



COPYRIGHT AND USE OF THIS THESIS

This thesis must be used in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Reproduction of material protected by copyright may be an infringement of copyright and copyright owners may be entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

Section 51 (2) of the Copyright Act permits an authorized officer of a university library or archives to provide a copy (by communication or otherwise) of an unpublished thesis kept in the library or archives, to a person who satisfies the authorized officer that he or she requires the reproduction for the purposes of research or study.

The Copyright Act grants the creator of a work a number of moral rights, specifically the right of attribution, the right against false attribution and the right of integrity.

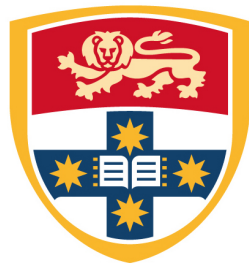
You may infringe the author's moral rights if you:

- fail to acknowledge the author of this thesis if you quote sections from the work
- attribute this thesis to another author
- subject this thesis to derogatory treatment which may prejudice the author's reputation

For further information contact the University's Director of Copyright Services

sydney.edu.au/copyright

**Yarning with Minjungbal Women:
Testimonial narratives of transgenerational trauma
and healing explored through relationships with
country and culture, community and family**



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Mykaela Saunders

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the degree of Master of Education (Research)**

**Faculty of Education and Social Work
University of Sydney**

2014



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Faculty of Education and Social Work
Office of Doctoral Studies

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

- I. this thesis comprises only my original work towards the Master of Education Degree
- II. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used
- III. the thesis does not exceed the word length for this degree.
- IV. no part of this work has been used for the award of another degree.
- V. this thesis meets the *University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) requirements for the conduct of research.*

Signature:

Name: Mykaela Saunders

Date: 30th of March 2015

The *Author's Declaration* must be inserted in the front of each thesis copy.

Acknowledgements

I pay my respects to my Elders past and present: of Dharug country, the homelands of my people; of Minjungbal country, the place I call home; and of Cadigal country, my home away from home, where the majority of this thesis was written. I acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and that the wisdom and resilience of the Elders ensured the ongoing survival of people, culture and country, of which I have benefitted greatly.

I first thank my supervisor Dr Karen O'Brien for her invaluable advice, warm yarns and patience in guiding me to become a better writer.

I thank the Minjungbal women who yarned with me, for sharing their wisdom and entrusting me with their stories to create this thesis.

I thank my Mum and brothers who supported me from afar and gave me every support possible over the phone with their deep yarns and warm laughs, whenever I was missing them. I thank my Dad, Aunties and cousins for being here for me too. I thank my community and friends for always being there when I came home.

I thank my family, communities, friends, countries and cultures, for never letting me forget who I am and where I have come from, but I especially thank them for pushing me on to where I am going.

Map of Minjungbal Country

People have lived in Minjungbal country since the landscape was created in the *budherum* or Dreamtime and recent archaeological analysis of middens and artefacts attest to a human presence going back *at least* ten thousand years.ⁱ Minjungbal country is part of the larger Bundjalung nation. Located in north-eastern New South Wales, Bundjalung country is bordered by: the Clarence River and Gumbaynggirr country to the south; the Great Dividing Range and Ngarabal country to the west; the Nerang River and Yuggera country to the north; and the Pacific Ocean to the east.ⁱⁱ Minjungbal country is situated in the area of what is now known as the Tweed Valley; a vast caldera of an inactive volcano of which the mountain Wollumbin is the pinnacle. Minjungbal country is bordered by Wollumbin in the south, the Pacific Ocean to the east, the Tweed River to the north and the Border Ranges to the west. Local people today generally refer to the Tweed as ‘Minjungbal country’.ⁱⁱⁱ



ⁱ Joanna Boileau, *Community Based Heritage Study: Thematic History*, Report for Tweed Shire Council, 2004, p. 18.

ⁱⁱ Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1994, p. 7; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2010, p. 4.

ⁱⁱⁱ Research yarns with Minjungbal women, 4-6 February, 2013.

Abstract

Yarning with Minjungbal women incorporates the testimonial narratives of five women from the Minjungbal community of Tweed Heads in far northern New South Wales. Our combined metanarrative explores how we have been able to interrupt transgenerational trauma, which is the process that explains how the impacts of historical suffering are inherited by successive generations. Minjungbal women's experiences of transgenerational trauma are discussed firstly through our ties to *country and culture*, secondly within the relationships in our *community*, and finally inside the dynamics of our *families*. Minjungbal women explain how we have experienced transgressions, resisted oppression, engendered healing and spread strength within each of these spheres.

Minjungbal women's relationships to *country and culture*, *community* and *family* have been influenced by the legacies of the past, and Minjungbal women still experience ongoing injustices from government policies and the attitudes of the dominant society. Nevertheless, this thesis contends that Minjungbal women have always been actors in resisting oppression, agents in interrupting the cycle of transgenerational trauma and instrumental in facilitating positive changes. *Yarning with Minjungbal Women* proposes that the key to resistance, resilience and healing lies within the teaching and learning that occurs within the context of relationships. *Yarning with Minjungbal Women* is therefore an embodiment of activism research as it is informed by the sharing of stories and the strengthening of relationships.

Yarning with Minjungbal Women is a contribution to the field of research about the history of Minjungbal country.ⁱ It contributes to existing research that explains the mechanisms by which the transgenerational transfer of trauma is inherited and passed on.ⁱⁱ This research is focussed though an Indigenous feminist heuristic perspective. This is the most culturally appropriate and immersive methodology for me to employ as a Minjungbal woman who has been shaped by transgenerational trauma, as I am perfectly suited to elucidate sensitive information from women in my community.ⁱⁱⁱ The testimonial narratives were recorded using yarning as a communication method.

Yarning facilitated the release of information in a way that Minjungbal women were comfortable with, giving them agency in the research process, as well as retaining the integrity of Minjungbal communication practises.^{iv}

ⁱ Jennifer Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun: Bundjalung Country*, Lismore, Richmond River Historical Society, 2006; Jolanda Nayutah and Gail Finlay, *Minjungbal: Aborigines and Islanders of the Tweed Valley*, Lismore, North Coast Institute for Aboriginal Community Education, 1988; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Christine Salisbury and Sue Follent, 'Bicultural Stress: An Aboriginal Community Perspective', *Australian Journal of Primary Health – Interchange*, Vol. 2, No. 2, May, 1996, pp. 78-85.

ⁱⁱ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails – Recreating Song Lines: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australia*, North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2002; Judy Atkinson, Jeff Nelson and Caroline Atkinson, 'Trauma, Transgenerational Transfer and Effects on Community Wellbeing' in Nola Purdie, Pat Dudgeon and Roz Walker, eds., in *Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice*, Canberra, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2010, pp. 135-144; Carmel Bird, ed., *The Stolen Children: Their Stories*, Milsons Point: Random House, 1998; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, 1997, Retrieved 23 March 2012

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/pdf/social_justice/bringing_them_home_report.pdf>; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bruce G. Douglas and Clarke Moustakas, 'Heuristic inquiry: The internal search to know', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 25 (3), 1985, pp. 39-55; Judy Iseke-Barnes, 'Living and writing indigenous spiritual resistance', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 24:3, 2003, pp. 211-238; Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research: Bridging Western and Indigenous research methodologies', *Hūlili: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Hawai'i Kamehameha Schools, 2004; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000; Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Internationalisation of an Indigenous Anticolonial Cultural Critique of Research Methodologies: A Guide to Indigenist Research Methodology and Its Principles', *Wicazo Sa Review: Emergent Ideas in Native American Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Autumn, 1999, pp. 109-121; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*, Dunedin, University of Otago Press, 1999; Alexis 40, 'The Politics of Writing', in Anita Heiss and Penny Van Toorn, eds., *Southerly – Stories Without End*, Vol. 62, No. 2, 2002, pp. 10-20.

^{iv} Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning as a Legitimate Method in Indigenous Research', *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, Volume 3, Number 1, 2010, pp. 37-50; Sacha Gibbons, 'Writing through Trauma: Ruby Langford's My Bundjalung People', *Journal of Australian Studies*, No.63, 1999, pp. 64-70.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
Map of Minjungbal Country.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	v
Chapter One	
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	2
• Minjungbal country, culture and community.....	3
• Past government policies that affected Indigenous people.....	4
• Transgenerational trauma.....	5
Research Methodologies and Research Methods.....	7
• An Indigenous feminist heuristic framework.....	7
• Testimonial narratives and yarnning as a research tool.....	8
• Balancing ethical responsibilities with existing relationships.....	10
• Tying it together: the research process.....	11
Significance of the Research.....	13
Chapter Two	
Minjungbal Women’s Relationships to Country And Culture.....	17
Relationship to Country.....	17
The Impacts of Development and the Fight for Land Rights.....	19
Reviving Language.....	21
Cultural Spirituality.....	22
Resisting Cultural Assimilation.....	24

Chapter Three

The Minjungbal Community	27
Colonial Transgressions and Blackbirding.....	27
Segregation and Solidarity.....	29
Attitudes to Authority.....	32
Rising Above Racism.....	34
Lateral Violence	36
Community Cohesion.....	38
Education.....	40
Helping Our Kids.....	43

Chapter Four

Minjungbal Families	46
Healing Broken Families.....	46
Fear of Welfare.....	51
Women's Business, Gender roles and Equality.....	54
Sexual Abuse.....	56
Domestic Violence.....	58
Grief and Stress.....	60
Addiction, Health and Well-being.....	61
Understanding and Interrupting Transgenerational Trauma.....	63
Transcending Transgenerational Trauma and Spreading Strength.....	65

Chapter Five

Conclusion	69
-------------------------	----

Bibliography.....	73
-------------------	----

Appendix (i) - Participant Information Statement.....	76
---	----

Appendix (ii) - Participant Consent Form.....	78
---	----

Appendix (iii) - Interview Discussion Questions.....	80
--	----

Appendix (iv) - Definitions of Key Terms.....	84
---	----

Appendix (v) - Glossary of Minjungbal Words.....	87
--	----

Chapter One

Introduction

Yarning with Minjungbal Women explores the ways in which Minjungbal women experience and break the cycle of transgenerational trauma. Explored through the spheres of *country and culture, community and family*, the following questions map the lived reality of Minjungbal women:

- How have past government segregation and assimilation policies affected Minjungbal women?¹
- How have Minjungbal women experienced transgenerational trauma as part of our cultural inheritance?
- How have Minjungbal women been able to disrupt the cycle of transgenerational trauma arising from past policies, and engender healing for ourselves and others?

An additional purpose of this thesis is to decolonise the prevailing interpretations of Minjungbal history by generating a discourse from a Minjungbal perspective. By examining how past government policies affected Minjungbal people, *Yarning with Minjungbal Women* presents alternative versions of the dominant non-Indigenous reading of Tweed history.² This thesis further decolonises the politics of knowledge production by recording Minjungbal perspectives using Indigenous communication protocols. A concurrent purpose is to therefore further validate and legitimise Indigenous communication and knowledge production methods in research.³ It supports past research that proposes that an Indigenous research methodology is the most culturally appropriate approach as well as a rigorous research method.⁴

It has been suggested that yarning has the potential to be therapeutic because insights may be gleaned about traumatic experiences, which can facilitate healing.⁵ Traumatic experiences can be externalised and evolve into narratives that have the potential to educate and thus promote reconciliation.⁶ This research is beneficial for the Minjungbal women who participated because it enabled the safe exploration of issues in a culturally appropriate forum, and allowed them to have their stories heard.⁷ This thesis facilitates

the release of knowledge, thereby healing trauma and educating future readers of the research. By discussing the approaches that Minjungbal women have used to facilitate healing, it provides inspiration for other Minjungbal people who would seek to interrupt the transgenerational transmission of trauma.

Having local narratives published and widely read inspires personal and community pride.⁸ This research serves the added purpose of giving something back to the community; upon publication, copies of this thesis will be given to the participants for their contribution to the research.⁹ Research was conducted in the community, for the benefit of the community, respecting Indigenous ownership of knowledge and contributing to self-determination.¹⁰ The participants represented their families and the community and presented authentic Minjungbal perspectives on the past, the present and the future.¹¹ The research also strengthened relationships between the participants and myself.¹²

Literature Review

Although this thesis is primarily built from the testimonial narratives of Minjungbal women, existing literature formulated the research questions and informed the research methodologies and methods. In choosing the following literature, a criteria was established based on suitability to the content and context of the research. Precedence was given to work authored by Indigenous Australian people, particularly women, then other indigenous people, and finally, non-Indigenous Australian scholars with a professional and respectful interest in Indigenous history.

This review sets the story in place and time: first by locating the Minjungbal community within Bundjalung country; next by establishing the historical factors that contributed to today's lived reality for Minjungbal women; and finally by exploring the theory of transgenerational trauma and how it applies specifically to Indigenous people. It then becomes clear that there is a need for new research that will: broaden the knowledge of Minjungbal history; address the gaps in the knowledge of Minjungbal women's experiences of past government policies; and localise the transgenerational experiences of Minjungbal women within the national context.

Minjungbal country, culture and community

Minjungbal: Aborigines and Islanders of the Tweed Valley by Jolanda Nayutah and Gail Finlay is a short reference book and has been used in local schools as a teaching resource since its publication.¹³ It provides a geographic description of traditional Minjungbal country and the subsequent development of the Tweed Shire municipality as a result of colonisation processes. It describes significant spiritual and cultural sites such as Wollumbin, the bora ring at South Tweed Heads, Fingal Head and Ukerebagh Island, and further touches on the beginnings of the politics surrounding their ownership today. It describes traditional Minjungbal life by using historical records from early European sources, as well as some oral history from local Elders.

Minjungbal provides a history of the area from pre-contact to the present, using both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives from historical and contemporary sources. It briefly outlines the effects of government legislation and policies and the impact of Blackbirding in the area, as well as European agricultural exploits and the resultant loss of Indigenous land rights. This serves to contextualise the community today. Although there is useful information about the history of the area post-contact, the authors do not go into any great depth about government policies and their consequences for the community. Published in 1988, the out-dated terminology refers to ‘Aborigines’ instead of ‘Aboriginal people’ and thus is in need of revision. The book contains several old staged and studio photographs throughout, yet does not offer any critique of the politics of their representation, or the ethics of their exploitation by colonial historians.

My Bundjalung People is Ruby Langford Ginibi’s testimonial narrative.¹⁴ Although this is a seminal work for Bundjalung people and for Indigenous women researchers, the usefulness of the content has limitations for informing this thesis. Bundjalung country is a large territory, and the focus is on Langford Ginibi’s ‘belongin’ places’, which are between two and three hours south and west of Minjungbal country. As such, there is no mention of Minjungbal country’s unique history.

Jennifer Hoff’s book *Bundjalung Jugun, Bundjalung Country* uses primary sources to interpret the past and offers a historical overview of the area from a Bundjalung perspective.¹⁵ Hoff, a non-Indigenous scholar, wrote the book in collaboration with twelve Bundjalung Elders from the Lismore area. Although the book is about the

history of Bundjalung country from a predominantly Indigenous perspective, very little of the history is specifically about Minjungbal people. It nonetheless forms the foundation from which the history of the area is built upon as this research provides the most detailed timeline of European contact in Tweed than other sources.

Research by community health workers Christine Salisbury and Sue Follent in ‘Bicultural stress: An Aboriginal community perspective’ shows that Minjungbal people today are significantly more psychologically stressed than non-Indigenous people.¹⁶ The findings are quantitative and do not frame this disparity within a historical context. This thesis will address this gap by including Minjungbal women’s perspectives on the history of the Tweed, exploring the ways in which transgenerational trauma is experienced and disrupted by Minjungbal women.

Past government policies that affected Indigenous people

The research of Carmel Bird and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission draw on the testimonial narratives of Indigenous people who were part of the Stolen Generations.¹⁷ Their findings indicate that past government policies aimed to assimilate Indigenous people into the dominant society. The rationale was that their Indigeneity could eventually be ‘bred out’ and that they would fit into, and indeed embrace, non-Indigenous society.¹⁸ The intentions of the policies were, at best, an attempt to brainwash and incorporate Indigenous children into the mainstream; at worst, they denote an objective of cultural genocide where all markers of the Indigenous culture – communicating in native languages, performing traditional parenting practises, experiencing community kinship, bonding with family, learning ancestral traditions, establishing a connection to land, inheriting cultural spiritual beliefs – were suppressed in an attempt to destroy the culture.¹⁹

Other research by Veronica Arbon, Ruby Langford Ginibi, Karen Martin, Leah Purcell, and Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins confirms that the many outcomes of the assimilationist policy caused great rifts within Indigenous communities, within families and within the individual because many people experienced psychological, emotional and spiritual trauma whilst interned by assimilation-allied custodians and institutions.²⁰

In *Singing the Coast*, Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins discuss the ‘missing family connections’ of the Gumbaynggirr people of Corindi Lake.²¹ There are analogous gaps in the history of Minjungbal country because various government policies also interfered with the lives of Aboriginal people in Tweed. In *Minjungbal*, Nayutah and Finlay offer some information about government policies and their effects on the community. They describe the factors that rationalised the practise of Blackbirding and they outline the legacies for the Islander community in Tweed Heads. The Missions and Reserves section explains the government policy of segregation and the use of *Ukerebagh* Island as an Aboriginal reserve.

In *Trauma Trails – Recreating Song Lines: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australia*, Judy Atkinson notes the role of past government interventions in causing, and adding to, existing trauma. Here, she is not only examining the role of institutions in causing trauma, but also establishes the resultant dependency that their interventions have caused. She states:

The bureaucratic interventions of the state – the processes of law, social welfare, and health care – have not addressed the core issue of human traumatisation. These interventions have, in many cases, compounded the trauma by creating and increasing dependency on the state which, while intensifying feelings of victimisation, also enforces beliefs of being powerless to change destructive circumstances.²²

Transgenerational trauma

In *Trauma Trails*, Judy Atkinson examines the process by which the effects of trauma become transgenerational: the effects of historical trauma compound down the generations, until healing actions break the cycle.²³ Original trauma can be passed down through generations, between family members and across communities.²⁴ Past violations against Indigenous people from European contact to the present have resulted in a chronic endemic crisis.²⁵ Transgenerational trauma has been applied to various communities with histories of injustice or wide-scale trauma, and:

What differentiates the experience of indigenous peoples from that of holocaust survivors and families is that the trauma experienced by indigenous peoples was not confined to a single distinct, large-scale event limited in time.²⁶

As well as carrying the older trauma, new generations are exhibiting new forms of trauma that are direct results of the past. Behaviours and attitudes that are effects of traumatic experiences are usually passed down the generations in obvious ways. Atkinson says there is also a form of transgenerational trauma that is ‘psychic’ and not immediately explainable in a non-Indigenous framework.²⁷ This can include seemingly untraceable effects such as anxiety, depression, and experiencing traumatic memories and dreams about family experiences without having prior knowledge of this history. Atkinson notes that even hearing family stories, without directly experiencing the events ourselves, posits “us” against “them”; transgenerational trauma also locates our current lesser socioeconomic status as entrenched in history.²⁸ Experiences of cultural and spiritual genocide are explored, as set out below:

Cultural genocide not only works to destroy the cultures of oppressed peoples, it also eradicates the sense of self, of self-worth, and of well-being in individuals or groups so that they are unable to function from either their own cultural relatedness, or from the culture of the oppressors. They feel in a world between, devalued, and devaluing who they are.²⁹

As such, Indigenous people are at a disadvantage for healing quickly and holistically. This is because a strong sense of cultural identity is the foundation of recovery, and Indigenous people have historically had more government interventions that have fractured and broken individual and community identities.

Judy Atkinson in *Trauma Trails*, and Judy Atkinson, Jeff Nelson and Caroline Atkinson in ‘Trauma, Transgenerational Transfer and Effects on Community Wellbeing’ state that transgenerational trauma can be caused by the interference of past government policies in Indigenous people’s lives.³⁰ The research shows that the psychological and emotional distress experienced by Indigenous people in the past can be inherited by successive generations, where it accumulates with newer trauma. It affects individuals and societies, and symptoms often present in the evolving cultural traditions as depression, anxiety, anger and substance abuse through self-medication.

The transgenerational trauma from past government policies permeate the stories in Langford Ginibi’s *My Bundjalung People*.³¹ Also in evidence are the legacies that these policies left on Bundjalung culture as a whole, particularly the impact of the Christian

missionaries upon traditional spiritual beliefs.³² The research of Purcell, and Somerville and Perkins implicitly demonstrate the effects of transgenerational trauma.³³ All research findings indicate that relationships are important for discussing and mitigating transgenerational trauma.

Despite the usefulness of these theories of transgenerational trauma for this thesis, the research applies to other Indigenous communities and does not explicitly explore the roles of creativity or activism in healing. Therefore, there is a need for this thesis to explore how transgenerational trauma is experienced and interrupted by Minjungbal women, because our community has unique historical and contemporary issues.

Research Methodology and Research Methods

This thesis synthesises existing methodologies to inform an Indigenous feminist heuristic research framework.³⁴ This methodology is informed by the work of Australian Indigenous and international indigenous scholars and writers, Feminist academics and Heuristic philosophers. The selected works outline the features of this methodology and explain why they were the most useful frameworks for informing this research in terms of: respecting Indigenous research and community consultation protocols; acknowledging the intellectual and cultural property rights of Indigenous people; arguing for the need for a greater variety of Indigenous perspectives in the Australian historical discourse; and asserting the need to decolonise the politics of knowledge production.

An Indigenous feminist heuristic framework

Lester Irabinna-Rigney asserts that Indigenous people interpret the world and its realities in different ways from non-Indigenous people because our experiences, histories, cultures and values are unique.³⁵ Veronica Arbon, Karen Martin and Linda Tuhiwai Smith agree that only Indigenous perspectives can adequately and accurately convey our ontological position.³⁶ The research of Martin and Kau Kahakalau indicates that Indigenous knowledge can only be documented and presented authentically by applying Indigenous methods of communication and observation.³⁷

Aileen Moreton-Robinson's research emphasises that as an Indigenous woman, I am best suited to researching Indigenous women's issues because I have an experiential understanding of the influences of history and culture in the participants' circumstances.³⁸ Therefore, an Indigenous feminist heuristic perspective is both an ethical and culturally appropriate approach because the researcher and the participants are Minjungbal women. This empathy ensures that the participants were treated with the respect and sensitivity that is paramount to ethical Indigenous research. Bessarab and Ng'andu, and Moreton-Robinson suggest that the power relationship between the participants and myself would be one of relative equality, thereby circumventing potentially problematic cultural and gender barriers.³⁹

One premise of Bruce G Douglas and Clarke Moustakas' Heuristic methodology is that it is not possible to research from an objective position; as a point of ethics, it demands that the researcher acknowledge their own biases and assumptions.⁴⁰ As an Indigenous woman who has been affected by transgenerational trauma, as well as being a postgraduate research student, I recognise that I hold a unique and privileged position. My own narrative contributes to this thesis to establish myself in relation to Minjungbal country, community and family.⁴¹ By making my standpoint explicit and by placing myself in the research, this transparency shows respect towards the other participants, which is important for ethical research about Indigenous people. This transparency conforms to the guidelines recommended by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the National Health Medical Research Committee.⁴²

Testimonial narratives and yarning as a research tool

Bessarab and Ng'andu stated that everyone has a story 'which shapes and defines who they are or how they came to be who they are', and the curiosity of learning local women's stories was the fundamental catalyst for my research.⁴³ Clarissa Pinkola-Estes said that 'stories are embedded with instructions which guide us about the complexities of life'.⁴⁴ In oral histories such as the Minjungbal tradition, the meanings of stories are manifold and the tone of transmission is variable. Stories serve to communicate cultural knowledge, to transmit history, to teach spiritual lore, and also to entertain. Pinkola-Estes explained that 'story is a medicine which strengthens and arights the individual and the community'.⁴⁵

Sasha Gibbons states that testimonial writing defies genres: it includes historical fact and personal narrative; it is communicated orally yet presented in writing; and it contains both factual and fictional elements.⁴⁶ In testimonial narratives such as those published by Bird, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Langford Ginibi, and Somerville and Perkins, the personal becomes political because the personal is made public.⁴⁷ It is therefore, according to Dodson, Iseke-Barnes, Kahakalau, Rigney, and Somerville and Perkins, an important way for Indigenous people to disrupt the dominant historical discourses that may marginalise their perspectives.⁴⁸ Many Indigenous people have published their oral histories in their own voices with success.⁴⁹ Langford Ginibi's daughter Pam Johnston advocates this style of writing in the Foreword of *My Bundjalung People* by stating that oral traditions need to be written, and that Langford Ginibi's way is an authentic way to do it.⁵⁰

Bessarab and Ng'andu explain the features and principles of yarning and the evidence of its legitimacy as a research method.⁵¹ They describe its traditional and continuing role in Indigenous communication and knowledge production and its ensuing appropriateness in conducting research for, about and by Indigenous people. Finally, they detail the benefits of using yarning for both researchers and participants in communicating knowledge, in providing transparency with the goals and outcomes of the research and in strengthening existing, or establishing new relationships.

Yarning as a research method involves the researcher and the participant communicating in an instinctive and natural way to exchange information. Research yarning is considerably less structured than a formal interview, however it does have a clear purpose and sequence of discussion questions.⁵² Despite criticisms of its legitimacy in research, yarning can be a rigorous academic method when informed by documented examples.⁵³ The purpose of this research is to explore experiences that can only be portrayed in the descriptive language that yarning facilitates.⁵⁴ As the spoken word flows easily in yarning, knowledge is recorded in authentic voices and gives agency to the participants to communicate their narratives in a way they are familiar with.⁵⁵

Balancing ethical responsibilities with existing relationships

As a Minjungbal woman, I am aware of community consultation protocols and why it is important to respect them.⁵⁶ The research methods for this thesis therefore embody consultation protocols that are embedded in my own communication practises: listening with respect; leading the conversation gently; acknowledging extra information given; ongoing consultation; focussing on the mutual benefits of research; and transparency with the goals of the research and use of information. This was an intimate, deep form of research in which I had to be available to communicate with the participants throughout the process. I was aware that some of the issues discussed in the interviews are of a sensitive nature and needed to be approached with respect for the comfort of the participants.

None of the participants were identified to each other or to anybody else in the Minjungbal community. This standard remained upheld throughout the research stage and beyond the publication of the thesis. Before analysis, participants were given a transcript of their interview for revision to further protect privacy if desired. Furthermore, the data was analysed in a thematic format rather than as individual narratives.⁵⁷ This ensured that factors that may identify the participants in their narratives do not stand alone, allowing them more thorough anonymity.

The participants in this research were women with whom I already had a personal relationship, connected either through family or through the wider community. Similarly presented in the research of Arbon, Bessarab and Ng'andu, Kahakalau, Langford Ginibi, Martin, and Somerville and Perkins, all information was therefore given in the context of our relationship.⁵⁸ This may be seen as problematic for further Minjungbal research in that contextually-given material negates the chance for future researchers to reproduce results in a publicly verifiable way.⁵⁹ However, recognising Rigney's assertion that academic knowledge production 'is not value neutral and is filled with competing interests', my research has used this subjectivity as an opportunity to explore information that less empathic methodologies could not.⁶⁰

The existing relationships I had with the participants were negotiated in a professional manner. The information was exchanged in the context of our relationships and this placed an added ethical responsibility on me to ensure that I maintained transparency

and respectful protocols throughout the process. The research facilitated my access to their knowledge of Minjungbal history, their experiences of transgenerational trauma and their insights into moving forward from the legacies of the past. In entrusting me with their knowledge, the participants had to have confidence that I would present their stories in a sensitive and culturally appropriate way.

To answer this question of professional and personal responsibility, I will locate myself as a local woman within the Minjungbal community. I am a Dharug woman, through my mother, then her mother and then her mother, *forever* back. However, I am part of the Minjungbal community through immediate and extended family relationships. Further, I grew up in the Minjungbal community, having completed my secondary education at a local school and later working in the community in the areas of education and disability. I have other cultural and social ties to the community, through friendships, mentors and professional relationships. Therefore, although I am not a descendent of traditional Minjungbal people, I am a Minjungbal woman; my relationships to members of the Minjungbal community, particularly the women, have always been important to me. Through knowing the participants and enabling me to deepen my relationship to them through this research, I am confident that our ties navigated any difficulties that presented by yarning about any problems that could arise.

Tying it together: the research process

An Elder from the Minjungbal community was consulted as the first point of contact for advice on the appropriateness of this research and for suggestions about which five Minjungbal women to contact as potential participants. She was supportive of the methodologies, methods and goals of the research.

The process for obtaining informed consent from Minjungbal women involved contacting each by phone to establish their interest in participating, and then to explain the aims, expected outcomes and methods of the research. This ensured they were in an informed position to verbally agree or decline to participate in the research. Each Minjungbal woman then corresponded that this transparency is ethical and culturally appropriate, and that the values of this research is in line with the interests of themselves and the Minjungbal community. All participants understood they were

under no obligation to participate and that they were able to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. All five Minjungbal women then confirmed that they would participate and that they were available for interviewing in February 2013.

Following the approval of the Human Ethics Research Committee, confirmed participants received the relevant research participation documents by mail to ensure that they remained mindful of the goals and processes of the research.⁶¹ All relevant information is contained in these documents, and I also ensured that participants were aware that I was available for further consultation by phone or email. In keeping with the recommendations of Kahakalau, Rigney and Tuhiwai Smith, the fieldwork was conducted in the community, with the community and for the benefit of the community to ensure that Indigenous consultation protocols were respected.⁶²

The research involved conducting informal, in-depth interviews with the five participants, and yarning was employed as the communication method.⁶³ The audio recordings of these interviews were transcribed to form individual testimonial narratives.⁶⁴ These narratives were analysed as a group metanarrative, in a thematic format.⁶⁵ This ensured that any factors that may identify the participants in their narratives do not stand alone, allowing them more thorough anonymity. Following examples in the works of Judy Atkinson, Carmel Bird, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Leah Purcell, and Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, the dialogue was kept as intact as possible, by using substantial direct quotes and by taking care with paraphrasing so as not to distort the meaning and emotional tone of the narrative.⁶⁶ This method ensured that the participants' voices remain authentic in their narratives. It also protects their privacy and respects their intellectual property, which are features of ethical Indigenous research.⁶⁷ Participants discussed their families in the context of the history of the community, and the analysis of the interviews was presented in a thematic structure to ensure that each participant's story remained anonymous.⁶⁸ Upon receiving the transcripts of our research yarns, the participants were given the discretion to revise aspects of their narratives that may reveal sensitive or contentious issues.

Recollection of traumatic events in the interviews caused emotional distress in some cases. However, prior to the interview participants indicated the topics they did not wish to discuss.⁶⁹ Furthermore, I have a personal relationship with all participants and Indigenous communication protocols have been embedded into my personal conversation practices from an early age; as such, this enabled me to accurately gauge the appropriateness of the dialogue and redirect the discussion when needed. The research was ensured to progress in an ethical direction by: deferring to the participants' preferential yarning topics; instinctively following Minjungbal communication protocols; and heeding the process of each research yarn as it unfolded.

Significance of the Research

Yarning with Minjungbal Women is significant because it is the only current research from an Indigenous perspective, about: the history of past government segregation and assimilation policies and their the effects on Minjungbal *country and culture*, the Minjungbal *community* and Minjungbal *families*; how Minjungbal women experience transgenerational trauma; and the resilience of Minjungbal women. This thesis is a contribution to existing studies about past government policies and transgenerational trauma.⁷⁰

It has been stated that there is a need to give testimony to Indigenous voices so this research is an important act of decolonising history.⁷¹ Using an Indigenous feminist heuristic perspective, this thesis decolonises non-Indigenous and paternalistic readings of Minjungbal history, and values the voices of women who have traditionally been marginalised by non-Indigenous research.⁷² The research is a contribution to the field of research done by and about Indigenous women.⁷³ The fieldwork methods used further legitimise Indigenous ways communicating and producing knowledge in research.⁷⁴

There is a saying that “we must know where we have come from before we can know who we are and where we are going”. This thesis is concerned with who Minjungbal people are today, and how we got to be this way. The basic premise of transgenerational trauma is that the effects that people experience have their roots in history. *Yarning with Minjungbal Women* is essential in describing how past events and experiences are responsible for much of the transgenerational trauma that our *country and culture*, *community* and *families* experience today.

The following chapters explore the historical factors that explain the ongoing problems that we face. However, Minjungbal women's testimonial narratives are not just a discussion of what *country and culture, community and families* have endured. The following chapters show that for every problem there is a solution, for each oppression there are ways to resist it, and for every trauma there are ways of healing.

¹ Particularly the *NSW Aborigines Protection Act 1909* and the *Pacific Islanders Labourers Act 1901* (Cth).

² Jennifer Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, 2006; Jolanda Nayutah and Gail Finlay, *Minjungbal*, 1988; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Christine Salisbury and Sue Follent, 'Bicultural Stress', 1996.

³ Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010; Judy Iseke-Barnes, 'indigenous spiritual resistance', 2003; Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research', 2004; Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Indigenist Research Methodology', 1999; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999; Alexis Wright, 'The Politics of Writing', 2002.

⁴ Veronica Arbon, *Arlathirnda Ngurkarnda Ityirnda: Being-Knowing-Doing: De-Colonising Indigenous Tertiary*, Teneriffe, Post Pressed, 2008; Veronica Arbon, 'Indigenous research: Aboriginal knowledge creation', *Ngoonjook*, Issue 32, 2008, pp. 80-94; Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998; Jennifer Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, 2006; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home Report*, 1997; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Karen Martin, *Please Knock Before You Enter: An Investigation of How Rainforest Aboriginal People Regulate Outsiders and the Implications for Western Research and Researchers*, Teneriffe, Postpressed, 2008; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, Sydney, Hodder, 2004; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

⁵ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004.

⁶ Sacha Gibbons, 'Writing through Trauma', 1999, p. 65.

⁷ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

⁸ Sacha Gibbons, 'Writing through Trauma', 1999, p. 64.

⁹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999.

¹⁰ Judy Iseke-Barnes, 'indigenous spiritual resistance', 2003; Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research', 2004; Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Indigenist Research Methodology', 1999; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010. Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2010; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999; Alexis Wright, 'The Politics of Writing', 2002.

¹¹ Sacha Gibbons, 'Writing through Trauma', 1999, p. 67.

¹² Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

¹³ Jolanda Nayutah and Gail Finlay, *Minjungbal*, 1988.

¹⁴ Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994.

¹⁵ Jennifer Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, 2006.

¹⁶ Christine Salisbury and Sue Follent, 'Bicultural Stress', 1996.

¹⁷ Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home Report*, 1997.

¹⁸ Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998, p. 1.

¹⁹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999, p. 26.

²⁰ Veronica Arbon, *Arlathirnda Ngurkarnda Ityirnda*, 2008, pp. 56-57, p. 88; Judy Atkinson, Jeff Nelson and Caroline Atkinson, 'Trauma, Transgenerational Transfer', 2010; Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Karen Martin, *Please Knock Before You Enter*, 2008; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

²¹ Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010, p. 31.

- ²² Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002, pp. 80-81.
- ²³ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002, p. 83.
- ²⁴ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002, p. 84.
- ²⁵ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002, p. 83.
- ²⁶ Brenda Elias, Javier Mignone, Madelyn Hall, Say P. Hong, Lyna Hart and Jitender Sareen, 'Trauma and suicide behaviour histories among a Canadian indigenous population: An empirical exploration of the potential role of Canada's residential school system', *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 74, Issue 10, May 2012, p. 1560.
- ²⁷ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002, p. 88.
- ²⁸ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002, p. 82.
- ²⁹ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002, p. 71.
- ³⁰ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Judy Atkinson, Jeff Nelson and Caroline Atkinson, 'Trauma, Transgenerational Transfer', 2010.
- ³¹ Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994, p. 83, p. 121
- ³² Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994, p. 20, p. 24, p. 69.
- ³³ Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.
- ³⁴ Bruce G. Douglas and Clarke Moustakas, 'Heuristic inquiry', 1985; Judy Iseke-Barnes, 'indigenous spiritual resistance', 2003; Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research', 2004; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, 2000; Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Indigenist Research Methodology', 1999; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999; Alexis Wright, 'The Politics of Writing', 2002.
- ³⁵ Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Indigenist Research Methodology', 1999, pp. 113-114.
- ³⁶ Veronica Arbon, *Arlathirnda Ngurkarnda Ityirnda*, 2008; Veronica Arbon, 'Indigenous research', 2008; Karen Martin, *Please Knock Before You Enter*, 2008; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999.
- ³⁷ Karen Martin, *Please Knock Before You Enter*, 2008; Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research', 2004.
- ³⁸ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, 2000.
- ³⁹ Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, 2000.
- ⁴⁰ Bruce G. Douglas and Clarke Moustakas, 'Heuristic inquiry', 1985.
- ⁴¹ Bruce G. Douglas and Clarke Moustakas, 'Heuristic inquiry', 1985.
- ⁴² Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies*, Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2011, Retrieved 3 May 2012 from <<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/docs/ethics.pdf>>; National Health and Medical Research Council, *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research*, Canberra, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003, Retrieved 3 May 2012 from <<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e52>>.
- ⁴³ Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, "Yarning About Yarning as a Legitimate Method in Indigenous Research", *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, Volume 3, Number 1, 2010, p. 39.
- ⁴⁴ Clarissa Pinkola-Estes, *Women Who Run With The Wolves: Contacting The Power Of The Wild Woman*, Sydney, Random House, 1996, p. 19.
- ⁴⁵ Clarissa Pinkola-Estes, *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, 1996, p. 16.
- ⁴⁶ Sacha Gibbons, 'Writing through Trauma', 1999, p. 66.
- ⁴⁷ Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home Report*; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.
- ⁴⁸ Michael Dodson, 'The end in the beginning: re(de)finding Aboriginality', in Michele Grossman, (ed.), *Blacklines*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2003, (Chap 1), pp. 25-42; Judy Iseke-Barnes, 'indigenous spiritual resistance', 2003; Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research', 2004; Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Indigenist Research Methodology', 1999; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999; Alexis Wright, 'The Politics of Writing', 2002.
- ⁴⁹ See Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home Report*, 1997; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.
- ⁵⁰ Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994, p. xiii.

⁵¹ Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, "Yarning About Yarning as a Legitimate Method in Indigenous Research", *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, Volume 3, Number 1, 2010, p. 39.

⁵² Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010.

⁵³ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010; Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home Report*, 1997; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

⁵⁴ Karen Martin in Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010, p. 39.

⁵⁵ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home Report*, 1997; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

⁵⁶ See Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Guidelines for Ethical Research*, 2011; National Health and Medical Research Council, *Values and Ethics Guidelines*, 2003.

⁵⁷ See *Appendix (iv) Thesis Chapter Plan*.

⁵⁸ Veronica Arbon, *Arlathirnda Ngurkarnda Ityirnda*, 2008; Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010; Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research', 2004; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Karen Martin, *Please Knock Before You Enter*, 2008; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

⁵⁹ Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

⁶⁰ Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Indigenist Research Methodology', 1999, p. 115.

⁶¹ These documents consisted of: a copy of the *Thesis Proposal*; as well as *Appendix i) Participant Information Statement*; *Appendix ii) Participant Consent Form*; and *Appendix iii) Interview Discussion Questions*.

⁶² Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research', 2004; Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Indigenist Research Methodology', 1999; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999.

⁶³ Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010.

⁶⁴ Sacha Gibbons, 'Writing through Trauma', 1999.

⁶⁵ See *Appendix (iv) Thesis Chapter Plan*.

⁶⁶ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home Report*, 1997; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

⁶⁷ Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Guidelines for Ethical Research*, 2011; National Health and Medical Research Council, *Values and Ethics Guidelines*, 2003.

⁶⁸ See *Appendix (iv) Thesis Chapter Plan*.

⁶⁹ See *Appendix (iii) Interview Discussion Questions*.

⁷⁰ Judy Atkinson, Jeff Nelson and Caroline Atkinson, 'Trauma, Transgenerational Transfer', 2010; Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home Report*, 1997.

⁷¹ Alexis Wright, 'The Politics of Writing', 2002, p. 14.

⁷² Judy Iseke-Barnes, 'indigenous spiritual resistance', 2003; Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Indigenist Research Methodology', 1999; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999; Alexis Wright, 'The Politics of Writing', 2002.

⁷³ Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004.

⁷⁴ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010; Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998; Jennifer Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, 2006; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home Report*, 1997; Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research', 2004; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

Chapter Two

Minjungbal Women's Relationships to Country And Culture

This chapter explores Minjungbal women's connections to country and culture. We first yarn about our relationship to Minjungbal country, detailing our intimate knowledge of the landscape and the vitality of this connection in facilitating our healing. Secondly we explore how development has impacted on our relationship to Minjungbal country, and why it is therefore essential that we continue to assert ourselves in the fight for land rights. Next we discuss how the Minjungbal language has been diminished and also how we are ensuring its survival. We then talk about the role Christianity has played in both converting and complementing our cultural spirituality. Finally, we yarn about ways we have been able to resist cultural assimilation and why this is essential in maintaining a strong identity as Minjungbal women.

Relationship to Country

I asked Minjungbal women about their relationship to country, their places of belonging and their ways of being in country. One replied:

I think it's everything that that word 'land' means, that answers that question. Because you know, it's what I eat, it's what I breathe, it's where I live, it's where I work, where I walk, who I associate with, it's everything. So my relationship with the land, wherever I go, is really important for the continuum of all that other.¹

Another Minjungbal woman said that:

[Where] you are from, it's a part of your existence...it's part of your self. And it's part of my grandchildren and great grandchildren. And Mum's...and it's just part of you. So I guess, you know, it's just the connection that Aboriginal people have with the land where they are from, where they're born...there's just no money can buy what that land is, part of you.

She further explained:

You're lost without it, not going over there, it's just that connection that you do have. And it's part of your soul and your body, you know? Just walking on, going out the beach, you just go out there and you know...you can recall when you were young and running out the bush, you know, before...the Tweed area was developed. And you remember all those sorts of things. But the connection is always with you.²

One Minjungbal woman said that from her house, 'I can still see that place, that I go for cultural expression...and that's up on Djoongerabah, up on Razorback Hill'.³ She said that sometimes, 'I go to just to speak to the mountain, Wollumbin...particularly when I need advice before I need to talk to people'.⁴ Another Minjungbal woman explained that these places 'were always traditionally places where people went to, you know, talk to country. And they were all connected in this network', and 'that those places were special to everyone else before us. You might not know that, but you know that going there'.⁵

'Growing up in Fingal was tradition. It was my culture', said one Minjungbal woman, 'we were eating and hunting our own bush tucker, sitting around in circle telling stories, drawing, painting, and utilising our surroundings to get by'.⁶ She recalled that growing up in Fingal, 'we would go there and get cockles, the *bimbalas*, and build a fire on the shore, so we'd swim over the other side, dig em up, shove em down our swimmers, and skull drag our arses back over the other side and throw them on the fire'; today, she takes her daughters there to do the same.⁷ Another Minjungbal woman articulated the feeling of being a living part of history when she spends time at the South Tweed bora ring: 'just that sense of pride that I have that *this was my people*'.⁸

One Minjungbal woman said 'I feel connected to the saltwater in a very big way'.⁹ She expressed a visceral need to spend time with the ocean regularly, and explained that when saltwater people are away too long, they feel drawn back because it's medicinal.¹⁰ Fingal is particularly special for one Minjungbal woman; 'swimming at Kerosene Bay. You know, one of my fondest memories or favourite places to go. And it was *religious* almost. Every opportunity we had, definitely on weekends we were down there swimming', she said.¹¹ One Minjungbal woman talked about her relationship with Pooningbah, at Fingal Headland. 'If I ever had any problems, you know, I'd always

head to there. To the headland, and just sit on it, and look out', and 'It only takes about an hour or so, sitting up there and regather my thoughts and I don't know what it is, but it just, I dunno, brings me peace', she explained.¹²

Even for those of us whose ancestors were not Minjungbal people, this is where we feel the strongest sense of belonging. One Minjungbal woman explained that 'it's not that we've adopted the country, I think the country's adopted us in a fashion'.¹³ 'It's almost like the land has sung me here. And I'm not going nowhere...I love it here. Why would I move when I have it all right here?' said another Minjungbal woman. One Minjungbal woman described an experience that made her feel like she belonged:

I stood on the banks of the river down there, and it had been raining for days and days and days. And I don't know if my feet actually grew into the soil like tree roots, or they just sunk because it was a bit wet. But it wasn't *that* damp. I just felt a connection. I think it's because the rivers are all connected, and my traditional land is salt water country...and I live here because I wanted to bring my kids to a better lifestyle.¹⁴

The Impacts of Development and the Fight for Land Rights

The Tweed has always been a desirable place to live for people, and developers have not been considerate of the land rights of Minjungbal people. All of us Minjungbal women have been involved in the fight for land rights; one Minjungbal woman said 'I can remember my mother helping to set up stalls, and my father's time consumed by archaeologists and anthropologists when the Tent Embassy was in Fingal'.¹⁵ Another Minjungbal woman said her family doesn't 'belong to any movement but have a march for land rights'.¹⁶ Another Minjungbal woman remembered telling one woman who she mentored 'Hey, this is your country, you get up. Cos the only way you're gonna save any cultural heritage here is if you get up and have a say'.¹⁷ As a result of such support, activism is important for one Minjungbal woman, who said 'The fact that we were *told* that we had to stand up and be counted...who we are and all that business, that's transferred down to where we are at today'.¹⁸ Another Minjungbal woman is adamant that:

Had there not been people around like [my] Aunty...and people before her who encouraged her, what on earth would have happened to it? There's a very real possibility that [developers] could have won and

extinguished [Native Title] but thank god there was some willing people in the various generations that were prepared to pass down particular information to people.¹⁹

One Minjungbal woman observed that in the 1980s, ‘when the Land Council started, I think a lot more of our community got involved, particularly with the issue of Fingal, because that’s an important part of our heritage...they were gonna build a resort there...and we, the community did get involved in stopping development’. Another Minjungbal woman agreed that ‘development concerns saw the families and community come together and fight for a common cause. If they didn’t, they would have been forced out of their homes’.²⁰

In 2002 Queensland Main Roads began planning a bypass to avoid Tugun from the Gold Coast Highway due to traffic congestion problems, and they proposed to build this new stretch of highway at the back of the Gold Coast airport. This a place of recorded historical significance for Aboriginal people in the area, to gather food, socialise and practise cultural traditions. As one Minjungbal woman explained, it is:

...known as the Favourite Camp for our people. It was a junction between our relations from the north and the people who lived here. It was considered, and recorded, by JG Appel as the ‘Favourite Camp’ when he rode down here in the late 1800s...told to us by our Old People. They always viewed that place out there as a very important place.²¹

It is precisely this reason why ‘the people that were closest to that site, culturally, fought tooth and nail’.²² She continued:

All that place out there is a village. We can take you to where the women’s sites are, we can take you to many other sites that are connected to *that* place out there, and it’s no different to a town, a village, that’s got a post office, a butcher, a grocery store, a school, a hall.²³

One Minjungbal woman said that ‘we had our concerns about the burials there, we know they were disturbed in the past’, and so ‘we *wanted* to prove to them, that this was a unique site, as told to us by our Old People and as recorded by the early explorers’.²⁴ Development consultation was inadequate and ultimately dismissive of the importance

of the place. ‘We were not believed’, said one Minjungbal woman; however ‘we knew different, we knew what our Old People had told us, and the proof is in the excavation reports’.²⁵ Despite protests and lengthy court battles the project went ahead.

One Minjungbal woman explained that although the Favourite Camp was on private property, before the bypass was built local people still ‘had our ways of walking through the scrub here, meandering through our tracks and getting in there, to check on the condition of cultural sites...and to check that everything was in order there and there was no damage occurring’.²⁶ However, due to the completion of the Tugun bypass, today ‘you’d be prosecuted if you get in there’, and so ‘they’ve essentially stopped thousands of years of continuing access into there’.²⁷ Furthermore, tens of thousands of artefacts from the area have been moved off-country and are now housed in shipping containers indefinitely. During the court process, one Minjungbal woman said:

I used to have almost nightmares. I used to lay awake at night just wondering what they were going to do and what they were going to deny future generations. They’ve denied people the right to study that area further. It’s covered over for good...with bitumen. That will never see the light of day again.²⁸

One Minjungbal woman explained how she saw transgenerational trauma unfold in this respect: ‘everywhere I look I see it...and not just within the human species of this community, I see it within, you know, the landforms and everything that comes from the earth. The animals, the waterways. I see it *everywhere*’.²⁹

Reviving Language

Within Bundjalung country, there are smaller groups of people who traditionally spoke the Bundjalung language with different dialects.³⁰ It is accepted that traditionally, people belonged to three main groups in the Tweed: the Goodjimburra people who lived along the Tweed Coast and spoke the Minjungbal dialect of the Yugambeh-Bundjalung language chain; the Tul-gi-gin people of the Rous River Valley; and the Moorang-Moobar people living around Wollumbin. Both the Tul-gi-gin people and the Moorang-Moobar people spoke the Nganduwal dialect of Yugambeh-Bundjalung language chain.³¹ One Minjungbal woman considered that punishment from authority in the past could be the reason for lack of fluent language speakers in the area today,

saying ‘obviously it did stop somewhere along the line, because out of most communities we’ve lost the most’.³² Another Minjungbal woman asserts that past policies ‘hindered traditional lifestyle, and led to genocide of language’.³³

One Minjungbal woman remembered that if her grandmother ‘sang out to us, and we wouldn’t listen, she’d break out in lingo. And soon made us toe the mark...so we have that Aboriginal language that comes through, you know, from when we were growing up’.³⁴ She added that ‘we pass on the Aboriginal English to our kids. I mean I’ve got a great granddaughter who’s throwing around the words like *munyarl* and a few others’.³⁵ One Minjungbal woman is proud of the Bundjulong words she knows and the Aboriginal English her family uses at home. She said ‘the words that we do know and we throw at each other is, you know, it’s our thing. It makes us feel deadly, you know?’.³⁶ ‘To ensure that it’s never lost’, one Minjungbal woman in turn is teaching her granddaughter ‘poems, little Aboriginal songs and language, and she’s picking up the language nicely. Just what I know. And I’m pleased that it’s a younger person cos I know she’s gonna last longer, if you know what I mean?’ she laughed.³⁷ ‘We are trying desperately to revive our language, and the use of it properly. That is more important to me than anything’, said one Minjungbal woman.

Cultural Spirituality

Missionaries, ‘not realising that we had a very, very strong sense of spirituality ourselves’, have established many Churches around Minjungbal country.³⁸ Although many Minjungbal people willingly went to Church, ‘it’s well-documented that people in positions of authority have taken advantage of kids’ in order to convert them.³⁹ One Minjungbal woman discussed this process: ‘They get a hold of them, get those little heathen black kids and they make them into Catholics!...the nuns got a hold of my mother...that’s what they did though, see, in their interests’.⁴⁰ Another Minjungbal woman agreed that ‘gotta get em early’ was the Church mentality.⁴¹

Although none of the Minjungbal women go to Church today, some still identify as Christian. One Minjungbal woman said ‘no I don’t go to mass, I don’t do that part. That doesn’t mean I’m not a Christian. It doesn’t mean anything because I don’t believe you have to dress up in all your finery to do that’.⁴² Another Minjungbal woman described how she ‘went to Church a few times early in my husband’s and my relationship. But it

just wasn't the place for us. I've not ever felt like I fit', and because of this 'it's not something that I practise, or force on my kids either. It's their choice. We gave that to them'.⁴³

One Minjungbal woman said, 'I was brought up in a religion so I do have a religious background, which does, you know, hold you up through bad times too, as well. But I don't go to Church, I don't preach to people, only if they come and ask'.⁴⁴ One Minjungbal woman explained, 'I think being Christian or whatever...it's who *you* are inside...a lot of people go to Church but they might not follow what's, you know, in their heart', and 'I don't go to Church but I do pray. And I've got a bible that my Nanna gave me and you know, it's really important that I have that beside my bed'.⁴⁵

There is an assumption that Aboriginal spirituality is incompatible with the teachings of the Church. 'Some people can equate the two. Some people can't', said one Minjungbal woman, however, 'even Aboriginal people believed in a being higher than themselves'.⁴⁶ One Minjungbal woman understands that both ways can complement each other and inform different aspects of her life. She was 'always taught to respect God and I always have. And I still have got that understanding that I know myself, that He is there, and He does look after us. But I also have a feeling of our Indigenous spiritual being as well'.⁴⁷

Minjungbal women identify primarily with a culturally-specific spirituality that permeates all aspects of life, such as belief systems, approaches to relationships, parenting practises, ethics and actions, attitudes to well-being and healing, and lifestyle choices. One Minjungbal woman discussed the local stories she grew up hearing, and still believes in. She said 'I do believe in the Dreamtime stories. And the Devil Dog, *Durrigan*, Caves at Fingal, all of that. And the warnings that we got, you know, about being out after hours, and be careful, and all of that'.⁴⁸ Another Minjungbal woman is comforted by her family's *moogai*, which is 'a female presence in the house. There's no threat with her at all. And often I'll get that smell of roses. So I refer to the presence as being my great grandmother'.⁴⁹ Another Minjungbal woman has noticed that like her, her son 'has that connectedness with the spirits too'.⁵⁰

Spiritual philosophies were discussed. One Minjungbal woman said, ‘I really, really do believe that what makes you who you are, not your physical self, but inside yourself, never dies’, and another offered ‘I believe there’s something out there, you know, bigger than me. That I’m only like a little ant in this universe’.⁵¹ One Minjungbal woman explained that her cultural spirituality ‘is strong in me. Certainly pleasing my ancestors and acknowledging them, especially talking to them when I’m undertaking any cultural expression anywhere. Asking for advice’.⁵²

Resisting Cultural Assimilation

One Minjungbal woman stated that even though Aboriginal culture ‘wasn’t written in words, it was written through dance and art and song. So it was still “written” and recorded. The recording mechanisms were killed off by disease, they were Elders, and massacre and things like that’.⁵³ Another Minjungbal woman attributes our significant cultural losses to “progress”; because ‘other areas...didn’t have their lands developed to the extent that we have’, we have lost more than more remote communities.⁵⁴ Another Minjungbal woman stated that the concern is ‘not just language. *More*. Just you know, that whole being of a person’.⁵⁵ She continued on to say that the aim of past policies was ‘to assimilate Indigenous people into European ways of life, thinking, education. Health’.⁵⁶ However:

None of it suited traditional Indigenous people. The education wasn’t, you know, applicable to them. The lifestyle, still today, isn’t relevant to a lot of people because it’s about material things. So the processes of assimilation to make that whole Indigenous race, like us. Similar to Hitler, that Aryan nation.⁵⁷

One Minjungbal woman felt the absence of cultural teachers in her early life profoundly. She discussed why it was therefore important for her and her friend to connect to their traditions when they were younger: ‘we used to go huntin’ and do this and that...I guess, we wanted that connection somehow. And I didn’t have any Old People around here teaching me those kind of things, so we just kind of taught ourselves...we were proud to be little black girls’.⁵⁸ She continued to explain, ‘when I look back on that kind of stuff now I think, you know, that was really us wanting to be a part of that. Cos no one taught us, we’ll teach ourselves. We’ll teach each other’.⁵⁹

‘We paint, we draw, here at home’ said one Minjungbal woman. She learnt the skills she is passing onto her own children by ‘just watching cousins sit down and draw and just pickin up methods from them. But you know, something that I taught myself’.⁶⁰ Some Minjungbal women have been able to teach art to others, and this ensures that older and more contemporarily evolved traditions are passed on and incorporated into our culture. One Minjungbal woman tells her students: ‘You have to find *your* country, where *you’re* from’, because ‘that’s what Aboriginal art is all about’.⁶¹

One Minjungbal woman explained that ‘we’ve been urbanised, yeah, but there are still things that we do today that are similar to our ancestors. There are still observances that we have’; this includes welcoming and funeral ceremonies, food gathering and fishing, and the teaching of culture to our kids.⁶² Another Minjungbal woman discussed her ongoing cultural obligations; one of her ancestors is buried in a cemetery ‘that’s hardly accessible now, but I still visit there’.⁶³ Another relative ‘asked me specifically to bring her back here, her ashes back here, and she wants them spread into the Tweed River. So that was her wish to be back in her own country. And that will happen. She’s passed and that’s my responsibility’, she explained.⁶⁴

Minjungbal women draw strength from history and the stories of our Old People. We are inspired by how tirelessly they worked, and continue this tradition to ensure that life will be better for future generations. One Minjungbal woman agreed: ‘you can’t give up. I always say to people, ‘Did our ancestors give up? They didn’t throw the towel in’’.⁶⁵ Of teaching culture, one Minjungbal woman said her ancestors ‘didn’t pass down their information willy-nilly to anybody. They looked at who was going to treat that information with the utmost respect. And that’s what we have to do’.⁶⁶ Another Minjungbal woman ‘started carting [my son] around to these developments with me, whether they liked it or not. For training, for cultural training. To tell him stuff, to *ensure* that someone’s gonna be around to carry on my job’. She has told her sons ‘if you don’t, it’ll finish with you’.⁶⁷

One Minjungbal woman said that cultural pride was ‘pumped into us. You know, from when we were little’; she was told to ‘never ever let anyone put it over you because of your colour. Stand up for yourself...have pride in who you are’.⁶⁸ Despite attitudes that have sought to suppress or demonise our culture, we are proud in the fact that we have

adapted and our culture has evolved, ensuring the continuation of traditions and knowledge. Being able to locate ourselves in a continuum of history feels ‘deadly through and through’.⁶⁹ We are all proud in our identities as Aboriginal women; as one Minjungbal woman stated: ‘from my heart, you know, I’m very proud of my Aboriginal and Islander heritage and the life that I have had’.⁷⁰

¹⁻²⁹ Research yarns with Minjungbal women, 4-6 February, 2013.

³⁰ Jennifer Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, 2006.

³¹ Tweed Shire Council and Tweed Coastal Committee, *An Environmental Guide to the Tweed Coast*, October, 2008, p. 10.

³²⁻⁷⁰ Research yarns with Minjungbal women, 4-6 February, 2013.

Chapter Three

The Minjungbal Community

This chapter explores the historical policies and attitudes of society that discriminated against Minjungbal people as a community. First Minjungbal women discuss our history of Blackbirding and segregation, and explain how injustices were resisted and trauma was mitigated when the community stood in solidarity. Next Minjungbal woman yarn about how our attitudes to authority have been shaped by our treatment in the past and we consider the different ways we have experienced and risen above racism. We then explore how racism has been internalised and polluted the dynamics of our community, and we talk about how community cohesion is the best way to dismantle lateral violence. Finally Minjungbal women discuss how education has been the most important sphere in building community connections and giving us the tools to transcend our problems, and we yarn about the problems our young people are facing and how they can be best supported.

Colonial Transgressions and Blackbirding

The first recorded European presence is when John Oxley's party sailed up the Tweed River in 1823. A reprisal at Kirin Kirin, now known as Murdering Creek, occurred in this early colonial period:

Two sawyers were murdered by a couple of blackfellas. But the tribespeople...*did not* approve of it. In an account of it by Neddy Harper, they did not approve of it. But these two went ahead and did it, and then the whole group suffered the consequences of it, including an old black woman being shot in the back. I mean, *she* didn't do it. They still shot her nonetheless.¹

As 'there was a view that we were *less* than whitefellas', Minjungbal people saw no safety in European law.² 'You couldn't go out and shoot six whitefellas because one committed a murder could you? They just would go after the offender. But here, they would go out and commit wholesale slaughter of innocent people because of one person,' observed one Minjungbal woman.³ Minjungbal women said that around this time people at Fingal were given poisoned flour resulting in the *reported* deaths of

roughly ten people.⁴ One Minjungbal woman said that even though ‘it wasn’t talked about a lot, like when I was younger, or even older’, older relatives had confirmed ‘that when they’d give us flour, our rations and stuff that’d be poisoned with like rat baits’.⁵

When Minjungbal country was gradually opened up to selector farmers from 1866 to 1914, the sugar cane industry was soon established and with it came a demand for cheap labour. South Sea Islander people, who had been Blackbirded to work on the farms of Queensland, ‘were brought here for the sugar trade to work in...cos they considered the Aboriginal fellas lazy. They didn’t realise that maybe [the Aboriginal fellas] were smart. Why *should* they have to work for these men?’ opined one Minjungbal woman.⁶ Conditions in New South Wales were considered more favourable due to less-racist policies, and border-jumping became popular for the South Sea Islander workers and other Aboriginal people. According to one Minjungbal woman:

They lived in Queensland...until the union said, ‘We do not want the South Sea Islander people to be working the cane fields anymore.’ And so what happened then is that a lot of them were sent back [to the South Sea Islands]. Some of them came out on agreement, but some of them were Blackbirded, came out here under slavery conditions. But when they wanted to send them back...a lot of them skipped the border to escape the real harsh *Aboriginal Protection Act* that was in Queensland.⁷

‘Some came here under agreement, others came here on their own free will, some came here simply to get away from Queensland’, confirmed another Minjungbal woman.⁸ When the White Australia Policy was introduced in 1901, ‘some of the people went back to the South Sea Islands where they were from...other people either didn’t know where they were from...they didn’t record the island correctly, or the boat they were on. Others married, and others wanted to stay here’.⁹ One Minjungbal woman said that once they had established themselves in Minjungbal country, ‘a lot of those South Sea Island people saw a familiarity with Aboriginal people and co-inhabited with them’.¹⁰ Another Minjungbal woman said that South Sea Islander men ‘could stay here if they married an Aboriginal woman. That was the policy of the day’.¹¹

One Minjungbal woman stated that ‘whether we be South Sea Islanders or Aboriginal, we were all in the same boat at that point in time’.¹² As a result of this early shared history, diverse South Sea Islander cultures have become significant components of the

Minjungbal community's culture. One Minjungbal woman pointed out that today 'everyone who grew up here has some kind of dual heritage on both sides. And it's such a unique community in that'.¹³

Segregation and Solidarity

Although Minjungbal people had been moved onto Ukerebagh Island from the early 1920s, in 1927 it was officially declared an Aboriginal Reserve.¹⁴ One Minjungbal woman said that 'when the Europeans came here they really didn't want to see black faces in amongst the crowds in the streets, so they shipped em all over there'; this was 'to get them out of sight, out of mind'.¹⁵ Minjungbal people didn't have the luxury to complain about their circumstances because they were too busy with coping with the minutiae of life.¹⁶ One Minjungbal woman indicates that oppression was normalised; 'my grandmother never spoke about anything!...I don't know why she didn't. Because you know, it was just life, I think, to them. Just life'.¹⁷ The fear of reprisal was a great deterrent; 'we just went along with the law and what the law said, because if we didn't obey the law we had it stacked against us. And that's the way it was'.¹⁸

Life was highly regulated; a culture of surveillance was imposed on Ukerebagh Island residents that curtailed their freedom of movement. Said one Minjungbal woman, 'that was a place of curfew...Aboriginal people had to be, at curfew, out of town and on that island...around about five o'clock. In the afternoon, get off the streets'.¹⁹ Despite this 'it was never run by a manager. But they did hand out government blankets and the ordinary rations that people got in the day, in that time'.²⁰ This established a welfare dependency for food and other resources because the swampy, mosquito-infested ground was unsuitable for agriculture. One Minjungbal woman said that the new colonial diets 'didn't suit them, it made them weak'.²¹ Another said:

We're salt water people here, you know, we need the resources of the rivers and the sea for our good health and our well-being. Introduced foods have had a bad effect on the health of my mother, my grandparents.²²

In 1951, the Island was declared a nature reserve, and 'they were all forced off Ukerebagh to live in other areas and that always was a big issue for a lot of our people. They felt they lost, that was their home' remembered one Minjungbal woman. Most

Indigenous people from Ukerebagh Island settled down in communities at Fingal, Chinderah, Cudgen and South Tweed.²³ One consequence of this sudden, unregulated, and sometimes culturally-inappropriate mixing, was that tensions and hostilities often erupted within the communities.²⁴

One Minjungbal woman said that ‘the bottom end of Fingal, was referred to as The Black’s Camp. We all lived down there, very close relationship, it was just like most Indigenous families, one big extended family’.²⁵ She added ‘when we were growing up though, if you were a blackfella, you were a blackfella. It didn’t matter where you were from and...there wasn’t South Sea Island, Torres Strait Island, Aboriginal, we were all just...blackfellas together...we were all there together, as a group, and as family’.²⁶ Even ‘the non-Indigenous people that lived up the top end of Fingal. They always treated us with respect which was great’, said one Minjungbal woman.²⁷

From Federation, the Tweed Chamber of Commerce fought for the segregation of Aboriginal students in the public education system, however they were largely unsuccessful. Some time before the First World War, the education system’s Aboriginal student policy of ‘clean, clad and courteous’ had very real implications in the story of Cudgen Primary School when one Minjungbal woman’s Nanna attended. Non-Indigenous parents:

...had the P & C Association complain to the Principal that the black kids were unhealthy...they had runny noses and they were dirty-looking. So they lined these kids up to examine them, including looking up their skirt! Nanna...came home and complained...that the Principal had even checked their underwear! Cos they were checking for cleanliness. I mean today that would be sexual assault.²⁸

Minjungbal women remember the policy of segregation in other establishments in town, often up until the 1950s. One Minjungbal woman described it as being ‘very similar to South Africa and American policies of segregating them’.²⁹ Segregation was enforced at the Empire Theatre in Coolangatta, where there was a roped-off section in the back for Aboriginal patrons. One Minjungbal woman remembered her experience as a little girl:

We were ushered down in this little dark corner of the Empire Theatre, and we just couldn’t understand it. Even Mum and Dad were quite shocked. And we never ever went back after that, because they put all the

Indigenous people in this little corner, and you couldn't sort of mix with the other non-Indigenous people. You were just roped off in this little section. And that has always stuck in my mind, cos we just, we could not understand. We didn't feel that we were any different.³⁰

If Minjungbal people sat in the “white” section they were admonished and sometimes they were reprimanded by their *own* people. Minjungbal women consider that this was either out of fear of the possible repercussions for defying the rules, or else in a stand of solidarity, as a preference to remain segregated from a racist society and close to other blackfellas.³¹ One Minjungbal woman describes the experiences of her mother and friends:

They'd wait til the lights went out and then sneak down the front of the picture theatre...but it would be the old Aboriginal Elder ladies that'd go up and go, 'Hey!' and tap em on the shoulder and go, 'Get up the back where you're supposed to be'.³²

The Minjungbal community resisted and practised solidarity. Boycotts were practised, because as one Minjungbal woman explained: 'It's one of the best non-violent political actions and you know, it's effective. You know, when people are losin money out of stuff, that talks'.³³ Upon being segregated at the Empire Theatre, one Minjungbal woman's brother 'wasn't gonna cop it. My brother stood outside and abused them for it so he was barred from the picture theatre'.³⁴ Another Minjungbal woman remembered rebelling in another way: 'Even though we had to sit at the back in the picture theatre. The boys, they're all larrikins...there used to be a little window at the back, and they used to pass all the grog through. Through the window!' she laughed.³⁵

There is an incident in recent memory where one Minjungbal woman faced discrimination at the Port O' Call Hotel in Coolangatta in the early 1980s. The proprietor adopted a policy of exclusion of all blackfellas to atone for the actions of one; she was refused service and asked to leave because previously another Indigenous woman had caused trouble in the establishment.³⁶ When this ban was enacted, patrons banded together and boycotted.³⁷ One Minjungbal woman remembered that 'we had a lot of people on side. *Everybody* that drank at that pub...so what they did was, everybody just moved. Moved away, until they got a new manager'.³⁸

One Minjungbal woman said the values she grew up with ‘basically were to, you know, do the right thing by people’, and that ‘you took care of your own. Whereas in an Indigenous community it wouldn’t be your immediate own it’d have been everybody’.³⁹ One Minjungbal woman said that the best thing about ‘growing up on the Tweed, is that *everybody* helped everyone else. No one saw anyone go without a feed. You know, there was always someone who would come to your aid, and share. And that was the beauty of it all’.⁴⁰ Another Minjungbal woman remembered:

In those days, everyone just worked together. And to me, well I never ever saw any jealousy or anything like that. You know, you just all shared everything. Food, whatever, you know. Which was lovely. And that was a great way to be brought up, that you appreciated what was around you and you appreciated all your friends.⁴¹

Although reflecting on the past could sometimes be painful for Minjungbal women, their memories of growing up were also a source of joy. One Minjungbal woman enjoyed ‘the big dances they used to have’, and also ‘the All-Blacks Football, when that came together, then they’d meet up, you know. And maybe meet up with other people from other areas, or marry up’.⁴² Another Minjungbal woman explained:

We didn’t have much growing up, you know. We’re the black people who never had anything much. But we didn’t miss what we didn’t have. That was the thing. See we had a happy upbringing, and happy childhood *I* thought. You know, even though there were times, you know, we didn’t have a lot.⁴³

She continued: ‘But we used to be happy. You know, as a group we used to go swimmin all together down the water. We had a good time. We had a good time growing up, yeah...even though sometimes, with the adverse circumstances, we just made the *best* of that situation’.⁴⁴

Attitudes to Authority

Growing up under oppressive policies has had a profound impact on how we as Minjungbal women locate ourselves in the non-Indigenous world. Even hearing stories from older family members of violence, racist policies, rape and abusive custodians have played their part in degrading Aboriginal people. Both personal experiences and a

community history of trauma have been internalised in one way or another, and bred attitudes of distrust, fear or outright hatred in varying degrees towards the authorities in the dominant culture.⁴⁵

The Minjungbal community have historically lived in fear of the police. One Minjungbal woman remembered that ‘it was just always being scared if police came...if there was something about your Aboriginal heritage that was going to be questioned’.⁴⁶ Another Minjungbal woman explained that ‘the police at that time...they were really discriminatory that way’.⁴⁷ Minjungbal peoples’ attitudes to the health system have been informed by their experiences growing up. One Minjungbal woman remembers that ‘people wouldn’t go to the doctors. They were *frightened* of the doctors, which is understandable’.⁴⁸ Another Minjungbal woman says that now she has ‘no faith in the community services...and even when my mother was [unwell], they provided no support for her either’.⁴⁹

‘History shows that...some people can’t articulate themselves properly’, one Minjungbal woman explained.⁵⁰ Social anxieties, awkwardness, shame or shyness around authorities and other whitefellas is a common experience: ‘I s’pose I gotta admit it to myself sometimes, that you know, we’re not on the same level as white people...even now I’m a bit shy. Even though I do cultural awareness training, I’m still a bit shy.’⁵¹ ‘Even though Aboriginal people are exempt from these fishing licences for example, there’s problems there with even being able to articulate that to the fishing inspectors’; this concerns one Minjungbal woman because, as she said, ‘My community is being fined at the moment’.⁵²

Discussing feelings of shame and shyness when dealing with authority, it is evident that Minjungbal women have overcome this for the most part. Of talking to non-Indigenous authority, one Minjungbal woman described the evolution of her feelings from inadequacy to confidence:

I used to get sick in the stomach before I’d go [to a meeting], thinking, ‘What am I gonna say?’ but I don’t care anymore. I don’t get nervous any more ...because it’s now just coming straight from my heart rather...it’s more of an expectation I have, that they understand, if they’re an educated person. Otherwise to me they’re an uneducated fool.⁵³

Rising Above Racism

One Minjungbal woman said that as an internalisation of past government policies, discrimination ‘was a policy that people in the town applied. So we did have racial discrimination. Everyone will tell you that’.⁵⁴ Some Minjungbal people ‘got the cheek to say that there was no racism here. Well, some people may not have experienced racism. They may not have. But the facts are that it did occur’, commented one Minjungbal woman.⁵⁵ She continued to explain that because of racism, ‘in the very beginning, they were very reluctant to say they were Aboriginal people. You know, very reluctant, because of that cloud that was over us all the time. They didn’t deny it, but they didn’t sort of broadcast it’.⁵⁶

One Minjungbal woman said that racism is ‘just part of you being black. That you know, when someone says something, you’ve got an antenna that sticks up and you can pick up, if someone’s sorta picking on you if you’re black, or if they’re sayin something that doesn’t sound right, even though it’s you know, covert’.⁵⁷ Yet even if racism is covert, ‘you know their tone’.⁵⁸ One Minjungbal woman observed that people have different understandings of what racism is. She said ‘some people just laugh it off. But other people can really get upset by it’.⁵⁹ Another Minjungbal woman explained:

You will find other women, who have just got on with their lives, gone to town, done their shopping, gone pickin beans, you know, didn’t care about anything else that was going on. And that’s life. They didn’t look for racism. Well neither did we, but if we come up against it, they wouldn’t see it as that, probably. They’d see it as something else.⁶⁰

Another Minjungbal woman spoke about skin colour: ‘I’ve always gravitated to the dark kids, you know? So you get torn between this, like you’re really, really white and people call ya a wigga and a wannabe, but you know your identity and your culture and you’re really in touch with that. But you’re not dark enough to be dark. And accepted’.⁶¹ Of identifying as Aboriginal, another Minjungbal woman observed that ‘things change when you tick a box. Other peoples’ perceptions of you change’.⁶²

Minjungbal women experienced and reacted in different ways to racism. There is a consensus that when we experienced racism from our peers - ‘*that* you could handle’ said one Minjungbal woman - it was much more easily deflected than if had come from

adults.⁶³ Thankfully, non-Indigenous adults in our lives stuck up for us. One Minjungbal woman is still grateful about when ‘there was other little white girls *did not want me* in their singing group. The parents just put their foot down and said, ‘No, she’s in it.’ Yeah so they were really good’.⁶⁴ At school, one Minjungbal woman’s ‘teachers used to shelter us...we were lucky, we didn’t come up against any racism...we had good teachers, you know and they treated us well’.⁶⁵

Some Minjungbal women have experienced racism from family members who were offended in recently discovering that they had Aboriginal relatives. One Minjungbal woman says, ‘You know, they’re offended to think that somebody’s out there saying that their ancestor has fathered a black child. Well I’m just as offended that they would be offended, because what’s wrong with that?’.⁶⁶ Another Minjungbal woman commented that some relatives refused to acknowledge their Indigenous heritage ‘cos the younger ones, you know if they’re married into some white posh family, they don’t wanna know’.⁶⁷ One Minjungbal woman says that her daughter and non-Indigenous husband ‘lock horns something fierce. So there is the effect...of all those policies you know’.⁶⁸

One Minjungbal woman said her father ‘was strict and disallowed me from participating in any Indigenous events...I couldn’t help but feel isolated from my family during these times, especially NAIDOC. My father wanted my sister and I to...not be involved in anything regarding Indigenous issues. He believed mainstream accomplishments were more recognisable’.⁶⁹ Of transcending lower class status, one Minjungbal woman said ‘it was like a competition, you had to have it in this world, you know. And I don’t think it was to do with the bigger world. I think it was black versus white’.⁷⁰

Rising above racism has been a challenge throughout all of our lives, and we all have different approaches to dealing with it. One Minjungbal woman recalled that she had ‘been in fist fights at school. Yeah. Because people have offended a black person...it’s like offending my grandmother’.⁷¹ Another Minjungbal woman used to fight racism with her fists too. She said, ‘we retaliated in the only way we knew how, and go, ‘Pow!’ And give them a clout!’.⁷²

Today Minjungbal women have moved on from that and now use our words: ‘If people sort of try to minimise or devalue something that I think is really important, then my mind goes a hundred miles an hour trying to counteract that argument, you know, and give them all the reasons why they're wrong or why they've missed something: ‘You’ve missed something brah’’, explained one Minjungbal woman.⁷³ One Minjungbal woman recalled defending a black colleague from other racist colleagues:

And we were sitting around talking one night, with all these girls...and they called her a ‘black bitch’. And I just said, ‘No, no. Don’t call her that in front of me.’ They said, ‘You’re different.’ I said, ‘No I’m not, look. I’m the same colour as she is.’ I would never, you know, put down my own, *regardless*, even if they were supposed to be my friends.⁷⁴

One Minjungbal woman described how her children dealt with racism; ‘if they went to school and they struck someone callin em, well that was to the demise of them, calling them that name! They do a bit of whoosh-whoosh’ she laughed.⁷⁵ Another Minjungbal woman’s children ‘fought racism in a different way. When they were called something in school...I think they gave the kids a hard time...you know, they used their mouth, and they're quick like that’.⁷⁶ Another Minjungbal woman explained how she taught her children resilience, explaining if ‘they’d come home and say, ‘Boohooohooohoo! So-and-so called me black!’ I said, ‘Yeah, so? What’s wrong with that? You are! Nothing wrong with that. What’s the matter with you? Get out of here or you’ll get a clout across your earhole’’.⁷⁷

Lateral Violence

Minjungbal women have experienced exclusion and othering from both whitefellas and South Sea Islanders family members; the trauma one Minjungbal woman’s mother experienced ‘is more about the fact that they were not included in the family because of their Aboriginality’.⁷⁸ One Minjungbal woman’s mother, ‘when she was a young girl...she had to ask permission before she even entered the property...and she resented that for all of her life’.⁷⁹ A South Sea Islander relative of one Minjungbal woman sometimes brought up her Aboriginality in a negative light. She says ‘he did have very racist attitudes...even though he was black himself’.⁸⁰ This intra-family racism sometimes created an identity chasm where Minjungbal women felt they had to choose one heritage to identify with and reject the others.⁸¹

One Minjungbal woman says that family-on-family fighting was responsible for the breaking of her family.⁸² Another Minjungbal woman's mother suffered major depression over the years because she was 'not allowed to live with either parent...because of her Aboriginality'.⁸³ She says that other relatives in her family also 'have that trauma from being left behind because of their Aboriginality...they both can be reduced to tears just like that'.⁸⁴ Today, 'it's still a very hard thing to deal with cos they're still very soft and raw inside'.⁸⁵ This Minjungbal woman says that still, 'there's some resentment that she had to feel that way, and sorriness on my behalf...sorriness for my Mum and a couple of my Aunts'.⁸⁶

Not being from the Minjungbal community could be problematic for outsiders; one Minjungbal woman's father 'was not entirely accepted into this community as a white man'.⁸⁷ Some relatives 'made it even more difficult for him to court my mother...he was ganged up on and beaten...often'.⁸⁸ Further, she states that her father 'talks about not being accepted by the Aboriginal people of this community...but then, he's also discriminated against in the non-Indigenous [community], because you can tell he does have Aboriginal in him. You know, so he's battling within himself, with his own identity'.⁸⁹ Another Minjungbal woman's father, 'not being accepted...the community treated my father like crap for so many [years], even still do...they struggle to accept that he's Indigenous. So that's hard, you know, really hard. The rejection of different things that we applied for, you know, and community are on the board of directors'.⁹⁰

Minjungbal women notice infighting between large families. Minjungbal women with dual Indigenous and South Sea Islander heritage experienced lateral violence growing up; questions of legitimacy as Traditional Owners, as well as challenges of authenticity as Aboriginal people, have been raised. One Minjungbal woman said that 'unfortunately sometimes racism can occur within other black races too'.⁹¹ As a little girl, one Minjungbal woman was called out by:

...one of my own Indigenous friends...she call me a black gin...and she was a black gin too, mind you! But I couldn't believe that! I was just shocked, you know...I always remember that...and I went home and told Mum she called me a black gin, and she's black herself, you know?...but that sort of thing, it sorta stuck in my mind.⁹²

Community Cohesion

Although ‘there is a lot of nosiness and other bullshit’ as well as ‘a lot of divide’ in our community, one Minjungbal woman observed that ‘when there’s a loss, everybody comes together’.⁹³ Another Minjungbal woman agreed that ‘we’re very blessed here at Tweed. I think the community as a whole, it has been very close-knit and supportive of each other’.⁹⁴ ‘I can see, that the community is very much, you know, alive and vibrant, and that they do a lot of really good things’, said one Minjungbal woman.⁹⁵ Another Minjungbal woman attributed this to the community being able to ‘target the goal and you find it’s a common goal, I think that works well’.⁹⁶

Minjungbal women who are not Traditional Owners have an ambivalence to identifying as Minjungbal women. One Minjungbal woman explained this was ‘because I don’t come from here, originally. But I am a part of this community, the Minjungbal community’.⁹⁷ Another Minjungbal woman said ‘even though I was born [off-country]...I still regard myself more as a Minjungbal woman, Bundjalung woman’.⁹⁸ Another Minjungbal woman explained ‘I do consider myself a Minjungbal woman because I’ve lived in Tweed and its surrounding areas all my life, along with my family. I identify as, and am recognised by the community, as being Aboriginal and from here. I have strong family ties with the Minjungbal area’.⁹⁹

One Minjungbal woman said ‘it’s not that we’ve adopted the country, I think the country’s adopted us in a fashion...because we’ve always been involved in whatever politics have been happening in this community’.¹⁰⁰ Another Minjungbal woman said her family always ‘felt accepted here’.¹⁰¹ One Minjungbal woman says that her feeling of belonging has been strengthened by relationships to other Minjungbal people: ‘I have family ties here now, through my youngest son. So now I feel even more part of the community through him and his family. And my friends. Many, many friends’.¹⁰²

Minjungbal women have been involved in diverse community organisations and for all of us, belonging has been strengthened through close involvement in Aboriginal Education and other community initiatives. One Minjungbal woman said that ‘it’s important that we have those kinds of people and agencies, just anyone there that care and are there to help’.¹⁰³ Another Minjungbal woman said:

I like the community feel of having carers come into your home that are Indigenous. People that mow your lawns that are Indigenous, people that you can go to see on medical grounds that are Indigenous. People that you have support people in organisations like Centrelink, stuff like that, and schools.¹⁰⁴

Minjungbal women's connections within the community today have facilitated our healing in different ways. One Minjungbal woman said 'I definitely know I've been through some hard times over the years and if it wasn't for, you know, not just my family, but...people in the community. I don't know what would have happened to me'.¹⁰⁵ She added that she is comforted because 'I always know...if I ever need to come up and have a yarn or ask a question' she will be supported.¹⁰⁶

One Minjungbal woman thinks nothing of helping others; she said 'It's just something we do...I've got no feeling towards it one way or the other, it's just who I am. Who we are'.¹⁰⁷ She added, 'that's all I've ever done. And you get to the point where you say, 'Well I'm sick of all this black stuff', you know, but you keep going'.¹⁰⁸ For another Minjungbal woman it is important that others know she is available for them, and she makes a point to 'show others in the community...if there's someone needs help or just to have a yarn or some sort of support, you know, there's always someone that they can turn to'.¹⁰⁹

One Minjungbal woman was involved with organising 'the big meeting down at the museum for the National Apology. You know, we begged and borrowed things to make sure that all the old people were there, and they were comfortable. They got transported there, we arranged all that. We arranged food for them, so we had big cook-outs'.¹¹⁰ Another Minjungbal woman has seen 'the community's kids grow up, you know, they come from Year Seven, they graduate, and they always pop in and see you still. So you see that continuity'; 'they're ex-students, going back a way. And I've got their children, and their children, here now'.¹¹¹ Another Minjungbal woman's daughter 'does not forget her roots. And she always comes back into the community, and helps the community'.¹¹²

Education

Minjungbal women agree that in their schooling experiences, Aboriginal history and achievements have not always been celebrated by the Australian education system; one Minjungbal woman reflected that when she went to school, ‘it was all about Indians...basically nothing about Aboriginal people. Nothing at all...well it was a...different era. We were taught about how to cook and to sew, so it’s different from now’.¹¹³ This is supported by Mick Dodson and Alexis Wright who both assert that Aboriginal history has been made invisible by key stakeholders in education.¹¹⁴

Minjungbal women all have a burning curiosity to learn, a thirst for knowledge of who we are and where we are going. This was sparked at a young age, and often as a reaction to racism and injustice.¹¹⁴ Although one Minjungbal woman already has a sound knowledge of Indigenous history, she said ‘there’s still more to know...it’s a thirst that’ll never be quenched. I’m *always* curious. Uncle...he told me then that I ask too many questions’, she laughed.¹¹⁵ Knowledge empowers us, and the weight of knowledge behind us gives us strength to fight and teach.

One Minjungbal woman explained that ‘nobody wants to listen to you if you don’t have an education...you come across as stupid unless you have a piece of paper and some letters behind your name’.¹¹⁶ ‘I’ve been up against the wall a million times and told to go away and, it’s another reason I did my teaching degree because teachers would say to me, ‘you can’t cross that boundary you know, you’re not a teacher’, said one Minjungbal woman.¹¹⁷ It is clear that for Minjungbal women, having a formal education legitimises our standing in the eyes of others and empowers us to speak with authority.

Another Minjungbal woman said ‘when I started working with the kids, and I *needed* to know information of the area and our people...I started to get my passion for it’.¹¹⁸ Education has given her a ‘sense of pride’.¹¹⁹ One Minjungbal woman explained, ‘Can’t have my students going to university and me not. So I enrolled in...Uni, to do an external study in Indigenous Studies. To get that piece of paper. Took me six years, but I was so determined to get that piece of paper’.¹²⁰ Another Minjungbal woman, when she ‘started having kids, I realised that you know, it was really important to me that if I wanted them to achieve, I need to be a good role model’.¹²¹

Minjungbal women said that the curriculum still does not do enough to promote the accurate teaching of Aboriginal history. One Minjungbal woman explained ‘that’s why I do cultural awareness training because people have got to be educated what’s happened in this country’.¹²² One Minjungbal woman continues her cultural awareness mission because her Aunty ‘taught me to assert my authority. She is my mentor...and she gave me that will’.¹²³ Minjungbal women agreed that the best way to achieve cultural decolonisation is through teaching and learning stories about the past; the education system is one of many means through which this can be achieved.¹²⁴

One Minjungbal woman agreed that decolonising history can be difficult because ‘it was fairly common knowledge that our Old People often told them what they *wanted* them to know’.¹²⁵ There is a desire to have a published version of history that is ‘recorded properly, rather than from somebody else’s perspective’, inclusive of Minjungbal perspectives, both past and present.¹²⁶ According to another Minjungbal woman:

There’s nothing written. It’s only from talking to people that you find out, you know, I mean that’s the hard task I’ve had trying to find written historical records, written by Indigenous people. Not from the white perspective, because, you know, it’s only one view of what happened, and a lot of things have been left out and, or lied about.¹²⁷

‘I’ve always been careful that if there is a publication out there, or somebody wanting to write a book that they engage us somehow’, said one Minjungbal woman; she continued, ‘I’ve always been of the view that if you write about us, ‘nothing *about* us *without* us’. Because they’ve got it wrong on so many occasions’.¹²⁸ ‘Unfortunately, there’s still some people that think they know our history better than we do’, ‘that because they’re older, because they hold historical records that they know more than we do about who we are’, explained one Minjungbal woman.¹²⁹ This happened recently when a non-Indigenous group published a local history and acknowledged the wrong people. She explained that the ‘error was not only in what they had repeated, but they failed to take advice on engaging people properly’.¹³⁰ Minjungbal people:

...had to take them to task because they didn’t engage us even though it was a suggestion from myself that they did do that, to engage us meaningfully, before they wrote this book, but they went ahead and did it anyway, based on what was known already in the historical record.¹³¹

She explained that:

They's got their hands on stuff that wasn't accurate, and of course the errors of fact then were repeated. So then, it was a long, drawn-out process to get these people to acknowledge that they's made a mistake and that that error had to be corrected.¹³²

They sent out an erratum, and in subsequent publications 'the error has been corrected, but it took us months for them to even admit that they'd made an error'.¹³³ 'We wanted them to recall the books because it was a concern to me that they could be out there. Someone like yourself could be doing your thesis or some study on it and they could then repeat those errors of fact', said one Minjungbal woman.¹³⁴

Being able to locate our family stories in the context of Australian history helps us make sense of why things were the way they were, and the interconnectedness of our dual history in this country. Aboriginal Studies programmes are important in this respect because both 'Indigenous and non-Indigenous kids get so much out of it'.¹³⁵ One Minjungbal woman said that 'as an Indigenous person, I mean I've learnt a lot...you think you sort of know, but it's amazing what you learn and get out of these classes'.¹³⁶

Navigating the non-Indigenous Education system can be done successfully; one Minjungbal woman said 'I was able to positively assert my identity', explaining below:

Through supporting Indigenous students, parents, community, teachers regarding Indigenous issues, and taking care of the school's Aboriginal dance group. It gave me opportunities to share my knowledge. I would encourage links by inviting community members to support the students through traditional dance. A cultural exchange program was established...so the *jarjums* could exchange knowledge.¹³⁷

One Minjungbal woman said working in Aboriginal Education put her in touch with other community workers, when she gained an awareness of 'what was going on in their communities, and almost very similar to our own, you know? Maybe to a different degree'.¹³⁸ Another Minjungbal woman said that at the school she works at 'we have a lot of community come in. And having that connection, coming in and just talking to the kids, it really sort of opens a lot of doors'.¹³⁹ At another school, parents are involved

when they ‘support the Aboriginal kids in the dance group...to talk to the kids about our culture and our history in the HSIE department. Even Science, you know, to talk about the bush tucker food on the track to the creek’, explained another Minjungbal woman.¹⁴⁰

Another Minjungbal woman has contributed by ‘setting up programmes in schools that assisted kids with literacy, numeracy problems, with transition. Writing my own programmes that didn’t suffice those needs that we were wanting to address’, and another said ‘I’ve also supported the teachers in the school in better understanding how our students learn, and our culture’.¹⁴¹ Another said it was of utmost importance that non-Indigenous teachers ‘have an understanding about where we’re from and understand the hurt that a lot of our younger ones are feeling’.¹⁴²

In order to ‘have a level playing field’, one Minjungbal woman said, ‘it’s gotta come about through education. We will get our rights *through education*, sooner or later’.¹⁴³ Another Minjungbal woman agreed that ‘it’s the thing across all cultures and societies. It’s the only way that people can lift themselves up from their circumstances’.¹⁴⁴ One Minjungbal woman said that in order for this to come about, ‘you gotta tackle em on all fronts, and for our people to be placed in organisations where we’re gonna make a difference, we need the education to do it’.¹⁴⁵

Helping Our Kids

In our yarns, I asked Minjungbal women what kind of advice they would give to younger people. Every one of them emphasised the importance of education, summarised by one Minjungbal woman: ‘Education is the key. With education comes success’.¹⁴⁶ Another Minjungbal woman said education was important ‘for the rest of your life. Not only for yourself but for your family, you know, when you’re a parent’.¹⁴⁷

I asked Minjungbal women in which ways our kids have it better off than they did. One Minjungbal woman replied: ‘they’ve got more than what we ever had in a material sense. And things seems to come easier for them that what they were for us’; another stated ‘there’s more out there, nowadays, than what we had. Even as far as funding...much better. In every regard. You know, technology, access’.¹⁴⁸ Another Minjungbal woman said life is better ‘because our own people have education and have

placed themselves in services that can provide for my kids', and because there are 'a lot of things for youth. And I know that the Old People fight for those things, they have done for generations'.¹⁴⁹ One Minjungbal woman takes issue with this, as 'our kids walk around as if they've got a god-given right to be free when a lot of people put their life on the line to fight for what they've got. And they don't appreciate it'.¹⁵⁰

One Minjungbal woman is not completely opposed to development. She explained that 'when there's jobs here, we want training opportunities for our kids. We want work for the unemployed', and 'that way, when these places are built...then they can sit back and be proud of it, they can also sit back and then they as mentors, if they've worked on a job, it develops a sense of pride in their work that they've done'.¹⁵¹ They can then have a role in 'ensuring that these places aren't damaged, especially when they've been part of building it'.¹⁵²

One Minjungbal woman was adamant that young people 'are all worse off in one way...development has robbed you of a lot of things here'; she explained that we 'don't have access to the places anymore that you should have been entitled to'.¹⁵³ Another Minjungbal woman agreed that for equality, 'that fight, that's still ongoing. With some of my kids, not all of them. Well like my son, he wants to take up arms...he sees the injustice of it all'.¹⁵⁴ Another Minjungbal woman observed that modern pressures appear harder to navigate:

I think when we were growing up, life seemed a lot *easier* than it is for our young ones today. There's so much going on and I think it's so much harder for them to stay focussed in a lot of ways because there's so many other distractions. Whereas I felt we didn't have a lot of things that the young ones have to handle now. It was just your family and that was virtually it. But there's so many other avenues for young people, even from primary school...and it does get on top of them I think.¹⁵⁵

When asked if she saw transgenerational trauma in the community, one Minjungbal woman affirmed 'I've just seen so much pain from kids at school, and my own parents and their sufferings'.¹⁵⁶ 'It seems our kids are always you know, [experiencing] injustice and just treated *badly*', said one Minjungbal woman, and that 'when they come up against the criminal justice system, they get a lot different consequences. And the way they react is a lot different'.¹⁵⁷

One Minjungbal woman sees transgenerational trauma ‘definitely in the community. Just working...with the kids...and when you have the parents come in it sorta gives you a better picture of what’s going on. And you can *understand* where this kid’s coming from’.¹⁵⁸ Another Minjungbal woman agreed, saying ‘And it can go back, way back, to their grandparents, you know. Some of them can heal, but others you know, they really need support in talking about what is really worrying them, and that sort of thing’.¹⁵⁹

‘Our young people in particular really need support’ one Minjungbal woman has noticed, ‘particularly our Indigenous kids coming up. Also other non-Indigenous kids who have got a real battle in life, with different issues’.¹⁶⁰ For this reason, she said ‘it’s important for all of our young people to just be understood’, and that ‘they feel there’s...someone they can go to. And talk to’.¹⁶¹ The high rate of youth suicide is a reality of Minjungbal life; ‘there is a lot of heartache in this community. You know, we’ve had a lot of young people pass away, people too young, and it rocks the community’.¹⁶² One Minjungbal woman said it was the most tragic kind of grief because ‘you cannot understand *why*...you know, you can’t see a reason why these things [happen], and an acceptance’.¹⁶³ Another Minjungbal woman was unable to attend a recent funeral, saying ‘I couldn’t go to another kid’s funeral. You know, we’d lost three...that year, and I just, oh my god. And this was closer to home’.¹⁶⁴

Working with our young people is important for Minjungbal women. One said she gets ‘so much joy and happiness out of seeing my students, and they’re all my family, come back and [visit], just the successes that...have [been] achieved is just wonderful darling. I’m so very, very proud’.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, another Minjungbal woman gets a ‘sense of satisfaction, I guess. And success. When you see that look on a kid’s face, that you know, when it [finger snap], the penny drops. When it just *clicks*. And that look, that glint in their [eyes], just, yeah. It’s all worthwhile’.¹⁶⁶

¹⁻¹³ Research yarns with Minjungbal women, 4-6 February, 2013.

¹⁴ NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, *Tweed Heads Historic Site And Ukerebagh Nature Reserve Plan of Management*, September, 1999, p. 4, Retrieved 3 May, 2013 from <<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/parks/pomfinaltweedukerebagh.pdf>>

¹⁵⁻¹¹³ Research yarns with Minjungbal women, 4-6 February, 2013.

¹¹⁴ Michael Dodson, ‘The end in the beginning’, 2003, p. 41; Alexis Wright, ‘The Politics of Writing’, 2002.

¹¹⁵⁻¹⁶⁶ Research yarns with Minjungbal women, 4-6 February, 2013.

Chapter Four

Minjungbal Families

This chapter explores how Minjungbal women have experienced transgenerational trauma within our families, and the things we do to break the cycle. First Minjungbal women discuss the impacts of past government policies in breaking up our families and how tracing our links can help to heal; by explaining how institutionalisation has affected our family members we understand that our fear of the welfare has its roots in the past. Secondly we yarn about how we have experienced gender-directed trauma such as sexual abuse and domestic violence, and we locate ourselves as women in our culture and families to our see our womanhood as a source of strength. We next explore how we experience grief and other spiritual health issues, and share our ways of surviving and thriving under these burdens. Finally we explain how we have been able to understand, recognise and interrupt the cycle of transgenerational trauma, and yarn about how we spread healing and resilience from inside ourselves to the outside world.

Healing Broken Families

Past Protection and assimilation policies were both directly and indirectly responsible for the breaking up of families and community. People were taken from Minjungbal country from the beginning of colonisation in order to disrupt local traditions, to subordinate our people with fear and to persuade them to assimilate into European culture. One Minjungbal woman said:

You look at those two fellas from the Tweed that they took away from here...they made them join the Native Police, they took them miles away up north Queensland. They finally escaped because they became homesick. They walked all the way down from there and they used the observation points to find where they were coming back to.¹

Being ‘shipped...around from mission to mission’ was common for people who didn’t conform.² One Minjungbal woman said this was ‘cos even if you acted like a bush solicitor, they’d chuck you off the mission, not to contaminate them other people. Put ideas in their head’.³ Minjungbal women today have family ties to diverse reserves and

missions such as Deebing Creek, Box Ridge, Cherbourg and Palm Island.⁴ Life was heavily regulated in these places; people had to ask permission to get married, to work, and to leave and to visit.⁵

Minjungbal women said that children were taken by the authorities under New South Wales and Queensland's *Protection Acts* and the later the *Aborigines Welfare Act*.⁶ By all accounts, child removal was not as common here as in other areas, partly due to Ukerebagh Island Reserve and the Black's Camp at Fingal not having a resident manager.⁷ Minjungbal women said that nonetheless, the welfare's surveillance was a pervasive presence:

People had to have their kids clean. It didn't matter if you had a dirt floor, as long as you had clean sheets on the bed, and you had food in the cupboard and your kids were clean. If they weren't, they'd just come along and take your kids.⁸

Children were 'told when white people came to the door, that they had to run away and hide'.⁹ One Minjungbal woman remembered:

Growing up in Fingal, I heard stories the Elders and Aunts would tell, of being told to flee for the sand dunes when the black cars drove down Leticia Spit. They would giggle off and tell of their successes of the *jarjums* hiding in the dunes.¹⁰

Despite these successful evasions, children were taken by authorities and put into reserves and missions far away as Deebing Creek, Cherbourg, Cowpa and Palm Island.¹¹ One Minjungbal woman recalled one boy she knew who had been taken. When he was an adult he 'had an identity crisis whether what nationality he was...so it took a bit of a journey for him to come back to his roots and find out where he's from, and his *place* in this community'.¹²

In some cases, children with dual heritage were not allowed to live with their Aboriginal parent and were instead raised by their South Sea Islander relatives.¹³ This decision was made by the families themselves, sometimes as a protective measure against welfare interference, or occasionally as an early example of lateral violence and inter-racial discrimination.

One Minjungbal woman's father was placed in an orphanage as a result of family violence. He was never told he was Indigenous and he also 'grew up believing that [his mother] were dead...he was told that. And for years [he] would search the cemetery...looking for her headstone. And was never there'.¹⁴ However, 'he found her when he was thirty. And so it's only been since then that he realised he was Indigenous'.¹⁵ In the orphanage 'kids [were] beaten, isolated, sexually abused...he wasn't allowed to even see his sister. He got flogged cos they touched each other through the fence. He was molested'.¹⁶ Another Minjungbal woman says that her Uncle's experience of the welfare system has affected his life choices:

He never had children because he feared that, you know, if homes were in place when he was a baby, then if he had children then they could put them in a home. He just didn't wanna risk that...never got married and never had children for that reason.¹⁷

One Minjungbal woman's describes how her siblings were affected by their mother's experiences of removal:

I know [my eldest brother]'s always been a very hurt and angry person. Because of, you know, the paths that his Mother's life went down. I know that. My next brother who I was very close to, we talked about it lots and lots and lots. And you know, his estrangement from his own children, he felt was part and parcel of that. Because his partners didn't understand how his mind was tickin over, and their relationships fell apart, and they took the kids and went. So yeah, I saw that. My younger brother has never had any children. And I know that, the reason he tells me he's never had any children, is because he didn't want children all over the place. So, you know, that can be seen in many different ways, just those words.¹⁸

One Minjungbal woman describes her Uncle's grief when she was standing beside him at the grave of his sister, her mother:

And his partner of...twenty-four years at the time had never seen him cry. Until that day. And when I put my arm around him and you know, tried to comfort him, he said, 'No, no. I need to let this out'. And he said, 'And I'm not crying cos my sister's there', he said, 'I'm crying because they took away my right to help her in life when she needed it'. And that's what Indigenous people do. You know, [we] don't just have a

family, [we] have a community. And he felt he was robbed of that right. All the time she struggled, needed someone to help her, he coulda been just there.¹⁹

Of her mother's ongoing problems, another Minjungbal woman says 'she's just got that many skeletons in her closet. I just don't know where to start. You know, the separation of her parents, the separation with my father, you know? So that, I know is a trend...and trauma that my mother suffered'.²⁰ These effects still impact on her: 'there are still a lot of issues that I have, and a lot of barriers that I can't climb over. Um, a simple hug, can't do it. You know, my kids picked up on that'.²¹

One Minjungbal woman said that the past has not been healed in her family 'because...we're still on that trail of trying to find my grandmother's real roots. So that's a journey that's been taking twenty years, to find out where she's really from. I haven't even started on my father's side'.²² Of whether the past can be healed, one Minjungbal woman says:

Definitely not. So the past, if you're talking about Stolen Generations, that can never be healed...we can't go back in time. We can't put all those pieces of the jigsaw back together. We can't give my mother back her mother and father so that she can learn all those nurturing and cultural ways, to pass down to us. It can't be done. And they're the reasons why it can't. Time.²³

She added:

In 2012 it happened again here in Tweed Heads! You know, when is it gonna stop? So when you hear about things like that, and things come up, the National Apology, it just opens it all up again... It opens the whole atrocity up as this yucky weeping wound that really isn't ever gonna go away because too many people were involved in that, whether they were removing or being removed. How do we close that?²⁴

Tracing links to our heritage is essential to move forward because the family trees of Minjungbal women are mostly incomplete. Therefore, researching our family histories, and understanding who we are, is important for healing and ongoing learning. 'My father's links are still being traced...although we are certain, my father's Aboriginal

identity is still to be confirmed', said another Minjungbal woman.²⁵ Sometimes the past remains murky because of family secrecy, or because the Old People were unable to pass knowledge on.²⁶

Another Minjungbal woman, whose mother was Stolen, has spent the better part of her adult life researching her roots and uncovering new twists in the story of her Mum's life because of the inaccurate record-keeping that went hand-in-hand with the welfare policies of the day.²⁷ She has 'tried to find out as much as I can. I've done a lot of research; I've talked to a lot of people', and has enjoyed 'finding my totem ... finding out little bits and pieces about, you know, women's roles in society'.²⁸

One Minjungbal woman was reunited with her grandmother through Linkup.²⁹ She said the reunion was bittersweet because 'I did get up there to meet her. But she suffered from dementia at the time, and was borderline Alzheimer's, so her memory was, she kept calling me by my Mother's name, by the name that she called her'.³⁰ Another Minjungbal woman, whose grandfather was Blackbirded, says she has 'been back to [the Island he is from] twice now, to trace my heritage back to that area'.³¹

Many of us use social networking sites to stay connected, and even to establish contact with extended family. 'Through various technology like Facebook, I've been able to locate family' said one Minjungbal woman. Another Minjungbal woman has recently found family in another community: 'I know I have mob down that way and I hope to visit. Family and work circumstances just tied me up here', she said.³²

Sharing stories has also been important for healing.³³ This is done by 'just passing down that knowledge of what's happened, because by talking about it, it helps get rid of some of the negative'.³⁴ One Minjungbal woman explained that her own forgiveness has come about through:

Listening to what other people have got to say and believing what people say...reading about like Nuns that were involved in that, who really believed that they were doing what they were told to do and it was in the eyes of the law that they were saving people by doing it. I think, to heal my own kids and myself, by letting them know that not everybody was an evil person who set out to do this.³⁵

One Minjungbal woman was adamant that by educating students about the Stolen Generations and ‘trying to get kids to understand that there’s always more than one side to every story’, she ‘can make sure that it never happens to my children. My children are aware of what happened. I hope that they pass that down to their own children’.³⁶

Fear of Welfare

In the past, authorities had the weight of policies behind them to remove Aboriginal children from their families with little real evidence that they were actually at risk. This atmosphere of surveillance caused parents to be overprotective, and Aboriginal people felt the need to make a show of “fitting in” to the dominant culture’s values. Aboriginal parents became self-conscious about how society would see them. One Minjungbal woman remembers that as a child, she ‘just had to *perform* to society’s views and perspectives all the time’.³⁷ Of her mother, she adds that ‘because of her past, and because of *her* transgenerational trauma...she was trying to do what she’d been told. And live within her resources’.³⁸

Another Minjungbal woman said that her and her brothers ‘didn’t come up against any racism. *Only* for the simple fact that we were always kept clean. *Always* kept clean’.³⁹

Another Minjungbal woman remembered:

...havin to be perfect...that’s how I had to be because society needed to see that my mother, this little black woman, was looking after her kids okay. Society had to see that she was feeding us okay...nothing could be left anywhere that it wasn’t supposed to be, because anybody could come in at any time, to check. We had [an Aboriginal lady] live down the road, she had seven kids. And we were real good friends with her, and...all of us used to play together. And these two Mums used to always have cups of tea and chat inside. But they never went out together, anywhere. Because people would see then that they were co-inhabiting with other blacks. And that wasn’t on.⁴⁰

The present-day avoidance of institutions and distrust of authorities that some Minjungbal women practise have their roots in the past. Growing up conscious of the power that the welfare and other authorities were able to exert in their lives, one Minjungbal woman was constantly reminded to ‘behave myself at all times. Dress

properly. All the above that ladies supposed to do'.⁴¹ Another Minjungbal woman says, 'around about my teenage years, I was not allowed to draw attention to myself in the street. Cos I'd get a clout'.⁴²

One Minjungbal woman's mother lived in fear of welfare; 'my eldest brother...spent a lot of time, when there was a knock on the door, in cupboards, under beds, locked in rooms, you name it. Mum had this funny thing about welfare coming and stealing her kids. She just always thought that it was gonna happen'.⁴³ Another Minjungbal woman remembers having to hide her Aboriginality:

When we were walking home from school...I said to my brother... 'Are we Aboriginal?' and he smacked me up the ear that hard that he made me leave the ground. And I told him I was gonna dob on him to Mum when I got home...and I said, 'I'm gonna ask Mum about we're Aboriginal.' And he told me, 'No, you don't. You're not allowed to. Mum doesn't want to hear it.' So as far as I'm concerned, when I look back at little things...my Mum always knew she was. You couldn't take that away from her. But she didn't want to live that life. Maybe she'd had it drummed into her in the home, or outside in wider society when she got out, that you're not gonna get by...if you tell people you are [Aboriginal].⁴⁴

One Minjungbal woman has a similar attitude: 'In myself, my number one golden rule is to just battle on regardless. Don't let anybody know what's happening inside your head or how you're feelin, and don't have any welfare services in your life'.⁴⁵ Similarly, as Minjungbal women themselves were brought up with a fear of the welfare, they have tended to raise their own children to be conscious of the gaze of the authorities:

With my children...a lot of the time...they don't understand my reasons for saying, you know, 'don't draw attention to yourself'. But that's for those reasons. You know...it's a stereotype. 'Oh well they're black and they're this and they're that and they come from that,' and yeah. I just would rather just not let people know.⁴⁶

Minjungbal women discussed how their upbringing has made them who they are today. One Minjungbal woman's Mum 'was really kind' and 'made sure that we had a conscience'.⁴⁷ Similarly, 'the values and things that my Mother instilled in me are the things that I use more of today' said another Minjungbal woman.⁴⁸ Another Minjungbal

woman said that despite the fact that ‘my Mum grew up in a home. She would never have had been tucked into bed or kissed on the forehead or read a story to...but she still did that. So they were things that obviously affected her growing up, that she needed to change, and needed to instil in us’.⁴⁹

The family cultures that Minjungbal women grew up in is still entrenched in their consciousness. One Minjungbal woman remembered ‘we were always with Mum, and we always had one of my father’s brothers, or sister-in-laws, or sister at the house helping. You know, if it was mowing lawns, or cutting coal, or wood for the fire. You know, just helping around the house in general’; she said that as a result, she has always had lots of family and other kids living in her house.⁵⁰

Minjungbal women discussed their parenting philosophies and practises. ‘I feel that I have replicated more of the good than the bad. I really had made sure of that’ said one Minjungbal woman; her priorities were ‘healthy ethics and how to treat other people’, as well as that ‘they learnt to stand up for themselves’.⁵¹ One Minjungbal woman explained ‘there’s an old saying: ‘There but for the grace of God goes I.’ You know, so you don’t put people down. And my kids don’t do that’.⁵² However, ‘over the years you have to teach them to say no to people’, she added.⁵³

Strength and pride are also important; ‘I’m determined to spread strength...with my sons, and even my grandson’ said one Minjungbal woman.⁵⁴ Similarly, another Minjungbal woman tries to ‘drum into my kids is to be proud of themselves and who they are’; she said this is because ‘I want them to always know who their Mother is, who their Father is and you know, where they belong and come from and what makes them, them’.⁵⁵ For another Minjungbal woman, stability was a priority because of her chaotic upbringing. She said ‘I’ve tried to hold my family together’, and ‘I’ve tried to be that mainstay, even though [their] father’s come and gone, and come and gone through [their] life, I’ve done that’.⁵⁶ One Minjungbal woman said that in her family ‘if there’s issues, they’re dealt with. You know, I didn’t think anything’s ever that bad to tear up a family like that’, and that ‘it’s too easy to leave’.⁵⁷ Another Minjungbal woman observed:

One difference I've really noticed with our family and other non-Indigenous people is when you've got something to say to someone, or when you're having a blue, you get it out of the way. And then it's done. It's done with. Whereas other people, it's a lot of talking behind backs...and it just drags on.⁵⁸

Family has been fundamental to healing past hurts. 'Without the support and love of your family, I think you know, things could have been so different' explained one Minjungbal woman. 'The kids help me stay strong', said another Minjungbal woman. Even though she still carries a lot of hurt, she said she's 'getting there. And I think it's [my kids] that's helping me heal too'.⁵⁹ One Minjungbal woman said 'I think you're here for a purpose in life, and I look at it as my family. But it's also the extended family, which everyone that you know and come into contact with'.⁶⁰ Other Minjungbal women agreed: 'family is the number one priority. I think that love, as I said, well it's kept me going'.⁶¹

Women's Business, Gender Roles and Equality

One Minjungbal woman said that the most important aspects of her heritage 'are more to do with the feminine side, because it's my Mum's side. So I've gone to great pains to try and trace that heritage through [matrilineal] lines'.⁶² Another Minjungbal woman said 'I can't ever remember sitting around in a group where there had been men. You know, the Uncles and that were always gone fishing, or, and it was always just ever the Aunties and Mum'.⁶³

One Minjungbal woman described how she disrupted the imposed expectations of her gender role when she was growing up: 'I was always a strong-willed person. My father reckoned I should have been born the boy in the family', she said; 'he reckoned I could get more done than the rest of them'.⁶⁴ Questioning the status quo has always been important to another Minjungbal woman; she said her mother 'told me that time and time again when I'd ask questions when I was young, 'you're not supposed to ask those questions'. But I continued, and I wouldn't know what I know now if I didn't keep asking the questions'.⁶⁵ She continued to explain 'I'm glad I was born now, because with the head that I've got, with the feelings that I've got, and the strong will that I've got, if I'd been born a couple of generations ago, I reckon I probably would've been in jail'.⁶⁶

To be validated as the only girl in a family of brothers, another Minjungbal woman said: 'I think you need to be louder. I think you need to be stronger. A lot more active than the males'.⁶⁷ One Minjungbal woman said 'I thought nothing about fighting, you know, I think growing up with all boys, trying to compete and trying to prove that you're just as good, if not better. I think that's what's done it to me'.⁶⁸ Another Minjungbal woman explained society's norms regarding gender when she said 'I do find that men will often try and dismiss you. But then sometimes you have to use your flamin womanly ways too!...I'm not talking about in the physical sense, but to try and charm people a little bit first and butter em up a little bit'.⁶⁹

The attitude that "Aboriginal women are not beautiful" by non-Indigenous standards, has been pervasive in our experiences. One Minjungbal woman remembers 'taking a wedding photo of Aunty...to school...to *prove*, isn't this ridiculous...that 'Look, black people can be beautiful. Look at this beautiful black girl''.⁷⁰ Another Minjungbal woman says that because she was perceived as attractive, she was not considered an authentic Aboriginal woman. People would say to her 'you're not black cos you're not [ugly]... they're all ugly'.⁷¹

Employment opportunities were limited for Minjungbal women. Despite being described as intelligent and good at school, one Minjungbal woman's mother could only get menial jobs in housekeeping or in the prawn factory.⁷² Another Minjungbal woman said her mother was 'well-respected' in her housekeeping job.⁷³ Women in this research similarly experienced discrimination throughout their lives as a result of society's attitudes. One Minjungbal woman described her own lack of employment opportunities; 'well you know, there wasn't much going. As a sixteen year old in the Tweed you didn't have much. There was peelin prawns, there was pickin beans, there was other things...which I couldn't do any of them!'⁷⁴

I asked Minjungbal women whether they considered themselves to be Feminists. All of us identify with the goals of Feminism although a few do not like to apply that label to ourselves. 'I don't think I'm a Feminist as such, but I've got a great respect for women in general, and particularly for my Mum. She's still the backbone, we feel, of our family', explained one Minjungbal woman.⁷⁵ Other responses include: 'In some ways, yeah I am. But in other ways I guess it doesn't shine through so bright'; 'the word

Feminist, it's kinda been a dirty word and people shy away from it. Because there's a stereotype of man-hating'; and 'I have very strong Feminist views. But I don't advertise that loudly. I guess when you get talking to me, you hear them come through'.⁷⁶ Regarding her achievements whilst being a mother, one Minjungbal woman said 'I don't think a man could have pulled off what I did'.⁷⁷

Minjungbal women have passed values of gender equality on to younger women. One Minjungbal woman spoke about how she raised her daughters: 'I have not ever told them, 'No you can't do it cos you're a girl''.⁷⁸ Another Minjungbal woman related that she had 'forever been telling these girls that I work with, all these years, you can do more than just have babies...the world's waiting for you'.⁷⁹

Sexual Abuse

As girls, Minjungbal women remember hearing stories from older relatives that 'women were raped' by non-Indigenous men.⁸⁰ With our women having the most inferior status in the dominant culture, there was no legal recourse for these transgressions. One Minjungbal woman explains that 'because our women were not considered human beings, let alone citizens, the laws there that would protect a white woman if she was assaulted...wasn't there to protect, or get justice for a black woman. And so that sort of abuse was carried on here'.⁸¹ Another Minjungbal woman says 'there was never any justice. You know I think [non-Indigenous men] saw it as their entitlement'.⁸²

A culture of vigilance was subsequently created in the community, and Minjungbal women became wary of European men, who 'when they'd go to drop off their rations or whatever, you know, then they start ooglin one of the girls...I'd imagine if [the women] knew they were coming...*what* was coming, they'd run down the beach. Put sand all over themselves'.⁸³ This was a protective measure to ensure that any rapist would be hurt as much as they were:

The women would go down to the beach when they knew that they were being targeted [by European men], you know, they sensed it or whatever. They would go down to the beach and they would rub sand all over their muss. So that when he'd come near them, and tried, he'd walk out of there being rubbed raw. Sandpaper.⁸⁴

Although our women became well practised at hiding, it was by no means failsafe and new sexually transmitted diseases soon spread through the Minjungbal community. Our women would wash themselves in the river and try local medicines to rid themselves of these afflictions, to no avail. One Minjungbal woman says:

I remember an older cousin of mine saying that his father told me about when the spread of diseases and things occurred here, even if it was sexually transmitted diseases, he told me that his father told him that the black women would be standing in the river scrubbing themselves and things like that, trying to get rid of the diseases and things that were brought here.⁸⁵

The cycle of sexual abuse can be a part of the inheritance of transgenerational trauma; one Minjungbal woman said of her abuser, ‘he was molested, and in turn I have been too’.⁸⁶ Another Minjungbal woman never understood her mother’s protectiveness until the truth of her childhood came out:

I see it with my Mum. You know, how she grew up...she was molested all through her childhood...and I never, ever, ever, ever knew why she was just so protective of us. Like around strangers, around strange men, even just family members she didn’t know too well and you know, why when things happened, she would overreact, well we thought she was overreacting. It wasn’t til, you know, I’m much older, and she was telling me this stuff. It makes sense, you know.⁸⁷

For one Minjungbal woman’s mother, the denial by other family members that she was sexually abused created a secondary trauma:

A lot of people have turned their backs on [her] cos they don’t wanna believe it, or for whatever reason. And the one who did it to her, he’s never acknowledged it, and he’s always called her a liar. And so that’s definitely been a big factor in [her], you know, just wanting to do everything on her own terms. You know, ‘Fuck everyone else’.⁸⁸

Discussing family rejection and exclusion, another Minjungbal woman says she ‘can relate to that...cos my mother was aware. A part of me hated her because she didn’t save me. Didn’t do anything to change it either. Because it still kept happening’.⁸⁹ One Minjungbal woman who was abused described how for most of her school years ‘it was

a battle. Cos I hated school. I didn't wanna go. I had too many other things going on in my head and I just did not wanna be there. Running away in the middle of the night in my jammies, you know?'⁹⁰

One Minjungbal woman described why she has never had counselling for her abuse: 'I don't feel comfortable, I've lost friendships because they've tried to make me to go counselling. I just, I think this is my way of venting. This is my way of defeating it...like right now, there's only limited people know that this has happened to me'.⁹¹ Another Minjungbal woman said that her experiences of abuse has 'helped me identify students...that potentially have been [abused]. And I know I've definitely supported one girl through it. And hopefully I've stopped her from her, you know, little issues and battles with her own mind'.⁹²

Domestic Violence

Living in a society that upheld the sanctity of marriage and punished the sin of divorce, made it much harder for our single mothers in the past. One Minjungbal woman says that this was 'a lot of the reason why my Mum didn't leave my Father when he started hitting her. Because society then would have viewed her as unfit, and taken her kids off her. So I think a lot of the things she used to do related to that issue. That fear, you know'.⁹³

As a result of these values, there was very little emotional or institutional support available for single mothers, especially Aboriginal single mothers, and so it was never an easy decision to extricate the family from an abusive spouse. One Minjungbal woman says that her 'mother was more or less trapped in society within...her marriage, because there was nothing to offer her, you know, to go to. There was nothing...there were no refuges, there were no support networks, there were no pensions for single parents. There was nothing'.⁹⁴ One Minjungbal woman left school to help her single mother 'at a time when there was no single parent pension or anything like that'; this contributed to a cycle of poverty later in life due to missed education opportunities.⁹⁵ She explains below:

[Mum] had four children. She worked, she had to work. There was nothing to help support her...I sort of got my head more around the job that she was doing, and how tough it was. And I went and got a job...try and help her out. But she started getting real sick and having these bad headaches, and passing out and vomiting all the time. And so I left school when I was fourteen to help her out, so she didn't have to work so much.⁹⁶

To leave a relationship would often mean cutting ties with family and leaving the support of the community. However, it was done, but not without huge financial and social losses, which had impacts in other ways. One Minjungbal woman says that when she left she 'didn't have any, none at all actually, didn't have any support...it was a hard battle'.⁹⁷ This Minjungbal woman had it stacked against her when she became a single mother:

I had five kids and I got divorced, so I had to rear five kids on my own...you know, I was discriminated against firstly because I was black, secondly because I was a single woman, and thirdly because I had five kids. And you know, it wasn't easy but you know, we all got through it.⁹⁸

Past experiences of domestic violence has had an effect on the quality of adult relationships, where some women see patterns on their own lives that mirror their earlier home environments.⁹⁹ One participant who's father was an abusive drunk had unwittingly attracted partners who eventually treated her the way she had seen her father treat her mother.¹⁰⁰ Another Minjungbal woman remembers domestic violence growing up, and the fear and instability that resulted from it:

My father had never hit my mother in front of any of us. And the night that he did that, was the night that she tucked us all into bed, told us to take our pillowcases off our pillows, fill it with clothes, and we could take one toy. She was coming to get us when it was dark. And that was it, we were out of there. So I think that that, she could endure anything on her own, but once her children were part and parcel of that, that was it.¹⁰¹

One Minjungbal woman discussed her regretful choices in romance and her assessment was grim: 'even you know, choosing partners. I look at some of the boyfriends I've had'.¹⁰² Another Minjungbal woman had a similar realisation after seeing patterns in her relationships that reflected her mother's abusive relationship history: 'And you think, 'What the fuck?'...But I don't know how I've got that [relationship history], because

you know what my main aim in life was? Never to be in the same situation as my Mum'.¹⁰³ Another Minjungbal woman, whilst jokingly recalling her dating history, poignantly locates the intersection of racist sexism or sexist racism:

I can't say I'm not a racist. I can't say that because you know when I was growing up...I'd go out with non-Indigenous boys, date them, whatever, you know just go out, have fun. Would *never* think of marrying em. *Never ever*. You know why? I'll tell you why. Well I wouldn't mind a blackfella calling me a 'black bitch' but I was never gonna have a white man calling me a 'black bitch'.¹⁰⁴

Grief and Stress

When the Europeans came, their diseases quickly became the number one killer of Minjungbal people. Elders and very young children were the most susceptible. As a result, networks of relationships were destroyed and valuable cultural knowledge was lost forever. This set an early precedent for a cultural tradition of accumulated grief that is still a feature of Minjungbal peoples' lives today.¹⁰⁵

Heavy mourning is an ongoing reality for Minjungbal people today. In a close-knit community such as ours, when somebody dies everybody is affected in some way. In addition to this, those we mourn are too young to die by any standards. One Minjungbal woman commented that 'it *rocks* the community, every time. Everyone pulls together, you know'.¹⁰⁶ The most worrying aspect to this is the fact that Minjungbal people are, more often than others, grieving multiple deaths at any given time.¹⁰⁷ When multiple funerals are held every year, everybody is affected in many ways for prolonged periods. One Minjungbal woman said 'I know our death rate is a lot higher than non-Indigenous people, so there's gotta be a lot more done, I think'.¹⁰⁸

Our losses shape us; one Minjungbal woman said that 'losing my husband at a very young age...that trauma of losing your husband, and the father of your children too, has probably made me a darn-side harder'.¹⁰⁹ One Minjungbal woman, whose mother died when she was a teenager, said she felt isolated for along time because it 'was just like losing your best friend'.¹¹⁰ Another Minjungbal woman explained that a lack of support had made her recent grieving process more difficult: 'my mental health state has been really, really bad, in coming to grips with not just the loss of my brother, but all the shit

that I've had to deal with and wade out of and you know...I've done this all on my own'.¹¹¹ Sometimes what is needed to process stress and grief is to take time out from distractions and shut oneself away, explained this Minjungbal woman:

I've cried a lot. I've spent a lot of time in my room. I've spent a lot of time walking along the beach. Sitting down in the park, down there in the boat ramp. Reading. I've locked myself within myself, even if there were a hundred people down at the boat ramp, I was there on my own. But I've done it in my own way.¹¹²

Relationships with our dearly departed are ongoing. For one Minjungbal woman, identifying her loved ones' places in the sky is a helpful way to remind herself that they are still there, even if she can't see them when the sun is out. She said 'he's in the Milky Way. And he's up there in the stars, and I know *exactly* which one he is, along with other of my family that I've lost'.¹¹³ Another Minjungbal woman said 'I can still smell them...that smell that you want. I'd *love* to smell my mother again' and that 'I'd curl up on their lap today, just to be able to smell them'.¹¹⁴

A common practise for Minjungbal women is to talk to our loved ones who have passed away. When she needs strength, one Minjungbal woman will 'sit "talkin to myself" a lot. That's what people believe...I just try and draw on those people who I've lost, and try and get my head around how they'd think and deal with situations, and what their attitudes'd be'.¹¹⁵

Addiction, Health and Well-being

For some Minjungbal women whose parents were addicts, it heavily shaped their attitudes towards alcohol and other drugs. One woman was adamant that she 'won't touch a drop [of alcohol]. I won't drink at all. I do *not* want to be like her. Like that'.¹¹⁶ 'I know my father was an alcoholic, and it was one thing that steered me away from alcohol for a long, long time', echoed another Minjungbal woman.¹¹⁷

One Minjungbal woman related that her 'Mum was addicted to pain medication...I was concerned about that at a very young age...I didn't think that it was normal...I questioned her on numerous occasions'.¹¹⁸ One Minjungbal woman sees patterns of substance abuse in her family; 'my elder brothers both drank themselves into

oblivion...from a young age...they were really, really bad drinkers...and yeah, my kids smoke cigarettes, and they abuse drugs'.¹¹⁹ Another Minjungbal woman theorised that 'you see it as a way to cope because people around you use that as a way to cope. And that's how you grow up'.¹²⁰

She added 'it's well-documented that in families, in environments where there is a lot of shit going on, and when there are mental health problems, that that's often a form of self-medicating'.¹²¹ Another Minjungbal woman agreed:

It can be used as a release. Some people might choose to go to Church and that's their release. But...with the mental health issues and the turmoil that all of us have lived through with domestic violence and shit like that, I think that people will deal with those things in their own way. And whether it be drugs or alcohol or prescription medication, or meditation, or however they're gonna deal with it, they're gonna deal with it.¹²²

However, self-medicating becomes problematic when 'you discover one day, well I'm not really coping, it's still all there', as one Minjungbal woman explained. Another Minjungbal woman described how substance abuse impacted negatively on her family: 'my father started...drinking and gambling a real lot...I can remember...sitting on the lounge, when they came to repossess it. He lost the house, gambling...everything. Lost it all'.¹²³ The transgenerational effects are made further apparent in one Minjungbal woman's family. She said 'I already see how my mother's alcoholism is playing on [my kids]...they shut down when she calls...they won't even communicate with her...I do the same thing though. It just, to see them respond and act like that towards, it hurts'.¹²⁴ One Minjungbal woman explained how she would rather process stress her own way, rather than self-medicating:

I think that if I wanted to sit for five minutes and say, 'Well I'm gonna let this consume me, and I'm gonna smoke pot, I'm gonna drink, and I'm gonna take prescription medication to block it out', I could easily have done that...but I've done all of it without it...I'm at an age where I couldn't possibly sit and drink myself stupid. I definitely wouldn't get a bong out. And I've got a drawer full of prescription medication there that I don't take. The doctors give em to me. But I don't wanna go down that path. I know that in this life we've gotta deal with everything that's thrown at us, and how we deal with it depends on, you know, how we want to deal with it.¹²⁵

Understanding and Interrupting Transgenerational Trauma

One Minjungbal woman explains her understanding of transgenerational trauma:

It's the moving of trauma through generations, and the impact, and you know, the whole, it encompasses lots of things. The spiritual being, and self-worth, and how you view things, your perceptions and perspectives, and the hurt, how you heal, and all different things...it's got a big meaning, transgenerational trauma, to me. And deep. A deep meaning.¹²⁶

Another Minjungbal woman, after reading about transgenerational trauma, said:

A lot of stuff clicked into place with me, and with [my Mum], and all that. And I guess I want to look a bit further in this community and see, you know, are people experiencing similar things from that? I mean, transgenerational trauma, it's not just blackfellas, it happens to everyone...however, in our country you know, Aboriginal people are a lot more disadvantaged in a lot of ways, and so it doesn't just affect down the line, it affects across communities...because how everybody's so connected with each other.¹²⁷

Minjungbal women at first described their understandings of transgenerational trauma as either a 'domino' or 'ripple' effect through history.¹²⁸ As one Minjungbal woman understands, 'it's just like having a severe earthquake in a generation and from there on the next generation it would be passed down'.¹²⁹ She elaborated, 'the only way that I can explain that is if you have the dominoes, and you knock them over, and it comes right down to here. Cos what's happened here has affected how people feel today'.¹³⁰ Another Minjungbal woman said that 'it's not just blackfellas obviously, but because so much *more* happened to blackfellas, it's a lot easier to see'.¹³¹

After further discussion, these metaphors were understood to be insufficient to describe Minjungbal women's experiences of transgenerational trauma in our families. These analogies would be more suitable to describing linear effects of historical trauma, as well as linear ways of healing, however transgenerational trauma in Minjungbal women's families is too complex to be described as such, as it stretches through time and across communities. A better analogy would be a series of ripples or earthquakes, with multiple starting points in each successive generation. This more accurately takes into account the accumulation and the compounding effects of historical and ongoing colonisation.

Minjungbal women discussed the mechanisms of transgenerational trauma: one is ‘still consciously or, you know, subconsciously...*affected* by things that have happened to my family in the past’.¹³² Another understands how people come to be affected by transgenerational trauma:

You’re not an island, and whether you like it or not, these things are passed down to you. Whether or not you sit there and consciously say, ‘I’m not gonna be in that, I’m not’; somehow you do. And it’s by recognising that you have, and then you can interrupt it and you can stop it.¹³³

Minjungbal women offered specific examples of how transgenerational trauma works:

If someone’s been taken from their family, they don’t have the parenting skills, that type of thing, and we see kids today, some of them don’t know how to parent, we just wonder if that’s, you know, from being part of the Stolen Generations.¹³⁴

And transpersonal effects:

After reading more about it, like always having some kind of intuition about...how the past impacts on the present. But reading up on it, as an actual social phenomenon, you can really see that whether your parents have explicitly instilled values in you or not, just by absorbing the atmosphere, and their moods, and the way they go about things, and their attitudes, that is passed on. Because you know, parenting isn’t just you know, like telling your kids this and telling them that, and they do it, it’s, they *absorb* those things.¹³⁵

One Minjungbal woman says that the transgenerational trauma framework is helpful.

She explains below:

Understanding that it’s just an umbrella with lots of things underneath it, that I don’t think that there’s enough information, I don’t think many people understand that many issues they deal with on a day-by-day basis are related to transgenerational trauma. I also don’t think they understand, or even maybe know that there’s a word out there that covers what they travel through each day.¹³⁶

I asked one Minjungbal woman whether, after our research yarn, she was clearer on how transgenerational trauma works in her own life. She agreed that ‘it just makes you look at things that you wouldn’t think were part of that process. It makes you look at things differently’.¹³⁷ Another Minjungbal woman explained ‘it’s really obvious that you know, things that we grew up with...they do have their roots way back then. They didn’t just spring up outta nowhere’.¹³⁸

All Minjungbal women considered the yarning that took place for this research beneficial. One Minjungbal woman said that it helped because she was much clearer on how transgenerational trauma had been carried down in her family.¹³⁹ Another Minjungbal woman said that she felt freer to talk openly about the past to me because I am not a professional or close family member.¹⁴⁰ During our yarn, one Minjungbal woman ‘got choked up. You know, it’s not a place that I like to visit. But having said that too, just openly talking. Yeah, it just helps you deal with it’.¹⁴¹ Another Minjungbal woman explained that through sharing stories of the past:

Everybody can know about it. And maybe that healing can come when people can stop seeing themselves as better than other people. You know, a higher hierarchy of race, colour, gender, whatever it is. When there are no, you know, racist people in the world. When there are no homophobes in the world. When we can all just be people and be accepted.¹⁴²

Transcending Transgenerational Trauma and Spreading Strength

One Minjungbal woman discussed the effects of past policies on her family, and said ‘it does affect you, *of course it does*, but you use it to push yourself’.¹⁴³ Another Minjungbal woman sees similarities between herself and her Mum in how they handle hard times: ‘Trying to keep her family together...trying to have that attitude she always had of you know, ‘if you can’t change it or alter it or fix it just let it go. Don’t let it eat at ya’’.¹⁴⁴ It is essential to ‘make the most of the situation...otherwise life just gets on top of you’, added one Minjungbal woman.¹⁴⁵

One Minjungbal woman said that her friends ‘help me, because they’re here. You know, they’ve been here for a long time’, and that she appreciates ‘just to be able to talk and to be listened to, not judged, not have people tell you what to do or give you advice’. She

acknowledged that her friendships have helped her with ‘talking to people. Like, if you’ve got problems. I’ve learnt to do that, and I didn’t do that for a long, long time...I’ve embraced that that opens up more networks to be able to help’.¹⁴⁶

Moving through the tough times is usually just as simple as just getting on with it. ‘I’ll have a whinge or a sook, you know, about having to take on extra or whatever, but yeah...I’ll accept it, and do it’, said one Minjungbal woman.¹⁴⁷ Another Minjungbal woman said that her approach is to ‘just keep busy...soldier on’.¹⁴⁸ Solitude provides perspectives that can be just as healing as talking, explained another Minjungbal woman:

There’s a big difference between being alone and lonely, and sometimes I really like to be alone. Just so I can think things through. Sometimes I get a pen and paper and you know, dot point things and work things out, prioritise things. And try and keep my mind healthy. That’s the balance, you know, try and walk away from negativity and conflict and confrontation.¹⁴⁹

Some Minjungbal women use writing as a form of expression, reflecting on events and working out solutions to problems. One Minjungbal woman has used journaling as a therapeutic practise for years. She said she has ‘been writing my journal, my life journal. That spans over thirty-five books, and different chapters’, and this has ‘helped me work through my perception of things’, including her understanding of her family history and abuse that she suffered as a child.¹⁵⁰ One Minjungbal woman likes to write her issues with her partner down first to get clarity. She said that ‘even in our arguments, [if] I can’t say it, I know I’m gonna get it all out on paper...you feel like you can say so much more, and get so much more out. I fall over my tongue sometimes’.¹⁵¹ Another Minjungbal woman stated ‘I’d be lost without writing’.¹⁵² Explaining further, she said:

You feel that you can just articulate it better you know. You can say it clearer. And you don’t have to say it in anger. I think of all the times I’ve had people recommend I go see a counsellor or psychologist, or psychiatrist even, and I’ve said no, because I know I can get through it. Because I’ve got [writing]. You know, I can work my own problems out.¹⁵³

Having a sense of humour is a ‘very important way of healing’, for one Minjungbal woman.¹⁵⁴ ‘I think people who have a history of going through some pretty heavy things, with past policies and things like that, it’s really the only way you can get through it’, offered another Minjungbal woman.¹⁵⁵ Humour serves to reset perspectives, and the consensus was that ‘we can turn it around and look at the really funny side of it all...I think that’s a way of getting through all this you know, through any troubled times’, and ‘if you always look on the negative side, you know, you’re just asking for trouble’.¹⁵⁶

Another Minjungbal woman sees the generational continuity of humour in this context. She said, ‘that’s all I can remember is them Aunts and that laughin and you know, gigglin and stuff, growing up, and just pickin on us, but laughin at the same time you know? Or we fall over and their laughin at us, and that’s something that *I* do now’.¹⁵⁷ Another Minjungbal woman sees Aboriginal people as having a very specific kind of humour. She said ‘I know every culture’s got their own sense of humour but I see more so with us, that it’s a real earthy kind of, almost dirty sense of humour. But it’s not a shame thing, it’s just a natural part of life and...I guess it’s how you connect with each other’.¹⁵⁸

Minjungbal women’s gratitude is apparent not just in their words, but it is also evident in that they are all very much respected and well-liked in the community. ‘If you show respect, and understanding, generally that person will give that back to you. You know, or if you just give them a little smile’, explained one Minjungbal woman.¹⁵⁹ Putting things into perspective is important; another Minjungbal woman’s philosophy is to ‘just stop for a minute and look around you and see what you’ve got...it doesn’t have to be money or a big home or anything. If you’ve got peace and happiness inside, it sorta carries through, and you just can give that to your family’.¹⁶⁰

For one Minjungbal woman, appreciating what she did have, as opposed to focussing on what she lacked, was key to moving forward. She said, ‘naturally your country, the environment, everything, you know, if you just look at things, take a step back and appreciate what you’ve got, it makes all the difference’.¹⁶¹ For the most part, Minjungbal women expressed gratitude for the lives we have lived and the experiences

we have had throughout our lives; one Minjungbal woman said ‘I’ve been very blessed, you know, to have such a loving family and a loving community. So yeah, we’re very, very fortunate here at Tweed’.¹⁶²

¹⁰¹⁰⁴ Research yarns with Minjungbal women, 4-6 February, 2013

¹⁰⁵ Christine Salisbury and Sue Follent, ‘Bicultural Stress’, 1996.

¹⁰⁶ Research yarns with Minjungbal women, 4-6 February, 2013.

¹⁰⁷ Christine Salisbury and Sue Follent, ‘Bicultural Stress’, 1996.

¹⁰⁸⁻¹⁶² Research yarns with Minjungbal women, 4-6 February, 2013.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Minjungbal history is a story of survival. Our recent past is characterised by the imposition of government policies that sought to control our country, demolish our culture or else undermine our fundamental rights as human beings for freedom to live in the way that we wanted. Although the dominant discourse is constructed by non-Indigenous people and their interpretations of historical events, this thesis shows that there is another dimension. Minjungbal people have always fought back, often openly resisting and covertly subverting this dominance of control. The details of this struggle are present in the stories of Minjungbal women.

The previous chapters have located the lived realities of Minjungbal women in a historical framework as shaped by the processes of colonisation. By exploring how we experience transgenerational trauma through our perspective, it is evident that past government policies often interfered in the lives of Minjungbal people. The consequences are written in the landscape, on our culture, throughout the dynamics of the community and within the histories of the families, all of which have always been in a symbiotic relationship with each other.

The previous chapters show that the fight for decolonisation is ongoing. Minjungbal country, culture, the community and families are still at a disadvantage from dealing with the repercussions of past policies, as well as facing ongoing struggles in newer forms. This final chapter summarises the ongoing oppression that must be addressed. It recommends time-tested actions that are needed to break the cycle of transgenerational trauma, and also suggests ways forward that have been proven to spread strength and healing in order to right past wrongs.

Chapter two has explored how Minjungbal people have always lived within an intricate network of relationships to each other and to country; we looked after the land and each other as much as the land sustained and nourished us. The land was, and still is, plentiful in giving us food, medicine and enjoyment, and a basis for our culture and

spirituality. This still holds true, and must continue to be true for our survival. The various waves of colonisation have had profound effects on the landscape of Minjungbal country, which deeply impacted the Minjungbal culture and community that relied on the land for everything. The loss of land rights have been directly responsible for the erosion of human rights in Minjungbal country because cultural traditions are impossible to practise without a connection to country. Although the many changes that were forced upon us caused irreparable damage to traditions and relationships, Minjungbal people have always resisted to the best of our abilities and fought for our rights to our land.

As explored in chapter two, there are new forms of colonialism and resultant trauma that Minjungbal country experiences today. Further development is planned in the area to reflect the desirability of Minjungbal country as a retirement and tourism destination, yet development makes it difficult for local people to continue their cultural obligations. It is essential then that developers follow processes that respect the ecological and cultural value of Minjungbal country, and that they engage in meaningful consultation with the community. Minjungbal women are not optimistic that their voices will be listened to based on what history has shown us. What has worked in the past, and therefore what is needed now, is community cohesion. Every person in the community, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, must be aware of the history of this place and the forecasted impacts of development. When all people understand the history and future of Minjungbal country, they will be better able to come together and stand united, to ensure that their voices are heard. This will only come about through creating connections in education and sharing stories.

Chapter three has also shown that since the beginning of colonisation, Minjungbal perspectives in history have been omitted. Historical accounts must therefore be decolonised to present a more balanced perspective. Minjungbal culture must be celebrated and visible to the wider community, and language must be a priority for revitalisation. Minjungbal identity must be respected as a valuable component of our rich multicultural community. Therefore, local history must be taught by schools. The education system certainly has a major role in this, however other institutions also need to step up. Most importantly however, our culture must be celebrated in non-

institutional spheres of life. Community involvement is essential for this. The sharing of stories in the context of relationships is the way this has always been brought about, and the way it will continue to happen.

Salisbury and Follent's research shows that Minjungbal people are far more stressed than our non-Indigenous counterparts.¹ The preceding chapters have placed these findings within an historical context, outlining a clear historical continuum of cause and effect, where policies, legislation and the attitudes of wider society have been responsible for the transgenerational trauma that the Minjungbal community experience. These impacts have been ongoing and accumulative. Ongoing issues, both causes and effects of transgenerational trauma, include high rates of preventable disease and mental health issues, lower class status, racism, lateral violence and ongoing grief. Children are still being taken away. Our socio-economic outcomes are still far below a humane and just level. There is still a disconnect from and mistrust of government and welfare agencies. Our young people are still taking their own lives. All of us still die too young. Not only do new generations have to live with and synthesise their historical inheritance, the stories and experiences of trauma and violence, they have to do so with an absence of older relatives to speak about and guide them through it. Strong role models are needed for our young ones.

As history shows, injustice has always been resisted and the Minjungbal community has always practiced solidarity. Strong relationships are the foundation of community cohesion; our connectedness is maintained by talking to and helping each other. When we engage with each other, we are contributing to making the community stronger, recognising that we are all connected and that acts of kindness have profound, far-reaching and long-lasting effects, no matter how immeasurable or not immediately apparent. This is true in both professional and personal capacities.

As discussed in chapter four, the effects of transgenerational trauma are ongoing for Minjungbal families. This is evident in our experiences of broken family connections, abuse and mental health issues. Personal experiences of transgenerational trauma are influenced by the history of the various countries, cultures, communities and families we belong to. Although historical trauma has had far-reaching effects that are in evidence today, also evident is the strength and healing that are being lived and

practised. Minjungbal women have been able to recognise and interrupt the effects of transgenerational trauma, and our commitment to instilling pride, respect and strong ethics in our own families is a testament to this.

Outside support that helps to mitigate our transgenerational trauma is important. Factors that assist with our ongoing struggles are directly related to the recognition of our sovereign status, including: government policies supporting land rights and self-determination; initiatives that address socio-economic hardships in culturally appropriate ways; culturally appropriate services and support for economic independence, fostering an independence from welfare; and the encouraging attitudes of non-Indigenous community, with whom we must establish strong relationships and maintain supportive alliances. What is essential is that we are given time and space to rebuild and heal on our own terms, in ways that are culturally appropriate.

Our own strength is the source from which our battles are fought and our trauma is healed. It is of utmost importance that the fight for land rights is ongoing; that we resist assimilation by reviving our culture; that we strengthen the relationships inside our community for solidarity, and are healthy role models for our kids; and that the pain and trauma in our families are evenly met with gratitude, creativity, humour and love. What worked in the past will work today. We have the answers in our history. If it is evident that transgenerational trauma is an ongoing issue, it is also evident from Minjungbal women's testimonial narratives that the future is in good hands.

A solution that addresses the roots of each of these needs is the sharing of stories, and *Yarning with Minjungbal Women* is an embodiment of this solution. This thesis contributes valuable stories that are important to the bigger picture. It is important for future generations to be able to learn about our experiences, and by preserving what we can, it also honours those who went before us to pass our culture on despite the adversity they experienced. Our history is precious to us, and contains the secrets of our ongoing survival.

¹ Christine Salisbury and Sue Follent, 'Bicultural Stress', 1996.

Bibliography

- Arbon, V., *Arlathirnda Ngurkarnda Ityirnda: Being-Knowing-Doing: De-Colonising Indigenous Tertiary Education*, Teneriffe, Post Pressed, 2008.
- Arbon, V., 'Indigenous research: Aboriginal knowledge creation', *Ngoonjook*, Issue 32, 2008, pp. 80-94.
- Atkinson, J., *Trauma Trails – Recreating Song Lines: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australia*, North Melbourne, Spinifex Press, 2002.
- Atkinson, J., Nelson, J., & Atkinson, C., 'Trauma, Transgenerational Transfer and Effects on Community Wellbeing', in N. Purdie, P. Dudgeon and R. Walker (Eds.), *Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice*, Canberra, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2010, pp. 135-144.
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies*, Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Retrieved 3 May 2012, from <<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/docs/ethics.pdf>>
- Bessarab, D., & Ng'andu, B., 'Yarning About Yarning as a Legitimate Method in Indigenous Research', *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, Volume 3, Number 1, 2010, pp. 37-50.
- Bird, C. (Ed.), *The Stolen Children: Their Stories*, Milsons Point, Random House, 1998.
- Boileau, J., *Community Based Heritage Study: Thematic History*, Report for Tweed Shire Council, 2004.
- Dodson, M., 'The end in the beginning: re(de)finding Aboriginality', in Grossman, M. (ed.), *Blacklines*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2003, (Chap 1), pp. 25-42.
- Douglas, B., & Moustakas, C., 'Heuristic inquiry: The internal search to know', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 25 (3), 1985, pp. 39-55.
- Elias, B., Mignone, J., Hall, M., Hong, S.P., Hart, L. & Sareen, J., 'Trauma and suicide behaviour histories among a Canadian indigenous population: An empirical exploration of the potential role of Canada's residential school system', *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 74, Issue 10, May 2012, pp. 1560-1569.

- Gibbons, S., 'Writing through Trauma: Ruby Langford's My Bundjalung People', *Journal of Australian Studies*, No.63, 1999, pp. 64-70.
- Hoff, J., *Bundjalung Jugun: Bundjalung Country*, Lismore, Richmond River Historical Society, 2006.
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them home: report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, 1997, Retrieved 23 March 2012, from <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/pdf/social_justice/bringing_them_home_report.pdf>
- Iseke-Barnes, J., 'Living and writing indigenous spiritual resistance', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 24:3, 2003, pp. 211-238.
- Kahakalau, K., 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research: Bridging Western and Indigenous Research methodologies', *Hūlili: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Hawai'i, Kamehameha Schools, 2004, pp. 19-34
- Langford Ginibi, R., *My Bundjalung People*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1994.
- Martin, K., *Please Knock Before You Enter: An Investigation of How Rainforest Aboriginal People Regulate Outsiders and the Implications for Western Research and Researchers*, Tenneriffe, Postpressed, 2008.
- Moreton-Robinson, A., *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 2000.
- National Health and Medical Research Council, *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research*, Canberra, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003, Retrieved 3 May 2012, from <<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e52>>
- Nayutah, J. & Finlay, G., *Minjungbal: Aborigines and Islanders of the Tweed Valley*, Lismore, North Coast Institute for Aboriginal Community Education, 1988.
- New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, *Tweed Heads Historic Site And Ukerebagh Nature Reserve Plan of Management*, September, 1999, p. 4, Retrieved 3 May 2013 from <<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/parks/pomfinaltweedukerebagh.pdf>>

Pinkola-Estes, C., *Women Who Run With The Wolves: Contacting The Power Of The Wild Woman*, Sydney, Random House, 1996.

Purcell, L., *Black Chicks Talking*, Sydney, Hodder, 2004.

Research yarns with Minjungbal women, Tweed Heads, 4-6 February, 2013.

Rigney, L., 'Internationalisation of an Indigenous Anticolonial Cultural Critique of Research Methodologies: A Guide to Indigenist Research Methodology and Its Principles', *Wicazo Sa Review: Emergent Ideas in Native American Studies*, Vol.14, No.2, Autumn, 1999, pp. 109-121.

Salisbury, C., & Follent, S., 'Bicultural Stress: An Aboriginal Community Perspective', *Australian Journal of Primary Health – Interchange*, Vol. 2, No. 2, May, 1996, pp. 78-85.

Somerville, M. & Perkins, T., *Singing the Coast*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2010.

Tuhiwai Smith, L., *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*, Dunedin, University of Otago Press, 1999.

Tweed Shire Council and Tweed Coastal Committee, *An Environmental Guide to the Tweed Coast*, October, 2008, p. 10.

Wright, A., 'The Politics of Writing', in A. Heiss and P. Van Toorn (Eds.), *Southerly – Stories Without End*, Vol. 62, No. 2, 2002, pp. 10-20.



Dr Karen O'Brien
Senior Lecturer in Indigenous Studies
Koori Centre

Room 214a
Old Teachers College A22
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA
Phone: +612 9351 6923
Email: karen.obrien@uni.sydney.edu.au

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

Yarning with Minjungbal women: new perspectives of Minjungbal country, narratives of transgenerational trauma and of resilience.

(1) What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study of how the knowledge of Indigenous women from the Minjungbal community can contribute to local history. The key discussion questions are:

- How have past government policies affected Minjungbal people historically?
- How have Minjungbal women experienced transgenerational trauma as a result of these past policies?
- How have Minjungbal women been able to disrupt this transgenerational trauma and enable their own healing?

Your participation in this research will create a forum for Minjungbal women to have their testimonial narratives published. This will contribute to releasing knowledge, healing trauma and serve to educate present and future readers of the research. This may be of benefit to your family, to the community and to other Indigenous people in the future.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Mykaela Saunders and will form the basis for her degree of Master of Education (Research) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr Karen O'Brien, Senior Lecturer in History and Indigenous Studies, Koori Centre.

(3) What does the study involve?

- The research involves participating in an in-depth, informal interview where you will yarn about issues in the discussion questions outlined above.
- The interview will be audio taped and transcribed later on. If you wish to change something or leave something out, you can request a copy of the transcription to make the changes before the information is used in the thesis.
- The interview will take place in early February, 2013. You will be contacted by phone by Mykaela to arrange a suitable time and place to conduct the interview. You can do the interview whenever suits you best – either during either the day or in the evening.
- The interview will take place in, or close to, Minjungbal country. You can decide where you will feel most comfortable: either at your home, in my flat or another place of your choosing.
- The interview will cover a range of topics related to the questions above. See attached *Appendix (iii) Interview Discussion Questions* for some examples.

Appendix (i) – Participant Information Statement

- There are no foreseeable risks or harm associated with participating in this research. However, talking about the past may bring up unpleasant memories. If you would rather not talk about certain things, please indicate on the question sheet provided.

(4) How much time will the study take?

The Interview Discussion Questions sheet should take about fifteen minutes to go over. The interviews will take anywhere from 1-2 hours in length.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants.

A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes.

(9) What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?

When you have read this information, you may contact Mykaela Saunders on 0498 138 368. She will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Karen O'Brien on 02 9351 6923.

(10) What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep.



ABN 15 211 513 464

Dr Karen O'Brien
Senior Lecturer in Indigenous Studies
Koori Centre

Room No 214a
Old Teachers College A22
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA
Phone: +612 9351 6923
Email: karen.obrien@uni.sydney.edu.au

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I,[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

Yarning with Minjungbal women: new perspectives of Minjungbal country, narratives of transgenerational trauma and of resilience.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction. Although I have already given my informal oral consent to participate in the research, this Participant Consent Form is a formal, written verification of my consent.
2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.
5. *I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.*



6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| • Audio-recording | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Receiving Feedback | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Address: _____

Email: _____

.....
Signature

.....
Please PRINT name

.....
Date

Please return this *Appendix (ii) Participant Consent Form*, along with *Appendix (iii) Interview Discussion Questions* to Mykaela at the beginning of the interview.

Interview Discussion Questions

Here is an example of some of the issues we will discuss. Due to time, we may not cover everything outlined here. There will also be time at the end for you to talk about anything else you feel is important.

Please tick the questions you are most interested in discussing and cross any that you would not feel comfortable talking about. You can mark as many as you like, and you are also welcome to add suggestions for our yarn at the bottom. Please return the copy that you have written when we have our yarn and keep the spare copy for your own use.

Introduction

- How do we know each other?
- Where is your family from?
- Do you consider yourself a Minjungbal woman? Why/why not?
- What family, historical, cultural, political ties do you have with the Minjungbal community?
- Which other communities are you from, and how do you identify with them?
- Can you tell me a little bit about other aspects of your heritage, and how you identify?
- Why do you live in Minjungbal country today?

History of the Tweed

- What do you know about the history of the Tweed, from before contact and up until before you were born?
- What kinds of past government policies do you know about?
- Do you feel the government policies interfered in the lives of Indigenous people?
- Can you tell me anything about issues with land rights in this area?
- How did these policies affect local people?
- Does your family have a history with these policies?
- Was anybody in your family part of the Stolen Generations?
- What is/was your relationship to them?
- How do you think this impacted on their lives?
- Were they ever reunited with their family?
- What do you know about Blackbirding?

Transgenerational trauma

- Do you know what transgenerational trauma means?
- Do you see it in your family and in the community?
- What was your experience of this in your family?
- Did you ever hear from family members about their experiences of being taken away?
- How did this affect you?
- How has your family's past impacted on who you are?
- What are the main experiences you remember growing up?
- What were your family's attitudes and experiences with health, welfare, correctional, police, educational, employment and other community services?
- Do you have similar attitudes?
- Do you think you have replicated the good and the bad stuff in your own family?
- How was this passed down to you?
- Do you feel that this is passed down to your kids?
- Do your kids have it better or worse off than you did?

- How has being a woman affected all of this?
- Do you feel you are missing important parts of your culture?
- What are your regrets about your cultural losses?
- What were the political and social values you grew up with?
- What have you accepted and rejected from this?
- Over all, looking back over your responses, do you see any patterns that you have inherited things from your parents, and that you are passing on as well?
- Where do you see you have stopped these things being passed on?
- Why do you think this is so?
- After our yarn today, are you clearer on how transgenerational trauma works in your own life?

Healing

Humour, creativity and spirituality

- How would you describe yourself? (what labels do you apply to yourself?)
- How is your identity defined? (by you, your family, society or other ways?)
- How does being a woman factor in to all of this?
- Are you a Feminist? Why/why not?
- What's your sense of humour like?
- Do you think it has been an important way of healing?
- Are you a creative type?
- What kind of areas are you creative in?
- Do you feel that your creative expression has helped as well?
- Would you call yourself a spiritual person?
- How has this helped you in life?
- What other personal things do you do that helps you in any way?

Relationships to family, community and country

- Would you say the past has been healed in your own family? How? Why not?
- What are some of the things you do to contribute to healing in your own family?
- Did you feel you are able to heal this yourself or have you needed help from family/partner/children/parents/siblings/other family/friends/community services/other?
- What are the positive things about belonging to this community?
- How have your community relationships contributing to healing?
- What about your own contribution to healing the community?
- Have you been able to do these alone or have you needed help?
- Who from? (family, partner, children, community, Linkup, other service providers)
- Is this land an important part of your identity?
- How has your relationship with the land helped?

Engagement with education and activism

- How do you act on your moral values?
- Are you part of any organisations or groups that help the community?
- Do you feel that this helps you, when you help others?
- Do you feel that education has contributed to your own healing process?
- What about political issues – have you been involved in anything like that?
- Do you engage with any Indigenous issues around Australia?
- What about the rest of the world?
- What advice would you give other people in a similar situation to you?

Definitions of Key Terms

Decolonisation is a process that disrupts dominant non-Indigenous discourses, by resisting non-Indigenous frameworks, aligning with Indigenous issues, approaches and methods.¹

A *Feminist* framework is concerned with the experiences of women and places these experiences as the focus of the research.²

Healing is a process of interrupting the effects of trauma, by processing traumatic events and redefining one's life in a way that removes the trauma as the focal point of one's existence.³

A *Heuristic* methodology requires immersion in the research; the researcher is placed within the research as a participant.⁴

An *Indigenous methodology* places Indigenous issues, values and ways of experiencing the world at the centre of research, and promotes Indigenous ways of communicating as the most culturally appropriate methods for collecting and presenting knowledge.⁵

Indigenous perspectives represent Indigenous experiences in an authentic way, including the realities of socio-economic and historical impacts; as well as understandings of identity, gender, sexuality, culture, spirituality and politics.⁶

Lateral violence is a social phenomena experienced by communities of oppressed people, where members act out their frustration within the group, against each other, instead of externalising it.

The *Minjungbal community* is the Indigenous community of Tweed Heads. Minjungbal country is located within the north-eastern area of Bundjalung country; Tweed Heads is the northern-most town in the Tweed Valley region in the far north coast of New South Wales, beneath the state border of Queensland.⁷

Past government policies refers to legislation made by non-Indigenous bodies to govern the lives of Indigenous people. The Australian Federal and State governments' various *Protection Acts* from 1869-1969 were first implemented by relocating Indigenous communities onto government reserves or church missions, in order to segregate them from society. Additionally, authorities took Indigenous children away from their families and placed them with government-allied custodians and institutions in order to assimilate them into mainstream Australian society.⁸

Testimonial narrative is a literature of resistance that integrates traumatic experiences into a social and historical narrative.⁹ It is compatible to Indigenous ways of communicating history because it records the personal, the cultural and the political inclusively.¹⁰ There is an assumption that for a narrative to fit the definition of 'testimony' its author must be named. However there are published examples of testimonial narratives that fit the description despite being authored by anonymous contributors.¹¹ Therefore, although the stories of the participants in this research have been analysed as a group metanarrative and presented in a thematic format to protect their privacy, their stories are also defined as testimonial narratives. For the purpose of this thesis, the term is used to indicate the contributions of the participants that are based on their personal knowledge and experiences.

Transgenerational trauma occurs when the effects of traumatic experiences are passed on to successive generations, thereby becoming a cultural inheritance. It is cumulative in that new forms of trauma experienced by new generations compound the original transgenerational trauma.¹²

Yarning is an informal Indigenous form of oral communication that requires talking and active listening. Knowledge is exchanged in the context of the relationship.¹³ Yarning as a research method can be classified as a qualitative interview in that yarning requires an interviewer directing the conversation and has a clear sequence of discussion questions. However, yarning is differentiated from a qualitative interview because it is relatively less structured, more instinctual, mutually negotiated, contextually-based and conducive to both researcher and participant.¹⁴ Instead of compartmentalising knowledge, yarning yields a more holistic conveyance of the participants' experiences.¹⁵

Transgressions are crimes against humanity, although not necessarily sanctioned by law or even legislated against. Rather, they are understood to be abuses of human rights and social justice as commonly agreed upon in an egalitarian framework.

¹ Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Indigenist Research Methodology', 1999; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999; Alexis Wright, 'The Politics of Writing', 2002.

² Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, 2000; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004.

³ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002.

⁴ Bruce G. Douglas and Clarke Moustakas, 'Heuristic inquiry', 1985; Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research', 2004; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004.

⁵ Judy Atkinson, Jeff Nelson and Caroline Atkinson, 'Trauma, Transgenerational Transfer', 2010; Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Judy Iseke-Barnes, 'indigenous spiritual resistance', 2003; Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research', 2004; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, 2000; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Indigenist Research Methodology', 1999; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999; Alexis Wright, 'The Politics of Writing', 2002.

⁶ Judy Atkinson, Jeff Nelson and Caroline Atkinson, 'Trauma, Transgenerational Transfer', 2010; Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Judy Iseke-Barnes, 'indigenous spiritual resistance', 2003; Kau Kahakalau, 'Indigenous Heuristic Action Research', 2004; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, 2000; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Lester-Irabinna Rigney, 'Indigenist Research Methodology', 1999; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 1999; Alexis Wright, 'The Politics of Writing', 2002.

⁷ Christine Salisbury and Sue Follent, 'Bicultural Stress', 1996.

⁸ Judy Atkinson, Jeff Nelson and Caroline Atkinson, 'Trauma, Transgenerational Transfer', 2010; Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002; Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998; Jennifer Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, 2006; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home Report*, 1997; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

⁹ Sacha Gibbons, 'Writing through Trauma', 1999, p.66.

¹⁰ Sacha Gibbons, 'Writing through Trauma', 1999.

¹¹ Carmel Bird, *The Stolen Children*, 1998; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home Report*, 1997.

¹² Judy Atkinson, Jeff Nelson and Caroline Atkinson, 'Trauma, Transgenerational Transfer', 2010; Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, 2002.

¹³ Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010; Judy Iseke-Barnes, 'indigenous spiritual resistance', 2003; Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 1994; Leah Purcell, *Black Chicks Talking*, 2004; Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins, *Singing the Coast*, 2010.

¹⁴ Bridget Ng'andu, 2004, in Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010, p.37.

¹⁵ Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu, 'Yarning About Yarning', 2010, p.38.

Glossary of Minjungbal Words

Bimbalas are cockles, a kind of shellfish.

The Black's Camp commonly referred to where Indigenous and South Sea Islander people lived at Fingal.

Budherum is a local word for the Dreamtime; before time.

Djerrbul is a sacred place where ceremony is performed at certain times for the increase of specific animals, plants or weather.

Durrigan is the Devil Dog, whose ancestral home was the Caves at Fingal, which were quarried away by 1895.¹ Following the loss of his home he is said to roam around Fingal of a nighttime.

The Favourite Camp is a place out the back of Tugun, of significance for Minjungbal people as it was the junction and meeting place with their relations to the north.

The *Hairy Man* is a short and hairy creature who is said to take children who are wandering around outside after dark. He is attracted to whistling and for this reason whistling outside after dark is discouraged.

Jarjums are babies and young children.

Djoongerabah is the Playground of the Pelicans, also known as Razorback Lookout.

The *Minjungbal community* is the Indigenous community of Tweed Heads, located in the Tweed Valley region in the far north coast of New South Wales beneath the state border of Queensland.²

Moogai is a ghost or spirit presence.

A *munyarl* is a non-Indigenous person.

Old People refers to both distant ancestors and Elders who have passed away.

Pooningbah is the Back of the Echidna, large black basalt columns rising from the sea at the headland between Dreamtime Beach and Fingal Beach. Also known as the Giant's Causeway.

Ukerebagh is an island where Indigenous people were segregated onto from 1927.

Wollumbin is the sacred mountain, the place where the sun first hits Australia, called 'Mt Warning' by Cook in 1770.³

¹ Joanna Boileau, *Community Based Heritage Study*, 2004, p. 30.

² Christine Salisbury and Sue Follent, 'Bicultural Stress', 1996.

³ Joanna Boileau, *Community Based Heritage Study*, 2004, p. 40.