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How Has Colonial Transgenerational Trauma Created a Lost Generation?

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Abstract

Through an examination of how colonisation and transgenerational trauma has created a lost generation, my research examines my own lived experience and the lived experience of participants who have contributed to the research through yarnings, which connects this relationality with artistic practice. The methodological approach proposes that there are similarities between Aboriginal people's lived experiences. This is the relational transgenerational connection that has been passed on from generation to generation, which has led to a lost generation of Aboriginal people.

This examination is validated by my own experience and those of the participants involved within this research and has grounds in contemporary society. Therefore, what perpetuates this relationality has been and continues to be the difficulty for Aboriginal people to connect to identity and or culture, which is vital to configuring a notion of Aboriginality. Aboriginality is premised on connection to culture, people and Country. My research investigates this lost generation of people and youth through their shared narrative and experience in concert with my own lived experience and the lived experience of members of The Stolen Generations.

The research is practice led, and attempts to assert through artistic practice and exegesis the various issues that come with this "lost generation". The aim is to demonstrate how these issues are, in fact, intergenerational and can be articulated in visual form. It is the visual that also connects us to established understandings of Aboriginality and culture. The exegesis, through a body of artworks, identifies key historical narratives that illustrate the truth of colonialism and concludes with the reality of contemporary themes depicting transgenerational trauma composed through my own lived experience together with the collective lived experience of participants within this research.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature: 

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Date: 27 March 2021

Cultural Warning

Indigenous viewers and readers are advised that this exegesis contains images, narratives, works and practices of people who have passed into their spirit dreaming. No offence is intended as we pay our respects to our peoples who have moved into their ancestral dreaming.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge that this research, exegesis, and practice were conducted on the ancestral lands of the Darkinjung, Gadigal, Darug and Dunghutti people. I would like to pay my respects to the traditional custodians and peoples of these locations. I also extend my respects to elders past and present and to all creation ancestors of these nations.

I would also like to acknowledge the elders and youth who participated in the yarning sessions and for trusting the researcher with their candid responses, which informed the practice-led research. I also acknowledge and thank Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Home Corporation for inviting me to present my research to the elders who were survivors of this institution, and for sharing their personal narratives with the researcher and for their support and approval of the research. I acknowledge all language groups, who were involved in the research: Biripi, Dunghutti, Bundjulung, Kamilaroi, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta. I would like to acknowledge and thank Gudjagang ngara li-dhi Aboriginal Corporation for allowing me the opportunity to exhibit this body of work to the local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community here on Darkinjung Country, Central Coast, New South Wales. I would also like to acknowledge and extend my appreciation and eternal thanks to my principal supervisor Dr Brian Martin for his invaluable contribution and support provided to me throughout this practice-led research. And finally, Monash University for accepting the research proposal and granting me the opportunity to undertake this unbelievable journey.

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Introduction

Setting the Scene

> Historical trauma is defined as the subjective experiencing and remembering of events in the mind of an individual or the life of a community, passed from adults to children in cyclic processes as 'collective emotional and psychological injury… over the life span and across generations'.[1]

This research examines how colonialism and transgenerational trauma has created a lost generation of Aboriginal people. It focuses on Aboriginal youth who find it difficult to connect to identity or culture, which is vital to configuring a notion of Aboriginality. Aboriginality is premised on connection to culture, people and country. My research investigates this lost generation of youth through an examination of their experiences in concert with the researcher's own lived experience and the lived experience of Aboriginal youth along with members of The Stolen Generations. These collective experiences are interconnected. The methodology employed to demonstrate this is practice and Indigenous led, and through artistic research and exegesis identifies the various issues that come with this "lost generation". The aim is to show how these issues are, in fact, intergenerational and can be articulated in visual form. It is the visual that connects us to established understandings of Aboriginality and culture and I demonstrate through a body of artwork the reality of colonialism and transgenerational trauma through research via historical narratives. These

[1] Judy Atkinson, Jeff Nelson and Caroline Atkinson, "Trauma: Transgenerational Transfer and Effects on Community Wellbeing", in *Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practices*, ed. Pat Dudgeon, Helen Milroy and Roz Walker (Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010), 138.

specifically include my own lived experience and the lived experience of the participants in this research.

The methodological approach through interviews and yarnings demonstrates that there are similarities in Aboriginal people's lived experiences. This relational transgenerational connection has been passed on from generation to generation, which has created a lost generation of Aboriginal youth. This is validated by my lived experience and of those participants involved within this research, and has grounds in contemporary society. This research also creates a framework where we can view art making as a way of looking at trauma and lived experience that creates awareness and challenges western epistemologies on colonialism. The significance of this research is two-fold in its way of revealing how colonisation has created a lost generation through trauma whilst at the same time reconfiguring how art practice can depict and illustrate the myriad common complexities that I have been faced within my own life and also continue to be faced by so many Aboriginal people, including our Aboriginal youth of today. This form of art making can succinctly reveal those contemporary problems in a creative way, which then has the capacity to engage with a broad section of the non-Aboriginal community, challenging an amnesia that is all too common and familiar to Aboriginal people. The benefits of such a practice is that it may further educate both private and public sectors — and more importantly, policy makers — who determine and apply their social and political hypotheses to policies that impact on the lives of Aboriginal people.

The aim of the research is to prove that the impact of colonisation and transgenerational trauma connect as the major contributing factors in the emergence of a lost generation of Aboriginal people and youth. It is hoped that this practice-led research contributes toward Indigenous knowledges, decolonial literature and literature about collective trauma, which

have all denoted the impacts of colonialism. The inspiration and motivation in making this research a reality is driven by passion and a desire to create art that asks substantial questions and makes strong statements about the state of life of Aboriginal people in Australia. Telling the truth visually, as have many Aboriginal and international Indigenous artists, both in the past and currently, is vital in deconstructing the narrative and framework of western discourses premised on the habits of coloniality.

As a child, I knew deep within me that I wanted to be an artist or something that involved creativity, however life and the paths we take often lead us toward a different journey. On reflection, it is about accumulating experiences, learning the lessons, listening, and gathering narratives and or stories — the lived experience, so to speak. Being an artist is a privilege, but it can also be a torturous journey — that is unless you come from an unfettered world that is not chaotic, dysfunctional, and traumatic. Your perspective on life and society is not challenged unless you have a strong morality and social justice standing, otherwise you are not impacted by it. Your experiences are positive ones, and this will always influence how you as an artist portray life and your experiences. But for an Aboriginal person and artist the experiences are vastly different, you can call on or delve deep into a wealth of emotional content and experiences to tell a story. Therefore, as a researcher, it is extremely important to tell the story of colonisation and connect this to transgenerational trauma. However, in order to do so, this research must deconstruct the social and political framework this has created, as it is the collective lived experiences and personal narratives shared by participants within this practice-led research that inform the images in the practice.

This reconfiguration has driven the practice-led research to the position in understanding how the impact of trauma has shaped and determined the lives and experiences of all Aboriginal people across this nation, who have emerged out of institutions, missions and

reserves and have also been suppressed by policy and legislation. As an adolescent, I had questioned things that were not as they should be. There was strong sense of belief that instinctively alerted me to know or sense that trouble was forthcoming — this is referred to as hypervigilance. Those experiences in relation to trauma as a child, adolescent and as a young man have ultimately shaped my persona in such a way that I needed to understand why trauma was so present in my life. I felt like I had this target painted on me, like a bullseye and I attracted in life a strong sense of abandonment, a lack of trust, and anger and betrayal. It was time to question the life I had lived and was living, and everything I had learned from my past, counselling, self-help literature was all going to be the new foundation in putting everything into perspective. I developed a determination in trying to make sense of the imbalance of negativity that had engulfed me, and I needed to deconstruct my own family dynamics as everything stemmed from the family, which remains for many individuals a way of achieving closure in their lives. Art for me is a form of self-expression that was able to convey, engage, challenge and disrupt ideologies and belief systems. It has the capacity to open conversations, to enter the psyche and create turmoil. For me it was the only vehicle I could utilise in taking this journey, as I required a semi abstract mode of creative expression. I do not want the art that I am creating in this research to be literal: instead, I want the viewer to discover their own meaning in the works and through an association to the title of the work.

Family Wellbeing Program

I was introduced to the Family Wellbeing Program, an Aboriginal Youth Leadership Program for 14 to 18-year-olds, which is facilitated by Aboriginal staff through Central Coast Primary Care (NSW).[2] I felt this was a defining moment for me in terms of how I could reconnect with

[2] Australian Government, "The Family Wellbeing Empowerment Program for Young Aboriginal Men," Australian Institute of Family Studies, accessed 25 March 2021, https://apps.aifs.gov.au/ipppregister/projects/the-family-wellbeing-empowerment-program-for-young-aboriginal-men.

my artistic practice as it allowed me to draw on my own lived experience. The program was in part about deconstructing and understanding not only your own values and beliefs but also more importantly the family dynamics that very much shape our own identity and worked to creatively bring about social and emotional wellbeing changes for those youth who took part. This was the catalyst in leading me to this research because I could see the creative potential in bringing this framework to a reality that made connection and sense. Furthermore, as I saw the connection between me and those participants and the belief about trauma within my own family dynamics, I believed there was a strong visual narrative to be told, and it was related to colonisation and the trauma which touched many generations.

As this program evolved over time and having listened to the shared stories of Aboriginal youth throughout the Family Wellbeing Program, as well as sharing my own stories and experiences, I begun to make the connection that the impact of colonisation was designed in such a manner that Aboriginal families would remain in a constant mode of trauma and/or poverty. As Rosemary Kudnarto Wanganeen stated in her presentation "Seven Phases to Integrating Loss and Grief", during the Perth Aboriginal Mental Health Conference in 2017, "we are a part of an industry".[3] For example, the health sector, the welfare sector including incarceration and prison, enables non-Aboriginal people to be employed to assist us out of our life of poverty. Major funding goes toward those sectors, but much of that funding is tied up in creating further positions for non-Aboriginal people to fill those positions, which then sees little to no actual funding implemented towards Indigenous communities. This is the cycle which was created when successive governments had finally looked at ways of addressing the "Aboriginal problem" — we became an industry. I decided that I needed to approach this research in a way I am most comfortable with — through a lens of creativity,

[3] Wanganeen, R. Seven Phases to Integrating Loss and Grief, Australian Institute for Loss and Grief

conveying the complex issues that infiltrate the lives of all Aboriginal people both young and old today, the generational impacts of colonisation.

Aboriginal Experience-Aboriginal Voice

This research is significant and relevant in today's commentary. It defines as well as encompasses a broad range of social factors, such as the health status of Aboriginal people and the living conditions of families, it also illuminates social and political agendas and confronts racism. This research is from an Aboriginal perspective, from a first-hand account of surviving trauma, and is substantially supported through the interviewees featured in this practice research.

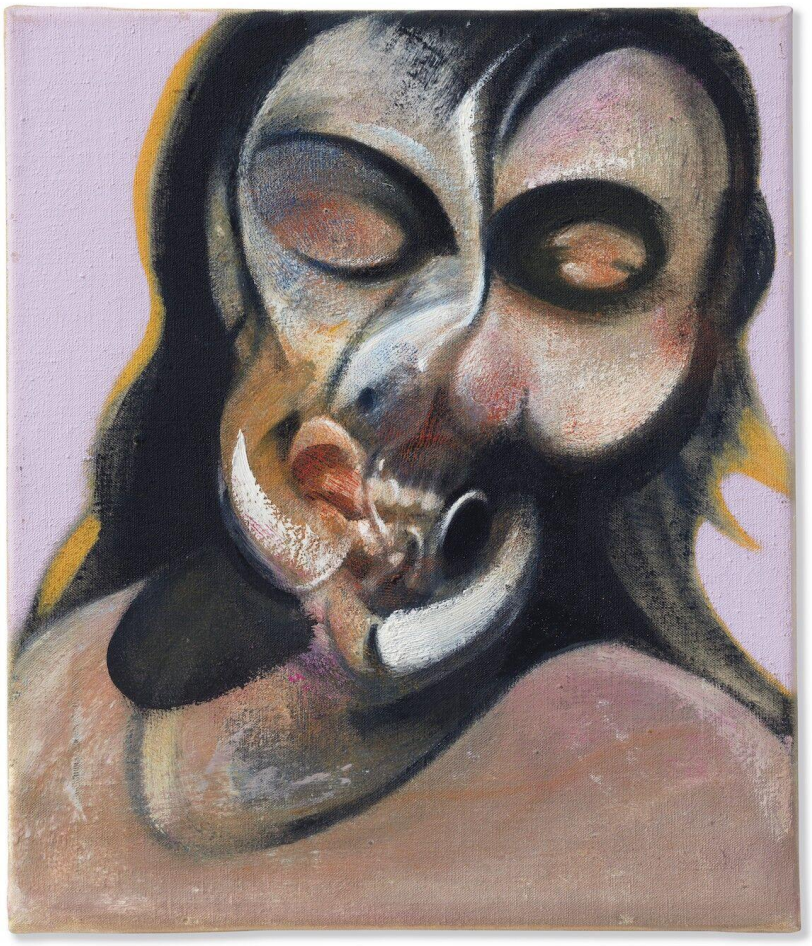
Through a theoretical framework and creative practice, the research adds to our own understanding of the social and political problems of contemporary Aboriginal society, and the need to develop programs that are supportive and allow Aboriginal people to take ownership of our problems. I argue that non-Aboriginal people do not truly understand the complexities, because if they did, then they would have known to employ Aboriginal people not only with lived experience, but also the necessary skills to implement appropriate programs across the country that addressed the issue of transgenerational trauma. What we have is a perspective of understanding in this country, that non-Aboriginal people do not recognise or connect with the fact that Aboriginal people are impacted daily because of colonisation, they cannot see how past trauma directly connects with current trauma. For example, some people honour and acknowledge the Anzacs but refuse to acknowledge the frontier wars that decimated our peoples. With the current and ongoing state of Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing within contemporary society, research such as this benefits the broader community because it supports existing research in trauma. What is unique to this framework will be the addition of visual images, which explore core issues that are a

direct result of colonialism and transgenerational trauma. This is invaluable to academics, educational institutes and more importantly the entire education system. The theoretical framework is fundamental in demonstrating the absolute connection between colonialism and transgenerational trauma. When we look back at our traditional life, we are able to see a healthy specimen of Aboriginal people: sinewy looking, athletic, tall and proud. But when we fast-forward, the picture is a stark contrast. As previously stated, we have evolved into an industry that feeds a workforce of bureaucracy.

Research and Practice

This led practice research recommends that if we are able to embrace the Aboriginal perspective of our own lived experience and incorporate this understanding into policies and practices, it will lead to creating innovative solutions that enable Aboriginal people to take control of our own destiny in terms of new practices and new programs that address our needs. For example, involving Elders in decision making regarding community programs, give them a voice, as traditionally this would not even be a discussion. Because some traditional practices have been lost through colonisation, we are witnessing first-hand trauma consistently being played out on a daily basis through high levels of youth incarceration that supersedes adult incarceration levels, youth suicide and the excess of drug and alcohol addiction issues. There is this hopelessness being embedded in our youth's mentality. Instead, with this research practice Aboriginal youth are provided a platform to articulate their own lived experiences. My own lived experience in concert with Aboriginal Elders, specifically those impacted directly by the stolen generation policy, will help to enable youth to understand the complexities that they are growing up in, and that this new found knowledge will enable Aboriginal youth to begin to build skills and strategies toward combating the onslaught of transgenerational trauma and avoid travelling a path that is well known to many Aboriginal people. Collectively the lived experiences of all of the

research participants offers compelling insights into examining generations of trauma, which is in turn conveyed through strong imagery. Through visual images we are able to see at first hand the manifestation of how trauma can be implied through the distorting of human form by the use of strong vibrant tonalities like a Francis Bacon, where the human form can take on a grotesque narrative that is strong and forceful — that is alluding to an energy resembling pain and suffering yet there is some element of beauty to engage the viewer. Bacon extracted a violent, anti-humanist message from Surrealism, Bacon was a traditionalist, painting with the bravura of Velasquez or Rembrandt. In an interview he elaborated on the brinkmanship required to 'trap' images, often via photographic mediation, at the point where they encoded the very pulse of nervous energy.[4]



[4] David Hopkins, After Modern Art 1945-2000, (Oxford University Press ,2000).69

Francis Bacon, Study of Henrietta Moraes Laughing , 1969. Image courtesy Christie's.. .Collection Samuel Irving "Si" Newhouse Jr., the heir to the Condé Nast publishing empire who assembled an unparalleled collection of postwar art.

In chapter one I discuss the literature that I believe best supports and substantiates the research question: How Has Colonial Transgenerational Trauma Created a Lost Generation? It was crucial to gather a broad range of literature in order to assist in signifying and demonstrating the research question and how this is directly linked to colonial history, and then to subsequently validate this by highlighting the contemporary issues which plague Aboriginal people and communities.

In chapter two, I use the term "other", drawing from Edward Said's 1979 book *Orientalism*, where he examines how the European colonisation of the Middle East described and categorised the Arab race. For me this is the basis of my discourse on how Aboriginal people have been positioned within the Australian social framework, and how this further contributes toward the fact that trauma is exacerbated through the psychological and emotional onslaught experienced, whenever Aboriginal issues are raised in media. In arriving at this conclusion, and to support my assessment, I demonstrate this through media and advertising showing them as the key perpetrators in positioning Aboriginal people as the other, through their own misguided and uninformed perspectives.

In order to substantiate and illustrate the topic under investigation, it was essential to bring lived experience, yarning and narratives from myself and of those who participated within the research. Chapter three shows how this was the most appropriate methodology to have undertaken. I was able to sit down with interviewees to provide a clear succinct overview of my topic of research, why I chose this topic and what it meant to me, and how their input into the research would further confirm and add immense value to the research. In denoting

that transgenerational trauma is passed on from generation to generation, I interviewed a diverse range of individuals from Elders, both male and female, to youth. The youth interviews were to illuminate the lost generation aspect to the research, where there is the belief that for at least a percentage of Aboriginal youth, through mixed parenting from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents, has in some way contributed to a lack of identity. With the elders, however, the narrative discourse was centred around oppressive government legislation they were impacted by, as well as being forced to live under segregation, missions and reserves, and the Stolen Generations. Those stories inform much of the visual practice, and signify the trauma experienced by those participants including myself.

Chapter four articulates how the visual practice begins with a presentation of colonial themes to signify the beginning of trauma. As the images are progressed, as a kind of timeline, they illustrate the complex frontier confrontations for land. Then moving into modern society, the visual practice reflects the oppressive government policies aimed at assimilation and the disintegration of Aboriginal culture. This is then is followed up with the lived experience narratives of myself and of the participants within the research. The practice is relational and grounded to this research and reaffirms the research argument. By creating a sequence of artworks on colonialism examining how non-Aboriginal artist presented this period of colonisation, I reveal the problematic issues around representation and memory. The visual ontology is presented through three phases, beginning with colonisation. The second phase reveals the socio-political construct used to govern and dismantle Aboriginal kinship structures and the emotional trauma emerging from this. In the final phase of the visual practice, I introduce the lived experience narratives, both personally and of those participants who contributed their stories to the research. Collectively, all of this informs how this has resonance toward the discourse and impact of transgenerational trauma. In

attempting to visualise this ontology, I had to consider what was the most effective method and style of practice suited to convey these collective visual narratives in the practice-led research.

Art movements such as the abstract expressionist COBRA art movement from Europe, and the more modern contemporary movement of neo-expressionism were influential in addressing the practice-led research. Jean-Michel Basquiat's street graffiti style certainly appealed. The use of rich vibrant warm and cool tones instinctively applied, clashing against each other, then layered by loose figurative forms, and in some cases subliminal text to convey further insights to the work, are a feature of Basquiat's work and are also found in the work of Australian Aboriginal artist Gordon Bennett.

In the conclusion, I discuss the research findings and integrate the relationship between literature, the yarnings and fieldwork, the broader field of visual practice and my own practice in order to reveal the impact of transgenerational trauma instigated and caused by colonisation.

Chapter One: Literature Review

This research contributes to an already growing movement of Aboriginal scholars addressing transgenerational trauma, such as Judy Atkinson, who has done tremendous work unpacking and reconstructing the connection to historical trauma and how this is manifest in current Aboriginal families and communities.

> Aboriginal peoples, as individuals and within their families and communities, have been profoundly hurt across generations by layered historic, social and cultural (complex) trauma. 'Closing the Gap' on Aboriginal 'disadvantage', must acknowledge that where there is hurting, there has to be a healing. In healing, people's Trauma Stories become the centrepiece for social healing action, where the storyteller is the teacher and the listener is the student or learner.[5]

Whilst Atkinson's research has looked at children and trauma, this research presents both theory and art practice as new knowledge that can reach across many sectors and industry in terms of education and further discussion. This knowledge further repositions me with a greater clarity, awareness and understanding of how we have been positioned and categorised by the dominant culture. Through this positioning we are "othered" and pushed to the margins and therefore it is in this space that the research is located.

Othering

The dynamic between understandings of dominant cultures and those categorised as "other" needs to be examined in order to understand how these spaces create inequities. This

[5] Judy Atkinson, "Educaring: A Trauma Informed Approach to Aboriginal Children Healing Needs," We Ali-li Pty, Ltd., 2012, 1, accessed 25 March 2021, https://www.oics.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Judy-Atkinson-Healing-From-Generational-Trauma-Workbook-We-Al-li.pdf.

deconstruction illuminates how western belief and attitudes create and represent their own nationalism, identity, and dominance against an assumed inferior — the *"other"*, a term coined by Edward Said, the author of *Orientalism.*

> Orientals or Arabs are thereafter shown to be gullible, "devoid of energy and initiative," much given to "fulsome flattery", intrigue, cunning, and unkind to animals; Orientals cannot walk on either road or a pavement (their distorted minds fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately, that roads and pavements are made for walking); Orientals are inveterate liars, they are "lethargic and suspicious," and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race.[6]

Said's analysis of the western perspective is an accurate description of how colonialism and its relationship to the colonised has evolved over many centuries. For example, when the Commonwealth of Australia was formed in 1901, Aboriginal people were excluded, twice. They were not citizens and were not to be counted in the census or population. One federal minister, King O'Malley, said there was no evidence to show that they were human.[7]

Ian McLean's book *White Aborigines* presents an interesting examination of colonial painters and their perceptions and interpretations of country depicted through landscape paintings. These paintings were considered a reflection and an attempt to capture the essence and spirit of the land: "While the picturesque painters of previous decades preferred a prospect and distance which imposed a certain order on the place, impressionists wanted to be in the

[6] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 39.
[7] Nigel Parbury, *Survival: A History of Aboriginal Life in New South Wales* (Sydney, NSW: Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 1986), 75.

landscape, as if this would enable them to imbibe its essential identity".[8] Said recalls Englishman Arthur James Balfour's lecture to the House of Commons in June 1910, relating to the occupation of Egypt:

> We know the civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country. We know it further back; we know it more intimately; we know more about it.[9]

In this, Said implies that the two great themes of power and knowledge underpinned the act of Britain's occupation of Egypt. This informs many aspects and interpretations in *Orientalism*, which will be expanded upon throughout this exegesis, in reference to how colonialism impacted Aboriginal Australia.

The benefits of this research will enable people to have a clearer understanding of colonialism and transgenerational trauma. Therefore, this research must resonate and reinterpret their own beliefs — that Europeans did not just arrive here and conquer — and as a result build a wonderful foundation for future generations of non-Aboriginal people to prosper from. We need to reconfigure understandings that what the colonisers left was a legacy of trauma that still impacts and pervades our fragile modern Aboriginal society today.

[8] Ian McLean, *White Aborigines: Identity Politics in Australian Art* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 54.
[9] Said, *Orientalism*, 32.

Transgenerational Trauma

This research also empowers Aboriginal youth and those participants involved, thereby instilling in them an awareness and understanding of how we as Aboriginal people have been positioned in society. With this newfound wisdom and knowledge, they will be able to articulate this discourse with family and the broader Aboriginal community. Lead to placing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships into context. The relevant theoretical perspectives employed here demonstrate that due to colonialism and transgenerational trauma, impacts have been felt across many generations. Because of these impacts, communities and families have become dislocated, leading to the creation of a lost generation.

In "Trauma: Transgenerational Transfer and Effects on Community Wellbeing", Atkinson et al. developed a five-generation account of the effects of violence on subsequent generations in South America.[10] This same account can effectively be mapped onto the history of Indigenous Australia:

> *1st Generation:* Conquered males were killed, imprisoned, enslaved or in some way deprived of the ability to provide for their families.
>
> *2nd Generation:* Many men overused alcohol and or drugs to cope with their resultant loss of cultural identity and diminished sense of self-worth. Unfortunately, government responses to emerging substance misuse problems have not always been effective and have directly and indirectly led to the traumatisation of individuals who had not been previously affected, and the exacerbation of trauma in those

[10] Atkinson, Nelson and Atkinson, "Trauma: Transgenerational Transfer and Effects on Community Wellbeing," 137.

already suffering the effects of trauma-related illnesses. The Queensland Government's solution to their developing substance use problem was to pass Aborigines Protection of Alcohol and Opium Act 1897, which enabled Indigenous offenders to be removed to and forced to remain on reservations, though without the support they required to overcome their substance use issues.

3rd Generation: The intergenerational effects of violence manifest in the increased prevalence of spousal abuse and other forms of domestic violence. The breakdown in the family unit that accompanied this violence 'required' caring governments of the day to remove 'at risk' children from their mothers and place them in the care of suitable, in many cases non-Indigenous, families. Unfortunately, the compassion shown for the children was not replicated in the case of the mothers, whose situations were not improved by government intervention.

4th Generation: Trauma begins to be re-enacted and directed at the spouse and the child; signifying a serious challenge to family unit and societal norms of accepted behaviour.

5th Generation: In this generation, the cycle of violence is repeated and compounded, as trauma begets violence, with trauma enacted through increasingly severe violence and increasing societal distress.

This depiction of the breakdown of a functional society within a five-generation timespan is identical to Aboriginal Australians where we witness the generational impact of historical trauma. Historical trauma is defined as the subjective experiencing and remembering of events in the mind of an individual or the life of a community, passed from adults to children in cyclic processes as "collective emotional and psychological injury over the life span and

across generations", which gives a comprehensive explanation of how trauma is transmitted across generations and the role of community networks in this transmission.[11] They say:

> The transgenerational effects of trauma occur via a variety of mechanisms including the impact on the attachment relationship with caregivers; the impact on parenting and the family functioning; the association with parental physical and mental illness; disconnection and alienation from extended family, culture and society. These effects are exacerbated by exposure to continuing high levels of stress and trauma including multiple bereavements and other losses, the process of vicarious traumatisation where children witness the on-going effect of the original trauma which a parent or other family member has experienced. Even where children are protected from the traumatic stories of their ancestors, the effects of the past trauma still impact on the children in the form of ill health, family dysfunction, community violence, psychological morbidity, and early mortality.[12]

The difficult issue we as Aboriginal people face is that our own transgenerational trauma because of colonisation is only in its infancy stages, it is not understood and/or even acknowledged by the broader non-Aboriginal community as the major contributing factor to the multitude of issues that plague our communities in contemporary society. This is even after both the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1987–1991),* and *Bringing Them Home* (1997), the report into the Stolen Generations, where the numerous recommendations that emerged through these investigations have not been responded to.

We ourselves had not linked our pain and suffering, depression, and anxiety to the burdens of our past. This is about trying to create that relationality through the image making in this

[11] Ibid., 138.
[12] Ibid., 136.

research stated via the narratives offered through interviews and my own lived experience, they become the images that connect to my research. When audiences can see first-hand through the literature and images of the oppressed, it is hoped they will connect and understand the true meaning of colonisation and its impact on Aboriginal people. Jack Saul, PhD, is assistant professor of clinical population and family health at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and director of the International Trauma Studies Program[13]. A resident of Manhattan discusses that when he first left New York City in October a month after 9/11, he had only then begun to realise that he was leaving a war-torn city.

> I felt distinctly separate from the people who had not been in New York City, who only witnessed 9/11 from afar through the media. Many people who live through a disaster or traumatic event tend to feel this way early on, that they are markedly different from others due to their personal experience. Having been in such proximity to the destruction of the WTC, I had felt firsthand the fragility of life and of national security in the face of terrorism. Outside of New York, I was more aware of this vulnerability and that others were less sensitive to the dangers we faced.[14]

This type of observation from a highly skilled professional who is experienced in working in the field of trauma, describes his own distinct difference from everyone else: his life has altered, he is not who he thought he was, but it is through social contact that the realisation of his 9/11 experience becomes profound. What I mean when I speak of being desensitised- I would imagine that this would have become a type of survival mode for many Aboriginal people who had lost their children or during the colonial wars when colonial expansion was ravaging our people and country. A sense of hopelessness must have permeated the hearts

[13] Jack Saul, Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster (London: Routledge 2014), 2.
[14] Jack Saul, *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster* (London: Routledge 2014), 70.

and minds of our ancestors. They witnessed such barbaric and inhumane conditions, and this is what I mean when I speak of being desensitised — we had become accustomed to the suffering, the grief and loss. Similarly, I had become accustomed to grief and poverty, through a cycle of trauma and abuse that I felt had become embedded in me and I am sure in many other Aboriginal people's psyche. Elizabeth Levang explains:

> Grief causes trauma to our physical, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive selves. Our chest and abdomen ache endlessly. We have trouble breathing, concentrating, and thinking. We experience isolation and economic pressures. Friends, family, and co-workers may be sources of consolation and encouragement, or they may be uncaring and lacking in the understanding. We may hear our fill of empty platitudes and mindless clichés, or we may be fortunate enough to discover a support network to reassure and assist us. Our religious faith may be tested as we wrestle with the thought of how something bad could happen to us. For far too many, death may seem like the only relief from the oppressive weight of grieving. When we try to ignore or deny grief, it finds ways of making itself known. Grief does not evaporate or dissipate because we ignore our emotions. Those emotions just express themselves in other, indirect, avenues. Addictions, abuse, or other destructive behaviors make poor substitutes for the work of grieving. For many, avoidance leads to despair and depression — an inability to find even a glimmer of hope on the sunniest day. Grief is not a gracious host. It takes its leave when it's ready, not when we're ready.[15]

Peter Levine, who developed the Somatic Experiencing body awareness approach to the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), presented his work with a woman who

[15] Elisabeth Levang, *When Men Grieve: Why Men Grieve Differently and How You Can Help* (Minneapolis, MN: Fairview Press, 1998), 12.

was in one of the World Trade Center towers on 9/11 when the plane struck. He showed a video of his work with her. As she told her story, Levine brought attention to the reactions she expressed with her body: the tension and constrictions in her movement, how she swayed her body as she described the building being hit by the plane, how she turned her head to the left as she recalled hearing someone on her left scream “Run!”. The woman’s body performed a parallel narrative to the one she was speaking.[16] Trauma has significant bodily affects, as do images, which is explored in this practice-led research.

The point I am trying to make here is that during my presentation outlining my research, I could observe the body language and the introverted narratives that was occurring with the Kinchela Boys Home (KBH) participants, particularly those who have not addressed their PSTD. I recall in my own counselling session on reflection, my throat would become tight, my body movements exaggerated. I could feel the tension in my body, and that energy that has been suppressed for such a long time, finally being given permission to be released from within. It can be a scary place to be, because once you are on that path you can’t just turn it off you have to allow and trust in yourself that everything is going to be okay. For many of these men this process has never been something they have been exposed to or engaged in, and this would be the case for many Aboriginal people who have not considered that addressing our own trauma and abuse is an option.

Amnesia and Guilt

The western framework, which has been built upon invasion over several centuries in Australia and longer in other Indigenous countries, now propagates an “*amnesia*. Here

[16] Saul, *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing*, 94, 95.

Andreas Huyssen's investigation into the constructions of memory and narratives of Germany in relation to the "changing status of memory and temporal perception in contemporary consumer culture" is significant for this exegesis and research.[17] For Huyssen, amnesia is produced in the context of the fading of generational memory. Huyssen uses the creation of the museum as a precursor to our obsession with memory, where the museum becomes a larger metaphor for holding culture and experience in everyday life. In the context of Australia, amnesia perpetuates the other and vice versa — these create false representations of Aboriginality.

This amnesia is realised as a type of unified belief and attitude to not break the code of silence, or engage in political dialogue that could prove destabilising to that framework, and whose foundations are established on notions of *guilt*. Norm Sheehan refers to the imagined moral centre where the colonial power marginalises Aboriginal culture whilst at the same time hiding its own unworthiness.[18] It is in this centre where othering, marginalisation and false representation occur. The struggle in bringing about social change has two beasts to contend with: political and corporate. However, it is the media that is the mouthpiece for the corporate world, which has the absolute power to convey and sway public opinion. What sounds and looks like racism in those opinions and views toward Aboriginal opposition or activism is shouted down, masqueraded as disrupting, creating division, disharmony toward mainstream society. It is in the narratives of the imagined moral centre where the other is created and it is here that we examine how this has had a detrimental effect on Aboriginal people.

[17] Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London: Routledge, 1995), 17.
[18] Norman Sheehan, "Some Call it Culture: Aboriginal Identity and the Imaginary Moral Centre," *Social Alternatives* 20, no. 3 (2001): 29–33.

Chapter Two: The Other

The practice-led research proposes how Aboriginal people are positioned and categorised as the other by the dominant culture, therefore it is in this space that the research is located and connects toward the paradigm of transgenerational trauma. The dynamic between understandings of dominant and categorised "other" cultures need to be examined in order to understand how these spaces create inequities. This deconstruction illuminates how western beliefs and attitudes create and represent their own nationalism, identity and dominance against the inferior — the "other", as defined by Edward Said in his 1972 book, *Orientalism* when speaking of the European dominance in reference toward the Middle East:

> *Orientalism* is very much a book tied to the tumultuous dynamic of contemporary history. I emphasize in it accordingly that neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other. That these supreme fictions lend themselves easily to manipulation and the organisation of collective passions has never been more evident than in our time, when mobilization of fear, hatred, disgust, and resurgent self-pride and arrogance — much of it having to do with Islam and the Arabs on one side, "we" the Westerners on the other — are very large-scale enterprises.[19]

Said's analysis of the western perspective is an accurate description of how colonialism and its relationship to the colonised has evolved over many centuries.

[19] Said, *Orientalism*, xvii.

Visual Histories

Ian McLean presents an interesting paradigm of colonial painters, such as the perceptions and interpretations of Aboriginal people depicted through paintings by both French and English artists:

> The English artists showed a grotesque, deformed race comically strutting in a strange land. By contrast, a few years later French artists with Baudin's exploration party made sympathetic studies of Aborigines and their environs which showed a proud, dignified stoic people.[20]

This is how the coloniser viewed Aboriginal people: as savages. The bulk of paintings made in the first years of colony are by the convict artist Thomas Watling and an unknown painter (or painters) whom Bernard Smith called the Port Jackson Painters. They seem deliberately intent on conveying the perceived fierceness, horror and exoticism of Aborigines. These paintings were considered a reflection on and an attempt to capture the essence and spirit of the land, peoples and country (Figure 1).

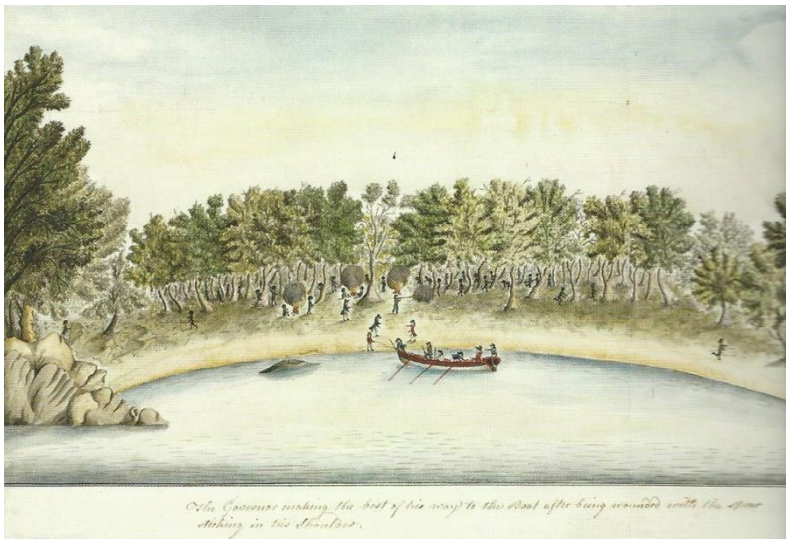


Figure 1. Port Jackson Painter, circa 1790. Watling Collection.

[20] McLean, *White Aborigines*, 25, 26.

What was evident in those paintings was a lack of moral presence and education about the subject, a perspective and ideology that has not changed in two hundred and thirty years.[21] McLean references Hans Heysen describing him as the first Australian painter to make the desert an icon of non-Aboriginal Australia, yet he never showed Aboriginal peoples in these landscapes. Instead, he depicted *terra nullius*, a term expressed by the Europeans to rationalise Australia as empty, belonging to no one, void of habitation, a land that was not work in the European context and figure 2 reinforces this notion or belief. However, like a mirror, *terra nullius* looks us back in the eye, as if the old river gum depicted by Heysen are the traces or fingerprints of the original owners, which cannot be erased.

Figure 2. Hans Heysen, *Droving into the Light*, 1914–21. State Art Collection of Western Australia.

[21] Ibid., 138.

Hence, Heysen's paintings, icons of Australian identity, proclaim the theft of Aboriginal land. Here we see art portraying as well as revealing a country that has been conquered not only spiritually but also physically. Painters such as Heysen, have in their minds acquired the true essence of the land , and Aboriginal narratives never did figure in his work, which to me, suggests no awareness or empathy toward Aboriginal people as they are but part of the flora and fauna. When you look at the water colourist who arrived on Sydney's shore in the early colonial period of invasion, they romanticised the scene by depicting Aboriginal people in the distance, as part of the landscape, flora and fauna. The history that we look back on is a constant reminder of where Aboriginal people's trauma originates from.

My artistic interpretation on the period of colonisation is presented through figures of *Slavery* (figure 11). The intention and meaning behind this artwork is in its demonstration of a loss of culture. It is also a response to how non-Indigenous painters in McLean's *White Aborigines* positioned Aboriginal people in the background, as the colonising of Australia expanded across the painted landscape, they were not painting the trauma being inflicted upon Aboriginal people. Conversely, my image brings Aboriginal people to the foreground and contemporises the past, demonstrating to the viewer that the past still lives on in Aboriginal people because there has been reconciliation or healing.

A Framework of 'Representation'

As discussed, the western framework premised on guilt and amnesia perpetuates and exponentially grows. The struggle in bringing about social change has two beasts to contend with: one political, one corporate. However, it is the media that is the mouthpiece for the corporate world, which has the absolute power to convey and sway public opinion. What sounds and looks like racism in those opinions and views toward Aboriginal activism is bluntly met with staunch vitriol from all levels of public life, claiming the uprising as disrupting,

creating division, disharmony toward mainstream society essentially unsettling both the conscience and unconscious framework.

The theoretical framework employed in the exegesis and practice is premised on reconfiguring understandings of how “otherness” is a major contributor to the trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The argument presented by Said is explored to identify and define the notion of “otherness”. What has become more noticeable in Australia is that Aboriginal people are seen as isolated, separate to all other races and cultures, especially as represented through media and advertising.

Figure 3. Nescafe Advertisement, 2019.

For example, figure 3 is an image from a Nescafé advertisement depicting a ‘traditional’ looking man sitting in the outback drinking coffee from a tin mug: this is how otherness is represented today. Yet in the very same commercial, other cultures are presented and depicted as working people, family, artistic healthy people who appear to have a purpose. Clearly the advertising industry is represented by narrow-minded, middle class non-Aboriginal people. They see all Aboriginal people as living in isolation away from modern

society, and as such deliberately position Aboriginal people as remote and distant, reminiscent of the early colonial painters positioning Aboriginal people amongst the flora and fauna without purpose, the wondering soul. This contributes to the imaginary moral centre. The media today ensures that notions of the "other" are widened, just as 'closing the gap' continues to widen. Closing the Gap is an intensely focused health campaign designed to address the widening health disparity between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal. The premise for this campaign emerged from staggering health statistics that see Aboriginal males dying seventeen years earlier than non-Aboriginal males and ten years for Aboriginal women compared to non-Aboriginal women. Aboriginal people are the irremovable stain in non-Aboriginal consciousness, therefore the best way to deal with 'the Aboriginal' is to subliminally degrade them depicting them as they see them — as unhealthy human beings. There is a long tradition of this in visual culture.

Figure 4. Australian Government Health advertisement campaign, 2018.

Case in point, a large-figured Aboriginal woman is given perhaps the most advertising airtime that any Aboriginal person has been afforded in Australian advertising that one can remember. But what is she speaking about? The negative impacts of smoking. This only reinforces the narrative and perspective that to the wider non-Aboriginal public, all Aboriginal

people are sick people. John Singleton, a media mogul in Australia, was once quoted during a story on *Sixty Minutes* back in the 1980s about the lack of Aboriginal representation in the media. The fact that *Sixty Minutes* felt the story was warranted in the first place spoke volumes. However, Singleton's response was "If you put an Aboriginal face to a product, the product would not sell."[22] A statement such as this, especially from someone who has enormous power in Australian media, profoundly influences how advertising executives would shun Aboriginal representation for many decades to come. What it did was reinforced the notion of the "other", us and them. Aboriginal people are not a part of the Australian franchise. And to many non-Aboriginal, what this says is that those "other" people in our country are living horrible and unhealthy lives. Everything gets amplified in damning ways when non-Aboriginal people present Aboriginal issues.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the national news consistently presented Aboriginal people, particularly in the streets of Redfern in inner–city Sydney, as drunken people fighting and laying about in the streets. At the time I was in my teens and would have to go to school and be ridiculed and shamed by fellow students, this was another form of underlining trauma that I and other Aboriginal children would have to endure throughout their education. Unfortunately, education has for many decades played a significant role in shaping the intellect of non-Aboriginal people's beliefs and attitudes toward Aboriginal people. It is these structures that further perpetuate false representations. For Linda Tuhiwai Smith,

> The most obvious forms of discipline were through exclusion, marginalization and denial. Indigenous ways of knowing were excluded and marginalized. This happened to Indigenous views about land, for example, through the forced imposition of individualized title, through taking land away for 'acts of rebellion',

[22] This was stated on the program *Sixty Minutes* and the researcher clearly remembers this discussion, either 1982 or 1983.

> and through redefining land as 'waste land' or 'empty land' and then taking it away.[23]

The educational institution is one that has propagated the marginalisation of Indigenous peoples. The education system is out of date, yet it continues to perpetuate an amnesia that is only damaging and traumatic to all Aboriginal youth and disadvantages non-Aboriginal youth.

> What if I told you?
> The version of history you were taught
> In school was heavily revised to favour
> Your own nation's agenda while hiding
> Its crimes. And in doing so fostered an unrealistic
> Sense of false patriotism used to manufacture
> Your allegiance to a corporate entity masquerading
> as your government?[24]

The above quote, whilst it is extracted from a humour website, is something many minority groups who have been colonised globally would agree with. It is an accurate statement that implies that the very education system taught to generations upon generations has been the vessel that has enabled a strong patriotic narrative to evolve in Australia, aided by conservative politicians and media identities alike. But what has also emerged out of this is a white privilege view of seeing another culture or cultures, because everything is shaped and framed from their own white privilege perspective. Whenever this patriotic framework is

[23] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd/ Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999), 1.
[24] "What If I Told You...," iFunny, 24 July, 2016, https://ifunny.co/picture/what-if-i-told-you-that-the-version-of-history-zvxsKJY34.

challenged, it is clear to see that the conservatives within the political system are speaking with their media colleague mates, such as Andrew Bolt, Alan Jones, and more broadly Sky News, getting on their soapboxes to rally support from the Australian community, via talkback radio, social media — powerful tools for discrediting any alternative message. Theirs is, and will always be, framing the debate and filtering of the message in a way that creates a favourably imbalanced perspective that leans towards a conservative ideology, which makes it very difficult to challenge.

Figure 5. *Daily Telegraph* article, 2015.

The University of New South Wales says Captain James Cook 'invaded' Australia in 1788, rejecting the term *'settled*, which has commonly been used.[25] Academics and experts have rejected suggestions that the University of NSW language 'tool kit' for its students is political correctness gone mad. Debate has exploded over the set of guidelines, which refer to the invasion, the *Daily Telegraph* ran an outraged front page slamming the guide as a 'whitewashing' and rewriting of Australia's history. The guidelines, in the university's Diversity Toolkit, says “Australia was not settled peacefully, it was invaded, occupied and

[25] “UNSW's Diversity Guidelines Spark Captain Cook 'Invasion' Debate,” SBS News, 30 March 2016, https://www.sbs.com.au/news/unsw-s-diversity-guidelines-spark-captain-cook-invasion-debate.

colonised". Interestingly, this was leaked to the *Daily Telegraph*, which then generated heated debates when published on its front page, notably coming from shock jocks Alan Jones and Ray Hadley of 2GB Radio in Sydney, and the multitude of callers who were swept up in the vitriol. This perverse amnesia, which is quickly whipped up into a frenzy and heavily supported by right-wing conservative liberals across the country, reflects a culture that is intolerant, rigid, and hostile to the truth.

For a country to heal, it must first recognise and speak of a truthful history, a history that acknowledges the past atrocities of which generations have profited upon. Clearly Australia is a country that refuses to grow both emotionally and spiritually. If countries such as South Africa can move toward truth-telling commissions[26], where allowing victims of apartheid to express their pain and tell their stories has enabled healing, then why can't Australia do the same? Monuments of remembrance are ubiquitous in Berlin. The city has at least 20 memorials to victims of the Holocaust – most notably Peter Eisenman's vast 19,000-sq metre Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

[26] https://www.britannica.com/topic/Truth-and-Reconciliation-Commission-South-Africa

A flower laid on an individual Stolperstein in Berlin. Photograph: (c) Sean O'Connor

But the memorial envisioned for Hirsch is different. Just under 10 sq cm, it might be easy to miss: a small brass stone, embedded directly underfoot, in the cobblestones of the street.

A flower laid on an individual Stolperstein in Berlin. Photograph: (c) Sean O'Connor

Known as "Stolpersteine", or "stumbling stones", there are now more than 70,000 such memorial blocks laid in more than 1,200 cities and towns across Europe and Russia. Each commemorates a victim outside their last-known freely chosen residence.

The stones represent a new vision of urban remembrance[27]. Therefore, if Germany can erect monuments and artistic sculptures throughout its cities in (honour of) that acknowledge the Jewish holocaust, it shows how a country of compassion, courage, and faith can growth both emotionally and spiritually. However, in Australia there appears to strong conservatives and media personalities challenging opposing truthful history, only spreading hate and separatism. This only compounds the trauma that Aboriginal people have to endure. This is the framework that Aboriginal Australia need to disrupt.

[27] https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/feb/18/stumbling-stones-a-different-vision-of-holocaust-remembrance

Further to this, Aboriginal people are instantly vilified when protesting injustices and they are told to get over it, move on, like a parent scolding a child. The lack of compassion and intolerance demonstrated by sections of the non-Aboriginal community toward Aboriginal peoples regarding social and political issues is today very loud and clear. Conservative non-Aboriginal people will not be made to feel ashamed by their proud conquering history. They believe that there was no invasion, Australia was settled peacefully, and history in their opinion cannot and will not be rewritten. Aboriginal people, the "other", are told to accept this, which only reinforces Aboriginal people's ongoing trauma.

The literature sourced brings together theories on emotional trauma, transgenerational trauma, race and racism and the consequent effect on identity and memory. Writers such as Said, Huyssen, McLean and Atkinson provide knowledge to the research that connects back to the practice. This belief has been repeated throughout history and can be linked with most Indigenous cultures throughout the world who have been colonised under this premise. Said unpacks this philosophy and demonstrates how orientalism is also perpetuated within modern contemporary society today. We live in the year 2021, yet Aboriginal people are confronted yet gain by the trauma of their past. The most painful thing about this is that politicians have the power to influence change but do nothing, through fear of losing political support from conservatives, as was clearly the case with the Whitlam Government in the 1970s. Sarah Maddison explains:

> In the 1970s there was a growing sense among Aboriginal leaders and activists that the Australian state was beginning to recognise their status as first nations peoples and to make policy accordingly.[28]

[28] Sarah Maddison, *Black Politics: Inside the Complexity of Aboriginal Political Culture* (Sydney, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2009), 6.

Progressive social changes were emerging under Gough Whitlam. He brought into legislation the 1976 Land Rights Act as one of his key policies, perhaps drawing from the significant and historical gesture, when pouring sand back into the hand of Vincent Lingiari, an Elder of the Gurindji people from the Northern Territory in 1975.

Figure 6. Prime Minister Gough Whitlam pours soil into the hand of traditional land owner Vincent Lingiari, Northern Territory, 1975. Mervyn Bishop https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/58.2000/

Linguiri and the Gurindji people had staged the longest ever recorded strike. Maddison, notes:

> New political struggles over land rights began to emerge in the 1960s: 1963 saw the Yolngu bark petition sent to Canberra in protest over the mining of their land on Gove Peninsula, and 1966 witnessed the Gurindji walk-off from Wave Hill station.[29]

[29] Ibid., 5.

Lord Vestey, an English cattle baron paid Aboriginal stockmen in tobacco, flour, tea and sugar rather than actual wages, Non-Aboriginal stockmen were paid good wages. This demonstrated the harsh inequality that Aboriginal men endured to provide for their families. The greatest kick in the guts to the Gurindji mob was that this was their land and because of colonisation they were dispossessed of it. Maddison states:

> The early frontier history of the British colonisation of this land has been well documented ... This was a violent time that saw Aboriginal people dispossessed of their land, often through armed conflict.[30]

The Politics of Race

There was and is nothing done about reconfiguring the curriculum being used in Australian schools, and it remains a defining part of Australia's vernacular history. My own daughter in her first year in high school has also been forced to endure racism in the classroom. She was traumatised because of the lesson on Australian history, not wanting to participate in those lessons. The students were less than complimentary. Unfortunately, high school is somewhat a true reflection of how our society relates and behaves. Having to console my daughter and explain how and why the actions of those students are the way they are, and that is because they learn what their parents learnt, and that is the method upon which social changes will be forever resistant. Here we have two generations experiencing trauma in high school based on the colour of their skin and their heritage and the curriculum being taught.

One of the most defining moments to occur regarding race relations within Australia emerged from the sporting field back in 2015, related to the Australian Football League.

[30] Ibid., 4.

Sydney Swans player Adam Goodes, whilst playing against Collingwood at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, had objected to being called an ape by a young female Collingwood supporter. Goodes upon hearing this turned around and pointed to the offender (figure 7.) and then approached security, explaining what had just happened. Security then escorted the young girl from the stadium. What was to ensue from this moment on would be close to two years of heated debate primarily within mainstream conservative media personalities, whose overinflated opinions espoused intense vitriol against Goodes over his action toward the young girl in question.

Figure 7. Adam Goodes points out a Collingwood supporter for racial abuse, 2015.

The media had felt that Goodes over-dramatised the incident, claiming that he was wrong in embarrassing the young girl, that she did not understand her comments and that Goodes simply overacted. The media and sporting public wanted blood, and they set about getting it anyway they could. A week later, Collingwood Football Club CEO Eddie Maguire had commented on his breakfast radio program that ‘Goodsey’, as he is referred to by Maguire,

should be the promotion for the upcoming theatre production of *King Kong* in Melbourne. Of course, there was backlash and wide media coverage about this, considering what Goodes had gone through only a week previous. However, Maguire was let off lightly due to his level of status within media and sport. It simply became fish and chip paper, so to speak.[31]

The point being made here is that this again contributes to the ongoing trauma that all Aboriginal people would have been feeling at the time. They did not have a platform to express their disgust at the unhealthy negative attacks by the power of white media. There was little media support of Adam Goodes, and Aboriginal voices were not heard. To say that sport and politics do not meet is ridiculous, considering that Australian sport has boycotted South Africa over apartheid in both rugby union and cricket, yet in the same breath denies Aboriginal people an opportunity to express their pride in their culture. For example, when Goodes did a celebratory war dance during the AFL Indigenous round, it was deemed too aggressive for non-Aboriginal people and was viewed as an act to fuel the fire. Support for Adam Goodes came several years later, with two documentaries in 2019: *The Final Quarter*[32] and *The Australian Dream.*[33] These enabled the views and perspectives of Aboriginal people across the country to be expressed and heard in the media. The saddest thing about all of this was that in the history of sport in this country, Adam Goodes will go down in history as the first sports person to be booed into retirement. Unlike many sportspeople he was not given the opportunity to leave the sport gracefully and on his own terms.

[31] Of course, since the publication of *Do Better: Independent Review into Collingwood Football Club's Responses to Incidents of Racism and Cultural Safety in the Workplace*, 2021*,* Maguire has stood down from his position as Collingwood Football Club's president. https://resources.afl.com.au/afl/document/2021/02/01/0bd7a62e-7508-4a7e-9cb0-37c375507415/Do_Better.pdf.

[32] For more information see https://thefinalquarterfilm.com.au/about.

[33] For more information see https://tiff.net/events/the-australian-dream.

This was one of the key reasons the researcher chooses to specifically focus on both advertising and media identities such as Jones, Bolt, and Hadley, and their treatment of Adam Goodes, to simply illuminate the discourse of how Aboriginal people are marginalised, isolated and treated as the "other". Australian media outlets — apart from NITV, ABC and SBS — generally have a narrow, sensationalist and ignorant view of Aboriginal people, and they frequently position Aboriginal people as less than positive role models in society: we are not a part of the franchise. Maddison discusses:

> The media are thought to be the most persistent culprit in perpetuating negative views of Aboriginal people, an issue raised by my interviewees in no uncertain terms. In Muriel Bamblett's view, the media are: The ones that persecute us, they are the ones depriving us of rights, they are the ones that are disempowering us. They make us hated in our own country … The only time you ever read anything it is bad … The media must change, and they have to be held accountable for what they're doing to Indigenous people in this country.[34]

So, when we consider the comments made by media mogul John Singleton — "put an Aboriginal face to a product and it will not sell"— this perception still holds ground, and it is depressing and what it implies. The implication is we are worthless, and we are nothing, and this is traumatic. I am now in my fifties and I still see this perception played out at a subliminal level. This tells young Aboriginal children that they have no future, they are irrelevant. When you see that the rates of suicide for Aboriginal youth is the highest of any cohort, it would suggest the messages being conveyed by the media and advertising have a negative impact on the lives of Aboriginal people and youth.

[34] Maddison, *Black Politics*, 215.

The attack on Adam Goodes, led by Jones, Bolt and Hadley, was also traumatic for Aboriginal people, because we had no voice to protect and support Goodes. All of the power was in the hand of non-Aboriginal media identities and they orchestrated the hatred and vitriol. They used this power to divide opinion and to incite racism against a lone Aboriginal sportsman, and when challenged about their racism, they simply denied it as racism, because *they* know what racism is? This was unprecedented in the history of sport in this country, because no sportsperson has ever been booed into retirement because of his pride in his heritage. What this moment illustrated is that racism in Australia is alive and very healthy. Furthermore, what racism does is traumatises those on the receiving end and Aboriginal people are always the victims of this, therefore this further contributes to our ongoing trauma within society. Moreover, this continually perpetuates false representation of us, our race and contributes to ongoing amnesia.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology (Interviews and Yarning)

> Aboriginal trauma expert, Judy Atkinson has argued that policies of child removal have produced a group of profoundly hurt people living with multiple layers of traumatic distress, chronic anxiety, physical ill-health, mental health distress, fears, depression, substance abuse, and high imprisonment rates. For many, alcohol and other drugs have become the treatment of choice, because there are no other treatments available.[35]

The research methodology is a culmination of the researcher's own lived experience as well as the lived experience of participants from varying generational cohorts. There is no separation between these relationalities:

> The methodological approaches to research are the content of the research and vice versa. They have a two-way agency. These are inseparable in an Indigenous worldview and it is in this light that we not only reassign axiology to this framework, but offer a relational way of reconfiguring research within the general knowledge economy.[36]

What this methodology proposes is that these collective experiences are both validated and confirmed through those relational narratives, that colonisation and transgenerational trauma is central in creating a lost generation of Aboriginal people and youth. The narratives that are expressed describe a common theme: the interruption and damage to child-rearing

[35] Ibid., 209.
[36] Brian Martin, "Methodology is Content: Indigenous Approaches to Research and Knowledge," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 49, no. 14 (2017): 9.

practices within families and communities, from the beginning of colonisation right through to contemporary society.

The narratives of participants from Kinchela Boys Home, the Family Wellbeing Program and the researcher all offer similarities of experiences related to abandonment, neglect and a feeling of being uncared for. Whilst the researcher may have felt this, this was not the case — it was a case of nature versus nurture. This notion was part of the reckoning that if the carer has not received nurturing, then how are they to give it. If you don't know what something feels like or looks like, then there was no modelling. Many of the participants experienced this, particularly those of the Stolen Generations, suffering a great loss of kinship and connection. As discussed, Atkinson speaks on a trauma-informed approach to Aboriginal children's healing needs and the process of healing involves the narratives of trauma to be heard as a way of social healing action.

The narratives collected from the interviews provide a visual foundation towards the art practice, between the researcher's lived experience and the continuing lived experiences of Aboriginal people and youth today. These experiences bring to the foreground the reality and connection to the intergenerational transmission of trauma. Here we are reminded of Blanco's five-generation account of trauma. The hypothesis behind this practice is grounded in the belief that trauma and violence can be passed down from generation to generation. Just as racism is passed on generationally, so to is violence and trauma.

The repetition of violence and dysfunction is seen within some communities and families as normal behaviour when in fact it is abnormal, and I, like many other Aboriginal people, have been born into this way of life. The early years of any life must firstly begin with a solid foundation, and in traditional life this certainly was the case. Nurturing was fundamental as

kinship structures were strong. The foundation for raising children is now a pattern of dysfunction and violence in some cases. The future of Aboriginal children, particularly those children that are removed from family kinship, has led to, and always will lead to a loss of identity and culture. This eventually causes more trauma, where there are many Aboriginal people across Australia enduring this existence.

The interviews and yarnings from a range of Aboriginal peoples illuminate this discussion further. I chose to interview several members of the Family Wellbeing Program, an Aboriginal Youth Leadership Program for 14 to 18-year-olds, on the Central Coast of New South Wales, where the I was was previously employed. This group were predominantly youth at risk, displayed socially inept communication skills, and often dealt with anger by violence: they also lacked cultural identity. Several 16-year-olds volunteered to be interviewed, demonstrating courage and strength. Aboriginal Elders who were impacted by the Stolen Generations policy were also interviewed, or more so having a yarn. This was a less invasive approach with specific open questions, due to the sensitivity and unresolved issues these individuals were carrying. Shawn Wilson discusses yarning as a talking circle where narratives and knowledge are discussed in a culturally appropriate way.

> The talking circle is a ritual used among many different Indigenous people. In a talking circle, one person starts by holding a stone, feather, talking stick or other object. The person holding this ‘sacred’ object who then has the floor as long as he or she holds it, and has the opportunity to speak (or choose not to, as the case may be). When he or she is finished, the object is passed along to the next person in the circle, who then has then floor. This continues until everyone in the circle has the opportunity to hold the object and to speak if they choose to. Remember

> that you are building spirituality, so don't be afraid to introduce the sacredness of your talking stick or rock.[37]

Information and support were provided to those before interviews and yarning's were initiated. Those who took part in the yarning's were aware of or have been involved with counselling support either through Headspace or local Aboriginal health services.

The research postulate was that Aboriginal people endure similar lived experiences manifested through poor housing, poor health, limited education, long-term unemployed or the high rates of incarceration particularly among women and youth, symptoms of colonialism and transgenerational trauma. This contention concurred with by Pat Dudgeon, a senior researcher in the field of Indigenous mental health, and they stated this in relation to Indigenous trauma on the ABC's *Q&A* program, which aired on Monday 5th October, 2015. Dudgeon states, "there is a link between the past and present, and trauma and as a result of this, trauma is passed on from generation to generation".[38]

The most alarming suicide rates known internationally are those of the Kimberley region of Western Australia.[39] Aboriginal youth in regional areas such as the Central Coast have limited knowledge or experience about Aboriginal culture. Some have never visited an Aboriginal site or knew they existed. Others have no knowledge of what language group they belong to, and therefore no answer to the question "who's your mob?" This shows the loss of identity that is vital for configuring where you locate your ancestry and cultural lineage. This is how we as Aboriginal people identify with each other when meeting for the

[37] Shawn Wilson, S. *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 4.
[38] ABC TV, "Q&A FactCheck: Indigenous Suicide," YouTube, 5 October 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glAS-YgsSK0.
[39] Nathan Hondros, "If the Kimberley was a Country, it would have the Worst Suicide Rate in the World," *WA Today*, 8 February 2019, https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/if-the-kimberley-was-a-country-it-would-have-the-worst-suicide-rate-in-the-world-20190207-p50wem.html.

first time. It is part of our contemporary protocol, reinforcing one's understanding about their family kinship. But colonisation, through integration and interracial relationships, changed the colour of our skin pigmentation, thereby creating further trauma, and those who want to identify encounter suspicion by those of much dark pigmentation who have endured much racism because of their darker pigmentation. This creates division among community and has created a kind of class system among Aboriginal people. For instance, you may progress further in life if you have light pigmentation and do not have the features of Aboriginality.

There are similarities between those Indigenous countries who were colonised: all have the symptoms of transgenerational trauma, revealing identical issues such as housing, health, education, employment, incarceration, social inequality and disparity. This perspective demonstrates that colonialist ideology is premeditated, a formula and framework used in the dispossessing and eradicating Indigeneity from existence, or to have them socially disadvantaged because it empowers the oppressor. This is then further exacerbated by racist ideologies, beliefs and attitudes, something that is below the surface of Australian culture, and passed on from generation to generation. This dynamic of intergenerational racism and discrimination intensifies the trauma that is passed on from generation to generation of Aboriginal people. This practice-led research is a way of reminding, and of initiating deeper conversations which need to be had — more truth telling.

Kevin Gilbert, a strong advocate and activist for the rights of Aboriginal people, notes Indigenous people in Australia are still grappling with the effects of colonisation. Gilbert states

> As invasion occurred, Aborigines began to sicken physically and psychologically: [T]hey were hit by the full blight of an alien way of thinking. They were hit by the

> intolerance and uncomprehending barbarism of a people intent only on progress in material terms, a people who never credited that there could be cathedrals of the spirit as well as stone.[40]

Judy Atkinson's paper, "Childhood Trauma in Aboriginal Communities"[41] references how families that are broken down become dysfunctional. Kathleen Brown-Rice's paper "Examining the Theory of Historical Trauma among Native Americans" presented identical research findings about transgenerational trauma and how this has shaped individuals, families, and communities in Native American communities.[42] Like Native American peoples, Aboriginal families were disposed of culture and country, placed on missions or reserves, required permission to travel the state, and were forced to apply for exemption certificates — another psychological and emotional blow bureaucracy used for controlling the lives of Aboriginal people.

In February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had formerly apologised and said "Sorry" to the Stolen Generations.[43] Following on from this moment, one would have expected that strategic planning around healing would have been forthcoming. Sadly, the response is underwhelming. Whilst the Healing Foundation has chartered to work with Aboriginal communities in developing strategies around addressing their trauma, the funding to support projects such as this is minuscule.

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[40] Kevin Gilbert, *Living Black: Blacks Talk to Kevin Gilbert* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, 1977), 2.

[41] Atkinson, We Al-li Healing Sharing Regeneration, Working with Children A trauma informed approach to Aboriginal Children's Healing Needs

[42] Kathleen Brown-Rice, "Examining the Theory of Historical Trauma Among Native Americans," *The Professional Counsellor* 3 (2013): 117-130.

[43] "Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples," Australian Parliament, accessed 25 March 2021, https://www.aph.gov.au/Visit_Parliament/Whats_On/Exhibitions/Custom_Media/Apology_to_Australias_Indigenous_Peoples.

Lived experience and participant interviews.

The my father was part of the Stolen Generation. He along with his three brothers were placed in Kinchela Boys Home, situated east of Kempsey, New South Wales. The trauma and abuse my father experienced through Kinchela was profound, and it would sabotage and haunt him for the short life that he had. The relationship he had with my mother was abusive and violent; unfortunately, these are the only memories I have of my father. I needed to know or understand this man, why he was the way he was, and what caused him to be so fearful and insecure and all the other emotions that accompany these thoughts and feelings. I often questioned myself: had I inherited these emotions thoughts and feelings? Did his trauma and abuse get passed onto me?

Even as a young child asking my mother why I was born black, and why we do always seem to not have much, even as a young child the researcher could see the disparity of having extraordinarily little. The vicious cycle has continued over many decades, with Aboriginal youth bringing children into this world, living in disparity and poverty without the proper guidance and support, and they are unaware that they are carrying with them transgenerational trauma.

Several interviews were conducted with members of Kinchela Boys Home, an institution that had been in operation for some ninety years. This institution reflects strong similarities to that of Don Dale Youth Detention Centre based in the Northern Territory.[44] Kinchela has a dark and painful history, recorded in the *Bringing Them Home* report, which was developed from the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal children from their families, and spoke of the brutality dished out by the guards.[45] For example, the whipping tree, which boys

[44] Australian Broadcasting Corporation, "Four Corners: Australia's Shame," last updated 3 June 2020, https://www.abc.net.au/4corners/australias-shame-promo/7649462.
[45] Australian Human Rights Commission, "Bringing them Home Report (1997)," accessed 25 March 2021, https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/bringing-them-home-report-1997.

would be tied to and whipped, and other stories such as talk of ‘running the gauntlet’, an act of running through a line of boys either side as you are hit. This was instigated and encouraged by guards, and those that did not participate would be punished. The most horrific stories to emerge from the interviews were that young boys died at the hands of guards dishing out punishment. It is said that if the land of Kinchela were excavated, you would uncover the remains of those boys. Even worse, the Macleay River, which flows just meters from Kinchela, may also contain skeletal remains, as there are rumours that deceased boys were thrown into the river. However, the many bull sharks roaming this stretch of water could feed on the remains to ensure any evidence of murder was covered up.

My father had turned toward alcohol and it is unfortunately what I remember most about him, which is unfair. I had known about him being a member of Kinchela as I grew into my later teenage years, but I certainly didn’t know much about Kinchela only that it was a brutal place. I recall Mum saying that at night she would be woken by Dad screaming and yelling in his sleep and would have to wake him up to stop this. When I hear about moments like this, I can only surmise that what dad was expressing in his nightmares were the horrors of Kinchela. Like many of the Kinchela men, Dad self-medicated through alcohol, and unfortunately that is when we would see the worst of him. I am only one generation away from transgenerational trauma on my father’s side, and two generations away on my mother’s side. My grandmother was taken away from her mother, who was a traditional Bundjalung woman. My grandmother spoke language, but I only discovered this toward the end of her life when her two older sisters who were ‘full blood’ Aboriginal, hence why they were not removed under this diabolical policy. A full blood Aboriginal child would remain with family, however those not of full blood would ultimately be removed and placed in institutions. They visited my grandmother in her home at Kogarah to help reconnect her with

language before she passed on. My grandmother was taken away because she was not ‘full blood’ like her two older sisters were. She was trained as a domestic servant, like many young Aboriginal girls during this shameful period of Australian history.

During my time in Kempsey, whilst attending the Annual General Meeting for Kinchela Boys Home, I was able to reconnect with members of my father’s family. As the afternoon progressed, one of my uncles, a shy man, had become slightly intoxicated, and was talking about his mother, a woman who had been taken and placed in Cootamundra Girls Home. Cootamundra also had a harsh history, as did Bomaderry Girls Home, which was located on the South Coast of New South Wales. He stated that as a child he would always want to know about this strange marking on his mother’s arm. This, he said, was always ignored by his mother; she never wanted to discuss his curiosity. Then as he got a little older, one day his father said to his mother, “He is old enough to know about this”, so she explained that as a young girl when she was taken from her family and had arrived at Cootamundra Girls Home, where she was branded like cattle with a number like all girls that were taken there. They, like the Kinchela boys, were only a number, that’s how they were referred to. And it was the only way they were communicated to — as a number.

Today when men from Kinchela speak at conferences, they introduce themselves as the number they were given. My uncle had become quite emotional, because as he was sitting with members of Kinchela Boys Home, who finally, along with women from Cootamundra, were now beginning to be compensated for their grief and abuse they had endured. He said that my mother was never compensated, and I thought to myself, neither was my grandmother. Every child that was taken were trained as a domestic servant or labourer, essentially, they were modern day slaves. I would hear stories from my mother that my grandmother would work in elite, wealthy areas around the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney,

such as Rose Bay and Watsons Bay. This working relationship must have continued after her apprentice days as a young woman, when she returned to Sydney raising her own children. My grandmother carried much grief and sorrow. She had walked away from her first marriage, where she left behind three daughters. One of those daughters was my Aunty Ruby Langford Ginibi, an author who wrote about this experience and her own life in her autobiography *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (1988).[46] My Aunty Ruby also received an honorary doctorate from Monash University for her contribution to literature. I cannot imagine how painful that must have been for my aunts, to have their mother walk away from them, and I cannot judge my grandmother for her decision. All that I can say is that with my grandmother, having been taken away from her mother, would have in some way desensitised herself emotionally.

There were, however, other contributing circumstances surrounding my grandmother's decision, and it would be unfair to comment or to make judgement about those decisions. Obviously, this was a painful time for many members of my extended family and has not ever been resolved other than through my aunt's autobiography, which I understand needed to be written. Stories like these needed to be told to gain some closure and acknowledgement of the pain, grief and loss and I felt my Aunty Ruby was able to achieve this. I recall the times when she would visit my grandmother to gather research for her autobiography, so I would like to believe that both achieved some closure to their painful pasts before my grandmother passed away. Unfortunately, this was not the case for my Aunty Ruby's two other sisters, who never did reconcile with my grandmother.

[46] Tara June Winch, "On 'Don't Take Your Love to Town,' by Ruby Langford Ginibi," *Griffith Review*, accessed 25 March 2021, https://www.griffithreview.com/dont-take-love-town-ruby-langford-ginibi.

Narratives

Following are personal accounts of participants and their own experiences of Kinchela Boys Home, and how they came to be and placed in this institution.

Interview Participant B – Biripi/Worimi/Dunghutti

Kinchela Boys Home 1957–1963

> *I was taken to Kinchela from Sydney, Paddington at the age of 8, my Mother could not do anything, I travelled on the old North Coast mail leaving behind my Mother at Central train station crying and screaming for her. My brother, who was age 4 and my sister age 6, were taken to Cootamundra Girls Home. My brother had joined me, when he turned 8, as Kinchela only took boys from the age of 8. This act was a legislated policy by the government, known as the Assimilation Policy, it was however about the removal of children from their families in order to decimate cultural ties, eradicate Aboriginality, essentially psychologically and emotionally destroying one's identity.*

Participant B stated that this was a continuing process during colonial times. The men were taken out of the equation through force, murdered or chained up and imprisoned, so that non-Aboriginal men could have their way with the Aboriginal women. The act of removing children from their families was undertaken by the Welfare Board in conjunction with the police. They could turn up to your home at any time and remove the children.

> *When I arrived at Kinchela, in the early hours of the morning I was met by a huge fat white man, he had a pommy accent, he stood there with two*

German shepherds who were barking angrily at me, I was petrified, I think I pissed me pants. They confiscated all my goodies, which my mum gave me and just chucked them in the garbage bins. It was not long before the punishment was dished out by the guards, they were ex-soldiers with pommy accents, they were brutal, cruel and without remorse, they would encourage other boys to beat on other boys and if they didn't, then they would be beaten by the guards. They shackled our minds, once they had control of our minds we were fucked. We were not allowed to show emotions, if we were heard crying, we were then taken out and beaten. I met an older Aboriginal fulla, he was a wise person, and he would say to me, that the answer is in the rain, thunder, and storms. Meaning the guards could not hear us boys crying for our mothers during this time. Kinchela was a prison camp, boys who were not at school, would be forced to work on farms doing labouring, it was tough going, we would not be paid anything, it was slave labour, and Kinchela would make the money not us.

I Went to Kempsey High School, I had a crush on a non-Aboriginal girl, and this was taboo, her father had found out that his daughter was seeing an Aboriginal boy at school. One afternoon when school had finished, her father was waiting outside for me, he verbally abused me, called me a nigger, Abo, Coon, and said stay away from my daughter, go find your own Abo slut. It was the first time I had experienced racism, I did not even know what a nigger, Abo, and coon was or meant. I was the only boy to have escaped Kinchela at the age of 15, I had enough of the bashings I had to leave my younger brother because he would have slowed me down. I manage to hitchhike from Kempsey to Kendall, not far from Taree. I was

born in Taree on Biripi mission, in a tin shack. I remember how the whitefulla's would come down to the mission, park their cars play music and drink, trying to get the Aboriginal women interested in them, they were looking for brown sugar. The Aboriginal men would go down there and flog them, the Police would come and charge and lock up the Aboriginal men, send them away to Maitland and Cessnock prison.

In an interview with the *Argus*, the local newspaper for the Kempsey Shire, Participant B's brother commented in relation to Kinchela, where he stated:

Even today there's no real closeness as a close-knit family should be. As a person placed in several foster care situations, not having that connection with my Mother, had and has made it difficult to have any emotional contact with her. When you are removed from kinship, and never exposed to nurturing care and familiarity of family bonds and ties, you do not know what it looks like; you have become deconditioned to a warped sense of reality. I cannot express how difficult this sense of abandonment manifests throughout your life, it destroys the most personal relationship's you have.

Participant C from the Family Wellbeing Program sat down with me for an interview discussion. I did not press for information as I have never done with all participants in this research, instead I have given everyone an overview about my research, and why I felt it was important to have their narrative and input into my research:

I am currently in Year 12, I originally lived in Western Sydney, but now live on the Central Coast, I have four sisters and one step-sister, we all live with

our Mum. My father does not live with us, I have only met my father twice, I am now 16 years old going on 17, all I know about him, is that he is Aboriginal, and his health is not good, my mother is Fijian born.

I am not familiar with Aboriginal culture, other than through my involvement in the Family Wellbeing Program and a bit of year seven studies. I enjoy high school and I will finish yr. 12 in 2017. I have always got into fights mainly in school, the teacher thought this program might be helpful for me. I would say the biggest issue is not being able to see my Dad, my stepfather is in gaol, he had a few warrants out for him. Before he went to gaol, he had stolen a car from Sydney and we were driving around the Central Coast, when the Police had noticed this vehicle as being stolen, they gave chase, we were speeding and eventually crashed into a tree, my stepfather ran away from the crash, I was left there and the police arrested me, I have been arrested before for break and entering, but I no longer hang with the crowd that does this stuff I am trying to stay on the right path. I have anger issues, because whenever I am at home, I will punch a hole in the wall, there are many holes around the house. I have seen a lot of domestic violence with my Mum and Stepfather, I am glad he is in gaol they have been separated for 3 yrs. now, he is also Aboriginal.

Participant D: 18 years old.

I have completed my HSC at The Entrance High School, my mother is Aboriginal is Wiradjuri, my father is non-Aboriginal. I have been exposed to a little bit of Aboriginal culture through my Mum, and through culture camps

and visiting Aboriginal sites, I think I have a bit of understanding of Aboriginal culture but not enough. My mother is part of the Stolen Generation, she suffers with anxiety and psychological issues. I have been diagnosed with Bipolar as well as ADHD, there is trauma that I am dealing with through being neglected by my parents, I feel that they did not want me. I had to attend a behaviour School, I was self-harming myself and I always felt depressed and still do at times. I have been seeing a Headspace Counsellor, which is helping. I hate change, but I like to have a routine, I think because when I was younger, I did not have any choice! Now I do I make my own decisions; I want to be a personal trainer because I like fitness and being active.

My Lived Experience

As the researcher I was dealing with unresolved trauma, scars that were not visible, yet there was this feeling of fear that had contaminated a substantial portion of the researcher's own life. The understanding of being different was not just because of the colour of the researcher's skin and cultural heritage, deep down it was because things would never be the same again. I was not functioning like any normal person who was free from trauma. At an early age I had begun to question the level of dysfunction he encountered: why was there always drama around the family and why were we subjected to trauma and abuse of other people? Trauma attracts trauma, just as violent behaviour attracts violence, and positive people gravitate toward other positive people. Survivors of trauma and abuse will tend to gravitate toward those that have encountered similar impacts in their own lives. This is why many families, even the researcher's own, are unable to reconcile their differences. They feel that there is too much anger and pain in the way of addressing the core issues. This is very much the case, as we lack the skills to confront and work toward healing. We deny our

emotions to be expressed, because people often suppress themselves from the grieving process.

In contemporary society, we clearly see the emotional drama between parents and children, specifically adolescents, and the energy and dialogue are if anything unpredictable in terms of outcomes when discipline and responsibilities are at play. The youth that I encountered during facilitation of the Family Wellbeing Program were and are continuing to operate in a framework of trauma and grief, with both parent and child living with fear and hatred. Often children are living with a single parent, or also with a de facto in some cases. This is not generally a healthy relationship as the de facto is most likely carrying their own unresolved trauma and projecting this in the relationship, or encountering it from the single parent. My own mother had unfortunately brought this kind of person into our family which was damaging both emotionally and physically for all siblings.

When I would hear Family Wellbeing participants talking about their relationships with their stepfathers, I could empathise and sympathise with them, because I knew that, like me, they were powerless to do anything about their circumstances. Their rights were inconsequential because their mother or father held the power and made the decisions. Therefore, as a child or youth you felt powerless. When I see young men and Aboriginal boys who are incarcerated in places such as Don Dale or any other institution, they have ultimately come from environments such as those I have described. They are growing up in a transgenerational trauma environment.

The loss of my brother in 1988 was the most profound and life-changing experience, which still today is a void in my life that will never be filled. His passing was unexpected, and he left a legacy so deep within the heart of me and my family, because it was an unexpected

loss, which we all still feel to this day feel. I know it was extremely hard on my mother because, as they say, you never expect to bury your child, more so that your child should bury you.

Relational Narratives

Aboriginal transgenerational trauma is in its infant stages of being acknowledged as a significant and monumental issue. The dots are slowly being connected that the state of our affairs in contemporary society is causally linked to colonisation and transgenerational trauma by elements of western society. However, as Aboriginal people we have known this and have articulated this through our historical protests against an oppressive brutal western framework. This research attempts to bring this to the foreground.

It was understood that in traditional times it was the uncles and aunts who did the disciplining, the teaching, and performed the initiation ceremonies that enabled the process from childhood to manhood and womanhood. Uniquely, the rearing of children was taken away from the immediate parents, therefore this system was embedded within our cultural beliefs and systems of culture. Cleverly it removed the emotional attachment and burden between immediate parents, which enables the child to grow and develop independently. It was an advanced kinship system that somehow instinctively knew about the emotional psychological elements at play within family dynamics. It was enacted across multiple generations and was embedded in deep relationality.

What was evident to me during my presentation to the men of Kinchela was that all of them had begun to understand and engage with my research discussion — they immediately got where I was coming from. They all took great interest knowing that my own father was one of them, and as a result I felt welcomed among them. Moving through the research

presentation the conversations became quite candid and, in some moments, rigorous. The discussion around sexual abuse was raised continuously, as participants spoke of the guards getting intoxicated and coming into the dormitories and removing boys for sexual gratification. It did appear that no one had escaped this. There were some tensions in the room as this was discussed, with some participants becoming angry at other participants for wanting to discuss this now, stating it was in the past and let's move on. In other instances, there were some men not prepared to acknowledge the grief and trauma they were carrying. Their body language and demeanour implied this. Interestingly, one gentleman was open about his hatred toward his mother for apparently letting him go to Kinchela. This sparked a debate amongst the men who tried to enlighten this gentleman, explaining that parents had no say in this decision because it was a law, a policy, but this didn't convince this man. He was still dealing with his pain, and abandonment was something he was trying to come to terms with. Some men were totally open to the researcher, freely discussing their own trauma and abuse in this forum. The researcher asked this group of men if he could be given permission to write about the things they had shared. Unanimously this was consented to, because there was so much being shared, so much hurt and anger being expressed, and I knew this was a defining moment in the research, receiving validation and support by the Elders. A connection was formed: they had endorsed the research by their responses, and they were humbled that the researcher wanted to undertake such research. I saw and heard many KBH men speaking about the impact this had on their families, their partners or wives and children, which confirms my own research into how colonisation transgenerational trauma has created a lost generation. It is here that I attempt to provide the counter-narrative. Decolonisation is about developing the counter-story, the shifting position where we can write our own narratives. For Smith, it is about critiquing the collective memory of imperialism that has propagated the ways in which Indigenous peoples have been classified

and represented.[47] In this instance and for the studio practice, it is about creating spaces to operate in and from.

[47] Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1.

Chapter Four: The Studio Practice

Painting- Marking Memory

The act of painting and mark making is very personal and connected to my own experience as an artist — it is the familiar. This familiarity allows for memories to be relayed and connected to the act of making. Therefore, the process of making can be emotional, bringing memories back into the present and exploring the relationship between the familiar and memory (trauma). For this research, the practice was about mark making as a type of response to trauma and the narratives that linked the members of the Stolen Generations, myself, and Aboriginal youth.

This action means you create new images from memories, yet they are different and therefore are not a ‘representation’ but rather a reconfiguration of it. The main issue faced so far as methodology during the studio practice was how does the researcher present and represent trauma in this research. It was unfamiliar territory from the perspective of expressing this emotion and energy through art. These observations became a key factor in the creation of the work, shaping the narratives, and arriving at a point of confidence and belief in what was being expressed and illustrated.

At first, there was a concern over how the method of practice would develop. Should it be more technical and illustrative? This was a dilemma for me, not being not a competent drawer. I grappled with it: my first step began through a sense of erratic lines and forms, somewhat scribbly, yet I was trying to consciously create forms which resembled imagery related to the theme or narrative. This was then denoted by the bold use of colour and tone. As I was undertaking more emotionally sensitive themes, for example, the interviews and narratives shared by participants were thought-provoking in themselves and overwhelming.

It had not occurred to me that I was experiencing some form of vicarious trauma whilst creating images around those challenging narratives. This feeling had forced me to withdraw for a period and regroup to reassess and revaluate the direction of my creative approach to the studio practice.

Having time away from the research to resolve my own emotional wellbeing, the researcher came back to the studio practice refreshed connected and engaged. The process of art making, and the choice of mediums employed, allowed me to immerse myself, to gain a sense of feeling and connectedness using my fingers with pastel, to feel my way through the work. Water-based mediums like ink, gouache acrylic and watercolour formed the foundation in this early exploration of creativity.

The Technological Interface

The studio practice firstly focused on the early historical narratives, the heaviest period of Aboriginal trauma. Painting colonial images of brutal occupation was immensely challenging and emotional, thereby having to take many intervals in the process of making the art, and this was not unexpected as connection to the unresolved pain of our history was being felt. As the practice-led research moved into more contemporary visual narratives, the process of art making undertook a shift. I moved away from the intellectual headspace, allowing emotion to flow, using abstraction, constant layering of lines and forms to signify the emergence of the many layers to trauma human beings often carry. It would be a little later in the studio practice that this whole notion of being distant from my own emotions in dealing with trauma from a creative paradigm would become a pivotal and poignant moment in the creative production. Incorporating a new approach to the production of work using new media technology would illuminate my studio practice. It was here that I discovered that the

use of technology, shifting the painted images into digital form for manipulation, assisted me in creating emotional distance to these works. This was an important step.

This new process of art making sat comfortably with the creative process of presenting and representing narratives from an emotional distance, and was therapeutic and healing at the same time. Like a patient sitting with a counsellor unpeeling the many complex layers of past trauma like an onion, so was this process of art making. Confronting an emotional narrative requires a visual construct to signify its meaning. Trauma to many of us is invisible, that is until it manifests and is expressed through the physical form. The act of digitising the painting is a way of removing myself from this above action. It puts a screen between me and the image and allows me to turn my attention to the aesthetics of the work. This is necessary for me and the work in terms of being able to deal with things when making and separating this from the formal aesthetics of the work. The introduction and use of new media technology through my Samsung Android smartphone, utilising photo editing, then transferring the image into Microsoft Surface Pro 3, transformed the art making. Photography was a way of stepping back to view the images through another lens so to speak. This gave new meaning to the narrative which could then be further explored creatively.

Chronological Painting

Many of the images painted in this research are faces contorted, which is reminiscent of how we internalised our trauma. For example, our intestines, which are long organic matter being twisted throughout the lower region of our bodies. This region of our body is where our emotions are stored. It supposedly links with our brain, so when unresolved trauma overwhelms the human spirit, it ravages the mind, body, and spirit.

I recall Aboriginal musician Archie Roach, who had performed at the Saltwater Freshwater music festival the researcher attended in Coffs Harbour in 2016.[48] Roach stated, "*Each time I sing the song, 'They Took the Children Away', I am healing"*.[49] Archie Roach was also a member of the Stolen Generations. The painting of trauma has become a cathartic experience for me. I am gaining more and more confidence in articulating both visually and literature-wise in this exegesis. Speaking from a lived experience perspective, a person who encounters any form of trauma will instinctively bury that trauma, to cope. This becomes a layer that one has distanced themselves from internally both psychologically and emotionally, a coping mechanism with which to function in daily life, supposedly.

Jill Bennett in her articulation of Gilles Deleuze's reference to image making, states that philosophers think in concepts, artists think in terms of sensations. Sensation is generated through the artist's engagement with the medium — through colour and line in the case of the painter — so that it is not the residue of self-expression or a property of some prior self, but emerges in the present as it attaches to figures in the image:

> Sensation is what is being painted, Deleuze asserts, "what is being painted on the canvas is the body, not insofar as it is represented as an object, but insofar as it experienced as sustaining this sensation."[50]

Much has been expressed throughout this paper within other chapters on that belief, and this visual aspect of the exegesis has been extremely difficult to address. The body of work would firstly address a timeline of historical and poignant moments, as the researcher felt

[48] "Saltwater Freshwater Festival 2020 Announced!" Saltwater Freshwater Arts Alliance, accessed 25 March 2021, http://www.saltwaterfreshwater.com.au/media/saltwater-freshwater-festival-2020-announced.
[49]"Archie Roach - Took The Children Away (Official Music Video)," YouTube, 3 November, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL_DBNkkcSE.
[50] Jill Bennett, Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), 37.

the need to illustrate the beginning of trauma. In referencing images of tall ships coming through the heads of Sydney, as has been produced many times, the researcher's intention was to simplify this moment as illustrated in the work below (figures 8 and 9). *Approaching Storm* and *The Land Turns Red* are presented as graphic/abstract/cubist style produced in oils.

Figure 8. Brad Webb, *Approaching Storm*, 2019, oil on paper.

Figure 9. Brad Webb, *The Land Turns Red*, 2019, oil on paper.

The colours in *Approaching Storm* symbolise the ocean in cool tones, juxtaposed by rich earthy tones land signifying contact in *The Land Turns Red*. Both images and environments tell their own stories, and the relationship that ensues as a result of that contact and colonisation. The bold graphic lines depict symbols brought to the shores of this continent, the sails being pushed by an offshore easterly, the protruding hull announcing itself through the heads of Sydney carrying with it the bible, guns and chains.

Figure 10. Men in chains, 1906 stock image. https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=http%3A%2F%2Fnationalunitygovernment.org%2Fcontent%2Fprisoners-frontier-wars-blackbirding-chain-

Figure 11. Brad Webb, *Slavery*, 2019, oil on canvas.

Recent conservative discussion led by Prime Minister Scott Morrison stated that slavery never existed in Australia, however archival images of colonisation debunk this belief, as depicted in figure 10 of men in chains taken in 1906. It is unimaginable that this was the perspective view or belief that Aboriginal people should be treated as such, even at the turn of the century clearly demonstrating, that Intergenerational trauma is linked to colonial history. Here we see an overwhelming sense of hopelessness potentially facing imminent death at the hands of a brutal frontier, clearing the landscape. *Slavery* (figure 11) is a large painting on three panels presenting a true image of Australian history, which is swept under the carpet by repetitive amnesia. The researcher recalls as a student the shame and embarrassment, hurt and anger experienced as this was emotional trauma. In 2020, a news story broke about a non-Aboriginal school teacher from Singleton High school in the upper Hunter region in New South Wales, going on a rant during a year 9 class in response to the *Black Lives Matter* movement, stating that colonisation was the best thing to happen to Indigenous people, and that all Aboriginal people are dole bludgers, and they live in state housing and were taking money from the government. This prompted four Aboriginal students to walk out of the classroom.[51]

The work *Frontier* (figure 12) evoked emotion and a feeling of frenzy, illustrating the confrontation, the clash of cultures. Originally pastels were chosen because they allow for a looser flow in expressing anger and rage, and how this can be portrayed through colour line and form. The work had been damaged by unfortunate weather leaking water into the studio. However, the work was documented photographically, provided an opportunity to employ digital imaging.

[51] "Singleton High School Teacher Removed from Classrooms after Racist Rant," ABC News, 30 June 2020, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-30/singleton-teacher-taken-off-classroom-duties-after-racist-rant/12405122.

Figure 12. Brad Webb, *Frontier*, 2020, digital image print.

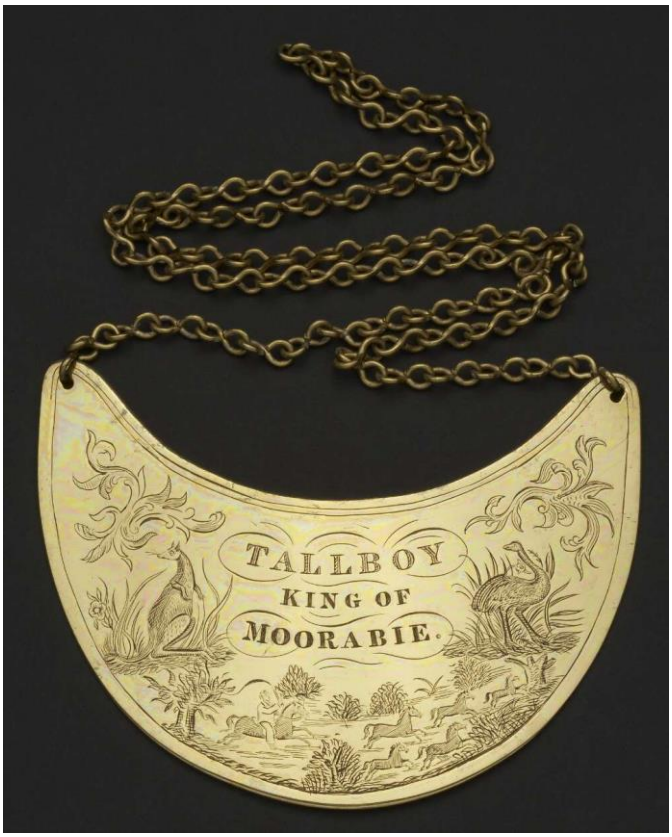

Figure 13. Breast plate breast-plate: brass ; 8 x 16 cm. from Moorabie, Milparinka, 1865 NSW. Rex Nan Kivell Collection NK1880

One of the most profound and disturbing exhibitions the researcher has seen related to the breast plates exhibition held at the Sydney Barracks in Macquarie Street Sydney (figure 13), a reclaimed colonial prison now under the Historic Houses Trust.[52] The space itself was depressing to walk through, still oozing with past trauma, cold, dark and damp. Within this space were images from the mid 1800s to late 1900s, black and white photographs of Aboriginal elders both male and female who had been anointed King and Queens. Each plate had a specific title, referencing back to England and county. The faces of those wearing these plates were sombre, with deep sadness in their eyes. However, there were no King or Queens. Traditionally, Aboriginal cultural hierarchy consisted of elders, all with equal status, where men had their roles, and women theirs. When viewing a triangle, the point of the triangle represents how a western democracy determines its leadership from Prime Minister, King, Queens, President and so on. When turning that triangle upside down, that is the leadership system that traditional Aboriginal communities adhered to. When you viewed these images of Aboriginal people wearing those breast plates there is no pride in their eyes, only pain. They have essentially been bestowed a tokenistic western honour that has no grounding or merit in Aboriginal culture.

[52] "Aboriginal Breastplates: Manufacture and Designs," National Museum of Australia, accessed 25 March 2021, https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/features/aboriginal-breastplates/manufacture-decoration.

Figure 14. Christian Bumburra Thompson, *Flora and Fauna*, from Ritual Intimacy Exhibition *2017*.

Bidjarra artist Christian Bumburra Thompson's *Flora and Fauna* (figure 14) presents a sophisticated narrative, replacing the face by use of flora. This work inspired the researcher's own artistic interpretation of this notion as presented through the work in figure 15, *We Are Flora and Fauna*, which presents Aboriginal imagery immersed into the landscape, a deep-toned landscape as if illuminated by a full moon. Animal- and human-like figures morph into one another, signifying the connection between totem and country. It is a response to the notion that in 1901 Aboriginal people were considered by Federal parliamentarians as less than human beings. Aboriginal people were not legally part of the

census and they had no rights whatsoever, they were simply governed with a heavy hand. This was the time that the policy of removing children from families was enacted and missions and reserves were established to keep Aboriginal people in controlled camps.

Figure 15. Brad Webb, *We are Flora and Fauna*, 2020, digital print.

Figure 16. Brad Webb, *Kinchela*, 2019, oil on canvas.

Kinchela (figure 16) is the result of heinous past policies and practices that saw the removal of Aboriginal children from their families. Premised on this cruel practice are many ideologies as to why and how this was implemented. For the purpose of this research, however, the aim is to postulate and illustrate visually the trauma imposed upon children and family. The strong narrative required a strong visual representation honouring the memory, as depicted in figurative form, which is dissected into various images morphing into each nightmare encountered by Aboriginal youth. From the left the image reads as a child is being ripped away from the mother's arm at Central Station in Sydney, the child then arrives at Kinchela to be met by a fat white man with two vicious looking dogs, which is confronting and terrorising to the child. Children were also forced to march in single file whenever moving around the confounds of Kinchela. Shower time was perhaps the most traumatic period, as many children were singled out and separated by guards to then be sexually abused, a

common occurrence in this institution. The far right of the image signifies a child being chained to a tree and whipped. This was known to and referred by many as the ‘whipping tree’ and was an act inflicted upon those who were deemed disobedient. These are the narratives shared and were far too common and distressing.

Visualising Trauma

Unwired and *Wired* (figures 17 and 18) depict the emotional and psychological trauma happening within the mind of an Aboriginal person. It signifies how the mind is impacted through trauma, the sensation of uncontrolled thoughts pinging off one another like explosions. For someone enduring this kind of anxiety, they are unresponsive at first, they cannot comprehend their present situation, it is pure reactionary, they are dissociative. We all have defence mechanisms — reaction patterns, really — that hide unbearably painful ideas, feelings, and memories from conscious awareness. One of these defences is called dissociation, which keeps threatening ideas or feelings separated from the rest of the psyche. There is essentially an unwiring of the brain, which can be countered with psychosocial counselling. It is about mindfulness and calming your thoughts, rewiring, reprogramming and detaching from emotions. Unfortunately, for some Aboriginal people, they do not venture toward this form of healing.

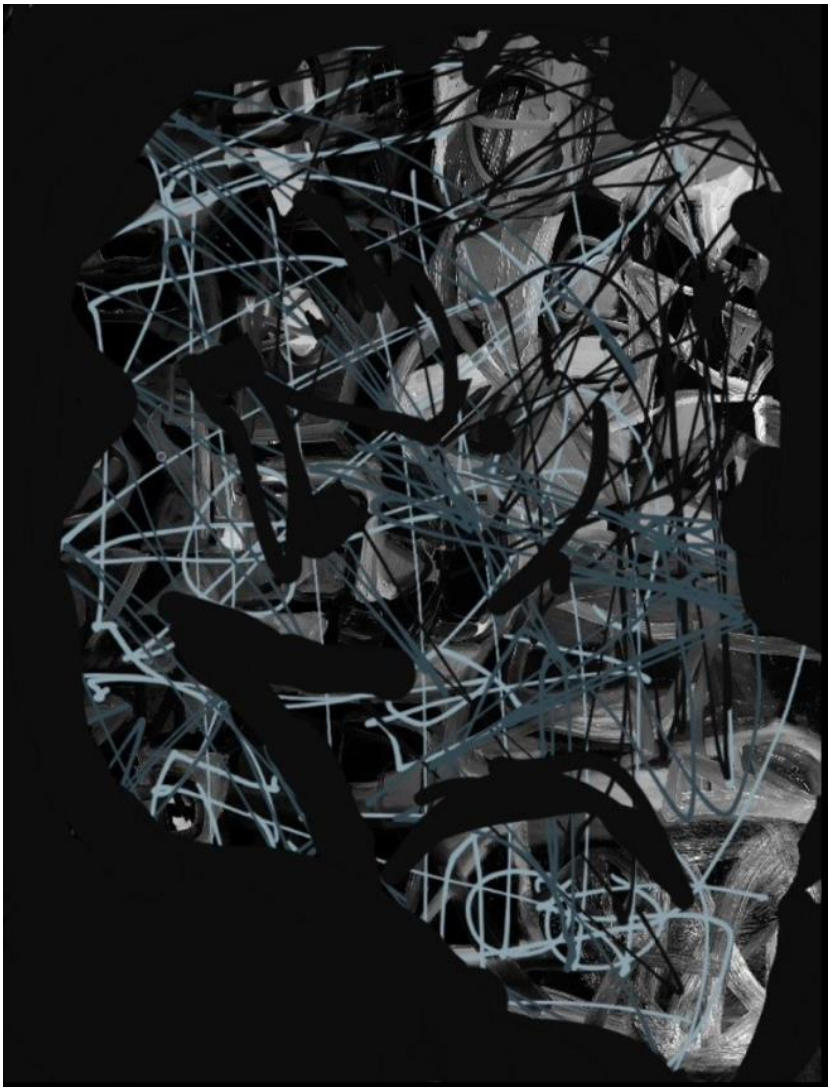

Figure 17. Brad Webb, *Unwired*, 2020, digital print.

Figure 18. Brad Webb, *Wired*, 2020, digital print.

Unwired and *Wired* are again remediated, extracted *from The* Blues (figure 19). Here I am using new media technology via my Samsung 8 phone to enhance, edit and reshape the images into a skull. Ironically, the combination of using technology that has multitudes of wiring is used to recreate another visual narrative of the human skull. The scramble of erratic lines signifies this chaos, because when someone is in that moment, the brain is going a hundred miles an hour, thoughts are pinging off one another, the thought process is out of control. I am trying to capture this sensation in this visual narrative.

Figure 19. Brad Webb, *The Blues*, 2020, oil on aluminium sheet.

In *The Blues* (figure 19) the process was undertaken in several phases. this work is an earlier reproduction from a study that developed through Photoshop and was then printed onto aluminium. Several lines and forms were applied depicting an energy, and as I am applying these frenetic energies in the shape of forms and lines envisaging how trauma attacks the human body. Having reached this point, I began to strip away elements of the chaos, what wasn't needed was eliminated. I understood the image had to become more simplified, similar to *Wired*. For me this was an illuminating process because I felt that I had arrived at methodology of practice that substantiated how I was going to approach future works. It was a defining moment in my practice led research: it was as if the journey was more important than arriving at my destination. Again, I am drawing on my own sensations

and memories as well as those of the participants in this research. The images denote turbulence among the floating forms that resemble faces contorted by their own inner blues, in a world that is turned upside down.

The essence insofar as sense memory is concerned is about tapping into a certain kind of process — a process experienced not as a remembering of the past but as a continuous negotiation of a present with indeterminable links to the past. The poetics of sense memory involve not so much speaking of but speaking out of a particular memory or experience – in other words, speaking from the body sustaining sensation. When one thinks of the blues, they usually think of it in musical terms. The colour blue can evoke a sombre mood, which symbolises a kind of melancholy musicality illuminated through a range of tonalities and sharp angles and twisted forms that signify movement among contorted imagery. This is how I imagine this internally and convey this through this image.

Figure 20. Brad Webb, *Invading Identity*, 2020, digital print.

Invading Identity (figure 20) is a strong image explored through an abstract expressionist mode. Here the image is going through a kind of metamorphosis of some kind, scraping away at the skull to reveal a clash of energy or ideology. The work is reflective of Kinchela Boys Home, where young boys were constantly reminded and reinforced through signage that stated that they are white: they had to act white and think white. The opaque milky tones represent this invasion of ideology, of taking away identity. Arriving at this concept was purely through an error with an abstract painting. In trying to resolve how I could keep this work as part of the body of work in the research, I came upon the narrative when reviewing a documentary on the Stolen Generations period and specifically Kinchela. Having first became acquainted with graphic design and understanding the principle of simplicity and less is more, I believe this has influenced several key works in this practice led research, which has also seen me embrace new media technology. The deconstructing of human skulls is to signify a decisive separation between cultural identity and the invading white ideological values. This further presents what this would do to any young person growing into adolescence and who was overwhelmed with a sense of a lack of identity, and the resulting sense of shame.

Figure 21. Brad Webb, *Every Day's a Weekend*, 2020, oil on aluminium sheet.

Every Day's a Weekend (figure 21) is another work where the process proceeded through the development of thumbnails studies, then photographed, and taken through new media technology using Photoshop, which allowed me to apply continuous layers. As with *The Blues*, this study was then printed onto aluminium, the result of which was more about applying an image to the surface rather than the final product, because my intention was to paint back into the image. Therefore the journey had begun, as I wrestled with and challenged my thought process, my own imagination on the theme. The congested forms depict the party like atmosphere, yet the blue background tone denotes a sense of anxiety, the contorted faces represent ensuing drama. The title of the work, *Every Day's a Weekend*, draws from my own childhood experiences in reference to the challenge of living in a house where alcohol abuse made for an unpleasant and unsafe environment, often leading to violence and abuse when too much alcohol was consumed.

What emerges from the research are familiar stories of family dysfunction, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol abuse. This narrative comes from a cross section of Aboriginal generations, and communicates the social climate they lived through, and how this impacted their lives and the lives of family members. The image of faces depicts ugliness and fear about how alcohol can make people look ugly and fearful through their expression and mannerisms. The work is painted in oils on an aluminium sheet. Originally the work was an abstract acrylic study intended for another concept (figure 21) and illustrates the familiar theme within this practice-led research: a frantic abstract image, which was then taken into Photoshop and altered through layering again in reference to trauma through. This was then printed onto the aluminium sheet. I had always intended to paint over this image, to expand the work through oil. The journey through this process saw this work evolve into various forms. It was as though I was taken on a journey of self-healing as I addressed the narrative, in fact, the whole experience has been healing.

The difficulty at times in drawing on your own personal narrative comes in confronting traumatic incidents, such as the one depicted in figure 21. The image was originally layered through Photoshop then reworked through the Microsoft Paint program. The intention was to create a nightscape and illuminate emerging figures that are enriched by warm tones to signify this strong energy or force. To the bottom right corner of the image is a body laid out, arms outstretched. This body represents a victim of a violent attack. There is no understanding as to why this attack had occurred, but it is a moment of psychological and physical trauma that had a devastating impact. Racism and violence toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are areas where the dominant culture takes this so-called psychological superiority complex and inflicts harm and abuse in the dark, behind the

scenes, out of public view. As depicted in this image, this moment has been a constant for both Aboriginal men and women since colonisation.

For example, as I reflected upon my own lived experience, I began to notice that things around me were not right or fair. It always felt as though drama just seemed to follow us. We were cursed and that was how it was: we inherited a life of poverty and unfortunately that is what we are still seeing in our communities and families today. It is this specific feeling of 'inheriting' a life not chosen that positions us within the continuum of transgenerational trauma. Therefore, I feel this practice-led research reveals new knowledge in that connection between colonial and transgenerational trauma and contributes toward a growing movement in research toward understanding the social, emotional, and psychological wellbeing of Aboriginal people, due to the impact of colonialism and transgenerational trauma.

Further to this, this work presents a way for the dominant culture to understand the links and connection to what an extraordinarily complex issue is, brought into an arena for further discussions. We have seen this through the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, because of George Floyd's brutal death at the hands of the Minnesota police sparked a global shift in attitude to this disturbing injustice. Social media, through Facebook particularly, has become very divisive, where right and left clash and extremists and conservatives all throw their opinion around at will. Opinion has become the new fact in modern society, through social media, because if it is out there, it must be true. Yet sometimes, social media can be a tool or instrument for justice, as was in the case of George Floyd, resulting in a police officer being charged for his murder. Without mobiles phones to film and upload instantly to social media to depict the brutality of policing in the United States, you could confidently say that most likely that police officer would never have been charged. Several days after this horrific moment, an Aboriginal youth in Surry Hills, a local inner-city

suburb of Sydney, was approached by police. Words were exchanged resulting in a police officer slamming the youth's face into the ground and handcuffing him. This was captured on a mobile phone then uploaded to social media. It raised considerable anger among all community members both black and white, which fed off the Black Lives Matter movement that has gained huge momentum globally. This was then a platform for Aboriginal people and activists to raise the issue and highlight the appalling ignorance of government and their lack of response or reform with regards to black deaths in custody. This is on the back of two Royal Commissions that have spotlighted the deaths of 435 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Still to this day, no recommendation has been enacted. Yet we see many private prisons being built in highly populated Aboriginal communities, because there is a substantial profit in incarceration, and both the private sector and the government profit immensely. The work *You Incarcerate Us* (figure 22) begun as a watercolour on paper, and again the process was about creating an abstract expressionist work of conflicting forms and images identified as both external and internal chaos. This image was then taken into Microsoft Surface Pro 3 utilising the 3D edit suite with minimal touches to refine or exacerbate the forms and enhance colour and tone. It was then printed onto canvas and then repainted in oils.

Figure 22. Brad Webb, *You Incarcerate Us*, 2019, digital print.

Figure 23. Collection of Guernica (Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid) Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, (1937), 349.3 cm × 776.6 cm oil on canvas.

The work in its true essence draws on Pablo Picasso's anti-war masterpiece, *Guernica*. When Picasso was questioned by a Nazi officer, who asked "Did you do this?", his response was, "No, you did".[53] With the incredibly high rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration in Australia, you could make a strong argument that there is a war waged on Indigenous people in this country, and the best way to deal with us is through incarceration. The most damning aspect of this is that women, proportionately higher than men, and children as young as ten years old are experiencing lock ups in watch houses across the country. Figure 22 evokes a haunting image of isolation, entrapment, hopelessness trauma and chaos, the skeletal imagery depicts the emotional physicality as contorted or eroded. And in some cases, the impact of Black deaths in custody is the result, either self-inflicted because of this overwhelming sense of despair and hopelessness or by suspicious circumstances.

I believe art and visual practice is the answer as it is a powerful communicator, and we need to be viewing images that make the viewer stop and think about the true history of colonialism and transgenerational trauma. In the case of the Mabo decision, colonial art was introduced depicting Torres Strait Islander people's daily rituals and connection to land and sea. Their cultural presence was evident. This was presented as a legal document, and no doubt the power of this art documentation was significant. The premise of art as a language in influencing the psychology and cultural memory of Aboriginal culture was and is pivotal to survival, as is evident all over this continent, as demonstrated in the form of song lines, a process of singing country to guide one through to the next verse or landmark, rock art and sandstone engravings, which connected nations to their country through Dreaming stories.

[53] Tom Lubbock, "Power Painting," *The Guardian*, 8 January 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/books /2005/jan/08/highereducation.news.

What is very apparent in contemporary Aboriginal society is that our youth are not in any way engaged in art of any kind. They are not thinking creatively, they are not being connected to themselves. It is as though they are spiritually disassociated from themselves. If young people aren't involved in making images, then this further keeps them separated and lost from culture and identity and demonstrates the argument that art has the ability to heal, educate and inform which is why I have chosen to conduct research that is practice led. The framework employed to colonise Aboriginal people was synonymous to all other Indigenous countries usurped by the British. In fact, it is identical in terms of Aboriginal people's socio-political status, thereby revealing similarities in terms of health, housing, education, employment, and social justice i.e., incarceration.

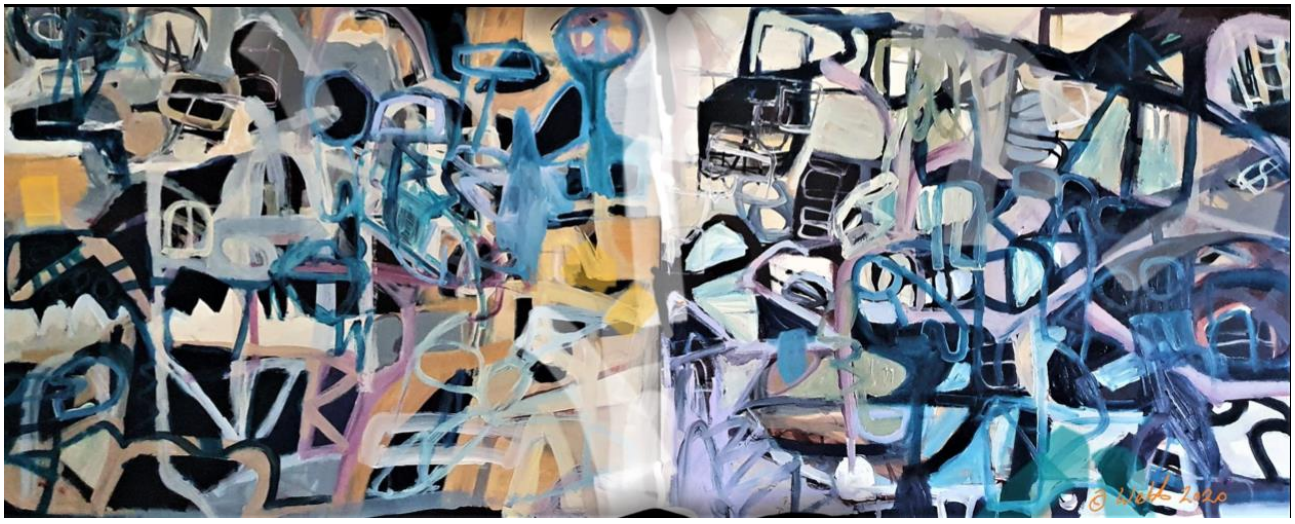

Figure 24. Brad Webb, *The Anxiety of Social Media*, 2020, digital print.

The Anxiety of Social Media (figure 24) signifies a turbulent response to the drama of social media, and whilst I am not across or involved in other such platforms as Twitter, or Instagram, I base this perception on my own experience with Facebook. What I have felt is that the experience of Facebook has challenged my own sense of wellbeing, particularly when observing comments and responses to issues of racism, social injustice and the

emergence of hate and diversity. What I have also discovered is that my responses are being observed by Facebook. This is via the use of algorithms, and processes where this platform and others like it record what we as the viewer observes, how long we have viewed them for and what our comment or response is. The Netflix documentary, *The Social Dilemma* provides an in depth look at these operations.[54] Whilst it may be sensationalised, it does provoke thought on how the internet and social media are playing a significant role in shaping perception and opinion in society, which has even influenced the outcome of politics, as was evident in the emergence of Donald Trump as President of the United States of America. There were several mediums employed to illustrate the image, from ink, watercolour, gouache, acrylic then oil. I was seeking to work in a fluid manner, starting with ink, which enabled me to be loose, merging lines and forms in what has become a comfortable style in an abstract expressionist mode. Layering these mediums onto a surface of two foam core boards to resolve this work then became another process of experimentation. Not fully satisfied with the layering of the various mediums, I then moved the image through the digital imaging process phase, using my Samsung S10 mobile phone. Documenting both foam core boards as one image, I cropped them before applying minimal colour to create the perception of one work. This was then taken into the Microsoft Surface Pro 3 edit suite to incorporate and accentuate colour line and forms and to elicit the chaos and emotion of energy, before being printed onto canvas.

A sense of division is depicted through the chaos of entangled forms, which elicits a form of suffocation, as corresponding views clash and the vitriol of attacking those you don't agree with. Facebook has become more about opinion, which is now the new fact in 2021. So often, Aboriginal themes are presented about history or reporting Indigenous sporting

[54] Belinda Barnet and Diana Bossio, "Netflix's The Social Dilemma Highlights the Problem with Social Media, but what's the Solution?" *The Conversation*, 6 October 2020, https://theconversation.com/netflixs-the-social-dilemma-highlights-the-problem-with-social-media-but-whats-the-solution-147351.

identities perspectives in relation to the national anthem. The barrage of commentary is negative, full of hate and racism, so, for me the anxiety this creates is overwhelming. This work represents that interplay of sensation, energy and emotional exchanges between total strangers expressing their own values and opinions in a type of visual anarchy.

The visual practice was about creating and presenting narratives from my own lived experience, along with the experience and narrative of other Aboriginal peoples from different generations. The resulting exhibition, *Invading Identity,* held at Gudjagang ngara li-dhi Aboriginal Corporation, was a space where the works could develop their own relationality and create further visual narratives together.

Conclusion

The research has investigated the multiple narratives and experiences of Aboriginal peoples, including youth, members of the Stolen Generations and through the lived experience of the researcher. This examination revealed multiple narratives that cross over on many issues, experiences, emotions and trauma. These shared experiences are pivotal to the continual perpetuation of trauma and demonstrates transgenerational trauma. Through artistic practice the practice-led research articulated some aspects of these narratives, experiences and traumas in visual form. A significant aspect of the research was the process of translating the various narratives into paintings through specific mark making, then shifting the paintings into digital form. This process was a way of dealing with the heavy nature of trauma by creating a space where I could operate from, and to then refocus on the image itself. This cathartic process was especially useful for looking at how to deal both with trauma and with the many other issues discussed in this exegesis.

In linking historical and transgenerational trauma to the lived experience of participants and myyself, this research demonstrates that when trauma is not resolved or addressed in any capacity, it is then passed on from generation to generation, due to the patterning and modelling that one grows up in. Further to this, the western framework that governs Australia acutely reminds Aboriginal people where and how they are positioned within its class system, as evident by their overwhelming social disparity, injustice, inequity, poor health, housing, education, employment, and high rates of incarceration. This assessment is analogous to other Indigenous countries colonised by an identical framework. If Aboriginal people are fortunate enough to rise above and emerge out of this oppressing social inequality and disparity, the next hurdle will be to contend with a dominant culture and discriminating society and ruled by conservative media and political allies who for decades

have built this ideology. This paradigm is protected by an established protocol of denial and amnesia about the true history of colonisation. When Aboriginal people have challenged this notion, they are labelled as aggressive angry mobs by media powerbrokers who are protectors of this established framework, to then have the public believe this. This belief further traumatises Aboriginal people.

In finalising the discussion, there is the generational impact of the Stolen Generations, and the pain of generations having to resolve and understand why they were forcibly removed from the breast of their mother and the protection of their father, and placed in the most brutal institutions, to then survive the physical, psychological and sexual abuse they encountered. It is incredulous to imagine that another human being could develop a policy that sought to remove and shatter the hearts and spirits of family and kinship like this. A callous design to integrate and breed a culture out of existence, since the frontier wars were unsuccessful in their charter to eradicate any presence of Aboriginal people across this nation. This is the secret: that many non-Aboriginal people have prospered through the land acquisitions during the land grabs and murders, removing people and placing them in different parts of country that were alien to them, preventing them from speaking language and forcing them into mission and reserves. The Aboriginal Protection Board — which provided anything but protection — ruled with an iron fist, making people work for no wages and stripping them of any liberties.[55] All of this has contributed to Aboriginal peoples' transgenerational trauma, lost identity, and fear of identifying, and has led to a lost generation. This is validated by the youth stories revealing their own lack of identity and connection to kinship and culture. This exegesis proposes an understanding as to why their parents were not able to provide the care love and support, they so deserved as they emerged into society: they were void of love nature and nurture. Again, if you did not receive

[55] Paul Irish, "Aborigines Protection Board Office," Barani, accessed 25 March 2021, https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/aborigines-protection-board-office.

this support, then how where to expected to give it? These complex issues link to how colonisation and transgenerational has disrupted and disadvantaged the lives of all Aboriginal people in modern contemporary society today, and is proof that because of this, it has led to a lost generation of Aboriginal people.

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Brad Webb

2021 Masters of Fine Arts Exhibition

Invading Identity

Gudjagang Ngara li-dhi Aboriginal Corporation

4 Church Street Wyong

27th February — 27th March 2021

I Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land the exhibition takes place on the Darkingjung People and pay my respects to those past present and emerging.

Introduction

How Has Colonial and Trans-Generational Trauma Created a Lost Generation?

Through an examination of how colonization and Trans-generational trauma has created a lost generation, this exhibition illustrates both through my own lived experience and the lived experience of participants who have contributed through yarning's connects this relationality. The methodological approach proposes that there are similarities between Aboriginal people's lived experiences. This is the relational Trans-generational connection that has been passed on from generation to generation, which has led to a lost generation of Aboriginal people.

It further validates that mine own experience and those participants involved within this research, has grounds in contemporary society. Therefore, what perpetuates this relationality has been and continues to be for Aboriginal people, is the difficulty to connect to identity and or culture, which is vital to configuring a notion of Aboriginality. Aboriginality is premised on connection to culture, people and Country. My research investigates this lost generation of people and youth through their shared narratives and experience in concert with my own lived experience and the lived experience of members of The Stolen Generation.

The research is practice led which attempts to assert, through artistic practice and exegesis, the various issues that come with this "lost generation". The aim is to demonstrate how these issues are, in fact, intergenerational and can be articulated in visual form. It is the visual that also connects us to established understandings of Aboriginality and culture. The research through a body of artworks identifies key historical narratives which illustrates the truth of colonialism and concludes with the reality of contemporary themes depicting Tran's generational trauma composed through my own lived experience together with the collective lived experience of participants within this research.

Left Title : **1. An Unsettling Vision**

Medium : Oil on canvass

Dimensions :

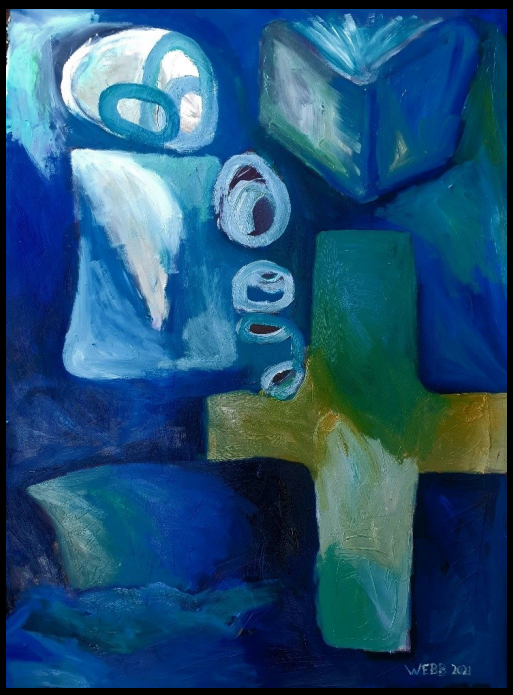
In the image of *An Unsettling Vision,* are three faces depicting various gazes beginning with the first glimpse of tall ships reflected in the eye. The second face is consumed and overwhelmed signified by warm ones tones of clashing energy. The final face reveals the impact of trauma, as illustrated by the clashing of colour reminiscent to the clashing of cultures.

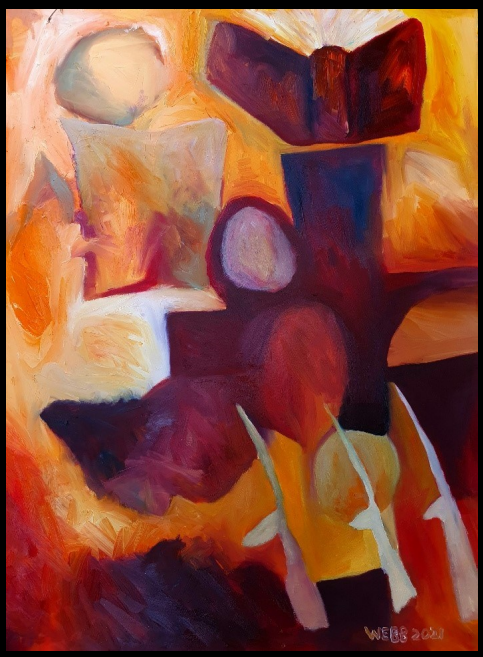
Title : **2. Approaching Storm**

Medium : Oil on paper

Dimensions :

Europeans visited the shores of parts of the east coast of Australia eights years prior to colonisation. Cook had apparently surveyed the coast in 1770. There are many Aboriginal stories of clan groups along the east coast shouting in war cry manner warding off the approaching storm. The colours are evocative of the ocean the creating the mood and tone.





Left Title**: 3. The Land turns Red**

Medium : Oil on paper

Dimensions :

The waging of war on the 29 Aboriginal clan groups of the Sydney basin took almost twelve years, the British were challenged by Pemulwuy of the Bidgigal people who rallied surrounding clan groups to repel the invasion. This is captured brilliantly in Eric Wilmott's novel Pemulwuy. This was the first bit of literature I read upon leaving high school that actually spoke of a resistance by Aboriginal people . The colour are denoted by the rich tones of the earth the darker red tones signify the spilling of blood by the European thirst for land acquisition.

Right Title : **4. Frontier**

Medium : Digital Imaging Print

Dimensions : 96m x 124cm

The frontier wars were rarely expanded upon or discussed in the social narrative. Likened to selective amnesia and suppressed parts of history. Normally this dialogue or debate is better left unsaid, it is an uncomfortable silence for non-Aboriginal people particularly those in positions of power, but not so much to those in society who are apparently quite educated and outspoken about the demise of Aboriginal people and culture . The true history of colonisation and the brutal frontier wars should be a truth telling process, like South Africa's truth telling process two decades ago, which in some ways contributed toward healing for both black and white people. Germany created monument and installations to the holocaust confronting this horrific part of their history. Yet here in Australia we cannot even get past Australia Day. This image conveys the confronting terror, energy and drama Aboriginal clan groups faced in the ensuing encroachment for their lands.

Above Title : **5. There were no Kings & Queens**

This painting is about the anointing of Kings and Queen by the Europeans selecting Aboriginal elders deemed by the Europeans as leaders. This divisive as in divide and conquer In 1993, The Sydney Barracks as part of the Historic Houses Trust, exhibited old archival images of traditional Aboriginal faces wearing these breast plates. The faces did not reflect proud leaders, rather conquered and defeated , and in pain. The abstract sharp edges are the kings and Queens in turmoil.

Above Title : **6. Slavery**

Medium : Oil on canvass

Dimensions

This powerful image of colonisation tells the story of slavery . I deliberately left out the eyes in, this painting, as I felt that the eyes are the window to our soul. The eyes sockets of these men are haunted and in pain. They are soulless in essence probably taken from country and placed into country where they do not recognise language. This was part of removing identity from culture and familiarity to customs land and dreaming . Very much like putting an Italian in Finland, language was vital to our existence it determined cultural boundaries and lore/law.

Left Title : **7. Clearing the landscape**

Medium : Oil on canvass

Dimensions :

The final act of premium land acquisition was initiated by both the Police and Pastoralists known ss hunting parties , seeking to remove, eradicate by any means necessary the presence of Aboriginal occupation. This is the true history colonialism that is suppressed in the teaching of Australian history

Right Title **8. Speak Our Language**

Oil on oil paper

Aboriginal people were forbidden to speak their own language, and were often removed far rom country unable to understand the language and customs of other imprisoned Aboriginal clan groups. This was part of the design, in erasing the cultural identity of Aboriginal people. Institution like Kinchela Boys Home, Cootamundra Girls Home reinforced this narrative, by constant reinforcement stating, "*You are white, you act white, and think white.*

Left Title **9. We are Flora and Fauna**

Medium : Digital Imaging Print

The 1901 Federation legally classified Aboriginal people as flora and fauna, not as human beings. It would 66 years until this law was changed in the 1967 under the Referendum. In some states this did not changed. It is unimaginable that a law could legislate, that another human being is viewed as animal and or plant species is unfathomable.

Above Title : **10. Kinchela**

Oil on canvass

Dimensions : H 152cm x 203cm

Kinchela, was a brutal boys home institution located east of Kempsey on the Mid North Coast New South Wales. Opened in 1901, for the purpose of the Government and the Aboriginal Protection Board's, dire plan to remove light skin Aboriginal children who as a result of interracial relationships. This had demonstrated to the authorities, that you could breed Aboriginal blood out, as articulated in the film Rabbit Proof Fence. Another cruel process in removing the identity of Aboriginal children's connection to family kinship and culture . This image is from the personal narratives of elders I interviewed for this research, they speak of being ripped from their parents arms at central Station on the left for the 8 hour train trip to Kempsey. To be met by a huge fat white man with dogs either side of him. Forced to constantly march around the premises of Kinchela, shower time was the traumatic time, as often guards would separate boys and sexually abuse them. Those who were disobedient, would be chained to a tree and whipped, this was known as the whipping tree.

Right Title : **11. Invading Identity**

Digital Imaging Print

Invading Identity, is an abstract response the to the intense trauma Aboriginal people have endure since colonisation. Here the head and brain is being ripped and torn apart by social injustice, loss of land, of culture and humanity ,unable to reconnect with kinship or country . Not only was our land invaded, so was our mind, body and spirit.

Right Title: **12. Unwired**

Medium : Digital imaging Print

Dimension : H 118cm x W 91cm

Depicts the emotional and psychological trauma experienced in a traumatized mind. It signifies how the mind is impacted through trauma, the sensation of uncontrolled thoughts are pinging of one another like explosions. So, for someone enduring this kind of anxiety, they are unresponsive at first, they cannot comprehend their present situation, it is pure reactionary, they are dissociative. There is essentially an unwiring of the brain, and with psychosocial counselling, it is about mindfulness and calming your thoughts re wiring reprogramming and detaching from emotions.

Left Title : **13. Wired**

Medium : Digital imaging Print

Dimensions : H 118cm x 91cm

Here the mid is more controlled balance by the cool tones to denote an element of peace and calmness. Unfortunately mental health and social and emotional wellbeing are major factors within any community which is impact by colonisation, social inequality and a lack justice. It is common among countries who have suffered the same fate of colonisation , the issue are identical to that of Aboriginal people.

Right Title : **14. The Blues**

Medium : Oil on Aluminium Sheet

Dimensions:

This painting, represent how when unresolved trauma leads to in some cases self medication. Unfortunately many Stolen Generation survivors were carrying their trauma, their Blues, self medicating through drug alcohol and other substance misuse. Grappling with issues of identity as a result of the impact of intense oppressing European ideologies. The contorted abstract images are a reflection of the inner turmoil as one is separated from mind body and spirit.

Left Title : 1**5. Every day a Weekend**

Medium : Oil on Aluminium Sheet

Dimensions :

The stories shared by Aboriginal youth articulated the constant drinking and partying they endured as children. For many members of the Stolen Generation, they spoke of their drinking to forget and self medicate. Often these situations led to domestic violence and as a result the separating of children from family and kinship. So the cycle of trauma continues where children are removed into foster care , and in some cases never see their families until they are young adults. This only exacerbates and contributes toward the issue of identity.

Above: Title 16. You Incarcerate Us

Medium : Watercolour / Digital Imaging Print

Dimensions : H 101cmx W 153cm

With Aboriginal people representing 3% of the national population, we 28% over represented in the judicial system. There have been two Royal Commissions into Black deaths in Custody, but still this has not addressed or changed how the law views and sees Aboriginal people. In fact, private prison are now being built where there is proportionally higher populated regional areas of Aboriginal people. The answer is to simply incarcerate as opposed to dealing with the deeper issues of trans generational trauma , poverty, lack of education ; poor health and housing . For some young Aboriginal youth it is a rite of passage to be instutionalised , as opposed to a non-Aboriginal youth who aspires to go to university. The work resemble a factory like production line depicting this ideology amid the chaos and trauma within an institution such as this.

Above Title : 17. Anxiety of Social Media

Medium : Digital Imaging Print

Dimensions :

Social media is a platform for a range of views opinions and apparent facts to be expressed. The vitriol around Australia Day (Invasion Day) along with the Adam Goodes Saga, the National Anthem and Aboriginal sporting athletes expressing their political views are constantly met with horrendous racism and anger by non-Aboriginal people. My visual response to all this, is an erratic approach responding and depicting the ugliness and sad comments about race culture and inequality.

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge and thank Gudja gang ngara li-dhi Aboriginal Corporation for allowing me the opportunity to exhibit this body of work to the local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community here on the Central Coast. I would also like to acknowledge the elders and youth who offered there time to sit and yarn with me and I acknowledge their language groups, Biripi, Dunghutti, Bundjulung, Kamilaroi, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta. Finally I would also like to extend my appreciation and gratefulness, for the constant support offered to me by my principal supervisor Dr Brian Martin who always encouraged me with passion and enthusiasm . And finally, Monash University for accepting the research proposal and granting me the opportunity to undertake the journey.