

University of Wollongong
Research Online

Faculty of Arts - Papers (Archive)

Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities


2007

Aboriginal surfing: reinstating culture and country

Colleen McGloin

University of Wollongong, cmcgloin@uow.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/artspapers>

 Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McGloin, Colleen, Aboriginal surfing: reinstating culture and country 2007.
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/artspapers/1625>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Aboriginal Surfing

Reinstating Culture and Country

Colleen McGloin, University of Wollongong, Australia

Abstract: Mainstream surfing in Australia is a discursive cultural practice, institutionally sanctioned as integral to national identity. Surfing represents the nation through a mode of white heterosexual orientation that is encoded into its practices and its texts. Surfing represents an historical transformation in the national psyche from the bush, inaugurated by the nation's literary canon, to the beach, which has become the modern site of the nation's identity. Indigenous surfing provides an oppositional view of nation and country that reinscribes the beach with cultural meanings specific to Aboriginal cultures. Surfing in this context can be seen as a reclamation of culture and a challenge to the dominance of white conceptions of nation and identity. This paper examines the indigenous surfing film, "Surfing the Healing Wave" and explores the film's representations of histories that are relevant to Aboriginal people. The film's narrative disruption of the surfing film genre instates a pedagogical practice that functions to reinscribe Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal histories through the contemporary event of the indigenous surfing contest.

Keywords: Australian National Identity, Indigeneity, Surfing Cultures, Pedagogy

When Aboriginal people are in the ocean, they know they are in their country. They belong to it. They don't own it ... we know there's always another wave. Surfing's about being part of the wave.¹

Some fellas, they talk about ripping the wave to pieces. I reckon the wave tells you what to do, just catch the wave and ride the wave, flow with what the wave's doing. And if you get a good score for it, well that's good. If you don't, you had a good time riding the wave.²

A S I FRAME this article about Aboriginal surfing in Australia with the words of indigenous surfers, I locate my own position as a non-indigenous academic who enjoys the privilege of working in an indigenous teaching and learning centre. This paper constitutes part of a larger study about mainstream surfing's connection to national identity, and Aboriginal surfing, which challenges this connection through the foregrounding of indigenous worldviews. In engaging with this subject matter, I seek to do credit

to the indigenous people who have generously shared their information about surfing and country³ with me. The paper provides a reading of the Indigenous surfing film, *Surfing the Healing Wave*,⁴ that foregrounds personal indigenous histories and simultaneously asserts Aboriginal conceptions of nation and country through the cultural practice of surfing, and through culturally relevant conceptualisations of the ocean. In recent years, indigenous surfing⁵ has gained increasing momentum in communities across Australia. And although Australian indigenous surfers are subject to the marketing conventions of mainstream surfing, there is a distinction in philosophy and practice, in conceptions of the beach and the ocean, and within the broader significance of Aboriginal conceptions of country, that introduces an oppositional discourse of country to that encoded within mainstream surfing and national identity.

In the construction of white Australian national identity, the ocean represents both a real and symbolic power: to enforce, to reinforce, to welcome and reject, and to provide a simultaneous point of reference for 'one-ness' and diversity. Its ambiguity

¹ Dhinawan, G. Indigenous surfer, Interview conducted at the Aboriginal Education Centre, University of Wollongong, March, 2003.

² Slabb, K. *Surfing the Healing Wave*, NEUGH P/L in association with the Australian Film Commission and SBS Independent, 1999.

³ "Country" in the indigenous context refers to a cultural and spiritual place of origin. It can refer to land or sea. "Country" incorporates cultural values and practices, stories and histories. The term "country" does not carry the meanings associated with a nation state. It is, however, a political entity in that it denotes a place that ascribes identity and stewardship, and dictates the Law and the obligations of its indigenous custodians. Country encompasses the geographical location of spiritual belief and communal kinship networks.

⁴ *Surfing the Healing Wave*, NEUGH P/L in association with the Australian Film Commission and SBS Independent, 1999.

⁵ Indigenous surfing denotes both Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in surfing as represented by surfers in the film. However, the film was made by Aboriginal surfers and its historical focus is on Aboriginal histories as distinctive from, and different to, the colonial history of Torres Strait Islander peoples.



as a cultural signifier marks the potential for representational shifts, for the manifold ways in which nation can be construed through imagery and imagination, and, more importantly, the ocean's ambiguity provides the capacity for intervention into its impetus as a signifier for a cohesive and unified national identity. The beach, a site for recreation and *re-creation*, is the materiality of nationalism; it produces subject positions, national bodies. In white conceptions of nation, the Australian male surfer represents the national corpus through the individual body of the male surfer, often represented within mainstream surfing texts as white, blond, tanned, fit, competitive, and heterosexual. The ocean is his performative place of becoming.

As the twentieth century emerged, the newly federated Australian nation was depicted through cartoon images such as "the little boy from Manly," the oedipal surfer who represented the nation's infancy. In the words of the cartoon's American creator, Livingstone Hopkins, the little boy from Manly came to typify "the well-meant impetuosity of a young colony."⁶ As the coast became more inhabited, literary figures and myths, such as the larrikin, the bush pioneer, the iconographic "digger", mateship and the Anzac, and their associated ideologies, were transposed onto the texts and practices of modern surfing and beach culture. National identity's representational shifts began by incorporating new iconographies, new ways of narrating old stories within the discursive framework of colonialism that kept intact the beliefs of white supremacy encoded in the White Australia Policy and a vast range of canonical texts. The "little boy from Manly" eventually transformed into a mature surfer where he "ride[s] history in a process of ongoing inscription," which, in turn, "guarantees that past Australian literature can be recuperated into a lived present, into the synchronicity of a continuing modernity."⁷ But as I have noted, the potential for disruption, remains one of the effects of the ambiguity of national signifiers. To this end, the burgeoning field of indigenous self-representation through a vast array of cultural products presents a significant challenge, not only to national identity, but to the wider reaches of western epistemology.

Since the 1990s, the production of indigenous film in Australia, both feature film and documentary, has escalated significantly as Aboriginal filmmakers increasingly access the means of cultural production. Aboriginal self-representation is increasing as the impetus for new and more contemporary stories is

realised through new, upcoming scriptwriters and authors. Huey Benjamin, one of the creators of the surfing video *Surfing the Healing Wave* told me that, as a keen surfer himself, he was interested in making a documentary film that provided "a positive Indigenous story."⁸ This burgeoning field of cultural production is about taking control of representation and *re-presenting* Aboriginal stories and cultures in forms and narratives that are relevant to Indigenous viewers. As an Aboriginal colleague says,

I think we are witnessing a shift in the representation of indigenous people, which is due mainly to the fact that representations are increasingly being made *by* indigenous people. We are therefore controlling how we see ourselves and how we want to be seen by others. This change has begun to channel viewers away from what we call the "poor bugger me" syndrome that characterises Aboriginal people as victims. Of course Aboriginal people are victims. But that's not all they are. They are also survivors, fighters, and challengers to the oppressive forces that have regulated and represented them. Our job as cultural producers is to balance our representations with an accurate history of colonial violence and an accurate account of our tenacity in overcoming that violence.⁹

Surfing the Healing Wave

Lumby's words echo the political efforts of the indigenous surfing documentary, *Surfing the Healing Wave*, a 1999 documentary film illustrating an annually held indigenous surfing competition, the "Billabong Indigenous Surfing Invitational." This competition brings together indigenous surfers from a range of Pacific countries in an annual event held in Australia. *Surfing the Healing Wave* won the award for best Australian documentary at the 2000 "Real Life on Film" festival.

Surfing the Healing Wave is produced by Aboriginal surfers Huey Benjamin and Tim Burns. It is narrated by surfer Kyle Slabb, also an Aboriginal surfer from the northern New South Wales coastal town of Fingal. Slabb and other members of his family established the first surfing school in Australia for Aboriginal children. The film utilises the cultural practice of surfing and the technologies of film production to teach Aboriginal culture and history. As Kyle Slabb states, "some of the kids don't

⁶ 'Political cartooning in Australia', available at: www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/cartoons/ p.4. Accessed 4 September, 2004.

⁷ Pugliese, Joseph. 'Assimilation, Unspeakable traces and the Ontologies of Nation', in ed. Suvendrini Perera, *Asian and Pacific Inscriptions: Identities, Ethnicities, Nationalities*, Glen Waverley, Vic: Aristoc, 1995, p. 247.

⁸ Benjamin, Huey. Producer, *Surfing the Healing Wave*, Interview conducted March 3, 2004.

⁹ Lumby, Bronwyn. PhD candidate, University of Technology, Sydney. Conveyed in conversation about the film *Surfing the Healing Wave* and its production, 13 September, 2004, at the University of Wollongong.

practice a lot of their culture, so we start by teaching them about the ocean, not just safety, but the significance of the ocean to our people.”¹⁰

From the outset, *Surfing the Healing Wave* positions the audience to look at surfing as an expression of Aboriginality; Aboriginal cultural practices and histories are paramount to the film’s narrative structure and its political intent. The opening sequences present a montage of images that depict Aboriginal culture through dance, song, ritual. This imagery is superimposed at various moments onto the scene of an Aboriginal surfer riding a wave. These scenes are accompanied by an Aboriginal male voice singing in language. This framing of the film positions the audience to read the film as a distinctive expression of culture, rather than a generic representation of surfing as a popular cultural practice. An Aboriginal surfer walks across the shore towards the ocean with his surfboard as the narrator, Kyle Slabb, introduces the viewer to himself, his country, his family and culture

I’m Kyle Slabb. We live here in Fingal, in between the river and the sea. From our house, you can hear the waves when you wake up in the morning. Most mornings if the conditions are good, me and my brothers go surfing. My Dad and Mum, my brothers and sisters, my wife and children, all my in-laws, a lot of other relations, we all live here in Fingal. We grew up in the salt water. My grandfather was a fisherman. My dad’s a fisherman and we grew up with that and I think that even comes before surfing, like being at the beach with Dad and then fishing all the time, we just progressed into surfing.

Slabb’s introduction signifies the importance of the ocean as a site for work and pleasure, and that which connects him to country, to kinship networks and to the cultural practices that structure his daily life. Slabb’s personal history is encapsulated in his introduction which breaks with the conventions of mainstream surfing documentaries. He then sets out the parameters of the surfing event that structure the film, elaborating on its purpose and focus while keeping these within the framework of indigenous knowledge and colonial history,

for more than 40,000 years, tribes and clans around Australia have been gathering together to meet relatives, make friends and sort out our problems. Since white people came to our country and did what they did it’s been a lot

harder for us to meet up together. This weekend Blackfellas are coming from all over Australia and from across the Pacific for our big annual surfing contest. We reckon it’s a good chance to get together again like the old way.

Kyle Slabb’s invocation of pre-colonial history, and the “old way” sets up the surfing contest as a tool for reinvigorating indigenous cultures. The unspeakable extent of colonial violence is euphemistically contained in the reference that white people “did what they did”. The film’s deliberate intention to convey the positive and rejuvenating aspects of the indigenous surfing contest, and of contemporary indigenous culture, is established. Accompanying the narration is the sound of traditional music. A map of Australia depicts the traditional names of the area and its surrounds as Kyle Slabb tells the viewer of his family’s traditional cultural heritage

We’re from the northern part of the Bundjalung tribe. It’s in the Nganduwal area. Our name for Fingal is Bunningbar. Bunningbar means *Place of the Echidna*. According to the whitefella’s maps we’re on the border of New South Wales and Queensland.

Slabb sets up the film’s oppositional discourse asserting Aboriginal conceptions of country and nation through the naming of traditional place names and kinship references. Bunningbar is identified through the Dreaming as a place of cultural significance for Bundjalung people. “Whitefella maps” and place names are subordinated. The setting up of place, of *country*, and its importance to cultural histories provides a framework for the film’s intervention into the generic conventions of white mainstream surfing videos, and for the film’s instatement of Aboriginal concepts of country and culture. Although ostensibly a surfing video, this film has little similarity to mainstream surfing videos, which, according to one of the filmmakers, Huey Benjamin, “bore the shit out of non-surfers.”¹¹ Generally, mainstream surfing videos adhere to an extremely formulaic set of conventions; there is little dialogue, prolonged and repeated shots of male surfers displaying their prowess, and often, the accompaniment of heavy rock music. The emphasis in these films is primarily photographic expertise, an element also prominent in *Surfing the Healing Wave*, although in this film, cinematic technique is effectively juxtaposed with personal narrations that situate the indigenous surfers outside of the egocentric domain of the individual and within a

¹⁰ Slabb, Josh. Cited in Smyth, Terry. ‘First Time is Just Swell,’ *Sun Herald*, 3 June, 2001, available at: http://global.factiva.com.ezproxy.uow.edu.au:2048/en/eSrCh/ss_hl.asp Accessed 4 June, 2004.

¹¹ Benjamin, Huey Producer, *Surfing the Healing Wave*, Interview conducted via email correspondence, March 2004.

wider framework of collective kinship relations as I will illustrate. This contrast in convention inscribes indigenous surfing according to contested knowledges that challenge western preoccupations of freedom and individualism. These western tenets of democracy are marginalised throughout the film, subordinated by a more relevant episteme that articulates cultural difference through a range of textual strategies, including comparison. For example, surfer Ty Arnold comments on the relaxed atmosphere of the contest and compares it to mainstream surfing competition, noting that in a normal contest

they always wanna win, they gotta win, gotta win, gotta win, but, like, in an Indigenous contest, it doesn't really matter. You just lay back and just relax and if you get knocked, you get knocked.

Arnold's use of the term "normal" is a form of ironic misuse, considering what is being foregrounded as normal in this context. In undermining the importance of winning, he is signalling what he sees as winning's *abnormality*, emphasising the significance of this event for Aboriginal surfers and their Indigenous guests, and its potential for bringing family and friends together, for having fun. What he marks here, therefore, is that this 'contest' is underpinned by cultural values that place an entirely different emphasis on winning. This deliberate intervention into mainstream surfing's constructions of 'normality' in relation to white patriarchal and national constructions of competitiveness marks one of the many points in the film where Aboriginal knowledges, pedagogies and practices are given precedence over white, mainstream cultural values. Kyle Slabb amplifies Ty Arnold's subversion of mainstream competitiveness central to the white masculinities informing Australian national identity

I don't like competition much, not surfing competition. I only go surfing for fun mostly, this is the only competition that I'll go in ... just for the other side of it, you know, just getting together, blackfellas from everywhere.

Once again, there is an emphasis of pleasure over competition and indigenous solidarity over white precepts of mateship. The term "blackfellas" used by Aboriginal people is not a gendered term; although the contest is for male surfers, the "getting together" of "blackfellas" signifies in this instance males *and* females, people who have lost contact, who are uniting at this event for the purpose of reigniting friendships and family connections, not

just male surfers. The emphasis on "fun" is a further challenge to the competitiveness of mainstream surfing contests. The corporatisation of surfing during the past two decades or so has ensured the durability of competitiveness and overridden the 'spiritual' dimension of earlier "soul surfing" eras. The repudiation of competitiveness exemplified above, particularly in sport, is both a subversion of mainstream surfing's ethos and a rebuttal of the values that inform and sustain Australian nationalism. The nationalist sentiment associated with mainstream surfing is frequently referred to in dominant discourses as "the Australian way of life," as iterated by one mainstream surfing commentator

[S]urfing might have started in Hawaii, and it took the Americans to turn us on to it. But since then we've made it our own. Surfing is uniquely and intimately tied to the Australian lifestyle. It's all the things we want Australia to be, and want others to perceive as Australian. Surfing is healthy, easygoing, edgy and, more than anything, a damn good business.¹²

It goes without saying that national identity depends for its coherence on the systematic erasure of 'other' histories. But what is notable in the above view, apart from its familiarity and unremarkability as nationalist rhetoric, is the acknowledgement of surfing's officially ordained origins in Hawaii. This 'history' informs mainstream surfing's official inception in Australia and while evidence suggests that there was a point of introduction in the early twentieth century by a notable Hawaiian surfer, this modern marking of surfing's official beginnings serves to elide many oral histories of coastal dwelling Australian Aboriginal people who enjoyed the leisure of surfing prior to European invasion.

As *Surfing the Healing Wave* proceeds, the 'naturalness' of mainstream surfing competitiveness is further challenged. The camera focuses on the beach as it fills with participants, visitors, families and spectators. People begin to arrive for the event. There are scenes of surfers heading for the beach, others arriving on Qantas planes, surfboards being sanded and waxed and loaded onto cars. The viewer is invited to partake of the excitement and expectations that surround the surfing competition as families and old friends greet and reunite. The 'competition' is given symbolic status as notions of communality are foregrounded. Kyle Slabb tells the viewers that

Most contests are about winning and losing. Fellows trying to beat each other and knock each other out. But this indigenous contest when

¹² Gliddon, Joshua. 'Mad Wax,' *The Bulletin*, Sydney: Australian Consolidated Press, 7 August, 2002, p.14.

you just see everyone on the beach the first morning, just blackfellas everywhere, you're just happy that everyone's there. Good feeling. And it's not just the surfers that come, it's their mums and dads, aunties and uncles, old people there, kids running everywhere. They're all here to cheer on their families and friends. They're all part of the whole thing, the celebrations.

In this marked distinction between mainstream surfing contests and the indigenous surfing contest, the narrator reiterates previous comments to reinforce to the audience that this event is intentionally oppositional in form, structure, and style to mainstream surfing competitions. Aboriginal culture is represented as something that *incorporates* surfing for its own uses and ends, as opposed to the view that surfing constitutes a culture in and of itself, or signifies a specific mode of national or cultural identity. Surfing in this matrix becomes an element of (Aboriginal) culture rather than a signifier of it; this detachment of surfing from its mainstream national iconic signification reconstitutes it as a cultural practice that has significant meanings and uses other than those inscribed in dominant discourse of nation and identity. These meanings and uses are more explicitly stated as a type of pedagogy that act to reinscribe Aboriginal culture and make it relevant to young people. I will return to this point.

The opening ceremony of the indigenous surfing contest begins with some young Aboriginal males playing the didgeridoo, followed by Balinese surfers performing traditional Balinese dance to music. Next, Maori surfers perform their traditional song and dance and finally a group of young Aboriginal males in traditional dress sing and dance as the crowd claps and cheers. Each participant rides out into the ocean and forms a circle, each carrying with him a small bottle of water brought from his country. Surfers then join hands and, paying homage to their respective countries, ceremonially pour the waters of their homelands into the waters of Bunningbar. This moving display of collaboration and mutual cultural respect provides a spiritual dimension sometimes invoked in the textualising of mainstream surfing texts, but rarely articulated in practice or ritual. Kevin Slabb, Kyle's father, opens the ceremony officially with a prayer calling on all surfers to join hands and we as a people will join our hearts together for this event saying

We're here for a great time and all the competitors. It's great to win but even greater still to be a part of this event. Put them waters in the ocean. The Billabong Indigenous Surfing Invitational is underway.

With a final challenge to mainstream surfing's competitiveness, the 'contest' articulates the precedence of participation over individual prowess. As the contest begins, the viewer's cinematic expectations of watching surfers riding waves are disrupted by the narrator's commentary which now displaces the emphasis on surfing and instates Aboriginal worldviews into the narrative. Land, integral to indigenous histories and identities, is the focus. And the 'contest' begins with Kyle Slabb instating Aboriginal history and culture, instating a new multi-generic form that breaks with the conventions of surfing films

We have a connection to our land because we rely on the land. Where white people think you have to look after the land, in traditional life the land looks after you, you have that dependence on the land and I suppose that connection's still strong. We still fish and we still hunt in the area and when you're taken away from that, it's like you're missing something. Since the European invasion, blackfellas everywhere been fighting to get their land back. A lot of battles have taken place here in Fingal.

The camera pans between surfers riding waves and the beach, where contest judges are working on a laptop as they prepare to score and judge the surfers. The inclusion of modern technology in the context of expressions of traditional cultural dance, ritual and music, exemplifies an editorial choice that, as the film intends, challenges colonial stereotypes by showing the expertise of Aboriginal people to introduced technology. Since colonial invasion, Aboriginal people have adapted to introduced technologies, deploying imposed knowledge systems for their own uses and intentions; in this instance, technical apparatus is used for the purpose of self-representation. Modern technology's creative and political use is a strike that redeploys the cultural tools of modern capitalism as decolonising instruments that effect interventions into existing colonial power relations. Echoed is Michel de Certeau's reference to the tactics and strategies deployed by subjects who subvert or "make do" with the imposed rituals and practices of colonial rule.¹³ This strategic, rather than tactical appropriation of the surfing documentary genre provides the opportunity for a radical shift in the way this form conventionally operates to position its audience.

Individualism, central to mainstream surfing's ethos, is undermined throughout the film. During the semi-finals of the surfing contest, deliberations are made regarding the collision of two surfers on the same wave. A decision is required in order to

¹³ de Certeau, Michel. Introduction, *The Practices of Everyday Life*, p. xiii.

determine a winner. When the decision is announced, the two surfers shake hands amicably in a clear demonstration of lack of ill feeling and mutual appreciation for one another's efforts. According to the narrator, the winner is decided by the wave rather than the surfer

I reckon myself the ocean decides the winner on the day. Every surfer's different you know, everyone's got their own style and the ocean don't care what colour you are or how good you can surf.

The assertion of an oppositional worldview, and discursive practice, are nowhere more clearly manifested than in this declaration that the ocean is the deciding force in the appraisal of human endeavour. On multiple levels, this statement diminishes the primacy of the individual and his prominence in the public domain. It eclipses Enlightenment thinking, eroding the individualism encapsulated in the iconic white Aussie surfer and undermining white constructions of masculinity and nation. The surfer, figured not as a conqueror of the ocean, or its human competitor in the pursuit of pleasure, is reconfigured as a passive recipient of the ocean's dictates, part of a larger, more powerful force than man. The ocean is personified to not "care" about "colour" or physical prowess but to retain the ultimate power to decide on the day which surfer will 'win' or 'lose', although this idea is also challenged by Slabb who again undermines 'winners' and 'losers' by reiterating his view that surfing is primarily about pleasure

Some fellas, they talk about ripping the wave to pieces. I reckon the wave tells you what to do, just catch the wave and ride the wave, flow with what the wave's doing. And if you get a good score for it, well that's good. If you don't, you had a good time riding the wave.

The film's representation of surfing as a distinctly Aboriginal cultural practice acts as a mode of pedagogy to produce and reproduce Aboriginal cultural values. The film articulates oppositional cultural values as illustrated, but it also teaches culture through its depictions of surfing instruction. Torres Strait Islander surfer, Margie Mills, introduces viewers to a group of young Aboriginal girls whom she teaches at a surfing school. Mills speaks of the shame often experienced by indigenous children and invokes the concept of 'shame' as one that has been instilled into Aboriginal people throughout colonial history. Learning to surf, she says,

is about trying to get them to overcome that. Being ashamed and getting up in front of people. I think that's a big step for indigenous kids. For many years we've been that way, fear of being embarrassed. But I think me being female helps and encourages them to be involved and do it for fun You just do it for fun and if you fall down, it's no big shame 'cos everyone else is doing it.

By promoting female surfing, and representing the importance of the presence of female family members at the competition, *Surfing the Healing Wave* illustrates that the delineation of gender roles in Aboriginal cultures is not underpinned by inequitable power relations; on the contrary, both genders assume representational importance in this film, as storytellers and pedagogues. Unlike mainstream surfing films, there are numerous shots of female family members, of young female surfers and women Elders. Although this is a male contest, the presence of women as active participants is crucial to the success of the day and paramount to the self-representation of Aboriginal culture. The demarcation between men's and women's social relations within Aboriginal cultures, unlike the distinctions in western cultures, is formed according to land, belonging, Dreaming, and protocol that acknowledge gendered rituals and practices, rather than the sexual division of labour. An indigenous surfer explained this demarcation to me as it relates to the beach: "some beaches are women's beaches. Like the birth places for Akawal women. If men go to these beaches without a woman, they could come to harm. Women's country must be respected. Like men's country."¹⁴

Indigenous surfing as it is represented in this film provides a formidable challenge to the discourses that continue to inform dominant perceptions about nation and identity. *Surfing the Healing Wave* disrupts conceptions of a cohesive nation by unsettling its premise of white supremacy, of masculine orientation, of gendered power relations, of 'freedom', the individual, and the primacy of individual endeavour. This documentary resists the validity of white history which has, for the most part, ignored or mis-represented Aboriginal people, as Anderson observes, "[None] of us has escaped the effects of false representation and invisibility. We feel it every day when we come into contact with the dominant society."¹⁵ Aboriginal surfing proffers a challenge through contested knowledges that resist the terrain of white knowledge. Through the application of technology and culturally relevant pedagogies, self representation disrupts colonial

¹⁴ Aboriginal surfer, Dhinawan, Interview conducted at the Aboriginal Education Centre, University of Wollongong, March, 2003.

¹⁵ Anderson, Ian. 'The End in the Beginning: Re (de) fining Aboriginality, *Blacklines*, Melbourne University Press, 2003, pp.25-42.

discourses that continue to represent indigenous people, and promotes a cultural mode of storytelling, as expressed by Jim Remedio, which is to “gain the same access and equity to mass media afforded other

community groups, to allow us to tell our stories, in our own way, as they happened, and as they are happening today.”¹⁶

References

- ‘Political cartooning in Australia’, available at: www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/cartoons/ p.4. accessed 4 September, 2004.
- Anderson, Ian. ‘The End in the Beginning: Re (de) fining Aboriginality’, *Blacklines*, Melbourne University Press, 2003.
- Benjamin, Huey. Producer, *Surfing the Healing Wave*, Interview conducted March 3, 2004.
- de Certeau, Michel. Introduction, *The Practices of Everyday Life*, p. xiii.
- Dhinawan G. Indigenous surfer, Interview conducted at the Aboriginal Education Centre, University of Wollongong, March, 2003.
- Gliddon, Joshua. ‘Mad Wax,’ *The Bulletin*, Sydney: Australian Consolidated Press, 7 August, 2002.
- Lumby, Bronwyn. PhD candidate, University of Technology, Sydney. Conveyed in conversation about the film *Surfing the Healing Wave* and its production, 13 September, 2004.
- Pattel-Gray (ed). *Indigenous Communication in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific*, QLD:, Centre for Indigenous and Religious Research, 1998.
- Perera, Suvendrini *Asian and Pacific Inscriptions: Identities, Ethnicities, Nationalities*, Glen Waverley, Vic.: Aristoc, 1995.
- Pugliese, Joseph. ‘Assimilation, Unspeakable traces and the Ontologies of Nation’, in ed.
- Remedio, Jim. ‘The Dominance of the North over the South in Global Communications in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific, QLD: Centre for Indigenous and Religious Research, 1998.
- Slabb, Josh. Cited in Smyth, Terry. ‘First Time is Just Swell,’ *Sun Herald*, 3 June, 2001, available at: http://global.factiva.com.ezproxy.uow.edu.au:2048/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp accessed 4 June, 2004.
- Surfing the Healing Wave*, NEUGH P/L., in association with the Australian Film Commission and SBS Independent, 1999.

About the Author

Dr Colleen McGloin

Dr Colleen McGloin lectures at the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre at the University of Wollongong. Dr. McGloin’s research interests include critical and cultural theories, issues of race and identity, and Aboriginal pedagogy.

¹⁶ Remedio, Jim. ‘The Dominance of the North over the South in Global Communications in A. Pattel-Gray (ed). *Indigenous Communication in Aotearoa New Zealand , Australia and the Pacific*, QLD:, Centre for Indigenous and Religious Research, 1998, pp.7-14.

Copyright of *International Journal of the Humanities* is the property of Common Ground Publishing and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.