is walking on this land until there is healing.

I think that for Truth Telling, people must understand that it is not some airy and fairy thing. It's something that's integral to me. It's ingrained in me to want to make a difference, maybe in 20 years' time we will get to reconciliation in Australia but that can only come through conversation and building relationships and having those ceremonies.

While these reflections are both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, they each bring something different and something quite profound to the process of storytelling. And it's about the storytelling. It's not about me. Each one captures something about the storytelling. Storytelling and the Stories themselves are the glue that bring us together, that bind us and connect us from the past to the present.

Jade focuses on Family and Country. Storytelling engages and interconnects her back to what her stories are. What comes first the land or the Family? I think the land is there, we connect to that land because it's Family, but we connect to Family because they're on that land.

Courtenay focuses on Country and connection. She talks about going back to Scotland, that we really are no different, very human in our need to connect and connect to land. That's a different way of looking at Country, how Courtenay looks at it, but very, very much the same as how I as an Aboriginal woman connect.

Marg focuses on Voice and body and stories. Storytelling is your whole physical being. Language and voice come together through storytelling, embodied.

Poppy talks about holding and being loved. And in the storytelling, there must be a holding. And sometimes in the storytelling, they're so painful. Sometimes you must hold yourself. I once asked a CEO; you want us Elders to be a part of the process of your meetings and stuff? I said, we're out there holding our people, but who's holding us as Elders? Yeah, it's a question I'm asking. I have to say that in my storytelling and in what I've spoken about, some of it is painful, it must be told but I also must hold myself, especially about one of those stories about Dad and losing that little brother, though I think he must have blamed himself in many ways

that he never spoke about it. So, while you're trying to hold everybody, while you're telling these stories, you want to make sure that you're not hurting your people. And you still must think about yourself.

I find that there are those within. I can look at an audience and know those who are holding me, those people who have the capacity to engage and listen to what I'm saying, otherwise, it's pointless talking to people who are not interested.

Language is the Country. It expresses the sounds of the Country, and it communicates Country. Language is defined in the storytelling because the language consists of land, family, relationships, and all those connections come together through language. Not so much language as in speaking English or speaking Aboriginal, but more it's the flow of the words and how the language is used to pull the story together.

I can't believe that I've done all this writing here. To me, it was just writing. Sometimes it felt like it didn’t make sense. When you’re in it all, you’re trying to write, and then you come out of it, and then you look at what you’ve created and it’s quite amazing. This is my autoethnography, this is my journey where Country is connected to storytelling.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION – TRUTH TELLING AND BELONGING

Introduction

Again, I recall, as my sister Janet took me by hand and said, "Come with me". We walked down a corridor and as we walked, she showed me many windows. We peered into and through and within each of those windows there was the story of *Kaarl-ka-nyininge*, "A place to be: We're here sitting and yarning around the fire".

As Aboriginal, *Nyoongar*, people we heal our cultural connection through belonging. This thesis presents a way in which to restore belonging through cultural immersion as explained through the six pillars. Likewise, it is hoped that non-Aboriginal people can also find a sense of belonging through a connection of the six pillars outlined in the framework. To find connection and a reconciliation through a belonging to Country, this Country, this *Boodja*, means to embrace and share its histories, stories and peoples. As Megan Davis states, Truth Telling sets the context and provides a transition space to build a shared understanding of the past (2022).

This thesis sought to answer the hypothesis: Can the six pillars that underpin the cultural framework of belonging have relevance and meaning for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people? For Jade, as a young *Nyoongar* woman, returning to Brookton, to *Kaarl-ka-nyingine*, was very intense.

> going out there to Brookton was so emotional because I was like, this is how you do a PhD on Country and this is how you deal with your community. It was so powerful and groundbreaking to see that. I've never seen it done so well. The process of combining two worlds and really like validating isn't the right word, but just making cultural knowledge more accessible to everyone…
>
> … there's a lot of tokenistic change making happening nowadays, but I feel like this [thesis approach] is really genuine and empowering for our mob. And it's really giving us a platform to use our voice to tell Nanna's stories. Yeah, it feels like this is what reconciliation should look like doing things. (Interview with Jade Dolman, 1st August 2024).

Jade, as a young *Nyoongar* woman, being present on her Country with an Elder was extremely emotional. Not surprising this was also true for other young *Nyoongar* people, bearing witness to an Elder, sharing her stories of her own and of their Country was both inspiring and heartfelt.

As an Elder I am inspired by the artwork by Jade, and of the performances of the young dancers who danced for us, and of those who prepared the food for the event for my milestone three that was held on the Brookton Reserve. I was inspired, for I witnessed the future leaders of our *Nyoongar* people. All this so carefully captured and crafted on video by my dear friend Poppy.

This thesis celebrates the ancient art and practice of yarning and how it creates a 'safe place' for stories to be told and held. Yarning is a natural means to being relational and ensures that a research approach is culturally safe. Elders, the yarn-holders, are indeed experts and therefore are both knowledgeable and adept in preparing the way. When the academy recognises and legitimises Indigenous standpoints and Aboriginal relational methodologies it is both powerful and transformative. This thesis recognises and celebrates Elders who are the legitimate guides and wisdom holders for this and future generations. Indeed, for within the thesis the stories honour the tradition and practice's that guided my grandfather, *Doorum*, my sister Janet *Djennaburra,* and others whose stories are present in the thesis.

Country is the basis of our belonging. It nurtures us. Importantly, it teaches us, as Styres (2011) states also reminds us. It builds our sense of Place so that we realise our Place in the world. This includes family and our positioning in family, our *moort*. My positioning as an Elder, Matriarch, Nan, sister, daughter, granddaughter, are integral for they are the connective points both to our past and to the future. Language is critical for it feeds our yarning. It shapes and expresses through our whole bodies; our full selves. Combined these are the elements that shape our story, and indeed, my truth, if you seek to also belong.

My Sister Janet, a Final Word

To the family, Janet has been wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother, yet before all these roles she was a daughter, granddaughter and a sister.

In her role as the Matriarch of the family, she was the holder of our history, our language and our culture. She taught her family the knowledge and stories that were given to her by her 'Old People,' as she calls them. She was rich in that knowledge, and her capacity to share that knowledge was deep and generous. Her generosity was seen in her humble giving in the early days when her children were still small and every Sunday she would take them all along to the little local mission church where once a month, or when it was full, she and the children would offer up a little box full of coins for the leprosy mission she and her husband and children supported. Through her deeds and actions, Janet will be always remembered as an icon of *Nyoongar* knowledge and advocacy. She was a Storyteller with the capacity to take you along

a corridor of windows to look into and share a glimpse of life from yesteryear as she shared her stories of time, place, family and space. She built bridges for herself and her family for a better life, raised with love and care on the Reserve, to build better relationships between Aboriginal Australians and non-Aboriginal Australians. She is a gentle reminder to us all that if we strive to live with tolerance and forgiveness we will gain more than we lose.

I quote from the bible, King David who said, ‘Thy gentleness hath made me great’

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APPENDIX A.

LIST OF VIDEO RECORDINGS

2024 – Final Doctoral presentation Milestone 3. Produced and Directed by Elizabeth Hayden. Recording and Co-direction by Poppy van Oorde-Grainger. Brookton

2024- Jade Dolman /Jacobs art time lapse design

2023 – *Kaarl-ka-Nyininge*: Interviews on Country. August 2023 – Elizabeth Hayden, Michael Wright, Michelle Webb, Courtenay Harris, Marg O'Connell. Recordings by Marg O'Connell and Michelle Webb. Produced by Elizabeth Hayden. Brookton

- 00:50 Visiting the Calvary Presbyterian Church
- 01:50 The Miley
- 08:57 The Rusty Bridge Reserve
- 25:51 Seabrook Reserve ('the Brookton Reserve')

2015 – Janet Hayden, Josey Hansen and Elizabeth Hayden. Recordings by Elizabeth Hayden. Brookton

- 00:00 *Doorum*'s camp and Tadpole dreaming place
- 04:40 Janet tells of their first house on White Street and how the Welfare came to the school to take Josey
- 09: 49 Janet tells about her wedding day
- 30:48 Janet walks with Liz and Josey on the same track as she did walking to the church for her wedding

LIST OF TRANSCRIBED AUDIO-RECORDED INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS *(NOT INCLUDED IN THIS THESIS /AVAILABLE ON REQUEST)*

Perth/*Boorloo*, *Wadjuk Boodja*

Focus Group – shaping the PhD with Liz Hayden, Michael Wright, Courtenay Harris, Marg O'Connell – 6th Sept 2022

Interview Liz Hayden, Marg O'Connell – thesis, chapters and methodology – 28th February 2023

Focus group – Introduction to thesis – "I am Brookton and Brookton is me." Liz Hayden, Michelle Webb, Marg O'Connell, Courtenay Harris – 11th July 2023

Brookton/Karlkanni, *Ballardong Boodja*

Interview with Liz Hayden and Michael Wright at The Miley, Brookton – 21st August 2023

Interview with Liz Hayden and Michael Wright at The Calvary Presbyterian Church, Brookton – 21st August 2023

Interview with Liz Hayden and Michael Wright at Rusty Bridge Reserve – 21st August 2023

Interview with Liz Hayden and Michael Wright at Brookton Reserve – 22nd August 2023

Focus group – thesis structure. Courtenay Harris, Liz Hayden, Michelle Webb, Michael Wright, Marg O'Connell – 21st August 2023

Focus group – Methodology – Liz Hayden, Michael Wright, Courtenay Harris, Michelle Webb, Marg O'Connell – 18th October 2023

Interview with Marg O'Connell, Jade Dolman/ Jacobs and Liz Hayden, Canning River Eco Education Centre, Kent Street Weir, Cannington – 1st August 2024

APPENDIX B

Approval Letter

Date: 11 May 2022

HREC Reference number: HREC1160

Project title: Voice of the 'Other': A Creative Response to Nyoongar Oral Histories for Aboriginal People - A Doctoral Thesis

Dear Mrs Elizabeth Hayden

Thank you for submitting the above research project for ethics approval. The research project was considered by the WA Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee (WAAHEC) at the meeting held on 28 April 2022. I am pleased to advise that the WAAHEC has reviewed and approved the following documents submitted for this project:

While this is not specifically Health related, we appreciate that WAAHEC was able to assess the research application.

Documents:

20220411 WAAHEC Application E-Hayden V1.2

E_Hayden_Research_Protocol_v1.1

PIF_V1.0_E-Hayden_other-participants

CF_V1.0_E-Hayden-other-participants

PIF_V1.0_E-Hayden-student

CF_V1.0_E-Hayden-student

Noted Documents:

The WAAHEC has granted approval of this research project, pending your agreement of the following conditions:

450 Beaufort Street, Highgate WA 6003 / PO Box 8493, Stirling Street, Perth WA 6849
Phone: (08) 9227 1631 **Fax:** (08) 9228 1099 **Email:** ethics@ahcwa.org **Web:** www.ahcwa.org.au
ABN: 48 114 220 478 **ACN:** 114 220 478

Conditions:

1. The WAAHEC will be notified in writing, giving reasons, if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
2. The Chief Investigator will provide a Progress Report by 30 June each year in the specified format. This form can be found on the AHCWA website (www.ahcwa.org.au).
3. The approval is for a period of ONLY 3 years from 2/05/2022. Research projects should commence and conclude within that period of time. Projects must be resubmitted if extension over three years becomes necessary.
4. Information about publications and/or conference presentations may be incorporated into Progress and Final Reports. This enables the WAAHEC to maintain a record of publications. Researchers can contact the WAAHEC if they require support or feedback prior to publication.
5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are formally acknowledged for their contribution to this research project.
6. If amendments to the research project become necessary, these should be submitted using the form provided on the AHCWA website (www.ahcwa.org.au).

Please contact ethics@ahcwa.org if you have any queries about the WAAHEC's consideration of your project. The WAAHEC wishes you every success in your research.

Kind regards

Peter Miller
For, **Vicki O'Donnell**
Chairperson, WAAHEC

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007), *NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice*. The process this HREC uses to review multicentre research proposals has been certified by the NHMRC.

450 Beaufort Street, Highgate WA 6003 / PO Box 8493, Stirling Street, Perth WA 6849
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19-Jan-2023

Name: Courtenay Harris
Department/School: Curtin University
Email: C.Harris@curtin.edu.au

Dear Courtenay Harris

RE: Reciprocal ethics approval
Approval number: HRE2023-0021

Thank you for your application submitted to the Human Research Ethics Office for the project RECIPROCAL - Voice of the 'Other': A Creative Response to Nyoongar Oral Histories for Aboriginal People - A Doctoral Thesis.

Your application has been approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) through a reciprocal approval process with the lead HREC.

The lead HREC for this project has been identified as WA Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee.

Approval number from the lead HREC is noted as HRE1160.

The Curtin University Human Research Ethics Office approval number for this project is **HRE2023-0021**. Please use this number in all correspondence with the Curtin University Ethics Office regarding this project.

Approval is granted for the period **19-Jan-2023** to **02-May-2025**. Continuation of approval will be granted on an annual basis following submission of an annual report.

Personnel authorised to work on this project:

Name	Role
Hayden, Elizabeth	Student
Harris, Courtenay	CI
Wright, Michael	Supervisor
O'Connell, Margaret	Co-Inv

You must comply with the lead HREC's reporting requirements and conditions of approval. You must also:

- Keep the Curtin University Ethics Office informed of submissions to the lead HREC, and of the review outcomes for those submissions
- Conduct your research according to the approved proposal
- Report to the lead HREC anything that might warrant review of the ethics approval for the project
- Submit an annual progress report to the Curtin University Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval, and a completion report on completion of the project. These can be the same reports submitted to the lead HREC.
- Personnel working on this project must be adequately qualified by education, training and experience for their role, or supervised
- Personnel must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation, that bears on this project
- Data and primary materials must be managed in accordance with the Western Australian University Sector Disposal Authority

(WAUSDA) and the Curtin University Research Data and Primary Materials policy
- Where practicable, results of the research should be made available to the research participants in a timely and clear manner
- The Curtin University Ethics Office may conduct audits on a portion of approved projects.

This letter constitutes ethical approval only. This project may not proceed until you have met all of the Curtin University research governance requirements.

Should you have any queries regarding consideration of your project, please contact the Ethics Support Officer for your faculty or the Ethics Office at hrec@curtin.edu.au or on 9266 2784.

Yours sincerely

Amy Bowater
Ethics, Team Lead