Gurranyin Borinya
(On Eagle’s Wings)

Effecting Change for Koorie Youth

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SUMMARY

This exegesis is an exploration of Koorie identity. It includes an overview of the first definitions of Koorie identity, as constructed by Government during the 1800s based on blood quantum. These definitions were used to inform policies and practices that led to the dispossession of country and dispersal of Aboriginal people; the removal of children and the fracturing of Aboriginal families, communities and societies. A review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander definitions of identity however, reveals a marked difference from non-Aboriginal definitions because of the inclusion of genetic inheritance, kinship and country.

Non-Aboriginal definitions based on blood quantum continued until the 1970s when they changed to include not only genetic inheritance but self and community identification as well.

In the research project, the slippery and multiple nature of identity became apparent, leading me to conclude that identity for Koories is similarly complex. I determined that four key factors contribute to a person identifying as a Koorie including race/genetic inheritance, culture and kinship, historical experience, and Aboriginality itself.

Government constructed definitions which are accepted by the wider community have led to challenges for Koories as they struggle for identity because they are sometimes positioned as not really Aboriginal as an effect of these. Young people’s struggles over identity have been caused by the impact of invasion and colonization which has resulted in cultural alienation, dispossession from country, racism, and trans-generational trauma.

Little research has been conducted around the struggles for identity experienced by Victorian Koorie youth. This is despite the fact that the existence of inequalities is clearly documented as is the disadvantage that flows from these
inequalities including low education levels, high unemployment rates, high child protection rates and, high juvenile justice and incarceration rates.

The intent of this research project has also been to contribute to Indigenous research methodologies and epistemologies. In the project I have used qualitative research methods that are in turn informed by Indigenous ways of knowing/methodologies. I have used a Victorian Indigenous research methodology with five qualitative Indigenous methods, Ngarri-story, Nyembera-waiting, Boonyabuk-connecting, Wanga-listening and Nangak-seeing. The elaboration of these methods constitutes a major outcome of this project.

The project has been both exploratory and explanatory and as well as the exegesis, it includes the development, accreditation and evaluation of the Gurranyin Borinya Cultural Enrichment Kit and the screenplay Tunno.

The products that comprise this project have been developed to broaden knowledge and awareness about Aboriginal histories and cultural heritage; enhance understanding about Aboriginality; strengthen identity, and provide strategies to support and enable young people to realize their creative abilities and develop a vision for their future.
Declaration

This is to certify that:

a) except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the candidate alone;
b) the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award;
c) the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program;
d) any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged;
e) ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Esmerelda Glenda Bamblett
Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge the assistance and support of Dr. Laura Brearley and Dr. Mark Rose, the Koorie Cohort and I am forever indebted to my Supervisors, Associate Professor Geoff Shacklock and Dr. Michael Crowhurst.
Dedication

Without God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit I would never have been able to do this research.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my children: Nolita, Samantha, Merle, Gary, and Leigh; my mother Merle; my sister Joanne and her family; my brother Neville (Bimbo) who is deceased but who provided much inspiration for the characters in my stories, and his children; my grandparents, Esmeralda (Lulla) and Alfred Bamblett both deceased who gave me a large extended family that helped me have a strong identity; and my amazing spiritual mother Aunty Mary (deceased) who encouraged and supported me and provided spiritual direction for my life.

Beside my family, the many people who contributed to my life are too many to name but they are amazing and have left an indelible imprint on me.
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TERMINOLOGY

In this thesis I have interchangeably used the words Koorie, Aboriginal, Indigenous and, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The word Koorie has been used in the context of talking about Aboriginal people from Victoria and parts of New South Wales. I have used the word Aboriginal when talking about Aboriginal people from other parts of Australia or events that have impacted on Aboriginal people all over Australia. The word Indigenous has been used to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I have also used Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in instances when discussing both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>AARE</td>
<td>Australian Association for Research in Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAE</td>
<td>College of Advanced Education</td>
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<td>FCAATSI</td>
<td>Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders</td>
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<td>HREOC</td>
<td>Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSC</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAIDOC</td>
<td>National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee</td>
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<td>NATSISS</td>
<td>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey</td>
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<td>MAYSAR</td>
<td>Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation</td>
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<td>NT</td>
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<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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Chapter 1: Prologue: Story-Ngarri

1.1 Introduction

Ngarri is a Bangerang word meaning ‘to tell’. In my research I have used it to mean ‘story’. Lawler (2008) contends that narrative is important to the process of developing identity, as our identities are embedded in social relationships and the narratives that we construct as we move through life. She argues that identity is a process that takes shape in the relationships between people and that these relationships are in turn mediated by the stories we tell ourselves about our own lives.

Further, Denebornough et al. (2006) suggest that stories (witnessed and responded to) can support and generate solidarity. Sefa Dei, Hall and Rosenberg (2000) also acknowledge that stories are significant to Aboriginal people because they contain Indigenous knowledges that are not learned in formal places but rather are passed down orally by generations of trusted Elders.

It is within this context that I have used the following story, Gurranyin Borinya, to form an interpretive structure for this research and as a strong metaphor for Aboriginal people and their struggle for identity.

Gurranyin Borinya

Gurranyin soared in the sky, feeling bad because even though he was meant to be the King of the Skies, the strange birds that made their nests in his country had pushed him out.

It was raining heavy with thunder and lightning making it difficult to see. Gurranyin was about to dive on a brown snake when he heard the sound of a shotgun (loud and as fearful as the storm) and felt a bullet tear his wing. He fell to the ground and lay there bleeding to death. He knew if he stayed there he would die and even though he was a long way from his country, he had to try to get home.
The bullet was only one problem. Gurranyin had been sick for a long time. His wing feathers gave off a tell-tale whistle when he dived on prey, warning them off. Even when he did get prey, his talons were blunt and he couldn’t hold it and calcifications on his beak made it hard for him to eat. To make it worse the other birds pecked at him all the time. The bullet was the final straw, warning Gurranyin to go back home to his country.

He decided to go and lifting his head, slowly made his way up into the sky. Flight was difficult with his wing torn and bleeding. Black clouds covered the sky as the lightning flashed and thunder roared. The other birds panicked and flew for cover and the storm erupted violently, pushing Gurranyin back towards the ground. But Gurranyin remembered how his parents taught him to propel himself high on the thermals. He waited for the right moment and then pushed above the storm, rested on the thermals and let them carry him home.

Finally he was home. He found his nest and flew straight in remembering the warmth of his mother when he was young as he lay on one of her old feathers. The land gathered his tired and hurt body to itself and he was relieved to be home.

Gurranyin slept. When he woke, he began the painful process of plucking his old feathers out one by one. As he plucked the feathers, he tore at his skin and the wound under each feather. Even though it hurt, he kept going until he got rid of all the motley old feathers. Gurranyin then flew to the river where he washed off the blood, dirt and filth. Over many days he cleaned himself and when he was finished lay bald and clean in the sun. As he waited for his flight feathers to grow back, Gurranyin sharpened his beak and talons on the rocks. The days went by and he fell in and out of consciousness, losing all track of time.

One day he noticed a new feather. It made him feel like it was a new beginning. As his feathers grew back, he regained his strength. After forty days his whole body was covered with new feathers. His beak and talons were sharp and he felt young again. He was hungry so he rose up out of the nest and began to fly high above the earth. As he flew he got stronger and stronger.
Gurranyin circled around looking for prey, and soon spotted a brown snake. With incredible speed and accuracy he swooped, picking it up in his sharp talons. As he was taking it back to his nest he saw other eagles lying on the ground dying. He flew to each one, offering help. It was too late for some, others didn’t want help, but for those who wanted his help, Gurranyin fed them and showed them how to ride the thermals like he did. As he flew over his country many eagles flew with him. They were once again kings of the skies!

1.2 Reflection on the Ngarri

The story of Gurranyin represents the struggle over identity for Koorie youth. It highlights what happens when young Koories are confused about their identity and it gives them strategies for change and renewal. On the ground, Gurranyin represents young Koories who have been subjected to trans-generational trauma and disempowered by negative events that have happened to their families over the past two hundred years. Like Gurranyin, if they are to survive, they too have to reconnect to family and country to renew their strength. The bloody, old feathers represent the negative stereotypes young Koories have been taught about their people in the education system and from the wider community. The new feathers represent the strengthening of identity. When they are strong in their identity, they are once again able to soar above the clouds like the eagle.

The story of Gurranyin is also representative of my people. It is a story of our struggle and a metaphor for my personal story. The shotgun represents introduced Government policies of extermination, segregation and assimilation. The trauma associated with these policies find their expression in Gurranyin lying on the ground, disconnected from family and country, exhibiting addictive behaviours (such as substance abuse). Gurranyin’s reconnection to country represents the determination of Aboriginal communities to regain and retain culture by establishing Koorie specific supports and services.
The growth of Gurranyin’s flight feathers represents the celebration of significant cultural events such as NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week and National Sorry Day. Gurranyin soaring above the clouds as he hunts represents the new policy of self determination and the resurgence of sharing and caring about each other and respect for Elders. Flying together represents the hopes and aspirations for a future where Aboriginal people contribute and make a difference to Australian society.

My own story is also represented by Gurranyin because it highlights my personal struggle for identity as an Aboriginal woman. It reveals how this struggle played out for me as a member of my extended family, the Aboriginal community and as a participant in the wider Australian society. It shows the impact of being a fair skinned Koorie who is a member of different Koorie nations as well as a member of the wider society that continually negates Aboriginality by perpetuating stereotypical views about ‘real’ Koories and by the silences that continue around the teaching of the history of white invasion and race relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australia as a “white blindfold view of history” (Yu, 2000, p.13).

The Gurranyin narrative is about identity. Lawler (2008) sees narrative as integral to developing identity:

One way of reading the narrative would be to see it as reflecting a process of developing an identity which occurs quite independently of the narrative. An alternative way of seeing it, however, is to see... [it as] processes of producing an identity through assembling various memories, experiences, episodes. (p.11)

Lawler goes on to say that it is through these life narratives that we locate ourselves within relationships that build identities:

...it is through the narratives themselves that we produce our identities this way... narrative gives us a means to understand identity in its sociality, since narrative identity places us within a
complex web of relationships and, ultimately, confounds the
notion of the atomized individual. (p.13)

It is from this stance about the link between narrative and identity that I have formed
my research aims and conducted my project as evident in the product and in this
exegesis. It begins with the telling of my own story of identity that is in the
relationship to the stories of my people, and to those of the Koorie young people who
were participants in this research project.

My key objective in this PhD by project was to create a resource that will empower
young Koories, enabling them to function as productive members of society and
become leaders and visionaries. My practical aim was to provide Koorie youth with
increased knowledge and awareness about themselves, assist them to work through
their struggle for identity, and to empower other Koorie community members.
However, throughout the research process it became apparent that the product
needed to speak to a broader audience because, to address the key issues associated
with the struggle for identity for Koorie youth, non-Indigenous perspectives on
Koorie identity must also be addressed.

This led to a bigger, more complex product because non-Aboriginal people's
perceptions about Koorie identity play a big role in the struggle for identity by Koorie
youth. Therefore an additional goal for my research has been to educate non-
Aboriginal people about Koorie identity by giving them an understanding of Koorie
history and culture.

1.3 My Story
My story and those of the young people interviewed are linked in the research
because they document circumstances that like Gurranyin had an adverse affect on
our lives. My story fits well with those of the young people and with Gurranyin
because even thought we are at different life stages, our historical experiences and
cultural connections are similar. Some of the young Koories interviewed were at flight
feather 1 (disconnected from family and country) others at flight feather 4 (having
limited cultural knowledge) and still others at varying places in their journey, depending on their age and circumstances.

My own story, although it is almost finished because I am at flight feather 11 (where I am secure in my identity) plays an important role in the research because of the similarities to the stories of the young people, including negative experiences in the education system, trans-generational trauma linked to the stolen generation, identity crises and, on the positive side, strong kinship structures. However, I am also aware that certain preoccupations in my story reveal my own personal view that many of the programs enforced on Aboriginal people by successive governments have not produced effective outcomes because of their cultural inappropriateness.

**My Genealogy**

My Aboriginal identity begins and ends with my kinship connections to the Bangerang, Waywurru and Wiradjuri people on my mother’s side and the Dja Dja Wurung people on my father’s side. The understanding and knowledge about these connections have been passed down by my family and contribute to the strength of my identity. Reay (1988) acknowledges the importance of kinship in the transmission of culture when she says:

> The close association between the alternate generations of grandparents and grandchildren, which ensures cultural transmission in many societies and finds expression in some Aboriginal societies... contrasts with the white society’s separation and effective alienation of youth and age generally. Aborigines have thus a better chance of keeping alive their family traditions. (p.x)

My mother Merle Bamblett was born in 1937 and although she was a single parent, my father Lyle Kennedy, a Dja Dja Wurung man, and his family were always around. We lived with my grandparents and my sister/aunts and brother/uncles from our extended family. Mum’s father, Alfred Bamblett’s great grandmother was Ellen, an Aboriginal woman. I presume she was given that Christian name and we have not
found her Aboriginal name. She had two children, Daniel in 1836 and John in 1838 to John Bamblett - who according to Sally Gould (mum’s cousin) was convicted of housebreaking and transported from England for 14 years. He was granted a ‘Ticket of Leave’ on the 4th October, 1836.

In 1862 when he was 24, John Bamblett junior married Mary Cameron (who was 21) in Victoria and they had nine children: Elizabeth, Mary, Alfred, Effie, Archibald, Daniel, Harriet, Charles and Edmund. Archibald, my grandfather’s father, (a Wiradjuri man) married an Aboriginal woman, Sophie Wedge, in 1896 and they had eight children: Elizabeth, Mary, Alfred, Neville, Effie, Sophie, Archibald and Jean at Warangcsda Aboriginal Station in NSW.

Their third child, my father/grandfather Alfred Bamblett, was born at Darlington Point NSW on the 8th September 1908. He married Esmeralda (Lulla) Morgan, a Bangerang and Waywurru woman, in 1931 when he was 24 and she was 16 years old. Lulla was born at Cummeragunga Station in 1914, the daughter of Ernest Morgan and Eliza Allen. Alf and Lulla had fourteen children: Neville, Merle, Jean, Mary, Elizabeth, June, Alfred, Leslie, Rosaline, Lionel, Geraldine, Lindsay, Linda and Garry. My mother Merle was the second eldest and the first girl. I am her eldest child and my grandparent’s first grandchild, born in Leeton NSW in 1952, followed by my brother Neville (Bimbo) in 1954 and my sister Joanne in 1965. My mother, brother and I lived in Leeton with my grandparents until my father/grandfather was murdered and then the whole family moved back to my grandmother’s country in Victoria.

As a shearer my father/grandfather Alf had to travel a long way to find work for the money to feed his large family. He was murdered on the 3rd November, 1957 by three Aboriginal men and one Aboriginal woman. According to the Supreme Court of NSW (1958) Inquest held on the 3rd of June 1958:

The deceased, Alfred Bamblett, had come from Leeton... looking for employment, and he was met, when he arrived at Griffith, by
his nephew... and he was taken to the Three-Way Bridge area...
Shortly after dark on the 3rd November the deceased was walking
along the canal towards the Three-Way Bridge and the accused
met him and there was an altercation on the channel bank. A
knife was used and the deceased was stabbed. (p.6)

I was only six when he was murdered but my father/grandfather and the stories told
about him live on in my memories.

My grandmother Lulla then moved back to Bangerang country in Mooroopna to
Rumbalara Aboriginal housing settlement. This move was initiated by a non
Aboriginal friend of Nan's, who was at a local Council meeting immediately following
my grandfather's death where they discussed taking her children. He said to her,
"Lulla, you better take your children and go, they're going to get the welfare to come
and take them off you." Nan knew this was no idle threat because when she was
thirteen, her mother had to swim the Murray River with her two children to get away
from the police who came to take the children from Cummeragunga Station.

Even though only three or four years had elapsed after this incident, Nan's fears had
lessened to an extent and she allowed me and my sister/aunt to go on holidays with
non-Aboriginal people. We were not the only ones because a lot of young Koories
went on holidays with non-Aboriginal people in Melbourne through the Harold Blair
Holiday Program that, as Broome (1989) recounts:

...tugged the heart strings of Melburnians every summer in the
1960s with images of wide-eyed Aboriginal children from rural
Victoria and elsewhere who were seeing the wonders of
Melbourne as guests of white families. (p.43)

The bus took us to the Aborigines Advancement League in Northcote where we were
picked up by non-Aboriginal families. In reflecting on these times with my
sister/aunt, we are convinced that one year we actually stayed with Stan Davey, one
of the founders of the Aborigines Advancement League.
During these years I also attended the Church of Christ in Mooroopna because Mr. Roy Clydesdale, the Minister, would pick us up each Sunday and take us to Sunday school, then to his house for lunch with him and his wife Anne, and then back to church in the afternoon before taking us home. I became a Christian and this contributed to my strong spiritual identity.

When I was 13 years old, I was fostered by a non-Aboriginal family in the same town as my family. My foster mother thought she could not have children and decided to foster an Aboriginal child. My foster parents were very nice. They took me on holidays to Rosebud, to the snow, and looked after me very well and for most of the time we got on very well. They bought me a bike and I rode around Mooroopna and regularly to Rumbalara to see my family until my foster mother decided it would be better if I did not see my family anymore because it was too unsettling. This was very difficult because my family was the most important part of my life. I continued to ride my bike to see them, but no longer told her.

Any motives by Government to construct our aspirations for a different life through the holiday and fostering programs were destined to fail because they did not recognize the strength of kinship in our identity. This strong kinship structure continues to be an important consideration in the struggle for identity for young Koories today.

The straw that broke the camel’s back was a visit by my twin sister/aunt who wanted me to go with her to a Normie Rowe concert (the number one music heart throb at the time). I boasted that I was allowed to go to the concert with her but when she arrived, my foster parents would not allow me to go because they said I was too young. Not long after that concert Normie Rowe was drafted to the army. I went back to my family after that incident because I was embarrassed to be caught in a lie to my aunt and extremely disappointed that I did not get to see Normie Rowe (although my aunt went with my uncle). This moment caused a tension that forced me to choose between my family and my foster family. I chose my family.
My experience is but one example of how the lives of children are significantly shaped by fostering. For instance, the Adoption Legislation Review Committee Report, cited in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report (1997), reveals how fostering could lead to permanent separation from their families for some children:

Informal and formal foster care arrangements and holiday placements supposedly for a temporary period were frequently the beginning of a permanent separation of Aboriginal children from their family and community. Some children placed informally, were passed from one foster home to another, names were changed and the child’s whereabouts ‘lost’ to their parents and unknown to welfare authorities. Some of these placements may have led to the granting of an adoption order with parents’ consents being dispensed with on the ground of whereabouts unknown, particularly as there was no restriction prior to the 1964 legislation as to who could arrange adoptions. (p.59)

I often wondered why Nan consented to the foster placement but after reading that comment I realised that Aboriginal women would have been encouraged to foster their children by letting them think they would have the opportunity for a better life. When I asked mum she agreed that Nan probably thought it would be better for us to live with non-Aboriginal people. Some children may have had better opportunities, however many who were fostered returned to the community when they were older seeking reconnection. However, for many this was difficult. Children of members of the stolen generation tell about the devastating impact their parents felt at being disconnected from their families and communities. Children who were fostered or taken had a twofold barrier, firstly to connect with their foster parents and then when they were older reconnecting to their family and community. Family and community connection for some was lost or broken forever.

In 1965 when I went home to Rumbalara, an Aboriginal word meaning ‘the end of the rainbow’. Ironically, I found that our people wanted to be moved into Housing Commission homes in Mooroopna and Shepparton because conditions on Rumbalara
were cramped and difficult with over 100 people squeezed into 10 tiny houses. Geoff Jones, a reporter from 'The Sun' newspaper in Melbourne wrote an article about Mrs. Harrison, another resident of Rumbalara, and me on 13th June, 1966, called the heart-break of a girl on the fringe (Appendix 1).

Jones described me as a “part-Aboriginal girl” (p.3) who lived on the fringe of Mooroopna. (Later in my life I was insulted about the reference to ‘part-Aboriginal’ because it was a denial of my Aboriginality.) He wrote about an incident that occurred when I took a non-Aboriginal friend from school home for the weekend, who afterwards did not have anything more to do with me. My friend was horrified when she saw Rumbalara. In the newspaper, Jones wrote the story as follows:

Esme’s home is one of 10 concrete bunkers with four rooms of concrete floors, walls and ceilings and one door - the front door. Esme’s girl friend saw this and was horrified. She saw the conduit across the ceiling, the firewood stacked in the bathroom to keep it dry, and the rooms choked with beds, children and clothing. She saw the outside lavatories - some only 20 yd. apart, the bathroom without a door and the sink used for washing clothes and dishes. (p.3)

I had never looked at Rumbalara through those eyes and was not even aware of how bad the conditions were until my friend reacted the way she did; when I read the article; and, when I received fan mail from many young non-Aboriginal people who had read the article and felt sorry for me. In a similar way, young Kooris are not faced with a struggle about identity until someone tells them they are ‘black’ and then adding to the confusion that they are not ‘really’ black. This generally happens when children attend school for the first time.

The article also reported that:

Pastor Doug Nicholls, of the Aboriginal Advancement League, led a deputation from Rumbalara, to the acting Minister for
Housing, Mr. Manson, and the chairman of the Housing Commission, Mr. Gaskin, in Melbourne. The deputation said it wanted Rumbalara abolished and Housing Commission homes for its inhabitants. (p.3)

This deputation included my grandmother, Esmeralda (Lulla) Bamblett, who actively sought rights for her family and through her actions passed on to me the drive to assert my rights as an Aboriginal person.

When I went to school the day after the newspaper article appeared, I was summoned to see the Headmistress who insinuated that I was lying. I can still recall her sarcastic tone of voice when she said “Now Esmereldas you know that didn’t happen, don’t you?” I was terrified of authority figures at that time and so I agreed with her. I did not have the guts to tell her that after taking my friend to Rumbalara for the weekend, she did not want to be my friend anymore. I never understood why the Headmistress was so adamant that I was lying until recently when I realized the article mentioned the school by name. By naming the school, she must have felt it implied that the school was racist and was defending her school. Although I did not realize that I was caught in the middle between the school and the public perception. Regardless of the reason for her reaction, she terrified me. After that incident, the next time I stayed home from school and was picked up by the Truant Officer, I had to face her again. After facing her for the second time, I made sure I never ‘wagged’ school again. It was therefore a great relief to me when I moved from that school to Nathalia High School at the end of year 9.

In 1968, when I was sixteen and in year 10, I went to live at a hostel for Aboriginal youth at Nathalia for three years with my two sister/aunts and other students from Cummeragunga mission. The next year Aunty Mary took me to a Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander (FCAATSI) Conference in Canberra where a group of young men, led by Dennis Walker, challenged the Council’s white membership. At that conference I met a young Koorie man from Melbourne who became a significant part of my life and a great influence on my identity as an Aboriginal woman. During 1970, he regularly sent me information to
help with my HSC subjects. I looked forward to getting a yellow envelope each fortnight because it was the only mail I received at the time, and it helped with my studies.

In 1970 I completed HSC at Nathalia High School and was encouraged by the Principal, Mrs. Mahood, to go to University. With her help, in 1971 I enrolled at Latrobe University in a Bachelor of Arts Degree and successfully completed the first year of that course. While attending La Trobe University I met up with the young Koorie man again and during the year I attended many different cultural activities, including dances that were held for the Aboriginal community at the old Aborigines Advancement League premises in Northeote, as well as numerous marches and protests about Land Rights. In the same year, I also attended cultural camps organized by Bruce McGuinness, the Field Officer of the Aborigines Advancement League. My participation in these events helped to reinforce and strengthen my Aboriginal identity.

At this time the Black Power movement in America began to impact on young Aboriginal people in Australia, so much so that Attwood & Marcus (1999) reported the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (VAAL) release of the following statement on Black Power to the Age in 1969:

Since the end of World War II, many of the coloured peoples who lived under white colonial rule have gained their independence, and coloured minorities in multi-racial nations are claiming the right to determine the course of their own affairs in contradiction to the inferior state under which they have lived. That is Black Power. Although in some expressions Black Power has used violence and sought black supremacy, those expressions have gained publicity because of their dramatic nature. The VAAL supports the principle of Black Power without necessarily condoning all the ways in which it expresses itself in different parts of the world, or indeed, in Australia. It is inevitable and healthy that there will be differences in the ways Aboriginal
people understand Black Power and the methods which they are prepared to use to obtain their ends. (p.243)

The Aborigines Advancement League was going through a time of change and its younger Koorie members, influenced by the Black Power movement, demanded that membership be all Aboriginal. They put the following resolutions to the Board of Management:

“That the Aboriginal people of Victoria displace all those non-Aboriginal members on the Advancement League Committee and all paid positions with the League AND ‘that a delegation be sent to the League to confer on this motion and that immediate steps be taken to get local Aboriginal personnel for these positions’.
(Management Committee minutes, 3 October 1969 taken from, Victims to Victors, 2005, p. 90)

This was not surprising because many of these young members were also active with FCAATSI and had demanded all Aboriginal membership on these as well. I also became involved in the Black Power movement, inviting different Aboriginal speakers to come to the University to speak to non-Aboriginal students about Aboriginal issues. I also spoke out about significant issues such as Land Rights and equal wages for Aboriginal station hands. In support of the Gurindji people I purchased a copy of the record Gurindji Blues by Ted Egan and Galawuy Yunupingu about the Gurindji Walkout. I did this because I was learning to become emphatic about my identity and country.

Despite negative media reports about Black Power I continued to be involved with the movement and it had a great impact on me, further strengthening my identity as well as leading me to research injustices being perpetrated on my people. The more I learnt about the history of my people, the more vocal and radical I became about Aboriginal issues and the more determined I was to raise awareness about our history. The slogan, black is beautiful was a powerful anthem for African American youth and became one for us as well. For the first time in our lives someone was
saying that Aboriginality was not only good, it was beautiful! For me this was a turning point because it was the first time I heard a positive narrative about Aboriginal identity from a source other than my family and community. I therefore became a strong advocate for Black Power, seeing it as a vehicle for strengthening our identity and became interested in the transformative power of story.

My education about what happened to my people led me to develop a social conscience about the world in general and I participated in many other protests of that era. My involvement in these events and times had a strong impact on my identity as an Aboriginal woman and much of what I learnt has stayed with me throughout my life. It is here that I made a conscious decision to dedicate my life to helping my community in whatever way I could. At this time I also developed a strong belief in education as a tool to empower Aboriginal youth. This has stayed with me throughout my life as an educator in Koorie Education and a community activist and is a key informant of this research.

During the summer vacation after my first year at University, I met my first husband, a non-Aboriginal man from Queensland. A family crisis forced him to go home and in 1972 I deferred my university course and went with him. We were married and our eldest two daughters Nolita and Samantha were born in Queensland. During this time I made every attempt to become part of my husband’s community. However for me it was a time of cultural alienation because it took me away from my family and community and interrupted the emergence of my identity. I had to confront many stereotypical ideas about Aboriginal people from his family. For me this was very difficult because I had to fight to maintain my emerging identity. The only support came from my aunt who lived with her family in Queensland and whose presence helped lessen the pain of separation from the rest of my extended family.

During the four years I spent in Queensland many people from my community died, among them my 19 year old brother/uncle. After he died I became obsessed with returning home and because I was desperate, took a ride back to Victoria (with my two daughters) from a complete stranger who advertised in the local paper for someone to share petrol costs. This visit only made me more homesick. Shortly after
returning to Queensland, I talked my husband into bringing me home for Christmas in 1975 and at the end of the holiday I stayed and he returned to Queensland to pack up all our things.

When I returned to Victoria the Koorie community was going through a time of cultural revival as an aftermath of the 1967 Referendum, the establishment of the Tent Embassy in 1972, and the establishment of Aboriginal organizations. In 1976 I enrolled in a Diploma of Teaching (Primary) which I successfully completed at Toorak Teachers College in 1978. Looking back in hindsight I realised that during those years back in the community I was re-establishing my identity while dealing with the clash of that identity with my marriage to a non-Aboriginal man who had a value system radically different from mine.

Being fair skinned meant that many people told me I could ‘pass for white’. The problem was that I could not ‘pass for white’ after all that I had been through. My experience in being unable to connect with the non-Aboriginal community in Queensland reinforced that for me. Back in the Koorie community, I felt culturally safe and connected even though reclaiming my identity was hard work. Because my consciousness about Aboriginal issues was raised at University, it may seem that it would be easy for me to reclaim my identity, but it did not play out like that. It was worth it for me to reclaim my identity, however, as the blacker I got, the whiter my husband seemed.

My husband tried to fit into my community, playing basketball with the Melbourne Blacks team and having many Aboriginal friends. On my part, I volunteered to work with Aboriginal organisations while I was studying because I wanted to reinstate myself in the Aboriginal community. While there are other variables I think my husband was suffering the same cultural alienation I suffered when I lived in Queensland and when I was 27 (the same age as my husband) he committed suicide. After this I moved back to my country in Shepparton to recuperate and heal my intense grief, guilt and sorrow. My story regressed and like Gurranyin I felt like I was shot once again. Over the next sixteen years as I continued my journey during which time I had my other three children Merle, Gary and Leigh.
My Second Marriage
My second marriage was to an Aboriginal man four years younger than me. Because he was a Koorie the marriage was culturally easier because we both understood and lived Aboriginal culture. During these years I represented my community on many committees including being the Victorian representative on the inaugural Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. I was also co-founder of Lidje Child Care Centre, Manega Aboriginal Annexe, Minimbah Adult Education Centre, Batdja Pre-School and Child Care Centre and Black Eagles Basketball Club, all Koorie specific services in Shepparton. For numerous reasons that had nothing to do with culture, the marriage failed after sixteen years. I moved to Melbourne because I identified place with specific events, and in this case Shepparton, with my failed marriage.

Study
In 1988 I wanted to teach Aboriginal Studies at a TAFE College and, even though I had studied and lived Aboriginal history for many years, was told I required an academic qualification to teach my own history. I was indignant about this but because I wanted to pass on my knowledge about my people. I enrolled in and completed the Graduate Diploma of Arts (Aboriginal Studies) at Underdale CAE in South Australia. Although my enrolment in the course came about because of the requirement by the TAFE College, I decided to take the year off work as a protest against the Bicentennial Celebrations and later in the year attended the Bicentennial protest march in Sydney with a massive contingent from Victoria including my then husband and two oldest daughters.

I did not study again until 2002 when I enrolled in a Master of Professional Education and Training at Deakin University in Geelong when I was employed at the Institute of Koorie Education as Research Manager. I completed the Master’s degree in 2003 and I started a family business, Neenann Multimedia & Consultancy, with my five children.

In 2004 when the opportunity arose to be part of the Koorie Cohort at RMIT as a PhD student, I thought long and hard about a topic to research. I decided to research
Koorie identity using Indigenous research methodologies not only to give me the opportunity to develop a product that would enhance and strengthen the identity of Koorie students, but also to record and affirm Indigenous methodologies and assist in legitimizing them in mainstream research.

In 2007 as a prerequisite of Ordination as a Pastor with the Assemblies of God Church, I had to study at Bible College and I successfully completed one subject from a Master of Ministry at Harvest Bible College.

**My path in Higher Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>La Trobe</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-1978</td>
<td>Toorak Teachers College</td>
<td>Diploma of Teaching(Prim)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Underdale CAE</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma of Arts (Aboriginal Studies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2004</td>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>Master of Professional Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Harvest Bible College</td>
<td>Master of Ministry (not completed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2010</td>
<td>RMIT</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: University courses*

In reflecting on my own educational history (above) I am affirmed in my strong belief that education is a tool that can be used to empower. My educational journey is linked to different circumstances in my life and has led to my personal empowerment.

1.4 **Themes in my story linking to the research project**

There are many similarities in my story and the stories of the young Koorie participants that I interviewed. These similarities also play out in a large way through
the history of our people. Aspects of identity identified through these stories find expression in the research and inform the final research products. I discuss a few of these below.

**Missions and Reserves**

Missions and reserves played a big part in my life, because my youth was spent between two reserves, Rumbalara and Cummeragunga (where my grandmother had lived and as a young girl was subjected to strict Government policies including taking children away and confining the people). My feelings about the missions and reserves are similar to those of the young people I interviewed. They spoke about the significance of missions and reserves because they connect us to our country but also raised issues about cultural disconnection when our people were forced off their country.

At the same time as I was living between the two missions, I went on holidays with non-Aboriginal people and then later was fostered out to a non-Aboriginal family for a short period of time. When I realised the link between those short term holidays and the policy to permanently foster out young Koories, I was appalled and relieved that I was not one of those children who never saw their families again.

**Identity**

Like the youth I interviewed, my identity has always been questioned. To begin with this questioning was by other Aboriginal children on the missions as well as non-Aboriginal students at school. It was extremely confusing to be called a ‘gubbah’ (meaning white) by the Aboriginal children on the missions because of the fair colour of my skin, but at the same time to be called ‘black’ by non-Aboriginal students at school because of my Aboriginality. This questioning continued when the newspaper article about me referred to me as ‘part-Aboriginal’. This questioning only subsided when I made a decision that no one could tell me how to identify because I realized that identity is more than skin colour.

Even though non-Aboriginal people continue to challenge me about my Aboriginality, it does not bother me and I no longer justify it. Some of the young people interviewed
in this project also voiced frustration about non-Aboriginal people judging their Aboriginality by the colour of their skin.

**Black Power**

Disempowerment was a way of life for my people because from the moment of invasion, control over their lives was taken from them. They were forcibly removed from their traditional country and sites of significance and placed onto missions and reserves where their movements were restricted by the Board for the Protection of Aborigines.

The Black Power movement on the other hand provided opportunities for Aboriginal people to express Aboriginal identity, validate the positive role of Aboriginality in their cultural experience, and empower the community. This was after a hundred and ninety years of oppression, racism and negative stereotyping about Aboriginal people. It is not surprising that my search for identity found expression through the Black Power movement because it reinforced Aboriginality as a positive. In a similar way, the youth I interviewed said that working at Aboriginal organizations and attending Koorie specific programs has strengthened their identity. This maps a transition from post-invasion disempowerment through increased awareness and exposure to powerful and positive stories that may lead to better futures for Koorie youth.

**Mentors**

Aboriginal culture incorporates Aboriginal ways of reflection and action and role models play a significant role in traditional learning by imitation and modelling. My mentors included strong Aboriginal leaders such as Dr. Mary Atkinson (my aunt), Bruce McGuinness, Sir Pastor Doug Nicholls, Stewart Murray, and Colin Bourke as well as non-Aboriginal people, Mr. Roy Clydesdale, Joan Harder and Shirley Mahood. The youth I interviewed said they too are mentored by Aboriginal leaders and by their participation in Koorie specific programs and significant Aboriginal cultural events.

My Aboriginal mentors provided positive role modelling that I incorporated into my own journey because they recounted positives that challenged the negatives in educational narratives about Aboriginal histories and cultures found in texts used in
schooling. I was able to reflect on these positive influences and use them to challenge any biases that came from non-Aboriginal education systems and the wider community. My non-Aboriginal mentors contradicted the negative stereotypes about Aboriginal people and the associated low expectations of what Aboriginal people could achieve and replaced them with beliefs that we could do whatever we wanted to do.

1.5 Reflections on my story

In telling my story here I have constructed an account based on my experiences as an Aboriginal person growing up between Victoria and NSW. I lived through a time when I experienced many policies that negatively impacted on my people, including segregation as I was subjected to non-Aboriginal governance on missions and reserves where I lived; assimilation as the Government attempted to remove Aboriginal children from their families through fostering programs; and self determination as I worked in Aboriginal organisations. My story reveals some of the trauma associated with policies that led to racist practices, but it also highlights successes I achieved. My life story reveals that our journeys are not always linear as Welty (1983) asserts:

The events in our lives happen in a sequence in time, but in their significance to ourselves they find their own order, a time table not necessarily - perhaps not possibly - chronological. The time as we know it subjectively is often the chronology that stories and novels follow: it is the continuous thread of revelation. (pp. 68-69)

There were times when devastating events, such as my first husband’s suicide, occurred in my life and I succumbed to deep distress, ending up like Gurranyin, off country, unable to even think about flying, let alone actually fly. During these times I had to find the motivation and willpower to lift myself off the ground and go back to country. It was at this time that my strong identity empowered me to do this. The dilemma however for many Aboriginal people is that they do not have a strong
identity and find life’s journey too difficult. They lie on the ground and eventually succumb to the circumstances.

The stories of the youth told to me during interviews reveal a deep yearning for their culture and this is expressed strongly in the song *Ancestors* by Cappa Ak-Alter Egoz (2006):

My Ancestors struggled and fought for this land,
Lived a cultural law, were born in this land,
Murray River the mish, the Bangerang clan,
A Proud Legacy lives on in this man.
My gift was a family that money couldn’t buy,
Coz’ money brings deceit that means money is a lie!
I’d rather know that my family’s safe,
Than be a lonely millionaire with nobody to celebrate.
My community is something I’m helping to build strong,
We never seem to know what we’ve got until it’s gone.
I don’t wanna’ see my people living life in a cell.
I wanna’ see ‘em living happy with a story to tell.

As well as this, young Koorieys are looking for some sort of language of possibility. The development of the Kit in this research project is about providing that. Through my story, the literature, and the stories of the young people interviewed, a picture emerges about how critical it is for young Koorieys to maintain their identity and how important ‘story’ is in this regard. During my journey I also found that education is the most powerful tool for empowerment. It has personally empowered me to become all I have wanted and has given me the vision, purpose and the tools to succeed. My personal philosophy is to empower Koorie youth through education. The Cultural Enrichment Kit is a significant contribution in achieving this objective.
Chapter 2: The Research Project

2.1 Naming the Research Project

The title of this research project is *Gurranyin Borinya (on eagle’s wings): Effecting Change for Koorie Youth*. During the project, I changed the title of this research from ‘Ngarta Borinya’ to ‘Gurranyin Borinya’ because while researching the Bangerang language, I discovered that I had used the wrong word for eagle. Ngarta is the Bangerang word for eagle hawk, while Gurranyin is the word for wedge tailed eagle. ‘Gurranyin Borinya’ is Bangerang for ‘eagle’s wings’ and for me describes the finished outcome - Koorie youth who have vision, strength and purpose.

Young Koories need assistance as they struggle with their identity to enable them to live productive lives because they are often confronted with quite different interpretations regarding what is means to be a ‘real’ Aborigine. Their cultural connections to Koorie communities providing one interpretation, government policy providing another and, racist interpretations that demean Aboriginal people yet another. As Lawler (2008) comments:

...identity is constructed in the meeting place between the subjective process of being Koorie (and living in the community) and the legal/historical discourses that position Aboriginality in particular ways. (p.3)

Young Koories are involved in a complex series of relationships with historical discourses as they engage in identity work.

Kehily (2009) is another who agrees with the idea that identity is about relationships:

In returning to the idea of identity as a meeting place it is possible to see identity as relational – formed and played out in relation to those who are similar and those who are different. (p.6)
For Koorie young people who are exposed to competing viewpoints regarding Aboriginality, there may be a certain amount of additional tension to work through. This additional tension can be an effect of the attitudes of others, sometimes others with power. This project aims to support Koorie young people in their identity work.

The outcomes of my research include products that are designed to strengthen identities and a theoretical account of the workings of these products. Specifically, I have produced:

- An exegesis based on Indigenous ways of knowing, and
- A durable record consisting of an educational kit (with a children’s book and stage play) and a screenplay.

The Kit and the Screenplay are to be used to educate and support young Koories to strengthen their identity.

### 2.2 Research Problem and Questions

The research problem is to do with how young Koories (18-24) build, maintain and strengthen their cultural identity. Specific questions that arise from this problem are:

- What is Koorie identity?
- What makes a person a Koorie?
- What does being a Koorie mean?
- What is the diversity of Koorie identity?
- How do young Koories maintain a sense of their cultural heritage in a rapidly changing society?
- What is the impact of young Koories maintaining their Aboriginality?
- How can Koorie youth be empowered to identify as Koories?
- How can Koorie youth be supported to have pride in their Aboriginality?

The intent of this research was to ascertain whether Koorie youth do struggle to identify as Koorie and, if so, explore and develop strategies to empower and give pride in their identity. It has done this by:
• Talking to young Koories about their experiences and struggles with identity.
• Documenting their stories of identity.
• Identifying issues which contribute to the struggle over identity.
• Understanding in new ways the factors that impact on their identity struggle.
• Developing a resource to assist young Koories to understand identity and empower them to build and strengthen that identity.
• Contributing to an ongoing project of cultural education about Koorie identity for both the Aboriginal community and for non-Aboriginal people.

2.3 Towards a definition of identity

In order to understand identity and related issues for young Koories it is important to unpack the concept of identity. Lawler (2008) sees a difficulty in this because:

Part of the slipperiness of the term ‘identity’ derives from the difficulties of defining it adequately. It is not possible to provide a single overarching definition of what it is, how it is developed and how it works... [and further because] the notion of identity hinges on an apparently paradoxical combination of sameness and difference. (p.2)

On this basis of sameness and difference and for the purposes of this project, I see identity for Aboriginal people as tied up with race/genetic inheritance, culture/kinship, Aboriginality and historical experiences. As Kehily (2009) suggests, identity work is also about the discussion of one’s relationship to others in the world. That is, we must:

...emphasise the importance of the social in all forms of communication, producing active and generative forms of identity-work. Something as ordinary, everyday and ubiquitous as talking to others becomes central to defining oneself and one’s place in the world. (p.2)
More than this, in acknowledging the slipperiness and complexity of the concept, Kehily (2009) further points out that identity is located in questioning who we are and that this is in turn bound up in questioning our lives and collective histories. She quotes Bauman (1988) as follows:

...that identity forged in the social sphere is located within temporal relations; a sense of the past, present and future haunts identity-work and identity practices. In asking the question, ‘Who am I?’ individuals are invited to set down identity markers located within the past and the present. (p.2)

McLeod & Yates (2006) assert that subjectivity and identity are terms that are used interchangeably. They define identity as “how young people see themselves... as a particular kind of person” (pp.37-38) and drawing on Mansfield (2000) they see the use of the word subjectivity as signalling that identities “are not simple, given, presumed essences that naturally unfold, but rather are produced in an ongoing process, mediated by multiple historical and contemporary factors, including social, schooling, and psycho-dynamic relations” (p.38). They go on to say that “subjectivity is constructed, made within the world... [that we are] not born into it already formed... [subjects are formed within a] range of influences, practices, experiences and relations that combine to produce a young person and young people” (p.38).

Taking this definition into account we can see that other factors including culture and kinship also play out to affect Koorie identity. When a child is born into Koorie culture they become embedded in a strong kinship structure that is linked to the division of roles within Aboriginal society. The roles may include brother/sister, mother/father, uncle/aunt, husband/wife and hunter/gatherer. Families play an important role in kinship and, genealogy, the study of families, is taught to children at a very young age so they can determine where they fit in the community. Whilst genealogy is necessary for children to understand place in community it also plays a very important political role today because of the Native Title and Cultural Heritage legislation that forces individuals to prove connection to family, traditional land,
culture and heritage. Culture and kinship are linked to identity as Lawler (2008) noted:

A linking of identity with kinship - or at least with ancestry - is one that is enshrined in international law and informs public discourse. (p.44)

Kinship is a major factor that enables Aboriginal families to retain their cultural identity because, as stated in Anon (2005), it “provide[s] a structure for social harmony and a wide network of social support and instruction around every person” (p.7). In Kcen (1988), Barwick asserts that Aboriginal people identify by family and place with a strong connection to the land and to each other. Lawler (2008) also says:

...kinship remains significant in doing various kinds of ‘identity work’. Kinship, at the very least, is a system for determining to whom we are related: as such it must also specify identities that exist within constellations of relatives. (p.40)

Kinship structures can be understood within the broader categories of race/cultural groupings. Understanding race is also important because issues of racism and ethnocentrism impact on Koorie youth and their identity work.

Sociologists and anthropologists define Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as a race of people. In Commonwealth v Tasmania (1983), an attempt to legally define race in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people led to the statement that membership of a race is:

...a biological history or origin which is common to other members of the race... Actual proof of descent from ancestors who were acknowledged members of the race or actual proof of descent from ancestors none of whom were members of the race is admissible to prove or to contradict, as the case may be, an assertion of membership of the race... genetic heritage is fixed at
birth; the historic, religious, spiritual and cultural heritage are acquired and are susceptible to influences for which a law may provide. (p.243)

The significance of this finding is that it establishes two defining aspects of Aboriginality:

1. Genetic inheritance acquired at birth, and
2. Cultural inheritance acquired throughout life and subject to change.

It is exactly these facts that are the cornerstones of understanding identity required by Koorie youth who are engaged in the struggle over who they are. Le Baron (2003) emphasizes this point in the following way:

Cultures are like underground rivers that run through our lives and relationships, giving us messages that shape our perceptions, attributions, judgements and ideas of self and other... Two things are essential to remember about cultures: they are always changing, and they relate to the symbolic dimension of life. The symbolic dimension is the place where we are constantly making meaning and enacting our identities. Cultural messages from the groups we belong to give us information about what is meaningful or important, and who we are in the world and relation to others - our identities. (p.1)

This is part of the paradoxical dimensions to identity (Lawler, 2008) that play out in this project. The American Anthropological Association’s Statement on Race (1998) also places emphasis on the importance of geographical and cultural connection and also throws up questions about the (shared) genetic basis of assumed racial groups. They make the following point and in doing so highlight some of the limits of relying entirely on biology as the determinant of group membership.

With the vast expansion of scientific knowledge in this century,
however, it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguous, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups. Evidence from the analysis of genetics (e.g. DNA) indicates that most physical variation, about 94%, lies within so-called racial groups. Conventional geographic "racial" groupings differ from one another only in about 6% of their genes... Throughout history whenever different groups have come into contact, they have interbred. The continued sharing of genetic materials has maintained all of humankind as a single species. (website, p.1)

Regardless of people's understandings of race, research has found that racism adversely affects people and this is also a key factor that impacts on Koorie young people as they struggle with identity work. Paradies (2006c) quoted in Paradies, Harris, and Anderson (2008) defines racism as:

...avoidable and unfair actions that further disadvantage or further advantage the advantaged. Racism can be expressed through stereotypes (racist beliefs), prejudice (racist emotions) or discrimination (racist behaviours and practices). (p.4)

Racism was one important reason for leaving school given by the young Koories interviewed in this project. Mansouri, Jenkins, Morgan, and Taouk (2009) agreed that racism is a part of the schooling experience for many young Australians (not only Aboriginal students). They found that:

Racism in the school setting was reported as being perpetrated by teachers, fellow students or administration staff. It was particularly interesting that some teachers were possibly complicit in this behaviour either through their tolerance of racist behaviour in the classroom, or via the perpetration of it themselves. For example an Indigenous girl, Becky, observed that dark kids 'are unfairly treated by some teachers: When dark kids would be noisy, you'd get sent out straight away – you wouldn't
get any warning. When the white kids talked in class they’d get a
warning so it wasn’t fair. (p.64)

This reveals that the claims made by the young Koories about being subjected to
racism in schools are legitimated. This racism finds release in stereotypical views,
prejudice and discrimination and plays out in the quality and longevity of life for
Koorie people. In a specific example, Paradies et al. (2008) link racism as one factor
contributing to poor health for Koories when they stated that it:

...is well established that Indigenous Australians and Maori have
higher levels of ill health and mortality than non Indigenous
people. It is also clear that the disadvantage suffered by
Indigenous peoples is associated with both historical and
contemporary racism, colonization and oppression. (p.1)

The way racism influences society’s views about Aboriginality is evidenced in the
many attempts by non-Aboriginal people to find an appropriate definition of
Aboriginality and the Government’s constructions of these views in legislation. For
instance, under the Aborigines Act 1915, assimilationist views based on a racist
assumption that Aboriginality can be defined by physical characteristics, forced
young men deemed to be ‘half-castes’ off missions and reserves in Victoria and NSW.

The video Lousy Little Sixpence highlights that young men were also expelled from
the missions if they were considered to be agitators. The video lists a number of
young men, including my grandfather Alfred Bamblett and great grandfather Steve
Hamilton who were thrown off Cummeragunga mission. Once they were removed
from the missions they were only allowed minimum contact with their families.
Broome (2005) found that under the Act:
All quadroon, octofoon and half-caste lads over 18 on the Board
Stations shall leave and shall not be allowed on the Station or
reserve again except for brief visits to family at the discretion of
the Station manager. (p.203)

The intention was to remove young people from their families and communities to
assimilate them and make them white. This was supported in an article by Manne
(2006) that quoted Dr Cecil Evelyn Cook, chief protector of Aborigines in North
Australia in 1933, as saying that:

Everyendeavour is being made to breed out the colour by
elevating female half-castes to white standard with a view to their
absorption by mating into the white population. The adoption of
a similar policy throughout the Commonwealth is, in my opinion,
a matter of vital importance. (p.65)

This desire to remove all traces of blackness led to an obsession with degrees of
colour as documented by Austin (1990). For instance in the Northern Territory, as
the following quote shows, officials were required to categorize school populations as
follows:

Between 1933 and 1937... Octofoon, Quadroon, European-
Aboriginal, Afghan-Aboriginal, Afghan-Half-caste-Afghan,
Chinese-Aboriginal, Half-caste-Half-caste, Half-caste-Chinese-
Half-caste, Half-caste-Chinese-Aboriginal, Malay-Half-caste,
Aboriginal-Half-caste and Cingales-Half-caste. (pp.104 and
115)(sic)

There have been so many different attempts to define an Aboriginal person that it led
Aboriginal barrister, Pat O'Shane (1991) to say “we have been defined, undefined, re-
deceived like nobody else in the world” (Koorie Cultural Heritage Trust website, p.1).

These many attempts to define an Aboriginal person over the years have led to the
current definition used by Government for the purposes of funding Aboriginal
programs. McRae et al. (2005) in the *What Works Report* says identity is a personal issue that has nothing to do with skin colour and that:

The Australian Government defines an Indigenous person as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives. Thus there are three components to the definition: descent; self identification; and community acceptance. (p.2)

This definition hinges on descent with the evidence being self identity, the culture of an Indigenous person, and, community acceptance of the Indigenous person’s participation in community cultural activities.

While Commonwealth, State and Local Governments have determined that Aboriginal identity has these three components (descent, self identification and community acceptance) and use this definition to determine who will be serviced under Aboriginal identified programs, it does not adequately convey what Aboriginal identity is to young Koories who struggle for identity or to Aboriginal leaders who continue to question views about Aboriginal identity. This is revealed by Gilbert (1978) who poses the following questions:

What is Aboriginality?... Is an Aboriginal anyone who has some degree of Aboriginal blood in his or her veins and who has demonstrably been disadvantaged by that? Or is an Aboriginal someone who has had the reserve experience? Is Aboriginality institutionalised gutlessness, an acceptance of the label ‘the most powerless people on earth’? Or is Aboriginality, when all the definitions have been exhausted, a yearning for a different way of being, a wholeness that was presumed to have existed (before 1788)? (p.184)
While it is useful that Gilbert is asking these questions, they are in fact rhetorical because he provides his own answers. It is important here to note that Gilbert accepted that there is an historical dimension to Aboriginality. He reminds us that Aboriginal people today are connected to over 40,000 years of history that cannot be excluded from definitions constructed in the last 200 plus years. Dodson (1994) has also been prominent in asserting that Aboriginalities are embedded in a history that goes back before colonization. This returns us to the connection between definitions and the paradoxes of identity and Huggins (2001) connects Aboriginality to identity as follows:

...the terms identity/ Aboriginality/ Indigencity may have many definitions amongst Indigenous Australians... Identity is private and public or in other words both personal and political... Aboriginality forms the core basis of identity. (p.44)

In these debates we need to remain aware that the term Aboriginal, meaning original inhabitants, while used to refer to Australia’s first nations' people does not adequately describe the differences between the nations within Australia. Aboriginal people have replaced the anthropological term ‘tribes’ with the term ‘nations’ and as Foley (2002) points out, across Australia there were “... several hundred, perhaps six hundred and fifty major language groups/nations pre-invasion” (cited in Rose, 2003, p.8) and in Victoria thirty eight different language groups from eleven nations. These different nations have different cultural practices.

Denning (2003) makes the distinction between Aboriginality and identity when he says that Aboriginality is the external form of culture that changes while identity remains constant. Identity then includes language (one external form of culture) and most Koories make a clear statement about their identity by using the language name Koorie/Koori as a generic Victorian name for Aboriginal and the name of their specific nation to describe them. Hence, I am a Koorie woman from the Bangerang nation. Willis, Smye and Rameka (2006) says this naming may be a result of negative policies and practices on Aboriginal people when they say:
Issues to do with the protocols of names may be simply a matter of convention, or they may arise out of deeper political processes that are part of the very struggle for self-determination and social justice. (p.169)

While these nations have many similarities, they also have many differences, thus agreeing with Lawler’s (2008) statement that identity is about sameness and difference. For example, my people are a freshwater people whose country has two rivers (the Murray and the Goulburn), while the Gunnaï/Kurnai people are near the sea and their cultural practices reflect this different location. In recognition of these differences, several young Koories who entered Mister and Miss NAIIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration) events in 2004 connected nation to identity in their public speeches. They clearly articulated their belonging to different nations and how this connected them to their country. As mentioned earlier, it is about culture and identity.

2.4 Research Outcomes

The purpose of this research was to find out from Koorie youth effective strategies that would empower them and enable them to articulate their identity and assist other young Koories to do the same. In the process I would hope the resources would also provide the basis for raising awareness for non-Aboriginal Australians. Major outcomes of the research include the development of cultural resources that can be used to foster a deeper understanding of issues of identity in Koorie youth; give Koorie youth knowledge that will strengthen their identity; educate the wider community about Koorie history and cultures; and foster a greater awareness in the wider community about the challenges facing Koorie youth.

These strategies have been achieved through the collaborative development of the Gurranyin Borinya: Cultural Enrichment Kit, (pitched at VELS level 3-6) with a range of practical resources designed to empower young Koories including: teachers notes and student activities; Daisy Chain (a stage play); Wulwummutj Bunga (a children’s story); a short film of a corroboree of the Gurranyin Borinya story; and the
screenplay Tunno. The kit and the screenplay are aimed at engaging Koorie youth with discussions and debates about who they are.

It is this relational work that is the struggle for Koorie youth in building, maintaining and strengthening identity that takes place through discussion and debates about who they are and where they come from because, as Kehily (2009) asserts, identity needs to be "spoken through ... a range of social categories and positions ... [and is] contextually specific" (p.6).

Debates will occur through using Gurranyin Borinya: Cultural Enrichment Kit with a range of groups including: staff of Aboriginal organisations, professionals in a wide variety of fields including education, child protection, health, juvenile justice, criminal justice, young Koories in their communities, and with non-Aboriginal students.

The Kit was designed for use by both Koorie and non-Koorie students to empower them by strengthening awareness and knowledge of identity because it is just as important for non-Koorie students to gain an understanding of their own identity as it is for Koorie students. It has been recognised however that this is particularly important for Koorie students because as Purdie, Tripeony, Boulton-Lewis, Fanshawe and Gunstone (2000) say:

...positive self-identity has been suggested as one of the factors that is related to attachment to school and positive school outcomes for Indigenous students. (p.ix)

In achieving success at school, it is also important that Koorie students gain a knowledge and understanding about Koorie history and culture. Purdie et al. (2000) go on to say this is:

Particularly important in terms of self-identity for Indigenous people are kinship group, sense of history, language, traditional practice and place. (p.9)
Students complete a series of modules in the Kit with a number of activities in each module. Linking back to the story of Gurranyin, for each completed activity in the program students receive a primary flight feather. The primary flight feathers are metaphorical because without its primary flight feathers the eagle cannot fly and unless young people have a strong identity they, too, are unable to function effectively.

The program has five sections with ten different components, each represented by a flight feather. Assessment of participants is based on the five Indigenous research methods: story Ngarri, waiting Nyembera, connecting Boonyabuk, listening Wanga and seeing-Nangak. Participants are awarded flight feathers on successful completion of each of the five sections and these not only indicate success for completion but function symbolically as a sign. The Indigenous methods link the Kit with the exegesis.

Gurranyin’s Ngarri forms the basis for the Kit. In Section 1 the flight feather represents Ngarri (story) and students listen to the story about Gurranyin and relate it to their own experiences and circumstances. In this section the emphasis is on the story itself and how the young people relate to the eagle in the story. Participants imagine themselves as the eagle.

In section two there are two flight feathers. The emphasis in this section is on Nyembera (waiting) not on the stories of the students and Elders. Students are asked to focus on recognition/decision and respect. Ngarri is about students waiting to hear stories from each other and from the Elders. It is about giving each other and the Elders space and being prepared to be silent as they wait. Their story should be about their lives and should include their age, experiences and circumstances. At the completion of this section, students will have waited to hear two sets of stories, the Elder’s stories as well as those from each other.

The three flight feathers in Section 3 represent Boonyabuk (connecting) and include connecting to family and connecting to country by learning about Aboriginal history.
Students conduct research into their family, nation and clan and view a Power Point Presentation on Aboriginal history. Connection will happen when they interview their families, learn about Aboriginal history and conduct research tasks.

The two flight feathers in Section 4 represent Wanga (listening) and students are required to listen with their hearts. They view a presentation with a demographic overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s contemporary issues. This section involves students listening to Aboriginal leaders and to music that communicates significant issues. Examples are the song Took the Children Away by Archie Roach, the story of his life as a member of the stolen generation, and Cummeragunga by Esme Bamblett, Gary Saunders and Damien Howard about the Cummeragunga Walk Off in 1939.

The three flight feathers in Section 5 represent Nangak (seeing) and include a study of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal visionaries. Students will be asked to look at their own future and develop a vision for themselves. To complete this students study gum trees and quotes that link them to vision. Students will also find ways of empowering other young Koories and educating non-Koories about issues facing Koorie youth.

For each completed assessment task in the program students are awarded a primary flight feather. While an eagle has twelve flight feathers, in this program students can only receive ten flight feathers when they have completed the assessment tasks. The eleventh flight feather will come when they feel good in their own skin and are functioning as productive members of both the Aboriginal and wider community and the twelfth flight feather comes at the end of their life journey because Aboriginal education is a birth to death process.

In summary, Gurranyin Borinya is a cultural enrichment program for youth to strengthen their identity. The program has five sections with assessment tasks in each section equating to primary flight feathers, to give young people an understanding of their identity. It aims, in particular, to strengthen the identity of Koorie youth.
2.5 Demographic context for the project

This project is necessary to address the extreme disadvantage suffered by Koorie youth that exacerbates their struggle for identity. The ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (2008) data in relation to health, education, justice, child protection, housing, and employment for Koories in Victoria reveals the extent of the disadvantage. The fact that this disadvantage has been apparent for many years is revealed by the 2003 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage-Key Indicators Report that confirmed:

...Indigenous Australians continue to experience marked and widespread disadvantage... shown most fundamentally by the 20 year gap in average life expectancy between Indigenous and other Australians. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003, p.v)

The next Disadvantage Key Indicators Report in 2005 stated that there was very little improvement:

It is distressingly apparent that many years of policy effort have not delivered desired outcomes; indeed in some important respects the circumstances of Indigenous people appear to have deteriorated or regressed... Many Aboriginal organizations were established to deal with these problems however, despite their good intentions and hard work the gap between Indigenous and other Australians continues to widen. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005, p.xix)

Yet later the Commonwealth of Australia 2007 Overcoming Disadvantage Key Indicators Report stated that “even where improvements have occurred, Indigenous people continue to do worse than other Australians. And many indicators have shown little or no movement. Indeed, in some areas, particularly criminal justice, outcomes for Indigenous people have been deteriorating” (p.v).
Findings from the three reports reveal that over this particular seven year period very little had changed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is disturbing to note that the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing disadvantage as evidenced in these reports is in fact increasing. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing disadvantage has grown rapidly not only because circumstances are not improving, but also because the Indigenous population is increasing and therefore more are exposed to the risks of disadvantage.

ABS data (2008) reveals the following about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders: 49% are under 20 years of age, child protection rates are high, children under juvenile justice supervision is high, education levels are low, they utilize aged care services at a younger age, fewer are in full time employment, fewer own or are purchasing their own home, income levels are lower, and homelessness is three times the rate as that for non-Aboriginal people. In 2005 Vic Health confirmed this when it reported that:

...on most social and economic indicators, Indigenous Australians fare worse than their non-Indigenous counterparts, and recent research suggests that the Federal government policy of practical reconciliation resulted in some health, education and employment statistics worsening for Indigenous Australians... The average annual income for Indigenous Australians is significantly lower than for other Australians. (2005, p.16)

ABS data reveals huge disadvantage for Aboriginal people on all social indicators. Despite Government and Koorie community attempts to address the problems and improve outcomes this disadvantage remains. According to the Mcrae et al. (2005) in the What Works Report, “cultural respect, recognition and support are a central strategy in improving outcomes for Indigenous students” (p.12). The report documents examples of programs that produce success for Koorie students such as the Ganai Project which “was the development of a CD-ROM to assist in the revitalising of language” (p.12). From this it would appear that culture plays a critical role in understanding and addressing disadvantage. To overturn the disadvantage,
cultural education programs are necessary to assist Koorie youth with their struggle for identity.

2.6 Cultural Education Programs

It would appear that some schools in Victoria teach Aboriginal cultural studies but on the whole there are only ad hoc programs developed and implemented by individual teachers in local areas. Outside of schools, cultural education and awareness programs have been established for non-Indigenous people by Government and non-Government agencies.

Teaching about culture and identity has largely remained the responsibility of Koorie parents and Koorie communities. Unfortunately because of the stolen generations and trans-generational trauma (as Aboriginal people had to survive under extremely traumatic circumstances and deliberate attempts by Governments to assimilate them into the wider community) it has been difficult for Koorie families and communities to practice, maintain and pass culture onto to their children.

In addition, Koorie community members were actively discouraged from practicing cultural activities on missions and reserves and from passing cultural knowledge onto their children. When they left the missions and reserves they attempted to fit into the wider community and felt it would make it easier for their children to blend in if they did not practice cultural activity. This meant that young Koories missed important opportunities for transmission of their culture and, as previously argued, this has contributed to current levels of disadvantage. Resources developed through this project aim to bridge this gap and add to current knowledge available for young Aboriginal people and the wider community.

A number of education strategies have opened up the way for Koorie specific resources to be implemented in Victorian schools including the education strategy for Koorie Students in Victoria as outlined in joint Government and VAEAI strategy, Wannik Learning Together- Journey to Our Future (DEECD, 2008), and the National Dare to Lead Project.
The *Wannik* strategy was developed to improve educational outcomes for Koorie Students by:

- Repositioning the education of Koorie students within all of our schools through strong leadership that creates a culture of high expectations and individualised learning for Koorie students.
- Underpinning this approach with explicit accountability mechanisms for improvement in outcomes for Koorie students across all levels of the school education system.
- Creating an environment that respects, recognises and celebrates cultural identity through practice and curriculum.
- Reinforcing the responsibility of all government schools to meet the needs of all students, by moving away from strategies designed around inadequacies in the general approach. (p.6)

The expectation of *Wannik* is that schools will engage with Koorie communities to develop cultural understanding and create an environment where Koorie students will be able to strengthen their identity. This Kit is consistent with the *Wannik* strategy.

The National Museum of Australia magazine, *Goree* (2009) gives the overview of the *Dare to Lead Project* as “a commitment by Australian Principals to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students” (p.13). This project began in 2000 with a commitment by 184 Principals from schools around Australia under the management of Principals Australia. According to *Dare to Lead* it “is now in its third phase, with currently over 50% of all Australian schools (more than 5000) signed on as Coalition members”. The website states:

> Participation and success rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have improved markedly over the past few decades, but on several key indicators literacy levels and secondary completion rates for example, they are still well behind the rates for the rest of the population. Whatever their circumstances, Indigenous young people's well-being increasingly depends on access to and success at mainstream education and what it provides.

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Dare to Lead schools commit to improving the educational outcomes of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and also to ensuring that all their students develop an informed understanding of Australia’s Indigenous people and their cultures, and of the importance of the reconciliation process.

These two policies commit to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students by creating an inclusive cultural environment for Aboriginal students and giving all students an understanding of Aboriginal people. The aims of these policies are consistent with the aims that I am pursuing in this project. Besides the Education system, another avenue for cultural support for Aboriginal students continues to be Aboriginal organizations.

2.7 Aboriginal organizations

It should be noted that Aboriginal organizations play a key role in the transmission of culture. The mother of Aboriginal organizations in Victoria, the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (VAAL) was established in 1957 and it was said of the organisation at the time that:

The new VAAL provided a forum for Aboriginal people who were rediscovering their identity and self-esteem. It wasn’t just black - with its connotations of racial heritage-that was beautiful, it was being Aboriginal - a social and cultural, rather than genetic fact. (Anon, 2005, p.98)

Two points in the philosophy of the Aborigines Advancement League (outlined in a 2008 booklet about their services and programs) continues to include identity. They are “to promote Aboriginal culture and identity and to develop a sense of Aboriginal urban identity for the Aboriginal community” (p.3).

In 1972 the Labor Government headed by Gough Whitlam “created the first separate Federal Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and tripled the Aboriginal Affairs budget” (ngankat-kalo section on the VAEAI website) giving Aboriginal people the opportunity to establish additional Aboriginal
organizations to provide services and programs for Aboriginal people and where Koories were able to identify openly, be proud of their Aboriginality, regain cultural knowledge and maintain their heritage.

Over time these organisations have increasingly become places for the retention and transmission of Aboriginal culture. Nathan (1980) described the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service as 'A Home Away From Home' because it not only provided Health Services, but also a place where Koories felt comfortable about their identity. In her report she quoted a patient as saying:

You can go in and identify with the Koories who are working there. We're all together. We have met such a lovely lot of relations through coming here and there are now a lot of people we are very close to... You meet all your friends there and every time I've been there I have always met someone I haven't seen for ages from all over different parts of Victoria. A very comfortable feeling. (p.115)

Aboriginal people have been able to connect to their identity by using these services, actively gaining employment in them, and being involved in their development. The young Koories interviewed in this project were clear that Aboriginal organizations played a significant role in assisting the cultural development of their identities. Also, I would argue this is of paramount importance - that Aboriginal community controlled organizations are actively involved at the level of facilitation and development of services and programs that aim to strengthen Aboriginal identities. Purdie et al. (2000) agree that:

Self identity is formed through interactions with environment (including culture and society, family, peers, and school-work environments) and interpretations of those interactions. Positive self-identity is promoted when young people can successfully integrate the various aspects themselves without having to deal
with excessive contradictions in the behaviours and emotions associated with those different aspects. (p.ix)

When interviewing my young Koorie participants, I found that they were continually talking about how interacting with their environment (that included kinship and culture) directly linked to the strength of their identity.

2.8 Summary

In summary the importance of understanding identity cannot be underestimated and this research project will develop programs to enable Koorie youth to understand their identity, make positive choices for themselves and connect with culture. At the same time it is important to understand that this project is informed by Aboriginal ways of knowing and Indigenous research methods that will produce new knowledge about Aboriginality and identity.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to survey the literature and review areas relevant to this project. The focus will be on definitions of identity by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, the impact of colonization, and the importance of identity to young Koorie.

The literature review will inform my work towards developing research products that will enable young Koories to recognise and name the role played by definitions in determining identity. The products (including the Kit and the screenplay) will support young people in deconstructing definitions based purely on blood quantum and in reconstructing their own identities based on genetic inheritance, kinship and culture, Aboriginality and historical experiences.

3.2 Definitions of identity

Non-Aboriginal definitions position Koorie in policy as not ‘real’ Aborigines if they are not ‘black enough’ and do not practice traditional activities. In doing so, they emphasize genetic inheritance and race more than culture. Aboriginal definitions on the other hand, while they do take into account genetic inheritance and race, also include kinship and culture, Aboriginality and historical experience. Hemming (2006) cited in Worby and Rigney (2006) agrees that:

Aboriginal heritage is a discourse and a set of related practices - it can be found in a variety of fields and embedded in a host of emerging management practices. It is not isolated to Aboriginal heritage ‘protection’ regimes. It carries particular constructions of the concepts of culture and history and historical relationships to national identity. (p.306)
Race/Genetic inheritance

This section will explore the role played by blood in definitions of Aboriginality and how this became included in legislation. The first definitions used by non-Aboriginal people were based on where Aboriginal people were located such as referring to them as the “aboriginal natives of New South Wales” (McCorquodale, cited in Gardiner-Garden, 2003). Blood quantum classifications began in New South Wales in 1839 and in Victoria in 1864. This led Gardiner-Garden (2003) to say that “the most common [way of defining Aboriginality] involved reference to ‘Blood-quantum’” (p.1) and along with genetic inheritance and traditional practices this largely informs non-Aboriginal definitions of Aboriginality beginning with legislation enacted in Victoria in 1886.

The Victorian Aborigines Protection Act 1886 was also known as the ‘half-caste’ Act and was indicative of how blood quantum was used to inform policy. It proclaimed that “only aborigines of ‘full descent’ and ‘half-castes’ over the age of thirty-four [were] to remain on stations and receive assistance from the Board” (Anon, 2005, p.24).

Harvey, Carter and Blow (2003) say this Act “continued the push for assimilation and the eradication of Indigenous culture” (p.187) and in 1913, Baldwin Spencer, appointed as Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, said of half-castes:

I think it may be said that though the half-castes belong neither to the aboriginal nor to the whites, yet, on the whole, they have more leaning towards the former; certainly this is the case in regard to the females. One thing is certain and that is that the white population as a whole will never mix with half-castes.

(p.187)

This thinking extended to Victoria where in 1915 according to Harvey et al. (2003):
The Act was extended to “all other persons whatever of mixed Aboriginal blood [or not]...” In other words, all the Victorian Indigenous population now came under Board control. (p.187)

Blood quantum classifications were found by *measuring* blood or classifying the amount of pure blood of an Aboriginal person. This measurement was done by one of two ways; either by dividing the number of generations by the number of marriages to people who were not considered pure blood, or by classification. The method for determining the amount of ‘blood’ was clarified by the 1936 Native Administration Act that determined a ‘native’ as:

...any person of the full blood descended from the original inhabitants of Australia [and a quadroon as] a person who is descended from the full blood original inhabitants of Australia... or their full blood descendants who is only one-fourth of the original full blood (quarter). (p.2)

This blood quantum definition formed the basis for many Government initiatives relating to Aboriginal people and according to Gardiner-Garden (2003):

[this continued into]... the late 1950s [when] States regularly legislated all forms of inclusion and exclusion (to and from benefits, rights, places etc.) by reference to degrees of Aboriginal blood. Such legislation produced capricious and inconsistent results based, in practice, on nothing more than an observation of skin colour. (p.2)

*Tatz (1972b), cited in Ward & Muckle (2005), describes this time as:*

...a lottery for Aborigines. In the Northern Territory, anyone other than a ‘full blood’ was classified as White, and emphatically told they were not Aborigines (even though they had been, at least since 1911). In Queensland, until 1972, Aborigines were ‘full-bloods’, persons with a preponderance of ‘full blood’, part-
Aboriginal spouses of Aborigines thus defined and - never mind the blood - residents of reserves. Part-Aborigines were those with one ‘full-blood’ parent and one with no *strain of the blood* of the Indigenous inhabitants, and those whose parents both had some blood but not a preponderance of it. Said a Perth magistrate to a self-identified Aboriginal defendant on a charge of failing to register for national military service in 1972, from which Aborigines were then exempt: ‘There’s no evidence of him living in a native camp, and he apparently lives at a normal address in Perth. I must also take notice of his appearance. He is well-dressed and well presented. I’m going to convict him’. (p. 22)

This is where the link between degrees of blood and skin colour started with an assumption that the darker someone’s skin the more Aboriginal they were.

Gardiner-Garden (2003) goes on to further say that in the 1960s and 1970s policy became more progressive and “the blood-quantum definitions, which had never been accepted as meaningful by Aboriginal communities themselves” (p.1) were abandoned. He also notes that the new definition of an Aboriginal person adopted by the Commonwealth was that an Aboriginal person was “a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia” (p.1).

While it appears there had been a shift away from blood quantum, in reality, it has just been re-badged with the language of traditional/non-traditional. Taylor (2001) observed that non-Aboriginal people continued to categorize Aboriginal people as traditional (real) or non-traditional (not real) when he said:

> Aboriginality is a notion that has inevitably been associated with a debate concerning ‘traditional’ versus ‘non-traditional’ (or otherwise described) aspects of Aboriginal identity. (p.1)

It can be argued that the term traditional is a more politically correct way of saying full blood, with the power to define resting not with Aboriginal people themselves but
with others. One method for determining whether Aboriginal people could be classified as traditional was whether or not they spoke traditional languages. Eades, cited in Keen (1988), stated:

The fact that such people speak little or none of their traditional languages is often used by non-Aboriginal people as evidence that these people are ‘not really Aboriginal’. (p.97)

Further, proof of identity is dependent on whether Aboriginal people practise traditional activities such as ceremony. Watson, Partington, Gray and Mack (2006) assert that:

Urban Aboriginal groups often face criticism from the wider community over claims of any distinctive need for recognition of Aboriginal world views, culture or language. This criticism is often based on the level of degradation of this knowledge that has resulted from colonisation. It is sometimes aligned with concepts of ‘purity of blood’. Thus it may be said that someone is not a ‘real Aborigine’ if they do not conform to a stereotype in terms of skin colour, language and ceremonial practice. (p.134)

Despite the movement of positions on the relevance of blood quantum definitions of identity the primacy of blood has remained a key factor in debates about identity and indeed continues to impact Aboriginal people today. The key point noted by Eleanor Bourke (1994) however is that “in Australia today, Aboriginal people are still held hostage, in the main to images created by non-Aboriginal Australians” (p.133). Definitions of Aboriginality that inform the implementation of policy have historically been developed by non-Aboriginal people to the detriment of Aboriginal people.

**Kinship and Culture**

Inevitably, definitions of Aboriginality have required interpretation by the courts. In recent times this has occurred with interpretations for electoral processes, Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Native Title legislation, and access to funding for programs. Some
of these definitions have gone further than blood quantum and include social factors such as culture and kinship. An example of how the legal system grapples with the issue of identifying Aboriginal people is provided by Gardiner-Garden (2003) when discussing the case of Marianne Watson, who appealed her exclusion from the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania Electors Roll because she was unable to prove her Aboriginality. He says:

Justice Drummond in Gibbs v Capewell said (e.g. that some degree of Aboriginal descent is a necessary, but not of itself a sufficient, condition of eligibility) and stressed the role of social processes in establishing individual identity. According to the judgment, Aboriginal descent did not need to be proved 'according to any strict legal standard', it being: a technical rather than a real criterion for identity, which after all in this day and age, is accepted as a social, rather than a genetic construct. (p.14)

The view of Justice Drummond that identity is a social construct is not dissimilar to the positions on identity provided by Lawler (2008) and Kehily (2009) that define identity around the ideas of sameness and difference and connection to community.

Another significant case highlighted by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) (1991) involved the Queensland Government’s challenge of the inclusion of Darren Wouters (who hung himself in a Brisbane Watch House) in the Royal Commission on the basis that he was not Aboriginal. The challenge was based on questions about his self identity because they claimed he spent 18 months in an institution where he struggled with his identity. They also challenged his inclusion against criteria for Aboriginal identity put forward in the Commonwealth v Tasmania (1983) known as the ‘Tasmanian Dam Case’ and:

...argued that though descent could be proved Wouters would not have met the other two elements because of his appearance, apparent denial of his Aboriginality and lack of Aboriginal community affiliations. (p.243)

High Court Judge Pincus agreed with the Queensland Government and said that:
...though Wouters had a ‘significant infusion of Aboriginal genes’, he did not pass the tests of self-identification and community identification. These were necessary components of Aboriginality and traces of descent alone were not sufficient. (p.243)

However the Commonwealth Government appealed this ruling and:

...the Full Court of the Federal Court overturned the first instance decision... on the basis that while proof of cultural identity might have been necessary to protect the cultural heritage of the Tasmanian caves, the test was inappropriate where issues of confused identity may have been the very cause of the suicide. This case made the Judges focus on Aboriginality and they defined an Aboriginal person ‘... as a person descended from the earliest or original inhabitants of Australia’ and found that expert opinion or evidence wasn’t necessary. (AUSTLII, 2003, p.15)

As a result of this ruling legal definitions are now getting closer to Aboriginal definitions as seen in the case of Gibbs v Capewell (1995) where (even though Watson’s appeal was dismissed because she could not prove that she was descended from an Aboriginal person) Justice Drummond understood that Aboriginality is determined by more than colour and blood. He found that:

...[the] less the degree of Aboriginal descent, the more important cultural circumstances become in determining whether a person is 'Aboriginal'. A person with a small degree of descent who genuinely identifies as an Aboriginal and who has Aboriginal communal recognition as such would I think be described in current ordinary usage as an 'Aboriginal person' and would be so regarded for the purposes of the Act. But where a person has only a small degree of Aboriginal descent, either genuine self-identification as Aboriginal alone or Aboriginal communal recognition as such by itself may suffice, according to the circumstances. (2003, p.14)
It is important to note that Justice Drummond has made a very clear statement about the validity of self-identification and community connection in determining Aboriginal identity. This is a marked change from historical definitions based on classification by blood quantum alone and also marks out the importance of Aboriginal control over definitions of Aboriginality.

The finding by Justice Drummond sits well with an earlier definition of Aboriginality by Justice Brennan in the 1992 Mabo (No. 2) judgment that introduced membership of the group into determinations of Aboriginal identity. He said:

Membership of the indigenous people depends on biological descent from the indigenous people and on mutual recognition of a particular person's membership by that person and by the elders or other persons enjoying traditional authority among those people. (p.70)

The identification of membership brings into the definition the significance of culture to identity for Aboriginal people because:

Culture is a defining feature of every person’s identity, contributing to how they see themselves and the groups with which they identify. Culture may be broadly defined as the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings, which is transmitted from one generation to another. Every community, cultural group or ethnic group has its own values, beliefs and ways of living. An individual’s sense of identity is grounded in their cultural identity. A person’s understanding of their own and others’ cultural identity develops from birth and is shaped by the values and attitudes prevalent at home and in the surrounding community. This identity becomes more complex and fluid over time as people develop allegiances to different groups within the

Goodwin from the National Indigenous Youth Movement of Australia, in the Report on the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency 2008 State-wide Conference, related the importance of culture to his identity when he said:

It was the first time that it hit me in an explicit sense how important my culture and identity was. To think our young fellas grow up knowing it’s important, they grow up living it, but you never begin to formally recognise how important it is in your spirit and in your heart and in your mind until you start to get a bit of consciousness about your own identity and until your consciousness is raised... There is a great overwhelming sense of pride that comes with that consciousness as well and it sustains you. (pp. 68-69)

Harrison (VACCA, 2009) also linked culture to his identity:

Culture gives me a sense of identity... It’s great to know that I’m part of the community it gives me a sense of direction and identity and it helps me set my goals and where I want to go. (p.71)

In another example, Saunders said that culture “is everything we do and are and makes us strong and gives us a sense of belonging... for us as Aboriginal people [culture] it’s everything we are” (VACCA, 2009, p.71).

Goodwin (VACCA, 2009) added that culture “becomes a piece of a jigsaw puzzle that you can’t live without... [it’s] an amazing gift that we have as Indigenous peoples” (p.69). This culture also evolves and is dynamic for Urban Aboriginal people who “have as much validity as other Indigenous people” (p.70) “even though urban
Indigenous Australians are using very contemporary ways to maintain their connections and traditions” (The Editor, Indigenous Newslines, p.5).

Culture is very much an influencing factor in identity work because the feeling of belonging and connection to family is by far the most significant factor for Aboriginal people because as Taylor (2001) says “keeping up connections between families and community is one of the many strengths of urban Indigenous people” (p.5).

Denning (2003) asserts that identity remains in place and continues to have a presence even though the world around it changes.

It is the recognition of a continued identity in the discontinuities of living, an acceptance that people can see themselves as metaphorically the same in different spaces, a realization that the external forms of culture can change but identity stays constant. (pp. 64-65)

At this point we find in the literature review that identity is not only connected to inheritance but also to the social dimension of culture and connection to community (including kinship).

**Aboriginality**

The terms Aboriginality and identity are intertwined in the literature as was evident in the preceding discussion. However for the purposes of this research I choose to define Aboriginality as a separate component (but part) of identity because I believe that it relates specifically to the spiritual connection of Aboriginal people to country. These days it is not unusual to find this view in popular statements about Aboriginality. In the Encarta Dictionary Aboriginality is defined as “the condition of being an Aboriginal, or the distinctive qualities inherent in Aboriginal people or their heritage and culture” and in the Wiktionary as “the quality of being aboriginal, the distinctive culture of aboriginal peoples and the spiritual bonds between aboriginal people and their place of heritage”. These spiritual connections extend to a shared generational consciousness of practices and histories around religion.
Therefore, Aboriginality is just one component of Koorie identity and as Denning (2003) recognized “...is a living, dynamic thing and the way to know it is to first accept that fact and then experience it” (p.64). Here Denning makes the point that Aboriginality permeates identity and is an indication of the importance of spiritual connections in and around the past.

If, as Huggins (2001) asserts, identity is personal and connected to community it is clear that an outsider to community cannot determine it. Aboriginal identity is personal and individual, but also collective and linked to community. It is inherited, constructed (an effect of sound practices and context) and spiritual. When community relationships are broken, as in the case of the stolen generations, it leaves people displaced, disconnected, uncertain and confused about their identity.

In the face of competing non-Aboriginal definitions about identity, Aboriginal people have worked hard to retain their own definitions of identity. Huggins (2001) links Aboriginal identity to social dimensions when she claims:

...identity is formed by social processes. It is this identity which has built Indigenous ideology for living and survival. Once understood it is maintained, adapted and remodeled depending on the challenges and circumstances. (p.44)

The strengths of Aboriginal communities and the cultural benefits experienced by its members include:

...resilience, kinship, family and community orientation... land, language, humour and identity [which] have also influenced the transmission of Aboriginality which has persisted to the present and will continue to provide future generations with strength, dignity and purpose. (Huggins, 2001, p.44)
The discussion thus far has identified inheritance and race, kinship and culture and Aboriginality as key features of identity for Indigenous people. The final feature of identity is found in the historical experiences of Aboriginal people, in their shared past.

**Historical experiences**

Historical experiences are integral to the identities of Aboriginal people and Dodson (1994) sees these experiences as shaping Aboriginalities because identity processes are based on Aboriginal stories and histories:

...they are Aboriginalities that arise from our experience of colonization and false representation. But they are embedded in our entire history, a history which goes back a long time before colonization was even an issue. (p.29)


Cooper defined Aboriginality instead in terms of historical experience or rather historical consciousness. At the heart of this was the remembrance of a 'horror and fear of extermination'. This was, he said, in the blood, a racial memory, which recalls the terrible things done to [us] in years gone by'. Among Aborigines, he confided on another occasion, this was a collective memory; rooted in their experience of colonialism. (p.183)

Harvey et al. (2003) also link Aboriginality to historical experience in saying that:

Today’s Elders are the survivors of two centuries of cultural and racial domination. Through all the hardship, traditions of resilience and courage were established... Indigenous Elders still continue the traditions of their foremothers and forefathers in south-eastern Australia today... They hold the family histories
that define each individual’s identity and the land to which they belong. (pp. 7-8)

This history that included the government policies of extermination, segregation (under the guise of protection), and assimilation while producing a legacy of adverse effects on Koories has simultaneously produced a strong desire to identify. Kath Walker supports this view when quoted in Attwood et al. (1999) as saying of assimilation that while it “...can only bring us forward as replicas of the white race; this is not what we desire, we desire to be Aboriginals, proud of this fact” (p.189).

With the introduction of the importance of historical experiences to the list the following diagram illustrates the four concepts I have used in defining Koorie identity, from the literature review.

![Diagram of Koorie Identity](image)

*Figure 2: factors impacting on Koorie identity*

The diagram shows that while each of these factors is explored separately in the research project, because of their impact on Koorie identity they also overlap with each other.
3.3 Impact of colonization

In this section I look at the impact of colonization on Aboriginal identity. The literature reveals that what has happened to Aboriginal people has led to dispossession and breakdown of culture, forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families (Stolen Generations), adoption and fostering, trans-generational trauma, confusion, racism, social and cultural disadvantage, and over-representation in the criminal justice system.

Dispossession and breakdown of culture (assimilation)

One dimension of disadvantage is the impact of past Government policies and practices on Aboriginal people. The first impact was dispossession from country. This dispossession was not merely physical but it was also spiritual because as Craven (1999) says:

Aboriginal people have always believed that we are the descendants of the land. By that we mean we believe we were formed out of the land in the beginning of time. That is why we class the land as our mother... The land is important to us because it gives us life, it provides food for survival, it supplies oxygen to breathe; without the land there would not be any life. (p.38)

Reynolds (1983) also sees this spiritual connection when he says “in Aboriginal Australia the individuals were thought to belong to their country by powerful spiritual bonds.”(p.32)

Aboriginal people were placed under the Aborigines Protection Act from 1886 in Victoria. This meant their lives were controlled by the Aborigines Protection Board and they were taken off their tribal lands and placed on missions and reserves to make it easier to control them. This was a deliberate policy to maintain the ‘purity’ of the Australian people as outlined in this quote from the Bulletin 1901 cited on the HSC Online website (NSW):
If this country is to be fit for our children and their children to live in, WE MUST KEEP THE BREED PURE. The half-caste usually inherits the vices of both races and the virtues of neither. Do you want Australia to be a community of mongrels? (n.p.)

The website also cites Dr. Cecil Cook, the Chief Protector in the Northern Territory between 1927 and 1939, who believed that:

Generally by the fifth and invariably by the sixth generation, all native characteristics of the Australian aborigine are eradicated. The problem of our half-castes will quickly be eliminated by the complete disappearance of the black race, and the swift submergence of their progeny in the white. (n.p.)

As a result of these beliefs, Aboriginal people were forced onto missions and reserves and if they wanted to leave, had to be exempt from the provisions of the Act. To do this they had to relinquish their identity and leave with what they termed ‘a dog tag’, or an Exemption Certificate. Exemption Certificates were introduced in the Aboriginals Protection and the Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 which was enacted to protect Aboriginal and half-caste inhabitants and restrict the sale of opium to them. Wickes (2005) noted that this Act defined the parameters of exemption:

It shall be lawful for the Minister to issue to any half-caste, who, in his opinion, ought not to be subject to the provisions of this Act, a certificate, in writing under his hand, and that such half-caste is exempt from the provisions of this Act and the Regulations, and from and after the issue of such certificate, such half-caste shall be so exempt accordingly. (p.2)

Craven (1999) noted that Aboriginal people exempt from the Act “were regarded as sufficiently ‘developed’ in their lifestyle to warrant being exempted from the restrictions of the Act.” (p.70). For people who agreed to receive an Exemption
Certificate it meant that they could not return to the missions and, hence their connection to families, culture and place was broken.

The policy of issuing Exemption Certificates was another attempt at the erosion of Aboriginal identity and led to the policy of assimilation, discussed in 1937 at the Native Welfare Conference, the first conference of State and Commonwealth Government officers to meet to discuss Aboriginal issues. At this conference Neville, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in WA, put the following:

We have power under the act to take any child from its mother at any stage of its life... Are we going to have a population of one million blacks in the Commonwealth or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there were ever any Aborigines... in Australia? (Sydney Morning Herald, 30 May 1998, p.41)

At the same conference in 1937, according to the HREOC report (1997) Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, it was also resolved that:

This conference believes that the destiny of the natives of Aboriginal origin but not of the full blood lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth, and... all effort should be directed to that end... Efforts by all state authorities should be directed towards the education of children of mixed blood at white standards, and their subsequent employment under the same conditions as whites with a view to taking their place in the white community.(p.26)

When the Native Welfare Conference met for the third time in 1951 this policy was made official. Citing Rowley (1972), Cunneen and Libesman (1995) observed that this policy stated:
...all Aborigines and part-Aborigines are expected to eventually attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, as other Australians. (p.35)

Under this policy of assimilation Aborigines and part-Aborigines were expected to take up the same customs and beliefs as non-Aboriginal people, in the process giving up their own identities.

The cultural context associated with the policy of assimilation led to the devastating practice whereby the Government took Aboriginal children from their families and sent them to institutions to be trained as station hands or domestic servants.

**Forced Removal of Aboriginal children from their families**
**(Stolen Generations)**

Edwards and Read (1989) estimate that 100,000 Aboriginal children were taken from their families and placed in training institutions. Disconnection from family, community and culture is evident in the stories of many of these people including Charles Perkins’ (1975) story. He was taken from his mother and placed in an institutionalized compound in Alice Springs. Discussing the impact of being taken from his family and the effects of his experiences in the compound he said:

> I felt I was not good enough, an outsider, that I was not part of that school, I was not part of those people and I belonged to nothing. White society told me I was white but rejected me. They took our Aboriginal heritage away and made us all drifters in society. They took everything from us and condemned us for existing. (p.31)

Despite these early experiences, through his success in sport, connections at university, and in the Aboriginal political arena, Perkins became a leader in the Aboriginal community. He was the first Aboriginal person to graduate from a
University (University of Sydney), and led the Freedom Rides of 1965 to country towns in New South Wales to highlight racist practices towards Aboriginal people. He became a significant figure in Australian public life through his participation as a player and administrator in soccer at the highest level, as a senior public servant and as a commentator on civil rights for Aboriginal people as well as other social issues.

Perkins managed to survive and become strong in his identity. However, other stolen generation people have not been so fortunate. While they have tried to resume their place in Koorie communities they have done so with little or no knowledge about their kinship and cultural connections, struggling with identity issues and consequently finding it difficult to belong. The loss of identity was, as Denning (2003) asserts, “the biggest wound of the ‘stolen generations’” (p.64).

Generations of Koories have found themselves in this situation and many continue to grapple with the consequences today because in some cases Koorie communities do not know how to ‘fit’ these stolen generation members back into the community and some stolen generation members do not know how to fit into their communities. The HREOC Report (1997) highlights the significance of the effects of disconnection of children from their families.

Grief and loss are the predominant themes of this report. Tenacity and survival are also acknowledged. It is no ordinary report... The histories we trace are complex and pervasive. Most significantly the actions of the past resonate in the present and will continue to do so in the future. The laws, policies and practices which separated Indigenous children from their families have contributed directly to the alienation of Indigenous societies today. For individuals, their removal as children and the abuse they experienced at the hands of the authorities or their delegates have permanently scarred their lives. The harm continues in later generations, affecting their children and grandchildren. (p.4)
Stolen generation Koories not only suffered the trauma of forced removal from their families and communities but were also kept from any Aboriginal cultural practice, as documented by Edwards and Read (1989):

Listen to the words of the famous – or infamous - Inspector Robert Donaldson, the architect of the state policy of removing NSW Aboriginal children. He’s addressing the Australasian Catholic Congress, in 1909, about his plans to put an end to what he calls the ‘great problem’: the continuing existence of Aboriginality in New South Wales. For adults we can only make their track as smooth as possible they will soon pass away; but the children require our gravest attention... There is no difference of opinion as to the only solution of this great problem, the removal of the children and their complete isolation from the influences of the camps... In the course of the next few years there will be no need for the camps and stations; the old people will have passed away and their progeny will be absorbed by the industrial classes of the country. (pp. xiii-xiv)

The simplicity and the brutality of Donaldson’s solution to the great problem is clear. This removal of the children and their complete isolation from Aboriginal communities and cultural practice was devastating to Aboriginal people (collectively and individually). Removing them from a kinship system where everyone was classified as kin meant that not only families were affected but whole communities and this led to a loss of local identity for many Aboriginal people. This is highlighted by Rose (2003) whose father was taken.

My reunification has happened with relative ease compared to others that I observed who have, through a similar crucible, been challenged to cross the bridge... Fundamentally, it meant the deconstruction of my being and reconstructing it through a different paradigm – an identity crisis of immense proportions. (p.16)
Similar identity problems occurred for the many Aboriginal children who were not forcibly removed but were fostered or adopted by non-Aboriginal families.

**Adoption and Fostering**

Identity issues created significant identity issues in the lives of Koories who were adopted or fostered by non-Aboriginal families. It is important to emphasize here the culture of forced adoptions and encouraged fostering I have previously noted. In Tweedie (2001), Kyle Vander-Kuyp (the Olympian) who was adopted by a non-Aboriginal family when he was five weeks old tells how the struggle for identity played out in his life. He says:

...when I was young, not knowing where I was from, I did have an identity crisis. What does it mean to be Aboriginal? Why have I got darker skin than other kids? Mum found me one day scratching my skin, wanting to get my colour off. (p.10)

Fortunately for Kyle he had a positive intervention from a famous Aboriginal footballer.

I remember meeting Maurice Rioli. He came to the school and talked at assembly and then got me aside for a chat... He told me that being Aboriginal was an advantage, not a disadvantage and not to be ashamed of it. I started to look at it differently then. (p.10)

Vander-Kuyp was fortunate to meet someone with a positive view of Aboriginality when he was having an identity crisis and it changed the way he felt about his Aboriginal identity. He now says, “I’d like to see our Aboriginal side recognized. There’s just so much more to learn” (Tweedie, 2001, p.13). However, it makes you wonder how many other people like Kyle have been made to feel ashamed of their Aboriginal identity because of other people’s perceptions and who have not had the benefit of such a positive intervention.
Trans-generational trauma

Today many Aboriginal people continue to face the effects of trans-generational trauma because of past policies that have impacted on their families, communities and country. Because of Government practices arising from these policies, they were subjected to an enormous amount of trauma since the invasion. According to HREOC (1997) there are multiple traumas that persist.

Australia’s Indigenous people have suffered multiple traumas, including cultural and spiritual genocide through the process of colonization and the “stolen generations”. The impact of these multiple repeated traumatizing events “doesn’t go away”. (p.178)

The effect of removal for the parents was not only confined to the time spent away from families and communities but also led to lifelong trauma as emphasized by Read (1990), who quotes Charles Perkins as saying “it’s a lifetime of insults. Your personal integrity is never left intact from the day you’re born to the day you die” (p.132).

None of the children who were removed from their families were able to access counselling to recover from the effects of being removed even though Atkinson, quoted in the National Child Protection Clearinghouse (NCPC, 2005), found that for children to recover from the effects of trans-generational trauma they need:

...to be safe and feel secure where they are living (that is, restoring power); support for their families in assisting them to feel safe and secure; opportunities to develop relationships; hope and belief in themselves and those around them; positive sense of identity, belonging and connectedness; an understanding of what happened to them; and their culture and customs to be valued. (p20)

It has been difficult for young Koorie who are not able to access these conditions. Alf Bamblett, in an address to the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Conference in 2005, said that because of trans-generational trauma:
...many young Aboriginal people lack the experience and awareness to enable them to develop healthy adult relationships. This is particularly concerning given the disproportionate number of young people in Aboriginal communities. (VACCA Conference Report, 2005, p.18)

Aboriginal people who were not stolen or adopted but left in communities also had to face the effects of the removal of so many of family and community members from their midst. They were also forced to adapt to non-Aboriginal lifestyles and culture to survive, as highlighted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Task Force on Violence Report (The State of Qld, 1999) that stated:

To survive this conflict, Indigenous people have gone through a process of acculturation whereby they have had to adapt to survive with many trying to live between two worlds. This has been the dilemma for generations where acculturation has been forced upon them, resulting, in many cases, in generations of dysfunctional people. (p.80)

A further effect of disadvantage and trans-generational trauma is that it leads to confusion about identity.

**Confusion**

In a related way, the struggle for identity for young Kooriies is often marked by confusion about what makes them Aboriginal. This confusion has been documented by many Aboriginal people including Kennedy (1985) who was sent to Palm Island as a child in order to be trained up to become a domestic servant. She said of her experience:

...when everyone seemed to get settled and the whites pounded every bit of our lifestyle, culture, language and our identity out of us... It was just like we were in some kind of vortex: spinning,
spinning, going nowhere in particular and when we did stop we felt devoid of our identity and very confused. (p.24)

Poverty, trans-generational trauma and confusion are persistent challenges to the construction of Aboriginal identity and attempts by other people to define what it means to be Aboriginal add to these challenges.

Anderson (quoted in Taylor, 2001) asserts that “... [it] is taken for granted that non-Aboriginal Australia has the right to dissect and define Aboriginalities – a privilege that is rarely reciprocated” (p.1). This continual questioning and dissection of Aboriginal identity by non-Aboriginal people adds to the confusion that Aboriginal people already experience and has a negative impact on them. This is a key factor in their struggle for identity because they are put in a position where they have to work through versions of Aboriginal identity that have been constructed by non-Aboriginal others to arrive at a more authentic (Aboriginal defined) place.

Taylor (2001) believes that the dissection and definition of Aboriginal identity by non-Aboriginal people must cease in order to stop this confusion felt by Aboriginal people. But this is only going to happen when the dominant culture has shifted in its attitudes. Taylor addresses this point by saying that “the answer lies in the hands of non-Aboriginal others... only when the dominant culture is mature enough will the questioning subside” (p.1).

While I agree that the dominant culture has a part to play in the struggle for Aboriginal identity, it is not for them to define and categorize who is or who is not Aboriginal but rather for them to raise their own awareness and through this to reduce their need to define others. This is exactly why I have developed an Education Kit that targets not only Aboriginal students, but the wider community.

The following story told by Read (1996) describes the confusion and displacement that can result from other people’s definitions of Aboriginal identity when these definitions are coupled with power.
In 1935 a fair-skinned Australian of part-indigenous descent was ejected from a hotel for being an Aboriginal. He returned to his home on the mission station to find himself refused entry because he was not an Aboriginal. He tried to remove his children but was told he could not because they were Aboriginal. He walked to the next town where he was arrested for being an Aboriginal vagrant and placed on the local reserve. During the Second World War he tried to enlist but was told he could not because he was Aboriginal. He went interstate and joined up as a non-Aboriginal. After the war he could not acquire a passport without permission because he was Aboriginal. He received exemption from the Aborigines Protection Act - and was told that he could no longer visit his relations on the reserve because he was not an Aboriginal. He was denied permission to enter the Returned Servicemen's Club because he was Aboriginal. (p.1)

In the end he would have asked himself “Who am I?”. Similar actions by others led to confusion and the resultant tension for many other Aboriginal people who were defined as neither black nor white, leaving them in no man’s land. Some of those defined in this way were denied access to programs and services for Aboriginal people while at the same time were unable to access them for non-Aboriginal people either. This was well described by Goodall (1996).

By 1933 there was a large camp of around 200 Aboriginal people just outside Cumeragunga, refused the dole in Victoria because they were New South Wales residents, but refused the dole in New South Wales because they were ‘too black’, and told they must go to the APB [Aborigines Protection Board] station for relief. But at Cumeragunga they were met by a manager clinging to the old APB rules, who told them they were ‘too white’ to receive Aboriginal rations because they were not ‘predominately Aboriginal blood’ (p.185).
This is yet another example of how skin colour was used to effectively exclude individuals from participation in either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal communities. It has been observed that this led to the positioning of Aboriginal people as ‘not real’ and relegated them to living on the fringe - and thus the creation of a new term ‘fringe dwellers’. Uncle Albert Mullett (www.abc.net.au/missionvoices) recalls:

There was only full-blood Aboriginal people allowed to live on Lake Tyers. So all part-Aboriginal people, we lived across the lake. And we were sort of the, I suppose you would say fringe dwellers then. Living outside of the mission because the government policies didn’t want part Aboriginal people... But a key point of that time is that a lot of our families on Lake Tyers used to bring food across the lake to us... And there was many families that lived on the fringes of Lake Tyers as their own people, on their own land. And that was devastating.

These stories demonstrate the utter confusion that resulted from Aboriginal identity being defined by others particularly where others are in a position of power to include or exclude.

In some ways this type of discrimination is easier to deal with than other more subtle forms. Discriminatory practice happens in very layered and complex ways as revealed by Terry Ngarrirjian-Kessaris quoted in the Racism No Way! Report (2000).

Not once during my 12 years of formal schooling did any of my teachers or anyone else in the school system affirm my Aboriginality. Instead I grew up feeling ashamed of my Aboriginal heritage and I felt pressured to stress that I was only part Aboriginal. (p.21)

The type of work I am attempting to do in the Kit is trying to address this complexity. The fear of difference played out around defining Aboriginal identity on the basis of degrees and definitions of skin colour is the most obvious and significant layer. The
more general fear of difference is harder to pin down but can have a similarly profound effect (with trans-generational trauma). This fear leads to unrealistic views about what constitutes Aboriginal identity, to social and cultural disadvantage for many Aboriginal people and, in many cases, over-representation in the criminal justice arena.

**Social and cultural disadvantage**

As highlighted earlier in this research all social indicators reveal the extreme social and cultural disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people. The implications of this disadvantage are linked to the achievement of human rights as outlined in the HREOC, Social Justice Report (2008).

> A deceptively complex issue that we face in adequately protecting Indigenous peoples’ human rights is to recognise that eradicating poverty and overcoming Indigenous disadvantage is one of the most profound human rights challenges that we face in Australia. (p.10)

Importantly, this connects social and cultural disadvantage for Aboriginal people to more general discourses about human rights. I would argue that the social and cultural disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today is directly linked to colonization.

**Over representation in the criminal justice arena**

Another impact or legacy of the factors that I have been discussing is the over representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice arena. It is one of the biggest problems facing Aboriginal people today. This was highlighted by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) that suggested a link between Aboriginal disadvantage in Australian society and rates of incarceration.

> The more fundamental causes for the over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody are not to be found in the criminal justice system but in those factors which bring Aboriginal people
into conflict with the criminal justice system in the first place... the most significant contributing factor is the disadvantaged and unequal position in which Aboriginal people find themselves in society – socially, economically and culturally. (p.15)

Welsh (1997) agrees that “much of the contact of Aboriginal people [have] with the criminal law can be traced to their dispossession and breakdown of culture” (p.85-86). Marcia Langton (cited in Keen, 1988) links imprisonment to the experience of being Aboriginal within a cultural context that positions Aboriginal people often in negative, limiting, and disempowering ways, when she says:

Aboriginal people of Australia suffer the highest imprisonment rate in the world, and it has long been recognized that dispossession, racism and cultural misunderstanding are the most significant contribution to the disproportionate rates of arrest, conviction, and penalty for Aboriginal people. (p.201)

Cunneen and McDonald (1996) also argue that colonization is one reason for the disproportionate rates of incarceration of Aboriginal people.

Factors explaining Aboriginal over representation include the impact of colonization, offending patterns, the impact of policing, legal factors, judicial decision-making, environmental and locational factors, cultural difference, socio-economic factors, marginalization, and resistance. (p.42)

It can be concluded that all of the above factors are evidence of racism.

**Racism**

According to Rosado (1998) racism is defined as:

...the deliberate structuring of privilege by means of an objective, differential and unequal treatment of people for the purpose of social advantage over scarce resources, resulting in ideology of
supremacy which justifies power of position by placing a negative meaning on perceived or actual biological/cultural differences...

In its essence, racism is culturally sanctioned strategies that defend the advantage of power, privilege and prestige. (p.2)

I have discussed racism previously, but what needs to restated here is that there are layers of racism that can be overt or covert and the Racism No Way! A Guide for Australian Schools (2000) points out that:

Until recent years, racist policies and practices were also embedded within Australian laws and institutions. The most telling examples of these were the removal of Aboriginal children from their families and the denial of full citizenship rights to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. (p.5)

Racism is fundamentally about the use of power over people and the examples I have provided illustrate how this can occur. They show how definitions of Aboriginal identity devised by non-Aboriginal people were used to manage programs and services in ways that led to racist outcomes. There is a suggestion in the Racism No Way! Guide for Australian Schools (2000) that “education together with effective legislation [will] provide the best hope for developing a society free from racism” (p.7).

**Impact of external definitions about Aboriginality on education systems**

Government and societal definitions have permeated the education system and Koorie students have had to engage with these constructions in determining their own identity. The use of a whited-out version of Australian history further perpetuates these stereotypes. Omission of such events as massacres and the forced removal of Aboriginal people from country have impacted significantly on Aboriginal students because the denial of what happened to their families and how the existence of these racist policies discriminated against them. This lack of recognition impacts on identity work. Aligned with these definitions of Aboriginal identity young Koories
are often in situations in schools where they are exposed to words that are used not only to describe but to position Aboriginal people in particular ways.

In the article *Students held back by racism* (The Advertiser on March 31, 2009) Tory Shepherd cites a Flinders University report, *In Our Own Backyard*, as saying:

One in three Aboriginal people experience racism in educational institutions ‘often’, and another one in three ‘sometimes’. [He says] the report found that racism in educational settings was worse than in all other institutions apart from the justice system... [and that] racism made people reluctant to stay at school or university. (2009, p.1)

Denning (2003) recognises that words can empower or disempower and that “finding a word that describes some wanted quality of identity that does not also import some unwanted quality is not easy” (p.64).

For example, the notion of the noble savage highlights a positive by describing Aboriginal people as noble but also counteracts with a negative by describing them as savage. Words can also be empowering when they are used by a cultural group to describe themselves but disempowering when someone outside the cultural group uses them. An example of this is the term black, which when used by Aboriginal people about themselves is empowering (i.e. black power) but when used against them is disempowering.

Documented incidents such as the one with Pam Pederson (the daughter of Sir Pastor Doug Nicholls, a great leader of the Victorian Aboriginal community) reveal the effect of using words such as these as negative on young Kooris. In an article by Neil Kearney in the Herald Sun (2006), Pam recalled her hatred for school because she was always fighting with other students because they called her names. Kearney says of Pam:

...striking back was the only way she knew to respond to kids who called her ‘blackie’ and worse... In class, Pam was afraid to
put her hand up. She felt shame at being the only Aboriginal.

(p.27)

This shame was because of the use of the word ‘blackie’ as something negative and it made Pam feel there was a reason to be ashamed. This highlights the place of culture and language in the way we learn to feel about ourselves. Being the only Aboriginal student in the school meant that Pam was in the position where she did not have anyone else to help negate the shame, turn the situation around, and affirm her identity. Being surrounded by positive messages and being exposed to other people who share a common set of positive interpretations of cultural experiences is vital to the construction of a positive identity.

Stereotypical caricatures of Aboriginal people as the noble savage or nomadic and primitive taught in schools have attempted to place Aboriginal culture in a time warp, where it was expected to remain. Denning (2003) suggests that this is a deliberate action because:

Powerful forces in society and law want to deny that [the dynamic nature of Aboriginal identity]. They want ‘Aboriginality’ to be frozen in time and place somewhere - in boomerangs, didjeridus and picaninny's. Powerful forces, especially in law, want a layered, static notion of identity and culture. (p.64)

This is a deliberate attempt by ‘others’ via education systems to deny contemporary Aboriginal identity. Koorie students are expected to somehow align these views with their historical and cultural reality and, when they cannot, they end by questioning who they are.

**Negative policies and positive identities**

While the policy effects of colonization were negative, they did however create the conditions where Aboriginal people because of the trauma that resulted, unified as a community and constructed spaces to verbalise their own versions of identity. As Taylor (2001) states:
We have been placed in a position of having to defend our position of self-knowledge, not only to challenge and shift perceptions and thereby to adjust the historically accrued imbalance without our own constructions and not simply to form a binary opposition, but more importantly, to assert a certain primacy and even exclusivity of our own standpoints. (p.1)

Attwood (1989) agrees that in some ways these negative policies had positive results in the struggle for identity.

For most, although not all, the Act served in one way or another to heighten their consciousness of themselves as Aborigines: for those who were forced away from the missions their sense of difference and oppression was sharpened, while for others the battle to retain their homes and the eventual removal of many to other missions after closure... had the effect of creating more of a common experience and shared knowledge among Aborigines once their loyalties and identification with the different missions had lessened. (p.68)

3.4 Summary

In this chapter I have looked at literature on Aboriginal identity and the impact of colonization on Aboriginal people. I took a critical perspective on definitions of Aboriginality based on blood, language, skin colour and ceremonial traditional practices because they are inadequate identity markers that have been determined by others. I have done this because these definitions have a negative impact on young Koories struggling to construct their identities within legislative and policy frameworks.

Through my review of the literature I have defined Aboriginal identity as comprising genetic inheritance, culture and kinship, Aboriginality and shared historical experience (See figure 2). In my view, these four components link to the core of
identity for Aboriginal people representing their past, present and future. Identity is something they live everyday, influencing everything they do, including the way they think, feel and communicate.

As a way of finishing the literature review the following diagram (*figure 3*) brings together many of the factors discussed throughout this chapter and is a symbolic representation of the impact of invasion and its effect on Aboriginal people.

![Diagram of Impact of Invasion](image)

*Figure 3: Impact of invasion*
Chapter 4: Research Methodologies

4.1 Introduction

The post-positivist methodological approach used in this research employs a Victorian Indigenous research methodology using Victorian Indigenous methods because they are appropriate for collecting information from Indigenous people and communities in culturally sensitive ways. The methods used in the project include story, waiting, connecting, listening and seeing. They are embedded in community through continual feedback. These categories are my own synthesis of approaches to method for Indigenous research that I have observed, experienced, heard and read about. Aboriginal researchers such as Atkinson (2001), Nakata (2004), Dodson (1994), and Rigney (1997) have also discussed and used Indigenous methods as part of research and other forms of Indigenous knowledge inquiry.

I have chosen words from different Victorian Aboriginal language groups to describe each of these methods for three reasons:

- They arise from my identity as a Victorian Aboriginal person.
- They highlight the importance of Aboriginal languages in research about Aboriginal identity because language is culture and culture is an important component of identity as outlined earlier.
- The young Koories interviewed are affiliated with different Victorian Aboriginal language groups.

The naming of the Indigenous research methods is important because it says something about identity and as Willis et al. (2006) suggest:

Issues to do with the protocols of names may be simply a matter of convention, or they may arise out of deeper political processes that are part of the very struggle for self-determination and social justice. (p.169)
My choice and naming of Indigenous methods helps to position me as both researcher and Indigenous participant in this research project. In doing so it helps me find a voice connected to both roles as pointed out by Tuhiwai Smith (1999):

Engaging in a discussion about research as an Indigenous issue has been about finding a voice, or a way of voicing concerns, fears, desires, aspirations, needs and questions as they relate to research. When Indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched the activity of the research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, people participate on different terms. (p.193)

4.2 A Qualitative Approach to Research

My preferred approach in this research was qualitative because it allowed the use of Aboriginal stories to be part of my methodology. Qualitative research can allow the voice of Aboriginal people, which has long been silenced, to be heard and as Liamputtong (2007) observes:

Qualitative research methods are flexible and fluid... (they) allow researchers to be able to hear the voices of those who are ‘silenced, othered, and marginalized by the dominant social order (p.7).

The choice of story, waiting, connecting, listening and seeing is my way of locating and bringing out these voices in culturally sensitive and meaningful ways.

These points are also elaborated in a doctoral thesis on the Association for Active Educational Researchers website (AARE, 2003) where the unnamed author says:

While acknowledging that qualitative research initially emerged as a means for anthropologists and sociologists to undertake studies of the ‘other’, it is equally important to understand the
ability to hear the emic voice is now a focal point of many of the techniques used in qualitative research. (p.2)

The use of the following methods supports a qualitative approach to accessing the emic voice in building culturally meaningful accounts of experience in and through research with Aboriginal people.

4.3 A Victorian Indigenous Research Methodology

My work sits in the Aboriginal methodologists continuum because it is a Victorian Indigenous Research Methodology that encompasses five Indigenous Research Methods, Ngarri-story, Nyembera-waiting, Boonyabuk-connecting, Wanga-listening and Nangak-seeing. This methodology is embedded in the Indigenous community voice through continuous feedback and collaboration.

Story: Ngarri (Bangerang)

The Bangerang word for story is ‘Ngarri’ (Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, VACL, website, 2008). Everyone has a story and every story is important. Stories are pictures painted with words on life’s canvas and they have within them the power to transform and inspire. This research project contains three stories: the story of Gurranyin, my own story, and the stories of the young Koorie participants. The story of Gurranyin (the eagle) provides a metaphor for the struggle for identity. My story provides a personal account of the struggle for identity. The collective story of the young Koorie participants provides insights and knowledge that were used to develop the kit and the screenplay as supports for young people in the struggle for identity.

For Indigenous people, stories have long been an important part of identity construction and through them researchers can uncover valuable insights about culture and kinship, historical experience and Aboriginality. Harvey et al. (2003) captured this by saying that:

Strong living cultural themes run through the Elder’s stories. The stories tell of the importance of keeping traditions, of keeping
culture strong, of holding on to the land, of respecting Elders, of being together and maintaining kinship. But the stories also tell of the fear and pain of losing children to welfare and of the sadness, dislocation and disempowerment caused by repressive race laws. (p.157)

Chad Meyers (cited by Judy Atkinson, 2001) also highlighted the importance of telling and passing on stories.

I will tell you something about stories. They aren’t just entertainment. Don’t be fooled. They are all we have, all we have to fight off illness and death. You don’t have anything if you don’t have stories. Their evil is mighty, but it can’t stand up to our stories. (p.80)

The following Banganger story told by my grandmother illustrates how important it is that story is passed down from generation to generation.

Long ago there was a woman in the Moira tribe who got married to a man from another tribe. She went to live with his tribe and had two children. One night she heard the men from her husband’s tribe plotting to kill the men from the Moira tribe. She took her children and went to warn her tribe. On the way she was attacked by an Elder from her husband’s tribe as he tried to stop her. She continued on her way until she came to the Murray River. She called across to her brother who swam the river to her. She had time to warn him before she died. He took the children and went back to his tribe where he warned them about the attack. When the people came to attack them that night, the Moira men were prepared and defeated them. (Oral story by Esmeralda Bamblett)
For me the point of my grandmother’s story was courage, to let us know that marriage choice is important, and that our people had heroes and heroines. As Meyers indicated, it was not just for our entertainment, but also for learning about culture and identity.

Story was used in a similar way in the movie “Ten Canoes”, described as “a film about traditional Aboriginal culture in north-eastern Arnhem Land... set in two time periods, the ‘present’ which is an unspecified time, but before the arrival of the Europeans or other foreigners in Australia; and the Dreaming” (Lewis 2006, p.2).

In the story a young man (in the present) who, because he doesn’t have a wife, covets the youngest of his brother’s three wives. He is then told the story about a young man in the Dreaming in a similar situation. The brother in the Dreaming time ends up being killed and the young man gains his brother’s three wives, the old ones as well as the young one. Even though he only wanted the young wife, he finds that he has to look after the others as well. This is not what he wanted! The young man in the present then realizes that it would not be easy having three wives, especially old ones, so he decides to be patient and wait for a wife. In this case, Lewis (2006) says the story is used to “teach a young man about Law and proper behaviour” (p.2).

De Heer, the non-Aboriginal Director of this film, understood the importance of Aboriginal people telling this story.

The story is their story, those that live on this land, in their language, and set a long time before the coming of the Balanda, as we white people are known. For the people of the Arafura Swamp, this film is an opportunity, maybe the last chance to hold on to the old ways. (Lewis, 2006, p.4)

Whilst for De Heer this was about holding onto the old ways, for Aboriginal people these stories are about describing and holding onto identity. Stories such as these were told and retold to generations of Aboriginal people, teaching them important truths about respect, sharing and caring, how to treat other people, and how to avoid
dangerous situations. Beyond their specific themes, stories are also important because they create different spaces to allow different voices to be heard and contrasted. Dodson (1994) points this out when he says stories are important because:

...alongside the colonial discourses of Australia, we have always had our own Aboriginal discourse in which we have continued to create our own representations, and to re-create identities which escaped the policing of the authorized versions. (p.29)

My approach for story (Ngarri) has similarities to the broad approach and intent of narrative inquiry described by Witherall, when citing Baxter, as follows:

...narrative allows us to enter emphatically into another’s life and being- to join a living conversation. In this sense, it serves as a means of inclusion, inviting the reader, listener, writer, or teller as a companion along on another’s journey. In the process we may find ourselves wiser, more receptive, more understanding, nurtured, and sometimes healed (1995, p.168).

Narrative researchers listen to and privilege the voices and stories of their research participants as they seek the answer to their research questions. Chase (2005) says that there is a distinct narrative (inquiry) method of operating with interviews.

When it comes to interpreting narratives heard during interviews, narrative researchers begin with narrator’s voices and stories, thereby extending the narrator-listener relationship and the active work of listening into the interpretive process. This is a move away from a... theme-oriented method of analyzing qualitative material. Rather than locating distinct themes across interviews, narrative researchers listen first to the voices within each narrative. (p.663)
Narrative inquiry requires the researcher to listen to the voices of the researched as part of the stories told to them rather than assuming that the answers are directly evident (or stated). Story through metaphor (a symbol or allegory) is used by Aboriginal people to teach listeners about themselves and/or their environment. In traditional Aboriginal society, because it is an oral society, story is a very important method of teaching and learning. Stories are told for a particular purpose because they teach valuable truths and are used to hand down oral tradition, to teach the values of the Nation, and to embed respect for Elders in the society.

In emphasising the power of storied knowledge, Pinnegar & Daynes (2007) say of narrative inquiry:

There are multiple ways of knowing and studying the world and the interactions of people...We become narrative inquirers only when we recognize and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship, primarily use stories as data and analysis, and understand the way in which what we know is embedded in a particular context. (p.7)

In this project my method Ngarri has a clear link to the practice of narrative inquiry as it occurred through the unstructured interviews with Koorie participants in groups as well as individuals. Ellis (1998) has observed that in sensitive forms of narrative inquiry with young people "it is crucial that we hear children's stories and listen for the ways in which they try to secure rightful places" (p.45). My group interviews allowed the young people to lead discussions into areas of interest (for them) and to story in-depth understandings and knowledge of the issues involved in identity while exploring stereotypical images they themselves have encountered and learned from during mainstream education. My method Ngarri, as an instance of narrative inquiry, was useful because it enabled my participants to tell their stories and for me the researcher to listen and hear.
Waiting: Nyembera (Gunnai/Kurnai)

I have used the Gunnai/Kurnai word Nyembera for waiting (VACL, 2008) to describe this as a different research method. In the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community waiting is a very important part of processes to get information because it takes time before Aboriginal people will give out significant information. A researcher must be willing to wait until an Indigenous person trusts them before they can get information. The amount and timing of information depends on the length of time the researcher has had a relationship with the research participants. During the time the researcher waits, other forms of communication, including yarning and silence, can and often do occur.

Yarning is small talk that may often be a diversion from the main topic. Silence is used as a method of communication because it gives the researched time and space to reflect on the information they will give the researcher. The silence also tells the researcher that it is not the time for disclosure of information because a trustful relationship has not been established or, perhaps, there are other more important priorities at that time. It is therefore important that the researcher be prepared to wait and hear the communication in the silence. Liamputtong (2007) agrees that silence is important in the research process and that reflexivity is a methodological strategy to become sensitive to silence. Information gathered in this way may be more relevant than information gathered using other methods. Silence may evoke a powerful message and therefore it is important that the researcher can interpret the silence in a culturally inclusive way. For example, in the Willis et al. (2006) edited collection Advances in indigenous health care, Fenwick described how this silence affected her as a non-Aboriginal nurse.

[Y]ou’re trying to interpret the silence. They’ll stand there and you know that they want something but you’re not exactly sure what. I sometimes wonder if they get what they really want.

(p.223)

While it was obvious to Fenwick that the silence she observed was important and a method of communication, she admitted it was difficult for her as a non-Aboriginal
person to interpret it. This is the kind of reflexive positioning, as a methodological strategy, for recognizing and hearing silence that Liamputtong (2007) considered important in research with Indigenous participants.

Waiting played a crucial role in my interviews and workshops with Koorie participants. While some of them engaged readily in the workshops, others didn’t. By using the method Nyembera I recognised their silence as important and understood that I needed to wait until they were prepared to share their story. This is Nyembera-waiting.

**Connecting: Boonyabuk (Wemba Wemba)**

I have chosen to use the Wemba Wemba word Boonyabuk (VACL, 2008) for the Indigenous method of connecting. A relationship or connection to Indigenous people has to be established by researchers because the researched will not share full and accurate information with someone they do not trust. Connection is about building relationships and, although they were not talking specifically about research, the Alberta Chamber of Commerce Aboriginal Programs Project (2006) realized the connection between relationship building and trust to the development of successful programs in Aboriginal communities by saying that:

> ...relationships are critical. Long-term relationships with Aboriginal communities are the key to developing trust and understanding. A respectful culture is more likely to develop the relationships necessary for constructive engagement and communication... It is very important to engage the Aboriginal community at an early stage. This is necessary to build trust and lay the foundation for a solid relationship. Early engagement also allows opportunity to explore the expectations of the Aboriginal community and to clarify what opportunities the relationship can and cannot deliver. (p.1)

Connecting to people, events, country and sites of significance is important to Aboriginal people and determines how, when, where and with whom they engage in
research. In my research project most of the Koorie participants knew me as an Elder in the community and therefore I already had the beginning of connection and relationship with them. Others engaged because of the connections I had with their families and still others trusted the judgement of their peers who already had a connection with me.

Without the Boonyabuk I built up as an Elder over 30 years within the Victorian Koorie community, it would have taken me much longer to establish trust with the participants and Nyembera would have been a more drawn out, difficult and fraught process.

**Listening: Wanga (Keeray Wooroong)**

Dadirri is an often used Indigenous research method intended to support a process of deep listening. This is outlined by Atkinson (2001) as more than listening with the ears. She referred to it as:

> ...a deep listening and hearing with more than the ears; a reflective, non-judgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard; and, having learnt from the listening, a purposeful plan to act with actions informed by learning, wisdom, and the informed responsibility that comes with knowledge. (p.7)

In expanding on this, Atkinson further quoted Ungunmerr (1988) as saying it is “a special quality, a unique gift of the Aboriginal people. It is inner deep listening and quiet, still awareness-something like that you call contemplation” (p.7).

Rather than using the word Dadirri, I have used the Keeray Wooroong word for listening, Wanga (VACL, 2008) because it locates this method in a Victorian context. In addition, over time, Dadirri has come to mean something more than listening. In recognizing that Aboriginal people may say something different to what they really mean, the only way to understand is to listen attentively to what is really being said.
I used Wanga as method with the Koorie participants during the workshops and semi-structured interviews. I listened and reflected on what the participants did not say as much as what they did say. As an illustration, by the fact that none of the participants talked about being fair skinned, I could still ascertain that it was important to their identity from the other things they said and how they said them. This is Wanga.

**Seeing: Nangak (Woiwurrung)**

The Woiwurrung word for seeing, Nangak (VACL, 2008), encompasses the final Indigenous method used in my project. Traditional Aboriginal society was an oral one. It was therefore necessary for the people to watch closely because there were no books they could read or refer to later. Young people learned to hunt and fish by seeing how it was done. They **had** to learn by ‘watching’ their Elders. After watching for a while, they attempted to re-enact what they had seen. They then watched again to see if it was correct. This process continued until they had learnt to successfully imitate their Elders. According to Robinson and Nichol (1998) this still happens today because:

> Learning occurs more frequently in informal, unstructured situations through observation and imitation rather than verbalization. Aboriginal cultures are strongly auditory - as shown by their strong oral traditions - but there is little verbal interaction for the deliberate and conscious purpose of learning and teaching. Information is transmitted primarily through observation and involvement. (p.2)

Dadirri, described as deep listening, also reflects “a non-intrusive observation or quietly aware watching” (Atkinson, 2001, p.7). An Hawaiian saying makes the same point: ‘Na na ka maku; ho ‘oolohe ka pepeiao; pa’ a ka waha’, ‘Observe with the eyes, listen with the ears, shut the mouth’ (Benham, 2007, p.514).

Nangak is culturally relevant because knowledge is passed down by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the children when they observe and listen. Indigenous researcher Hughes (1997) agrees that “much Aboriginal learning is by
observation and imitation, rather than through verbal instruction” (p.9) - what I am calling Nangak.

Today, knowledge is passed onto young Koories in a similar way. When they attend community meetings they have to watch and observe the social interactions between people from different Aboriginal language groups. They do not speak until they have reached a certain age because they have a cultural obligation to let the Elders speak and then only speak when Elders allow them. Their initial learning is done by watching Elders. Most of the communication is body language and they constantly observe group dynamics and adjust their behaviour according to these observations. In my project Nangak was present when participants observed each other doing the workshop activities. During the play reading, they saw how others engaged in oral traditions of discussions and story-telling. This is Nangak.

4.4 Legitimacy of Indigenous Research Methodologies

Research is not new to Aboriginal communities. That it has been around for thousands of years is evident by the stories told through dance and art, on the walls of the caves, in the sand and passed down orally. This evidence reveals a people who have thoroughly researched their environment. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people did not have written records of research in traditional times but it is evident by their survival in a hostile environment for thousands of years that they were highly successful researchers. For example, they were effective conservationists, with an intricate knowledge of every part of their environment. As Nakashima et al. (2000) state:

Sophisticated knowledge of the natural world is not confined to science. Human societies all across the globe have developed rich sets of experiences and explanations relating to the environments they live in. These ‘other knowledge systems’ are today often referred to as traditional ecological knowledge or indigenous or local knowledge. They encompass the sophisticated arrays of information, understandings and interpretations that guide human societies around the globe in their innumerable interactions with the natural milieu: in
agriculture and animal husbandry; hunting, fishing and gathering; struggles against disease and injury; naming and explanation of natural phenomena; and strategies to cope with fluctuating environments. (p.12)

Dreaming stories abound with finite detail about the natural world and how people react and survive in many different situations. These stories come from an in-depth understanding and knowledge about the people and the environment through Indigenous ways of knowing (Nakata, 2004, Dodson, 1994 and, Cochran et al. 2008) that lie at the heart of the histories of research conducted by Aboriginal people over centuries.

In much the same way, Indigenous ways of knowing can be effective tools to conduct research on Aboriginal people and communities today. However, for that to happen, Aboriginal researchers must often challenge research conducted on Aboriginal communities that is driven by a specific intention to develop policies and programs designed for imposed solutions to constructed problems. This type of research has a negative impact when it produces outcomes that do not accurately portray Indigenous cultural values and mores, or reflect Indigenous ways of knowing. Research outcomes have powerful and far reaching consequences when they give policy makers a platform from which to lever their own particular biases. Therefore, it is important that research conducted with and on Indigenous people is undertaken in a culturally inclusive way, respectful of Indigenous ways of knowing. This means, as Porsanger (2004) says, that:

Indigenous methodologies should be designed to ensure that the intellectual property rights of indigenous peoples will be observed; to protect indigenous knowledge from misinterpretation and misuse; to demystify knowledge about indigenous peoples; to tell indigenous peoples’ knowledge; to communicate the results of the research back to the owners of this knowledge, in order to support them in their desire to be subjects rather than objects of research, to decide about their
present and future, and to determine their place in the world.
(p.117)

Porsanger's main concern is that the rights of Indigenous people are protected before, during, and after the research process. However, to begin, it is necessary to be clear about what constitutes Indigenous knowledge. Hughes (1997) points out the difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing as follows:

Aboriginal epistemology is conveyed in the particular world view held by Aboriginal society. According to Muir, the world for the traditional Aborigine is made up of entities which are related in an unscientific way (from a Non-Aboriginal perspective) but in a spiritual way which reflects the nature of a universe quite different from a white Australian. (p.8)

This is instructional because it identifies the connectedness between the physical and the spiritual for Indigenous knowledge of the world. If this goes unrecognized, or is not understood, then knowledge of events and people's lives cannot be produced in inclusive and meaningful ways. For example, since the invasion many Government Inquiries and Royal Commissions have been held on Aboriginal people using research methodologies that did not recognize the connection between the physical and spiritual.

Research with Indigenous people and in Indigenous settings has long been dominated by Western ways of knowing because:

The Western academy, as a colonial institution, seeks to control the production and dissemination of knowledge, as well as promoting the superiority of that knowledge. This has been destructive to indigenous communities, as the Western academy has positioned itself as the “authority” of knowledge regarding indigenous (colonized) peoples. (Dougherty, undated, p.2)
The Western Academy’s control of the production and dissemination of knowledge, has formed an epistemological meta-narrative that needs to be recognized for what it is and what it does. According to Paradies et al. (2000) all world views are storied and worth listening to, but for this to happen a deconstruction of meta-narratives (overarching stories) that have been used to dominate others needs to occur. In practical terms the deconstruction of meta-narratives leads to a validation of stories from the other.

Because of colonization and the accompanying dominance of Western Academy meta-narratives, Koorie’s voices and Indigenous epistemologies are positioned as the ‘other’. With the emergence of postmodern positions that there are multiple stories to be heard it becomes possible to include voices that have been long silenced and excluded in scholarly debates by meta-narratives. For Aboriginal communities this is evidenced in the revival and increasing scholarly recognition of stories from their Elders.

Patrick Dodson emphasized the importance of Elders voices in a letter to The Australian (13th September 1996), in which he said:

My grandfather taught me that the river is the river, and the sea is the sea. Each has its own complex patterns, origins and stories, and even though they come together, they will always exist in their own right. Non-Indigenous Australians cannot be expected to learn or to understand the lessons of my grandfather, but simply to respect that they are central to my identity. (p.7)

While the knowledge produced by non-Aboriginal researchers was accepted by the Academy, cultural knowledge passed on by Elders was not. However, Holmes (2000) asserts that both voices are acceptable and that:

...some of us will need to find a space ‘in between’ where both the knowledge of our elders and the knowledge of our colleagues and professors may enter, live and be voiced. (p.50)
Finding the in-between space may require an act of collaboration between Elders stories and the voices of the Academy, as Sefa Dei et al. (2000) observed:

Knowledge is produced and acquired through collaborative processes. No individual, group, community, or nation can justifiably claim ownership of all knowledge. What constitutes valid knowledge and how such knowledge should be produced and shared internally and globally, is still a subject of intense debate. It is important that there is no academic closure on this subject. (p.3)

Despite these encouraging and productive trends for finding an in-between space, academic institutions remain gatekeepers and continue to exercise that power in controlling knowledge and methodologies. Hooks (2003) voiced a concern understood by many in saying that:

...our institutions are conservative and they confine our voices and our imaginations more than we know. Unwittingly we become our own gatekeepers, representatives of an institution, and not devotees to the sacred world of the imagination. (p.169)

It is essential that Indigenous researchers question assumptions about the legitimacy of knowledge implicit in the gate keeping process of the academy. Tuhiiwai Smith (2001) empowers others to do the same in saying that:

In contemporary indigenous contexts there are some major research issues which continue to be debated quite vigorously. These can be summarized best by the critical questions that communities and indigenous activists often ask, in a variety of ways: Whose research is it? Who owns its? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will the results be disseminated? (pp. 9-10)
By asking these questions, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are now suspicious of research and may refuse to participate. They rightfully protect the ownership of their knowledge and their intellectual property rights and do not participate in research if they think it will have a negative effect on their communities while advancing academic knowledge. Rigney (1997) quotes Brady, who observed that “it is the acquisition of Indigenous knowledges and the ensuing ownership of that knowledge which are the foundations upon which many academic qualifications and careers have been achieved.” (p.109)

Aboriginal people have learned to question research because in many cases researchers have not given them the courtesy of feedback or because analysis and interpretation within a particular framework lacked cultural understanding that was contrary to the intention of the research. Rigney (1998) says “it is little wonder that the world’s Indigenous communities are apprehensive and cautious towards research” (p.109). It does not matter what cultural background a researcher has, research data will be filtered through their own particular cultural context and this is another instance where reflexivity is important (Liamputtong 2007). Atkinson (2001) also recognizes this when quoting Simpson (1993) as saying that:

Value free research is not possible and does not occur. Research may be most perniciously biased by the attitudes of the researcher when those attitudes are hidden from the reader or even from the researcher’s own perception. (n.p.)

In discussing Maori research, Tuhīwai Smith (1995) concludes that because it is not possible to have value free research, the cultural identity of the researcher is also important in the research process.

Another dimension of kaupapa Maori research is to be found clustered around issues of identity. Bishop, Irwin, Pihama and Smith have all argued that being Maori, identifying as Maori and as a Maori researcher, is a critical element of kaupapa Maori research. Whilst this position is anti-positivist, in that it is also
saying that we look at the world through our grounding in Maori world views, most Maori researchers would also argue that being Maori does not preclude us from being systematic, being ethical, being scientific in the way we approach a research problem. (p.186)

Indigenous researchers, using Indigenous research methodologies, bring to research an understanding about cultural difference. Rigney (1997) argues that this culturally reflexive perspective contests the colonial imperialism of knowledge:

Indigenous Peoples think and interpret the world and its realities in differing ways to non-Indigenous Peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures and values... [they] must look to new anti-colonial epistemologies and methodologies to construct, re-discover and/or re-affirm their knowledges and cultures. (p.6)

Put another way, Nakata (1993) says that Indigenous researchers have a particular standpoint in research and are in a prime position to view Indigenous knowledge because:

We are at the centre of our own lives and our own history, and we need to give primacy to that position. We stand in relation to the mainstream but we do not have to view that relationship as secondary to it, as it has been inscribed in the corpus of Western Disciplines. (p.3)

4.5 Summary

As an Indigenous researcher I chose a Victorian Indigenous research methodology in my research project because it provides valid and culturally appropriate methods for the Koorie participants to share their stories and knowledge. In my research project I made a break with conventional, established methodological practice because my experience shows that past research, when linked to programs and policies, did not work well. Having said this however, I am also aware that in some research it may be
viable to use conventional, established research methodologies with projects that are conducted by non-Aboriginal researchers.

As an Indigenous researcher I was prepared to wait, to connect, to listen and to see in giving the Koorie participants the space, time and respect to tell their stories. This was both method and a process of knowing in my research. During waiting I built up my connection with them. I built a relationship with participants through mutual connection with culture, kinship and families. During their participation in the workshops and interviews I listened to them with inner listening, hearing what they were not saying as well as what they were saying. Finally, during the workshops I observed as they participated and shared experiences through presentations about Aboriginal history and contemporary issues.

My choices were also made because I wanted to locate myself as an Indigenous knower firmly in the story of the research. I felt that it would make the participants comfortable about participating and sharing their stories and knowledge. My story, along with those from Koorie participants, forms the epistemological base for the research project. My own story has happened and is told over a longer period of time (57 years) and in conducting research on it, I have been engaged in waiting, connecting, listening, and seeing. That length of time has given me historically reflective space in my story and therefore allowed the necessary reflexive analysis. The story of Gurranyin, as a metaphor for what happened to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, is also a metaphor for the lives of the researcher and the participants.
Chapter 5: Voices of Koorie Participants

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is about my fieldwork with young Kories and the struggle for and over identity. The chapter is integral to my research project and its aims for understanding identity and in supporting the project of identity for Aboriginal youth and for others. Specifically, the chapter deals with the voices of the young Kories who participated in the project. It outlines the research methods used and how in using these methods I found out how my participants identify as Kories and the nature of their struggle.

5.2 Research Participants

In this section I detail the research participant group, how they were selected and how the research methods were used with this group. Fifteen young Koorie participants were chosen between the ages of 18 and 25, the group consisting of six males and nine females. Participants came from different Victorian nations: Bangerang, Gunna/Kurnai, Wolithica, Gunditjmara, Yorta Yorta, and Wurundjeri, as well as nations from other States: Palewa from Tasmania, Waka Waka from Queensland, Walpiri from Northern Territory, and Gamilaraay, Geawegal and Muti Muti from New South Wales.

Of the group, nine were employed (three had short term jobs on a three month employment project at a Call Centre), two were unemployed, two were engaged with home duties, and two were studying (TAFE and year 12). In the group, eight had completed year 12, two completed year 11, two completed year 10 and three had left school after completing year 9. For eight of the fifteen participants both parents were Aboriginal, for the others, three had an Aboriginal mother and four had an Aboriginal father. A profile snapshot of the group revealed that four said they knew “lots” about Aboriginal history and another four said they knew a “fair bit” while three said “not much” and another three said “some”. However, taking a different emphasis, the Walpiri participant said he “lived culture”.

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Based on experience of effective communication within Aboriginal communities, participants were selected by a word of mouth process through Koorie networks facilitated by staff of Aboriginal organizations after I had spoken about the research project. After contact was made with participants the research proposal was discussed with them and if they were interested their participation confirmed. Without exception all who were contacted agreed to participate because they wanted to contribute to research about Koorie identity.

Members of the participant group were contacted by phone and invited to participate in the workshops (that included activities from the ‘Gurranyin Borinya’ Cultural Enrichment Kit), one on one semi structured interviews, and play readings.

**Workshops**

The Workshops had two functions as part of the research project. Firstly, they were designed to inform participants about Aboriginal history and contemporary issues impacting on Aboriginal people. Secondly, they were designed to draw out commentary on Koorie identity from the participants to inform the development of the products and the aims of the project.

The research methods outlined in the previous section were used to facilitate connection and communication as well as to collect research data. In the workshops, Ngarrri, Nyemba, Boonyabuk, Wanga, and Nangak, were useful Indigenous methods because some participants lacked self-esteem and would not talk about identity until a connection was established. As an Indigenous researcher and after thirty years working with communities in Aboriginal Education I had an advantage in establishing connection because I either knew participants personally or knew members of their families. As outlined in the previous chapter, it is important that research participants establish a personal connection with a researcher to make them feel comfortable in talking about personal issues such as identity.

Indigenous research methods were appropriate because the participants live the methods as cultural practice and using them enabled me to find out how participants live their identity.
Interviews

The issue of mutual concern for both me as the researcher and the young people who participated was identity. Also, because identity is personal it was important to conduct one-on-one interviews with each participant to explore their ideas and experiences about identity. A schedule was devised with questions based on family and nation connection, educational experiences, historical impact, Koorie organisations, and visions for the future. It was used in the semi-structured interviews with each participant so that any data gathered could be used for further analysis and contributes to the outcomes of the project as well as being used to answer the research questions for the research project. The results of the interviews were useful to make some generalizations about the research findings for other young Koories who were not active participants in the project as well as for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in other parts of Australia.

Play reading

The research group was involved in a play reading of the stage play, Daisy Chain, and the screenplay, Tunno. Collaboration as part of the Tunno play reading was significant to the research project because it meant that participants could contribute through the discussions to the identity work of the characters, the plot, and to the further development of the practical activities in the Gurranyin Borinya Cultural Enrichment Kit.

The stage play Daisy Chain has been included in the Kit because it can be performed by a class or as a whole of school play. It is informative because, while it is fiction, it incorporates historical events that are significant for Aboriginal people and therefore can be used to complement the history section in the Kit.

I wrote the screenplay after the first workshop with the participants and it was loosely based on comments they made during our discussions as well as on my own observation and experiences as a Koorie. The aim of the screenplay was that as a research product it could be filmed at a later date and used as a cultural tool for a wider audience to dramatically portray the difficulties young Koories have in finding
their identity. It is separate from the Kit because the anticipated audiences are different. The Kit was designed specifically for use with school students while the screenplay has the potential to be an informative tool for young Koories who are not at school or in classes where the Kit is used, or have left school, as well as for the wider non-Indigenous community.

5.3 The Workshops

Prior to the workshops participants were told about the research project and how their participation in a workshop would give them information that they may not know about Aboriginal issues as well as inform the research outcomes.

While I considered the workshops to be an effective method of getting useful feedback from the group, who I felt were more likely to talk if they participated in activities that were interesting to them, I also anticipated that they would:

- Give participants the opportunity to listen to presentations about Aboriginal history, contemporary issues and to set a vision for themselves.
- Give participants opportunities to interact with each other so they could discuss their identity.
- Enable participants to strengthen their cultural connection.
- Enable participants to identify strategies to strengthen other young Koories.

Accordingly, the workshops were based on the following beliefs:

1. A strong identity is important for young Koories.
2. Young Koories have cultural connections.
3. Young Koories need to understand the impact of history on their lives.
4. Young Koories need to be able to verbalize their identity.

Workshop content consisted of a number of the activities developed for the Gurranyin Borinya Cultural Enrichment Kit, including the following components:

- Koorie IQ Test
- Power Point Presentation on Aboriginal history
- Statistical overview of contemporary issues
- Presentation by an Aboriginal Elder and a non-Aboriginal Manager
- Presentation about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal visionaries
- Group discussion to evaluate and discuss workshop content

**Workshop 1**
Seven of the fifteen young Kooriees recruited to the research project participated in the first workshop. There were four sessions in the workshop that focused on history, experiences of other young Kooriees, oral history, vision and a practical cultural activity. Before the workshop, all participants completed a Koorie IQ test to assess their general knowledge about Aboriginal history. A post-workshop evaluation was undertaken to determine what had been learnt through their participation.

**History**
The content was organized around key events and was aimed at filling in gaps about Aboriginal history including the Dreaming and Aboriginal lifestyles before 1788. This was followed by a brief overview about the doctrine of ‘Terra Nullius’ and how it was used to justify the invasion and then the establishment of the Port Phillip Protectorate in 1839 under the Protection Act.

A section about the resistance by Aboriginal people to the invasion and significant events they celebrate followed. Events included the ‘Day of Mourning’ in 1938 (for equal citizenship) the Cummeragunga Walk off in 1939, the Referendum in 1967 and, Land Rights protests (including the Tent Embassy) and the election of the Whitlam Government (leading to the establishment of Aboriginal organizations) in 1972.

The final part of the history section included the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody, the Inquiry into the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their parents, the Native Title decision, the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Northern Territory Intervention and the National Apology in 2008.
Experiences of other young Koories

After the presentation on Aboriginal history, participants were shown a video of other young Koories talking about educational experiences and their visions for the future. The young Koories in the video were participants at youth forums held by the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) in eight Victorian regions. The young people highlighted the negative experiences they encountered in the education system. They talked about the impact of racism on their school experiences; about being in class with teachers who teach achieving students and not students who need help (like them); continually having to prove themselves at school; fighting with other students (because of racist attitudes and slurs); being taught by teachers who lacked any understanding of their cultural needs; isolation (because they were in the minority); and harassment by teachers.

The videoed young people also gave several reasons why they believe Koorie students may not complete their schooling. The reasons included the fact that some students have a low self esteem; many do not cope with school work; many dislike school; not wanting to deal with tensions between themselves and others; and not receiving enough support from home (VAEAI, 2002). The reasons they raised give an insight into the disparity between progress rates for Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students, as reported by the then Minister for Education Brendan Nelson to the Parliament in 2001, where it was noted that “the SPR (Student Progress Rates) for Indigenous students was 68% compared with 87% for non-Indigenous students” (Nelson, 2001, p.96).

Oral histories

After the history presentation a Koorie Elder who was invited to tell her story talked about her life growing up on the mission and how she was only allowed to reach grade 3. She spoke about how lack of educational qualifications made it difficult for her to find employment and she encouraged the participants to increase their education qualifications and skills so they could enhance their chances for employment and maybe build opportunities to establish their own businesses.

A presentation by a non-Aboriginal employment Manager gave participants an understanding about the needs and requirements of employers, as well as increasing
their understanding about workplace culture, with a view to making their transition to work easier. Some participants were unemployed and working in a Call Centre on a three month work experience placement and were looking for permanent employment. The Manager informed them about a network established to bridge the gap between education and employment.

**Vision**
The afternoon session began with a presentation on strategies to support participants to set a personal vision. Slides were shown to challenge participants to focus their energies on finding a vision and setting goals. This session was important because it allowed participants to be practical in focusing on achievable goals for their individual future. Comments made about this session highlighted that Koorie youth do have vision and aspirations for their lives but need practical opportunities to develop and articulate them. This process enabled them to move beyond the limits imposed because of past experience.

**A practical activity**
The final workshop session was a culmination of all that had been learned from the earlier sessions. Participants were encouraged to be creative and innovative by designing a culturally appropriate house for a Koorie family. One suggestion was that a granny flat be built as part of the house to cater for Elders to remain a part of the family rather than going into a nursing home. Another suggestion was that the main bedroom and those for children be near each other to allow bonding and connection to be established between children and their parents.

**Feedback and Evaluation**
The three major themes emerging from this workshop were connection, stories, and identity. Connection and stories are reflected in the research methods and identity is the primary focus of the project. A connection was established with participants before the research began, by talking with them informally about their families and country and at the same time the participants established a connection with me as we listened to each other’s stories. Participants did not raise connection as an issue but did reveal that it was important in establishing connection with the non-Indigenous
presenter. Their insistence on connections as a part of listening to both his story and the Elder’s story highlighted the importance they placed on hearing stories and through the stories, forming connections to the storytellers.

**Connection**
During the workshop participants were given opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback on each session in the program. The participants requested more information at various times during the presentations. For example, they asked the non-Aboriginal guest presenter questions to establish a personal connection with him and during and after the presentation asked many questions about employment issues.

It was interesting to watch participants as they prodded the presenter for his story. They did not enter into any other dialogue until this had occurred. The participants later reflected that his session was engaging and helpful, especially his personal story. The comments made about his presentation revealed that participants felt his personal story was very important because they said: “it was good to get to know more about him” and “it was fascinating that his father is Samoan”, indicating that to them the most important part of his presentation was his identity story. Groome et al. (1995) also stressed the importance of connecting relationship when they identified a similar occurrence with a group of Aboriginal students, observing “... [the] most effective teachers of Aboriginal students have entered into extraordinarily close relationships with them” (p.48).

This presenter informed the young people about the differences between workplace cultures and they were very interested because it allowed them to explain the experiences (of some) when they worked in non-Aboriginal workplaces. Some described how they felt uncomfortable working in non-Aboriginal workplaces and had thought it was because of their cultural background and did not realize, at the time, that it may have been related to the culture of the workplace. For example, one male participant volunteered an example of a dress code workplace requirement that he felt was unnecessary and racist. He related how he had been asked not to wear runners to work and that this request made him feel that he was unacceptable
because of his cultural background and that the shoes were only used as an excuse to put him down. At the time, he did not understand that different workplaces have different safety rules and after the presentation he was prepared to accept that the request for him to wear different footwear may have been acceptable.

Most participants said that even though they preferred to work in an Aboriginal community organisation, they would be willing to work in a non-Aboriginal workplace if they had a mentor who would help them understand workplace dynamics. They also indicated that they would be willing to try different career opportunities that it would be useful to have positive role models who they could talk to and help them with their resumés. They reflected that a magazine published for young Koories advertising job opportunities and other information, such as complaints about poor service, would assist them in locating employment.

When asked about stereotypes he had about Koories before working with Koorie community members the presenter replied that he thought Koories were the same as non-Koories. The participants were amazed at his response because they had expected him to have negative stereotypes about Aboriginal people. Then he explained that the only Koorie he had met prior to working in the Koorie community was an Aboriginal male who had been adopted by non-Aboriginal people who lived a very similar lifestyle to him.

The questions revealed that participants were fully engaged with the presentations. The session was informative because it gave the youth an understanding of how non-Aboriginal people think; challenged them about their own negative assumptions about non-Aboriginal people; and, made them realise that what they had assumed to be racism may in fact be related to differences in workplace culture.

**Stories**

When asked what else could be included in a Cultural Enrichment Kit, participants commented that there should be more personal stories about Koories over the past two hundred years. They said they enjoyed hearing individual stories because it made the sessions more interesting. The examples in the section above provide a
good illustration of this point. Stories are both enjoyable and useful for learning about Koorie history and culture, for example, as when they listened to the Elder relate her experiences. This was reinforced with other comments about how interesting and helpful the sessions on Aboriginal History and identity were, especially when reinforced by the Elder who told a similar story about her life. It is stories that provide the means for connection to contribute to the development of identity discussion and formation.

**Identity**

When discussing Koorie identity, participants challenged the requirement by Government that their identity must be confirmed by Koorie organisations with a legal (signed and stamped) Confirmation of Aboriginality form. The issue was hotly debated because of the role played by the form in accessing services. The heat in the discussion was due to the recognition of Government’s power over definitions of Aboriginality and that non-compliance meant denial of services. This was discussed in an earlier section when the contradictions contained in exemption certificates were identified. Another useful discussion centered on Koories who do not identify in the community but ask for their Aboriginality to be confirmed by Koorie organisations.

Following these discussions participants recommended that the forms should contain a section where the genealogy of the applicant is recorded. This would assist individuals as well as Koorie organisations and Elders to see their kinship connection to the Aboriginal community. They also considered that the current practice of Board members of Koorie organisations signing Confirmation of Aboriginality forms be changed to allow Elders in communities to sign as they know the kinship connections to community and country of members from their communities.

Other discussions covered sovereignty, land rights, native title and social justice and the negative impacts on identity. The full range of discussion revealed that young Koories have a well developed capacity to think about identity issues for themselves and their children (in the future). The importance to participants was reflected in comments that included “interesting because it helped me clarify what a Koorie person is” and emphatically as “too deadly”. Discussions of this kind clearly indicate
that young Koorie wish to participate in workshops that will inform, educate and challenge them.

This workshop also revealed how important it was to develop the cultural enrichment kit because young Koorie have identity issues that need to be addressed. The Kit addresses the issues and in doing so may prevent the high attrition rate of Koorie students as evidenced by the Australian National Training Authority “...in 1996, 71 per cent of Indigenous secondary students dropped out of school before year 12.” (1999, p.11) and by the Minister for Education, Brendon Nelson (2001) who reported to Parliament that “…the retention rates for Indigenous students from year 10 to year 12 was almost 33 percentage points lower than the rate for non Indigenous students” (p.xix).

The Kit addresses the issue of some Koorie students dropping out of school but it is also important for those Koorie students who remain at school until years 11 and 12. For school completer’s involvement in identity activities is important because, as revealed by the research group participants who had completed year 12, the issue of identity remains relevant to them.

The Aboriginal history, identity and vision sessions were based on developing identity. Koorie who have a positive identity and self image are able to develop a vision which will assist them to successfully complete their schooling and become effective members of both the Koorie and wider communities. Groome & Hamilton’s (1995) observation that, “it is apparent that matters of Aboriginality and identity are key factors in the success or failure of Aboriginal students” (p.34) supports the view that educational experience is essential in making a difference.

**Summary of workshop 1**

The three themes emerging from this workshop: connection, stories and identity are important to my research project because connection provides young people with a link to others that is informed by culture and kinship; stories allow experiences to be told and shared between young people and Elders; and identity formation follows from the discussion of issues that arise from both connection and stories.
Workshop 2

Workshop two was carried out with 12 participants from the research group. It differed from the first workshop because of the use of puppets and activities based on traditional Aboriginal practices. The aim of this workshop was to support the participants to tell their stories via the use of puppets (this was done in order to reduce personal risk by creating a safe space); to strengthen pride in identity via participation in traditional activities; and, to encourage articulation of a way forward.

Puppet stories

Puppets were deliberately chosen to represent the moieties and totems of Aboriginal people. The eagle and crow are representative of the two Victorian moieties, a black cockatoo, white cockatoo and turtle of some Victorian totems, a Tasmanian devil for the Palewa people and a possum to represent the Wiradjuri people. The Koorie girl puppet had fair skin and blue eyes to break down the stereotyping about colour being representative of Aboriginality and specifically to demonstrate that Koories have different skin colours. There was more to this activity than just playing with puppets because the puppets were deliberately selected with culture and identity in mind to trigger clan and nation associations and to stimulate dialogue in relation to these in a safe way.

Participants were placed in three groups and each group given the task of choosing puppets to tell a story to the larger group and then to follow this with their own personal stories. Participants were not given any direction about the stories they could tell. The three groups worked with the puppets and the following stories emerged. This is about story.

Wiran

The first story was a land rights story. A group of Koories were going on a land rights march led by the black cockatoo (Wiran). As they marched they chanted: “What do we want. Land Rights. When do we want it? Now!” Wiran was negative when he spoke as the leader of the rally, because he said “We’re here again. Nothing’s changed.” The audience could tell through this speech that he was extremely frustrated that despite the continual marches by community, nothing had changed.
Wiran forced each member of the group with a puppet to speak at the rally. There was a strong feeling around the importance of each person’s voice being heard that emerged through this story.

**Bayadherra**

The second story was about the Yorta Yorta land claim. This group chose the Bayadherra (long neck turtle) to lead the claim because it is the totem of the Yorta Yorta people. This land claim was well known in the community because of its negative outcome despite several appeals to the High Court by the Yorta Yorta people. The story featured a number of clans within the Yorta Yorta fighting over Native Title because of the decision handed down that they were not entitled to land rights. Participants were passionate about the land claim and really disgruntled that the court’s decision was negative.

**Waa**

Group three’s story was specifically about identity. The puppets used included the crow (Waa), a black cockatoo and a white cockatoo. Waa brought the white cockatoo to the black cockatoo’s (Wiran’s) house. Wiran wanted to know if the white cockatoo was a gubbah (white person). Waa the crow said that the white cockatoo was not a gubbah and went on to explain his kinship connection which was through his (Waa’s) uncle because white cockatoo was his uncle’s son. Upon hearing this explanation Wiran accepted the white cockatoo as a Koorie. This was a story about skin colour and identity.

Participants were reluctant to use the puppets at first because they were unsure about how to use them and they felt it was childish. They wanted to be shown how to use the puppets. Their expectations were that the teacher should dictate the use of the puppets. However once they got into the activity they enjoyed it and, as I had anticipated, the safe space created by the use of puppets allowed for rich and meaningful stories to emerge. Participants were still reluctant however to tell individual personal stories and in fact did not do so. I have taken this to mean that in the future more time would need to be allocated for participants to move into this space.
Traditional cultural activities

Participants in workshop two also engaged in traditional cultural activities which they named the ‘Kooriewealth Games’ (because of the Commonwealth Games). The activities included boomerang and spear throwing, yabbing, hunting Kangaroo, eating a bardi grub and performing a corroboree. Some participants had never yabbied before and others had never thrown a boomerang or spear before and they all engaged fully in these activities with enthusiasm and motivation.

The three groups from the first activity involving puppets formed teams for the hunting game. One person from each team was designated as a kangaroo and the others as hunters. The hunters from the other teams had to then catch the kangaroos. The kangaroos were sent out ten minutes ahead of the hunters to hide. I watched the groups as they hunted the kangaroos and was intrigued to see how they exercised their hunting skills. The team that won the game used a more strategic approach than the other teams. Once the hunter found the kangaroo instead of running straight towards it, he pretended to go in the opposite direction and then at the last minute doubled back and chased the kangaroo. Before the kangaroo could guess what was happening, it was caught.

Participants also engaged in spear and boomerang throwing activities with spears made from doweling. They had to see who could throw them further. They also yabbed at the dam and then later cooked and ate what they had caught. They were also supposed to eat bardi grubs which had been pre-frozen but when I got the bardi grubs out of the freezer to thaw them, I wasn’t sure if they were in suspended animation, or dead. Although one female participant showed her willingness to eat a raw bardi grub I did not pursue this because I did not want to poison any of the participants.

These games were very successful with the male participants who expressed the desire to participate in traditional cultural activities such as hunting. They were engaged in the activities and said that they should have gone for longer. They commented that participation in the hunting activity had shown them how important
patience is to hunting and this highlighted the importance of allocating sufficient
time to this activity in the Kit. Participants were highly motivated to engage with
what for many of them was a lost cultural practice.

Vision
The next section of workshop two focused on supporting participants to develop
strategies to shape a personal vision for the future. In order to do this a series of
slides, based on the book *The Meaning of Life* by Trevor Bradley Grieve (2003), and a
Power Point Presentation about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders and
visionaries was shown. Following this there was a group discussion about the slides.
Participants enjoyed the slideshow about *The Meaning of Life* and the consensus
about the visionaries was that they were impressed by their great achievements.

The discussion then moved to Charles Perkins as an example of an Aboriginal
visionary. Participants were particularly impressed by Perkins because he had been
removed from his family and yet was able to achieve great things. Participants
discussed the difficulties for some Koories who cannot trace their ancestry (because
of the forced removal of their families from communities) to construct a powerful
personal vision, noting that parents and kin provide support and the safe space for
this to happen. This is about seeing.

This in turn led participants to a discussion of ‘coconuts’, defined by Aboriginal
people as being black on the outside but white on the inside. Participants felt this was
a result of immersion in non-Aboriginal culture and this was particularly pertinent
for stolen generation people and for Koories who, in order to be accepted in
mainstream society, felt they had to hide their Aboriginality. The key idea here is that
a lack of contact with Aboriginal communities impacts on identity.

While some participants felt empathy for these Aboriginal people, others were less
sympathetic and took the hard line. They argued every Koorie should identify and
actively participate as a member of the Koorie community or they should not be
accepted as Koorie. A fiery debate followed and after some time participants finally
agreed to disagree because they could not reach a consensus on this issue. This
debate mirrors that about the Confirmation of Aboriginality forms and reveals the depth of participants’ feelings around definitions of identity.

**Major themes from all aspects of workshop 2**

The major themes that emerged from workshop two were the significance of land rights, questions around identity and the impact of loss of traditional cultural activity. The puppet stories revealed the importance of land rights and identity issues and the enthusiasm participants showed in cultural games revealed that the loss of traditional cultural activities had caused spiritual sorrow or distress and that had impacted on cultural connection.

**Land Rights**

The fact that two of the puppet stories were about land rights highlights the significance of this issue for young Koories. The first puppet story showed the frustrations that participants have around land rights marches, recognizing that despite community participation in these marches every year, land rights have still not been achieved. The underlying issue seemed to be whether the marches are ever going to achieve their aim. It also signposts a frustration with the broader political will and the impact of what others say about land rights.

The second story about the Yorta Yorta Land Claim revealed the depth of disappointment over the decision by the courts not to give the Yorta Yorta people land rights. The discussion that followed demonstrated disappointment that the decision had caused disunity in some Koorie communities with members challenging each other over boundaries and naming. The desire for unity and a variety of voices comes through both stories.

The fact that Wiran (first story) ensured that each group member spoke at the rally perhaps signals that young Koories also want their voice to be heard in these debates because they feel that what they have to say is important. This however reflects a breakdown of the traditional system with such debates conducted by Elders on a consensus basis with young people having to wait to participate. This is a significant dimension of the struggle for identity. Young Koories being exposed to non-
Aboriginal cultures are also shown different cultural ways of being young. To them being young does not involve being outside decision making processes because in today's society children as young as sixteen are encouraged to make decisions about their lives. This is about *listening* and creates a real tension between the cultural expectations and norms of Aboriginal people and those of non-Aboriginal people (generally).

**Identity**

While identity is a common link between all the activities in the workshop participants chose to tell specific identity stories.

These identity stories revealed high levels of frustration for the youth because they do not receive their rightful recognition as Koories from a wider community that expects them to continually justify their identity if they are not black enough. This links back to the point I highlighted earlier about Koorie identity being defined by others and proof of Aboriginality bound up with questions of blood and colour.

There is a need for policy makers to consult widely with Aboriginal people about what they consider appropriate ways of identification, particularly when considering the heated debates by the participants around confirmation of identity and identifying. Policy makers need to question the obsession with definitions of Aboriginality when it is well established that this is the role of the Aboriginal community. It is frustrating for Koories to constantly have to re-state and explain their identity because no matter how strongly they identify, every time they are challenged, it takes them back to the place where they are forced to question their identity again. For young Koories whose identity strength is still being constructed it draws them into the debates of others and this is a source of their frustration.

Before the research began I thought that questions associated with identity would be easy to resolve. However, the many kinship variables associated with Koorie identity further complicate the matter for young Koories. For example, some participants have a non-Aboriginal mother and an Aboriginal father; others a non-Aboriginal father and an Aboriginal mother; and others two Aboriginal parents. In addition to
these variations there are also Koories who were stolen, adopted, or fostered by non-Aboriginal families and therefore parented by non-Aboriginal parents.

Participants with two Aboriginal parents related different cultural experiences than those with one Aboriginal parent and one non-Aboriginal parent. Significantly, they were stronger in their identity than those with only one Aboriginal parent. Participants with a non-Aboriginal mother were reared differently than those with an Aboriginal mother because of differently learnt child rearing practices. They spoke about the kinship system where many people were responsible for their upbringing, including their aunties, uncles and grandparents. Participants who had a non-Aboriginal father also spoke about differences because these men were unable to pass down Aboriginal cultural heritage.

These different kinship variables added complexity to the research. This was highlighted when one participant who had a non-Aboriginal father and Aboriginal mother admitted she was unsure about her nation and clan. This shocked those participants who knew their nation and clan, and they strongly queried her lack of knowledge. Her initial response was to withdraw from group discussions (which she did) until a stronger connection was established with the other participants which happened after a period of waiting. Once trust was re-established, this participant found a safe space to discuss her identity issues.

The workshop discussions opened up a safe space for participants to articulate their identity, in this instance with their peer group. While having to justify identity to non-Aboriginal people is frustrating, the tension within Aboriginal communities around what constitutes a ‘real Aborigine’ highlights another issue for young Koories. As discussed earlier, what constitutes ‘real’ Aboriginal identity has been formulated by others, accepted in the wider community and taught in schools. Koorie students are taught in schools to accept stereotypes and that these definitions about ‘real’ Aborigines are true. This was emphasized with one participant (with very dark skin who had lived most of his life in the Northern Territory) who commented: “I met a young guy who told me he was Aboriginal but he had blonde hair and blue eyes. I just looked at him” [in disbelief]. This reveals that stereotypes held in the wider
community have also influenced Aboriginal people’s thinking about identity. The diversity of Aboriginal people means that being Aboriginal will mean different things to different people.

The impact of the loss of traditional culture
The hunger participants revealed for cultural knowledge, through their participation in the traditional cultural activities, showed the impact of the loss of traditional culture in their lives. They saw the activities as a method of contributing to their identity and the fact that they wanted real spears revealed dissatisfaction that these were only games.

The competitiveness that is a significant feature in Koorie sporting activities today did not present during the traditional cultural activities but instead the games encouraged co-operation rather than competition. Participants willingly helped and encouraged each other. This co-operation manifested itself not only between members of the same groups but also between the different groups. When questioned about this, participants responded that because the games were effective team-building exercises they called for co-operation rather than competition. The participants willingly made an agreement that this space was not competitive but rather cultural and a space for connection. The cultural activities that were expressed through the games become a vehicle for participants to practice inclusion.

Summary of workshop 2
The workshop was effective in getting participants to talk about identity issues while, at the same time, giving information and getting them to participate in activities that strengthen identity. The Indigenous research methods: story, waiting, connecting, listening and seeing were used in the receipt and analysis of participants’ views about identity. The puppet stories uncovered valuable insights about culture and kinship, historical experience and Aboriginality. Waiting allowed the participants the time and space to reflect on what they discussed in the workshops. Connection enabled participants to about build relationships with the researcher, presenters and each other. Listening was important to the whole research project as participants listened
to presenters, and to each other. Finally, seeing was about the researcher patiently observing participants as they envisioned their futures.

5.4 Play readings

There are two plays included in the product for this project. These are Daisy Chain and Tunno. There were three readings, two of Daisy Chain and one of Tunno conducted. Youth participants from the research group and other interested people from Aboriginal organizations were involved in the readings.

Daisy Chain

Daisy Chain is a dramatic history of Aboriginal people in a stage play. Prior to the full read through a workshop was held with participants to review Daisy Chain and suggestions led to revisions in the play. Initially, the workshop was to be the full reading however participants wanted the play read to a wider audience and as a result it was finally read as a performance on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} June, 2009 to celebrate Reconciliation Week.

The audience consisted of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people from different organizations (including the Children’s Protection Society, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited and the Aborigines Advancement League) as well as Aboriginal community members. Daisy Chain was received enthusiastically by audiences!

The positive reception and reaction to the performance of Daisy Chain was evidenced in comments made by audience members at the reading. Members of the audience were given a daisy chain graphic on which to make comments. Following the performance collected audience comments on the play were as follows:

These are beautiful stories that tell us about Aboriginal histories. I wish if you practiced more the play can be put in DVD for record because it is really histories for Aboriginal stories and people. In the 1918 scene include more detail, such as children playing and making daisy chain. Maybe make the audience more impressed.
This day (1938) should be history day for Aboriginal communities. If we have some real persons like William Cooper in the conference-strong voices- so it makes our children proud.

Marvelous writing, emotional and educational. Humorous. The combination of music and video (tick, tick).

I found this play presentation very moving. It was also accurate and informative. The combination of music, photos and video was very, very good.

Loved it. You all done a fantastic job. Lots of heart and soul put into this. You should all go on tour.

I was mesmerized by the play... it was informative. Witty and heart wrenching... sometimes all at once! You are very talented with words, feelings and ideas. Well done, I simply don’t know where you get the inspiration.

Well done!

The second play reading of Daisy Chain was held on the day of the Flag Raising ceremony for the National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration on the 7th July in 2009. The same cast members were involved although the audience was different and this time included twenty children aged between 12 and 15, Aboriginal Elders, community representatives, and a number of non-Aboriginal people.

Some Elders in the audience were emotional about the content and two of them cried. They said it was relevant to them because it reflected histories and their lived experiences. They commented:

It was a wonderful play
This play should be taken all around Victoria.

The young Kories in the audience said it was an eye opener to them. They said they learnt a lot about Koorie history and it made them realize how little they knew, and how little they knew about how Koorie organizations were established. One young person said:

I learnt so much history by watching the play.

At the end of the play there was question and discussion time and audience member commented that not only did they learn from the play but they also learnt from the discussion that followed. Those involved as readers also said they learnt a lot about Aboriginal history through their participation.

**Tunno**

Tunno is a cultural murder mystery screenplay. Participants were asked to individually read the screenplay and make comments before the performance reading. They made the following suggestions in relation to the content:

The play should finish at the end of the court scene before the repatriation of the bodies, because it drags on for too long.

Rather than wait until the bodies are repatriated, the young men should be praised up in this scene.

You need to emphasize why Jason is a mongrel-build up more of the back story - build Jason up. Tell us why Jason is a hard head.

They go back to the property too much for no reason.

The language should be ‘bruz’ and ‘cuz’, not mate.
The object might not be a feather, but a piece of bark with Koorie designs on it.

When asked what the play was about, participants said it was about how Jason strengthened his identity as he became more aware of his culture and how he builds his relationship with the Elders.

Tunno was publicly read by the group in December 2009. This time there was no audience because the intent was that the reading by participants would be videoed. As the researcher I watched the recording of the reading and revised the play. This is a collaborative form of writing consistent with my Indigenous methodological approach, involving story, connecting, waiting, listening and seeing. Participants commented that Tunno was different from Daisy Chain and that it should go to a wider audience because it was a “good yarn”. Another comment was that Tunno “is different from what you normally write because it does not contain the usual documentary type commentary.”

5.5 Interviews with participants

One on one interviews were undertaken with individual participants. While the original intention was to interview participants for up to an hour, most interviews were of 20 to 30 minutes duration because participants did not volunteer lengthy answers and with a semi-structured interview process there was no desire to lead the participants or continue the interviews beyond what was required.

My interviews with individuals brought into play my Indigenous research methods: story, waiting, connecting, listening and seeing. Each of these methods played a role in my interaction with the young people, their interaction with me, and the storying that took place through the unstructured interview process (just as each of these is evident in this written text).

Koorie identity concept map for the interviews

In preparation for the interviews with Koorie young people, based on my research and experience in working with the community, I theorized the following concept
map of aspects that impact identity of Koorie youth. The separate components in it were used to inform my strategy for the design of the unstructured interviews.

![Concept map of identity of Koorie identity](image)

*Figure 4. Concept map of identity of Koorie identity*

As a result, my semi-structured questions were designed around naming and country, the role Aboriginal organisations play in identity and the relationship between learning Koorie culture and school retention *(see Appendix 2)*.

**Naming and country**
Participants were asked four linked questions in order to explore their understandings of kinship, nation, clan and country. I was interested to find out how they related to these terms individually and as community members. These questions also linked to the some of the key ideas outlined in the concept map including group identity, diversity of identity and Koorie Nations and clans.
Aboriginal communities have diverse Nations and clans that are responsible for different geographical areas and speak different languages or dialects. For instance, the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages map shows the 38 language groups in Victoria (see map in Appendix 3). Aboriginal society is organized into moieties, nations and clans with individuals becoming attached through inheritance, recognition and acceptance. Within, through and around this classificatory structure kinship works to provide identification for individuals with groups and communities.

Nation and clan names preceded western Christian names and determined everyday relationships. While they were not used on a daily basis, they were important to how the people interacted socially because kinship identification is understood and practiced in this way. The names of nations and clans are therefore important because they are more than just ‘names’. They reflect kin and social relationships between members in the groups and the country they are responsible for looking after.

Until the 1970s nation and clan names were used only amongst Koorie members in communities because on the missions and reserves they were not allowed to practice culture or speak their traditional languages. With the establishment of Aboriginal organizations in the 1970s came resurgence with Aboriginal people using nation and clan names openly to identify them as they formed a national identity. As well as their nation and clan names, existing generic names such as Koorie in Victoria, Murri in Queensland, Palewa in Tasmania, Nunga in South Australia, Nyoongah in Western Australia, and Yolgnu in the Northern Territory became widely used acceptable terms.

With the exception of one participant, everyone knew the name of their nation and viewed strong connection to country as important to their identity. Two comments were:

I’ve got connection to the land - I belong here. This is where my ancestors come from and this is where we’re gonna remain. We
are the first nations - We are the first people here and that makes me proud to be a black woman.

Whenever we go down [to country] we go and visit the cemetery and go and visit the mish or go to the Co-op... so we’ve got strong connections down there.

Another participant related connection to country with identity as follows:

If people ask me what makes me a Koorie - it’s not the colour of my skin [it’s] connection to the land and to the people. Young people do have trouble with the issue of identity, caused by not knowing your family and what country you came from and all that.

**Koorie organisations**

Three questions were asked about the level of involvement of participants or their families in Koorie organizations, how they fit into the Koorie community and the importance of Koorie organizations. The two ideas from the concept map linked to these questions are contemporary issues and the impact of social change.

Rapid social change over the past two hundred years had a traumatic impact on Aboriginal people. This impact reveals itself in contemporary statistics which show discrepancies in health, education and employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in all States and Territories (ABS, NATSISS, 2008). To counteract these discrepancies Koorie organisations were established to provide culturally appropriate services in health, education, the legal system and employment. They have also become places of cultural transmission because they have given Koories a safe space to connect with other members of the community and in the process have become sites that strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities and enhance wellbeing.
All participants were involved with Koorie organisations in one way or another. Seven were employed in Koorie organisations and one considered that she learnt a lot about her culture by working in the organisation. Other participants had parents who worked at them; others attended them for service provision; and others participated in their programs. The following observations were made:

I had a lot to do with the Health Service, AAL, VAYSAR, MAYSAR. I was heaps involved in them through my life.

I have been involved in the Koorie orgs in Melbourne including VAYSAR, VACSAL, VAHS, and Bert Williams. My Mother works for VAYSAR.

I used the Aboriginal Medical Service in NT and since I’ve been in Victoria I have been involved with Bert Williams Aboriginal Youth Services.

My family members have worked with Koorie orgs. We do have strong connections. We do have connections working in Koorie organisations.

[My mum] she’s been heavily involved in Koorie orgs.

**Defining identity**

Participants were asked a question about how they define their identity and their answers incorporated four of the key aspects from the concept map including cultural alienation, expectation, trans-generational trauma and Aboriginality. As already stated, defining Koorie identity is not easy because of the complexity of naming, relationships and cultural mores. All participants identified strongly as Koories, however they were unsure how to articulate this to others.

Only one participant was from the Wurundjeri nation, even though all of them live on the traditional land of the Wurundjeri people. This has implications for identity
because connection to country is important in establishing identity. These implications are especially important for young people living off country because non-identification can lead to cultural alienation. Some participants said that despite living off country they maintained strong connections through family and often returned to country to visit significance places. However for some others, living off country may lead to feelings of cultural alienation which in turn has an impact on being able to articulate identity, as participants said:

I find that a lot of kids [at risk] do struggle with identity and culture. A lot of them don’t know their nations or their clan names and stuff and I find that really sad.

That opened my eyes once I started working here. That there are young Koorie who don’t even know where they come from, that disconnection. I reckon every Koorie has connection to somewhere and if that’s disconnected they go out and look for it. A lot of our young kids probably don’t know where they come from or their tribe or families and that’s one of the things I noticed working here. It doesn’t give them anywhere to belong to.

Aboriginal people have often been positioned by the wider community in ways that have stereotyped them as ‘dumb’, ‘ancient’ or ‘traditional’, labels laden with deficit assumptions that are associated with low expectations. Exposure to, and experience in dealing with, stereotypes and labels fed into the anxiety and struggle for identity definition for some of these young people as the following comment reveals:

There were always questions of how [I was Aboriginal] and does it really count. My mum’s side is fair. Also they hear little bits and pieces about America and how they aren’t really recognised. At the time [I was] very angry... Their view of an Aboriginal person was someone who was extremely dark and had limited education and they question was why was I still in school... We had one teacher in high school and her view was that there were no
Aboriginal people in Victoria because there is such a difference in skin colour. If you weren’t physical [with dark skin] then you weren’t... therefore [she said] we were lying.

Assimilation practices also contribute to cultural alienation and this was especially evident when Aboriginal people were not allowed to openly practice culture and were punished when they did. The effects of this trauma are passed on through the generations. And, for children who were stolen from their families and communities (and reared in institutions) not being able to access cultural practices not only impacted on them but also on their descendents through trans-generational trauma.

All participants spoke in varying ways to a combination of these themes and highlighted the importance of cultural identity to their Aboriginality.

[I] went to Northern Territory for a holiday and then lived there for 2 years. Like a culture shock up there, them mob talk their language as their first language. It was a highlight of my life. It made me question my identity a little bit - I felt kinda gubbah. I felt they were lucky because they still have their language and corroboree. I felt like we miss out down here. It’s like more gubbah down here. Up there it’s so different. I went through women’s law up there. It’s like a higher respect for yourself and from the community and you learn more respect for your culture.

This experience called into question her knowledge of her own traditions and she felt the loss of her culture, but she went on to demonstrate the possibilities for powerful reconnection to build identity by saying that:

When I found out what it really was I felt really privileged for myself and for my culture. I felt proud to be Aboriginal. They were going to give me a skin name but I left there.

Two other participants also spoke about skin colour when telling their identity story.
I'm proud of who I am. A lot of people come up to me and think I'm from Africa or Somali but I tell them I'm Aboriginal. I always say that.

I don't identify with my father because he is white and I'm proud to be black because I have been raised with my Aboriginal family. People have said I could pass for white but I tell them that I'm black on the inside. It used to annoy me but I don't let it get me down because I know I'm black - I'm Aboriginal. I like the colour of my skin. Sometimes I wish I was blacker but I'm pretty good the way I am.

For these young people the colour of their skin was a crucial marker of who they wanted to be and how they chose to present themselves to others. However for others, definition of identity was about identification struggles bound up in their relationships with parents and familial identification.

My mother (who is not Aboriginal) does not like me identifying as a Koorie. One of my sisters identifies strongly but the younger one doesn't identify because she is very much on my mother's side because my parents split up when she was a baby.

These snapshots of young people defining identity, in their own ways, bring to the fore the complexity of identity formation for young people as represented in the concept map shown earlier.

**Experiences at school**

A series of questions were used to ask participants about their schooling experiences. The questions focused on school completion, reasons for early leaving, the teaching of Koorie history at school, and the effects of history and contemporary issues on them.

In line with the participant profile information disclosed earlier, a third of participants completed year 12 schooling, one in three completed year 10, and
another third were only at school until year 9. Reasons given for dropping out of school included cultural differences between home and school, a lack of interest in school, boredom with school work, the influence of other early school leavers, and the experience of racism at school. Two participants, who had only completed year 9, had been involved in the juvenile justice system because of violence and alcohol. Pertinent individual comments about school included: “Didn’t really like to be told what to do by teachers” and “I did not go right through school because I wasn’t interested in school”.

Only those enrolled in Koorie specific classrooms and in a culturally inclusive school had learned about Koorie culture at school. The other youth did not learn any Koorie culture at school and found mainstream schooling not to be Koorie culturally inclusive. The ramifications have impact on the experience of schooling.

I got into a few confrontations with teachers over it [Koorie history] and in the end decided I’d better be careful because it was leading to more confrontations that I was having in class and making it more difficult to go through school. It was limited and it was a very narrow perspective of Aboriginal history.

We were token blackfellas at our school. If they wanted to know anything they asked us. They never taught me nothing. A lot of my education came from family.

Another did not have any trouble at school because the issue of Aboriginality did not come up and she said that she does what she has to do and gets on with her life. However, even when Aboriginality goes unnoticed, the experience of schooling still impacts on identity.

One of the things I learnt was that sometimes it really is hard and sometimes you want to pull back and kind of be unnoticed because it might be confronting but the best thing to do is just push through it and be strong in your identity and say whatever
the outside want to say about me I know who I am and where I come from and that there are people there supporting me.

For most of these young people the history they learnt at school about Aboriginal culture was based on traditional stereotypes and they felt alienated by it.

We learnt I think [in] about year 10 about Koorie history and that was just from the textbooks and stuff. That was just about when Captain Cook came over and about what happened to the Aborigines and kinda like savages... It was all around when they first settled here. It wasn’t anything after that. We didn’t learn about anything political about what Aborigines did to get where they are now. I think it should be in schools and [is] what kids should learn about.

The main troubles I had with identity was going through high school especially... high school was a bit hard because it became very confrontational at the school I was in once it became known that I was Aboriginal. I was put in the situation of always having to explain myself and be kind of the target for whatever was happening in the media. I found that was a hard time. I was just starting to identify as Aboriginal and having all these connections in community and at the same time all these young kids who didn’t really understand what was happening and expecting me to have all the answers.

Participants said that what they did know about Koorie culture they had mostly learned from their families, as evidenced in the comment of one who said “I learned about Koorie history from my father who was very involved in Aboriginal Affairs, working for a number of Aboriginal organizations”. Generally, the position put forward was that they would like to know more. For example, another participant said “I am very interested in Koorie culture and learning about Aboriginal history”.

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But, while the desire and interest to know more about Koorie culture was strong, they themselves did not have suggestions about how to do this.

**History**
The discussion about experiences with schooling, learning Koorie culture and Aboriginal history led to further discussion about how it was important that families knew about Koorie culture because they are keepers of historical knowledge and conduits for cultural transmission and maintenance. One participant said:

> I have a very large extended family and never had any trouble identifying as an Aboriginal woman however I have not bothered to pass my knowledge on to my son. This workshop has encouraged me to pass the cultural knowledge onto my son.

The importance of history was emphasized by Charles Perkins who tied it to Aboriginal identity when he said about the Australia Day celebrations:

> We stagger and stumble into each other in confusion when our identity... is contested and thus allow ourselves to be moulded by others. Our land, our pride, and our future has been taken away from us and our people buried in unmarked graves. We wander through Australian society as beggars. We live off the crumbs of the White Australian table and are told to be grateful. This is what Australia Day means to Aboriginal Australians. We celebrate with you, but there is much sadness in our joy. It is like dancing on our mother’s grave. We know we cannot live in the past, but the past lives with us. (Read, 1990, n.p.)

The message here is that the past does not go away and history creates a legacy for new generations of Aboriginal people. Cooper at the VACCA Conference (2009) put it as follows:
...you have a legacy to carry on as a young Aboriginal woman... My theory is that you’re born into it (politics). My Elders have left me a legacy that I don’t think any of us can reach in our lifetime. All we can do as Aboriginal youth is to make sure that legacy is not forgotten. (p.70)

Young people also made comments about the personal impact of history, on families, leaving legacies for the next generation. For example, the absence or loss of parents in one generation impacts on the one that follows.

The past affects me because my dad was taken away when he was a baby and didn’t know much about his culture and all that. Met his mother when he was a young boy... [and] didn’t know who his parents were or anything. He didn’t have a father growing up but he’s been there for me. It made him more determined to be there for me. He has been there for me. Most of his songs are about his family and about what has happened to him and all that.

And, stories about keeping families intact are celebrated and passed on as histories of struggle and survival.

My mum was fortunate enough not to be stolen because my grandparents kept them on the move all the time. They travelled all the way from Queensland down to Melbourne and they went back and forwards in two cars to go and get the family.

Nan was part of the stolen generations... Nan lived on Lake Condah mission and her mother was sick with TB and grandfather was away chopping wood. All the aunties and uncles had the kids and the police just came and took them. They went to court the next day and all the uncles and that came and said they’d take the kids but they said they only wanted the endowment money. She never got the kids back until they were
eighteen and were able to leave. Nan never took mum and that to
the doctors ever because she thought they would get taken away.
So that still plays on your mind.

I get emotional. There is like a trans-generational affect that the
past has on me.

A final question, not directly incorporated into the flow chart categories, was posed to
participants about how they see their future. There were mixed reactions about
visions for their future. One participant could not see past today, saying that:

In the community the people don’t think about their life and how they’re living
it. It’s harder to make a decision.

However another saw a positive future that was tied to building positive identities
linked to culture.

I see a good future for my children. I think our future’s gonna be
good but can be better if policies and stuff change for Aboriginal
people because obviously my children will identify as Aboriginal
people and I just hope that I can make a better future for my
children by doing the work I’m doing and maintaining my culture
and identity.

There will always be a range of views. For one participant, this was expressed in being
cautious about the future for Aboriginal people saying “I’m kind of in a wait and see
[place]”.

Finally, one participant revealed a passion for her future as a leader helping others to
overcome problems.

I want to be a leader with young people. I’ve got a passion to help
young people who are disadvantaged. I want to be a leader and
someone they can look up to in the future. I reckon I do [have a strong identity].

5.6 Summary
Participants expressed strong views about identity. Even though most lived off country they revealed strong affiliations to their country by knowledge of their nations, clans and kinship. All held some affiliation to Aboriginal organizations they recognized as culturally inclusive places. Those who struggled at school had to continually fight for their identity to be recognized because schools were not Koorie inclusive. Finally, the question about the future gleaned interesting diversity as the comments revealed that some Aboriginal people are thinking more about survival than the future, some see changes to Government policies as being the panacea for them, some remain cautious, and others are passionate about how they can effect changes through their own leadership abilities.

Participant Profile Summary

The following table provides an overview of the participants who were interviewed

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<th>No</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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Figure 5: Profile of Koorie participants

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Chapter 6: Development of Research Project Products

6.1 Introduction

The research project includes the exegesis and the development of an education Kit and a screenplay. The products uniquely combine to tell the story of Gurranyin, the eagle. The story is a metaphor for the history of invasion and the resulting culture clash that impacted on Koories and led to the struggle for identity that is played out for Koorie youth today.

The story links to each product because it was used in the Kit and partly in the screenplay. In the Kit, the story forms the basis for the journey students take to complete assessment tasks that gives them ten flight feathers. In the screenplay, the main character Jason has a dream that is an excerpt from the story (where the eagle is shot) and he finds an eagle feather (Tunno) which helps him solve the screenplay’s murder mystery.

6.2 The Gurranyin Borinya Cultural Enrichment Kit

The Gurranyin Borinya Kit is based on the story of a Wedge-tail Eagle, Gurranyin (which was told at the beginning of this exegesis). The Kit has five sections with activities for students to complete. When students complete assessment tasks they are awarded primary flight feathers and full completion results in ten feathers.

The assessment tasks are based on the five Indigenous research methods used in this project. That is:

- Ngarri: Story
- Nyembera: Waiting
- Boonyabuk: Connection
- Wanga: Listening
- Nangak: Seeing
The Kit was developed to create a resource for young people that would give them strategies and tools to enhance and strengthen their identity. Resources drawn upon to develop the Kit included my experience in Aboriginal Education (over 30 years), a literature review, along with feedback from the interviews, workshops and play readings conducted with the participants.

**Curriculum Development**

Part of my role as Executive Officer for the Victorian Aboriginal Education Consultative Group was to develop Aboriginal Studies curriculum for implementation in Victorian schools and to work with teachers to educate, inform, and prepare them to teach the curriculum. The Aboriginal parents I met at Parent Seminars believed that teachers play an important role in educating students about Aboriginal History. This was highlighted by Purdie et al. (2000) who quoted an Aboriginal parent as saying “we need teachers to have a better understanding of the culture... (and) be aware of the social problems” (p.12).

My experience in Koorie curriculum development, informed by professional practice has been important in determining strategies for the implementation of my education kit and its associated resources.

**Professional Practice**

As well as curriculum development, while working in Koorie Education I organized and facilitated cultural awareness programs for teachers, administrators and students. This increased my own knowledge and understanding of issues and the challenges facing my people. In 1998-99 I taught VCE Koorie History at Shepparton Secondary College and in 1999 also developed and lectured in Indigenous Studies for 2nd year Bachelor of Education students at the University of Melbourne. In these cultural awareness programs participants expressed a desire to learn about traditional Aboriginal culture and lifestyles.

At this time I formed the opinion that Indigenous Studies should be compulsory for all pre-service teachers because most of them have very little access to knowledge about Aboriginal people before commencing their teaching careers. My experience was that some had very negative opinions about issues such as Native Title and while
the course did not change the views for all it did produce change for some. This has confirmed my view that compulsory studies about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, culture and contemporary issues will lead to culturally sensitive teaching practice. Indigenous Studies as a compulsory course in teacher education institutions would impact on evolving development of primary and secondary school curricula (Aveling, 2006).

Research
The information in the Kit, screenplay and exegesis is connected through the voices of the youth that come through story, waiting, connecting, listening, and seeing. As has been mentioned before, these voices and the methods that invoke them inform the product and exegesis.

The Gurranyin Borinya Story
The Gurranyin Borinya story contains facts about the Wedge-tailed Eagle's ways and habitat. A number of features outlined by Col Stringer (1983) have informed the story. He says eagles are the kings of the sky; they are not scared of storms because they use thermals to fly above them; they are not scared of other birds, but other birds are scared of them; they sharpen their beaks by honing them on a rock; and, they renew their youth by plucking out their old feathers and then lying in the sun waiting to grow new ones.

This section of the product also contains a DVD of the corroboree of Gurranyin to give students the story in a traditional form.

History and Contemporary Issues
The history section contains significant events such as: Pre-history, Invasion, Protection, Assimilation, Reconciliation, the Day of Mourning, the Cummeragunga Walk off, the 1967 Referendum, the 1988 Bicentennial Protest, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the 1992 Native Title Decision, and the 2008 Apology to the Stolen Generations.
This section contains a statistical, demographic overview taken from the ABS website, NATSISS, (2008). It contains information collected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website to give a profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today. Also, the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, Victorian Language Map (2007) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Language Map (1988-94) were included in the Kit.

Setting a Vision

Research was conducted to find visionaries and leaders to profile in the Kit. Two Victorian leaders, Dr. Mary Atkinson and Sir Pastor Doug Nicholls were selected. Dr. Mary Atkinson was chosen because of her achievements in Aboriginal Education. For instance, as President of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, she established a Partnership in Education with the State Government which has seen joint management in Koorie Education become a reality in Victoria. Sir Pastor Doug Nicholls played a major role in the Aboriginal rights movement. As Co-founder of the Aborigines Advancement League (the mother of all Victorian Aboriginal organisations) he led many protests that resulted in granting Aboriginal rights.

Other visionaries included in the Kit are as follows. On a national level, Charles Nelson Perkins was included because he is well known for his role in the 1965 Freedom Rides and his lifelong fight for our rights. Oodjeroo of the Noonuccal tribe, Kathleen Walker, was included because she not only lobbied for the 1967 Referendum, as a member of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, but spent her life working to achieve rights for Indigenous people. Internationally, Martin Luther King Jnr, Mahatma Ghandi, Nelson Mandela and John Fitzgerald Kennedy are all well known. King and Kennedy were included for their role in the American Civil Rights movement; Ghandi included for his role in ending British rule in India; and, Mandela for his role in ending apartheid in South Africa. Two spiritual leaders were included; Billy Graham, a well known evangelist who was adviser to many American Presidents; and Mother Teresa who worked tirelessly with the poor in the slums of Calcutta, establishing her own Order and receiving the Nobel Peace Prize.
Walwunmutj Bunga

*Walwunmutj Bunga* is a children’s story about a young Koorie girl, Tess, who lives on an Aboriginal mission. She finds a shiny stone down the river and hides it. She does not know what it is but tells her brother about the stone. It is a diamond that was stolen by a couple of thieves who came back for it. When they find the stone gone, they pretend to be researchers and go to the mission to find out who has it. They find out it is Tess and her brother Brad and try to kidnap them. Tess and Brad jump out of the boat and swim the river to their grandfather to escape. The men are locked up and the children get a reward for finding the diamond.

I wrote *Walwunmutj Bunga* (shiny stone) to complement the Kit for primary school students. The story features language words from the Bangerang people and links to the Kit because it shows what life was like living on an Aboriginal mission. Ideas for the book come from my own experiences of growing up between two missions, reading stories about Elders who grew up on the missions and reserves in Harvey et al. (2003) Aboriginal Elders’ Voices—Stories of the Tide of History, and oral tradition from stories told to me by my mother, grandmother, and extended family members.

Daisy Chain

*Daisy Chain* complements the Kit and is designed for secondary students. It is history in a play. The title ‘daisy chain’ is a metaphor for each significant event in Aboriginal history linking together like a daisy chain. The play contains parts of real speeches made at significant events as well as fictitious dialogue for telling the story. It represents significant historical events that have impacted on Aboriginal families including:

- The 2008 Apology to the Stolen Generations by the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, on the 13th February.
- The forced removal of Aboriginal children from Cummeragunga mission in 1918.
- The Day of Mourning in 1938.
- The Cummeragunga Walk off in 1939.
- The 1967 Referendum.
- Kathleen Walker handing back her MBE in 1987.
- The Native Title decision handed down by the High Court in 1992.
- Back to the National Apology in 2008.

In summary, the Gurranyin Borinya Cultural Enrichment Kit provides a collection of resources aimed at strengthening identity through provision of information, histories and activities for young people.

6.3 Screenplay (Tunno)

Tunno is a cultural murder mystery. It is about a young Koorie Jason and an adventure with his cousin Greg and non-Aboriginal friend Steven. They are typical young men, bored with life, drinking, smoking marijuana and getting in trouble with the police. One night while trying to find money to buy alcohol, they trespass on a property where they discover a bone in an old mineshaft. While trying to find out how the bone got there, they solve a mystery and in the process Jason finds out about his culture and his identity is strengthened.

I wrote the screenplay and included it as a learning resource because of my love of reading and writing and my recognition of the power of stories to communicate truths of experience in meaningful ways. For me this began in 1989 when I wrote an earlier stage play, Voices in the Wind that told the story of my grandmother.

Ideas expressed by research participants were included in the writing of the first draft of the screenplay and their suggestions were also taken into account during the redrafting process after they participated in the reading. In order to write the screenplay research was undertaken into porcelain dolls (doll reference website), skulls (Wilkenson, 2002), the Koorie Court (Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement, 2000) and massacre sites (Woolington, 1973) to ensure that Tunno is connected to historical events and facts.
6.4 Trial of the Kit

Earlier versions of the Gurranyin Borinya Kit have been presented at a number of teacher conferences and Aboriginal community meetings (see Appendix 4). Part of the Kit was also trialled with a teacher and a group of grade 5 and 6 Koorie students in the Manega Aboriginal Annexe at Gowrie Street Primary School in Shepparton [during term 3 in 2009]. Also, as has been mentioned several times, performances and readings of components of the Kit, with research project participants, have provided opportunities for collection of feedback useful to the ongoing development of all of these items.

The feedback received from presentations, trials and performances of work-in-progress drafts and later versions was used to rework, revise and reorganize the Kit. This has occurred throughout various periods during the research project and the development of the resources. While there have been many revisions required, both large and small, the feedback has predominantly been positive and has always been useful. Without exception, everyone who has heard the story has stated that it is powerful and fits perfectly with my own story. What follows is a summary of insights received and taken during the trial and revision of drafts of the Kit and its component resources. It is indicative of the feedback received and incorporated – it is not a full account of the trial or the feedback.

Gowrie Street Evaluation

One section of the Kit was trialled with grades 5 and 6 in Manega Aboriginal Annexe at Gowrie Street Primary School. There was not enough time for the teacher to complete more than one section during the trial. The teacher said of the Kit that it “is overall a good Kit but for the teaching of it you need to have time. Time is the biggest thing to give it justice... I could only pick certain components out of it so I did the overview of Aboriginal history”. The teacher’s comments on the section on Aboriginal History were:

This component took three weeks but it wasn’t enough time to do justice to all the activities. The timeline history, but the questions at the end of it were out of order. The students really enjoyed it
and got into it but it wasn’t enough time. Because it was three weeks I had to condense a lot of the activities but at the same time try to provide all the information that was in the Kit to the students. If the Kit was used throughout the year in a program there would be ample time to deal with any issues that might arise through it. Because there wasn’t enough time to talk to the students, there were issues that may have arisen but couldn’t be followed up.

This feedback was useful because it provided practical insights into how students manage activities and the way in which the resources support student learning. It allowed for revisions, and tweaking of how the components are arranged and sequenced. It also provided advice for teachers (that was included in the Kit) to make them aware of how much time they need to do all the activities in the Kit.

Feedback from participants at Conferences
Feedback from participants at conferences where the Kit was presented has been positive, especially about how the Kit could be used as a tool to strengthen identity of young people. At a Catholic Education Conference for teachers (see Appendix 4), a comment was made that the Kit should not be developed only for Koorie students but it would be useful to be used by all students. This was a major insight into the broad usefulness and potential application of what I was developing. By taking this comment on board I was able to revise and expand the Kit so that the Koorie cultural content could be used for educating all students about Aboriginal culture.

Comments by research project participants
As previously mentioned, comments made by the research group participants at different times have provided input for the revision of drafts and earlier versions of particular components. In one case, it was suggested that the workshop include practical interactive activities and this led to the inclusion of an additional activity in the revised Kit based on songs written and sung by Koorie singers with an aim to strengthen identity and raise the self-esteem of young Koories. My incorporation of other comments made by the research group participants allowed me to develop and
include stories about the achievements of different Aboriginal leaders and visionaries to encourage students to imagine great possibilities and show them what it is possible to achieve.

Useful comments were received on how activities should include ideas for students on how to use the puppets to tell their stories. It was recommended that the facilitator of the puppet activity should be able to demonstrate the use of puppets for the students. Participants said that they felt safer telling a group story rather than individual stories because it meant less personal risk for them. The shame factor was taken away because ownership of the stories was collective and that individual stories could be told when participants felt they had a safe space to do this. They also observed that the puppet activity was good as an ice breaker at the beginning of the workshop.

In particular, I took great encouragement from the following overall comment made by one participant about the Kit.

This program will give me a greater education and will assist in my employment because having cultural knowledge and understanding is an essential criterion for working in Aboriginal organisations and this program could be good for other young Koorie kids who don’t know anything about their culture.

**Feedback Process with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority**

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) is the curriculum body in Victoria for all schools. Its role is to develop curriculum for P-10 compulsory years of schooling as well as post compulsory years of schooling, VCE and VCAL. The feedback from VCAA was that it could be a stand-alone resource for supporting the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. Abbreviated comments received from the Manager of the Humanities unit about each of the sections are as follows (*see full comments in Appendix 5*).
Sections 1 & 2 (Ngari and Nyemera)

The following comments were made:

I have added some additional elements of the standards where I felt the text provided opportunities for the students to demonstrate them. These standards are implied through the kind of investigations the students are doing but is not explicit in the text and includes: Interpersonal development at level 4 and specifically to build social relationships through respect for a diverse range of people and groups and accept and display empathy for the points of view of feelings of their peers and others; Working in teams; Personal Learning as the Individual Learner; Manage Personal Learning by seeking and using learning support when needed from peers, teachers and other adults; Civics and Citizenship and Community Engagement; English; Reading; Writing; ICT- for Creating by using a range of skills, procedures, equipment and functions to process different data types and produce accurate and suitably formatted products to suit different purposes and audience; Thinking Processes - Reasoning, processing and inquiry by developing their own questions for investigation, collect relevant information from a range of sources and make judgments about its worth.

The kit does not claim to incorporate History however, opportunities to demonstrate the following element’s standards are provided for: History - Historical Knowledge and Understanding and Historical Reasoning and Interpretation by using a range of primary and secondary sources to investigate the past.
Sections 3 & 4 (Boonyabuk and Wanga)

This could be used beyond the Koorie community to develop greater cultural awareness and tolerance. In its current form, the kit provides opportunity at Level 4 for: Building Social Relationships in Interpersonal development; Working in teams; Personal Learning; The Individual Learner; Managing Personal Learning; Civics and Citizenship; Civic Knowledge and Understanding; Community Engagement; English, and Reading.

Section 5 (Nangak)

Aspects of the VELS Level 4 that support vision and empowerment of self and others—the curriculum map at the start of the unit does not link strongly to this section. It would seem that the intention is to just give examples of how it maps to the VELS and is not meant to be comprehensive. However, even if this is the case, it will not be obvious to many teachers where empowerment and vision are in the VELS and an indication on where it is may support them in their choice to do this section.

In this section the kit supports the following: Civics and Citizenship; Community Engagement; Writing; Speaking and Listening, ICT for Creating.

The following general comment was made:

The kit does not claim to incorporate History or Geography, however, opportunities to demonstrate the following elements of the Level 4 standards are provided for: Historical Knowledge and Understanding; Historical Reasoning and Interpretation; and, Geographical Knowledge and Understanding.
Daisy Chain
The following comments were made about Daisy Chain:

While the purpose of the play is to supplement the Kit, I think that it could also be a stand-alone resource for use at Levels 5 and 6 as well. The curriculum mapping below therefore covers these levels as well. It provides opportunity for (depending on activities linked to the play):

- Interpersonal development at Level 5 and Level 6
- Civics and Citizenship
- Civic Knowledge and Understanding
- Civic Knowledge and Understanding at Level 5 and 6
- Historical Knowledge and Understanding at Level 4
- Historical Knowledge and Understanding at Level 6

Walwunmutj Bunga
VCAA Officers thought that the text provides an interesting insight into the life of its main character, Tess, and provides many opportunities for classroom discussion of values, as well as some issues surrounding the lives of Aboriginal people. They said it is appropriate for a class or individual text at level 4, but its use could also be adapted to a broader range of levels (Level 3 - Level 5). They commented:

...The story provides opportunity to address the following elements: Interpersonal Development-Building Social Relationships; Civics and Citizenship; Civic Knowledge and Understanding; Community Engagement; English; Reading and Thinking Processes, at Level 4 of the VELS standards.

All comments from VCAA Curriculum Officers are reflected in the revisions made to develop the final version of the Kit.

6.5 Implementation Process
The product will be available for use by all primary and secondary school students. As well as this because identity is central to all aspects of Aboriginal life Gurranyin
Borinya carries applicability to other sectors that require identity development as well as to schools. To ensure the Kit is implemented in Victorian schools there are protocols that need to be adhered to. These protocols include requesting that the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) evaluate it for its cultural appropriateness. Two opportunities were made available to VAEAI for their comments on the Kit. The first opportunity was in 2008 when an overview of the Kit was presented to VAEAI members at the State-wide Koorie Education Conference. Conference participants (all Koorie Education workers) requested copies of the Kit to incorporate into schools in their regions through the VAEAI Constituent Units, the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups.

The final draft of the product was sent to VAEAI in March 2010 for their comment about its cultural sensitivity. The Primary and Secondary representatives met to consider the Kit and their only comment was that the VELS standards should be put in each of the sections as well as at the beginning of the Kit. They felt this would make it more attractive to teachers to use.

DEECD’s Education Strategy for Koorie students in Victoria, Wannik: Learning Together- Journey to Our Future was launched in 2008. It was developed in close consultation with VAEAI and it plans to improve outcomes for Koorie students across all Victoria’s government system by creating “... an environment that respects, recognises and celebrates cultural identity through practice and curriculum” (p.6). The Kit does exactly this.
Chapter 7: Epilogue

In this final chapter of the exegesis I return to my research problem, its aims and questions in order to bring together the key insights about Koorie identity that have been gained through my research project.

To begin, I shall revisit the research problem which was about investigating and finding ways to increase knowledge about how young Koories (18-24) build, maintain and strengthen their cultural identity.

The questions that arose from this problem were:

- What is Koorie identity?
- What makes a person a Koorie?
- What does being a Koorie mean?
- What is the diversity of Koorie identity?
- How do young Koories maintain a sense of their cultural heritage in a rapidly changing society?
- What is the impact of young Koories maintaining their Aboriginality?
- How can Koorie youth be empowered to identify as Koories?
- How can Koorie youth be supported to have pride in their Aboriginality?

My journey through the collection, interpretation and analysis of data together with the creation, development and publication of the research product (the Kit: corroboree DVD of the story, the teachers’ notes and students’ activities, Wulwunmutj Bunga and Daisy Chain and the Screenplay, Tunno) has allowed me to build a response to the problem and its questions. What follows is a summary of those responses with emphasis on those aspects which have relevance for me as the researcher and hopefully for readers of the exegesis and users of the product (resources and materials).
My literature review focused on the slippery nature of identity as a category and this was confirmed through my investigation of my own biographical story and of stories of young Koorie who were also struggling with their own identities. Identity is not simple because we all have multiple dimensions to our identities and sometimes these sit in tension with each other. Identity for Koorie is complex and within this project I determined that there are four factors contributing to a person identifying as a Koorie. These factors are historical experience, culture and kinship, genetic inheritance and Aboriginality.

In determining what does being Koorie mean, the history of definitions was unpacked and critiqued leading to a definition that includes genetic inheritance, self identification and connections to community. In addition, that there are many nations and clans of Aboriginal people and therefore great diversity among Koories was recognised, appreciated and put to use by myself and my research participants. It was in dealing with this that the young people raised the issues associated with the difficulty in identifying in today’s changing society. For example, the adverse impact on young Koorie who do maintain their Aboriginality is that they are questioned, required to justify and forced to defend their identity. Acceptance by members of the wider community of Koorie identity will support Koorie youth in their Aboriginality.

Significantly, schooling experiences can be highly alienating and destructive for young people struggling with identity formation. This is especially the case for Koorie youth who experience cultural exclusion, racism and (for many) the consequences of fractured or low school participation and completion. This project has endeavoured to address the need for schools to become more inclusive places where identity can be strengthened and Koorie youth (and young people in general) empowered. The development of the Kit and the other resources has been directed at supporting schools, teachers and students in understanding and implementing inclusive practices.

In adopting an approach to research that was informed by the emerging tradition for Indigenous methodology, I chose research methods appropriate for collecting information from Indigenous people and communities in culturally sensitive ways.
My choice and naming of these Indigenous methods helped to position me both as researcher and as Indigenous participant in the research. As an Indigenous researcher I was prepared to wait, to connect, to listen and to see in giving my Koorie youth participants the space, time and respect to tell their stories. This was both method and a process of knowing in my research. I see the elaboration of Indigenous methods as a key outcome, academically and politically of the project.

My five Indigenous methods were named Ngarri (Story), Nyembera (Waiting), Boonyabuk (Connection), Wanga (Listening), and Nangak (Seeing). By naming, describing and illustrating the use of these research methods I have sought to contribute to the development and application of ways of bringing the voices of Indigenous people, in this case Koorie youth, in culturally sensitive and meaningful ways to research about Aboriginal identities. As both a method of data collection and a process for knowledge construction these methods have informed and actioned the development of the research products in this research project. In this way, my use of Ngarri, Nyembera, Boonyabuk, Wanga, and Nangak contribute to an evolving scholarship about Indigenous methodology.

In bringing together these observations and conclusions from the research journey I have been reminded of the parallels between my own observations and the sentiments about struggle over identity contained in the following poem, *Lord why did you make me black?* At the beginning of the process I had my own ideas about identity, but through my research I have come to deeper and broader understandings of identity complexity and the diversity of what it means to be a Koorie. It is these deeper and broader understandings that are reflected in the research products and that resonate with the sentiments in the poem.

The poem, *Lord, why did you make me black?* is relevant because it powerfully expresses the struggle for identity. It begins with a deep sadness and reflection about skin colour and identity, but finishes with an understanding and appreciation for physical differences between people.
**Lord, Lord, why did you make me black?**

Why did you make me someone the world wants to hold back?
Black is the colour of dirty clothes, the colour of grimy hands and feet,
black is the colour of darkness, the colour of tyre-beaten streets.
Why did you give me thick lips, a broad nose and kinky hair?
Why did you make me someone who receives the hatred stare?

Black is the colour of a bruised eye when somebody gets hurt,
Black is the colour of darkness, black is the colour of dirt.
How come my eyes are brown, and not the colour of daylight sky?
How come I feel so used, why do some people see my skin and think I should be abused?

Lord, I just don’t understand, what is it about my skin,
Why do some people want to hate me and not know the person within?
Black is what people are listed when others want to keep them away,
Black is the colour of shadows cast, black is the end of the day.

Lord, you know, my own people mistreat me; And I know this isn’t right!
They don’t like my hair, or the way I look, they say I’m too dark, or too darn light.
Lord, don’t you think it’s time for you to make a change,
Why don’t you re-do creation and make everyone the same?

The first part of this poem is a sad indictment about the way society has dealt with the issue of skin colour because it reveals desperation about the colour ‘black’ with its link to identity. However, the other half of this poem shows how the author has dealt
with the issue of skin colour and physical characteristics and reached a positive conclusion.

God Answered Saying:
Why did I make you black, you have the audacity to ask?
I did not do it as a joke or as some cruel task

Get off your knees, and look around, tell Me, what do you see?
I didn’t make you in the image of darkness, I made you in the likeness of Me!
I made you the colour of coal, from which beautiful diamonds are formed.
I made you the colour of oil, the black gold that keeps people warm.

I made you from the rich, dark earth that grows the food you need.
Your colours the same as the Panther’s, known for her beauty and speed
Your colour’s the same as the black stallion, a majestic animal
No! I did not make you in the image of darkness, I made you in the likeness of Me!

All the colours of the heavenly rainbow can be found throughout every Nation
And when all those colours were blended well, you became my greatest creation.
Your hair is the texture of lamb’s wool such a humble little creature is he,
I am the Shepherd who watches them, I am the One who will watch over thee.
You are the colour of midnight skies, I put the stars, glitter in your eyes,
There's a smile hidden behind your pain, that's the reason your cheeks are high!
You are the colour of dark clouds, formed during my strongest winters in December.
I made your lips full, so when you kiss the one you love, they'll remember
Your stare is strong, your bone structure thick, to withstand the burdens of time.
The reflection you see in the mirror, the image looking back at you, is Mine!

So, in answer to all of your questions, and to forgive you for all of your flack.

These are the reasons that I the LORD made you so BEAUTIFUL and BLACK!

RuNett Nia Ebo (1994)

It is obvious that the poet has dark skin and her struggle is because of the colour of her skin and her physical characteristics and how they link to her identity. In my research project a similar identity struggle plays out for young Koories not because they are not dark skinned or possess particular physical characteristics but because they have to justify their Aboriginality against views informed by stereotypes.

What has this poem got to do with the research project and the struggles facing young Koories maintaining their identity? It emphasizes that in contemporary society Aboriginal culture is in competition with other cultural values and mores that are considered universal and normal. The pressure on young Koories to conform to normal activity places unrealistic demands on them and reduces the time they have to participate in cultural activity. Parents are faced with the challenge of how they help
their children maintain identity. They ask whether they are doing any favours by teaching them culture. That similar issues were contemplated by our parents and grandparents was obvious to me when I asked my grandmother why she did not pass on her language and she replied "It would have only got them [the children] in trouble with the managers on the mission". Nan made the assumption that her children were better off not practicing their culture.

This project has revealed that young Koories do think about the issue of identity and do participate in cultural activity when it is possible to do so and are interested in knowing more about their culture. Using cultural names to describe themselves was also important because they saw it as a way of retaining culture.

The metaphor of the eagle was used to explain identity because Gurranyin represents young Koories. In its own environment, the eagle is king of the skies just as Aboriginal people once lived in harmony with their environment. Because of adverse Government policies and practices, young Koories struggle with trans-generational trauma and are confused about their identity. In the story of Gurranyin the old feathers represented the impact of historical events on their families and communities. Like Gurranyin if they are to survive they have to renew their strength, heal spiritually, go back to country and strengthen their connection. The new feathers represent learning about families and country. Each feather strengthens identity. When identity is strong young people can soar above the clouds and contribute effectively to both the Aboriginal and wider communities because when our children know who they are and are proud of it, they will be able to do anything.

This research project revealed to me that I am Gurranyin. I have been where Gurranyin lay when he was shot. Like so many others I had to fight against the storms of life to fly. My education has taken 57 years and has involved many challenges. On the journey I have had to connect to family and country and through this I have been able to pluck out the old feathers of hurt, anger, resentment and racism. The challenge as a community, parents and grandparents is to make sure the next generation knows who they are and are proud and that they too can fly.
The project has been a journey of discovery for me. I began the process thinking I had eleven flight feathers and that I was secure in my own identity as an Aboriginal person. During the project I realised there are times when something traumatic would happen and I would return to the struggle just as Gurranyin did.

Education is a birth to death process and in our lives we will revisit issues that impact on our identity. Because we are always learning our journey never ends, therefore the twelfth flight feather can only come to us at the end of our lives. It is the spirit of the struggle for renewal in Gurranyin’s story that has been uncovered in this project and supported in tangible form through the development of the research project products.

As T.S. Eliot (2001) says in Little Gidding, to know the end is to know the beginning.

    We shall not cease from our exploration.
    And the end of all our exploring
    Will be to arrive where we started
    And know the place for the first time.
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Appendix 1: Newspaper Article

[Copyrighted material omitted]
Appendix 2: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What is your family name?
2. What is your clan?
3. What is your nation?
4. Where is your country?
5. What Koorie organisations are in your country?
6. Are you involved in any of the local Koorie organisations?
7. If so, how?
8. If not, why not?
9. Are your parents involved in local Koorie organisations?
10. How do you fit into the Koorie community?
11. What things do you do that reflect your identity?
12. What did you learn about Koorie history at school?
13. How do you think what has happened to Aboriginal people in the past effects you?
14. How do you think what is happening to Aboriginal people today effects you?
15. What have you learned about Koorie history from other sources?
16. Did you complete your schooling?
17. If not, why not?
18. If so, what have you done since leaving school?
19. What sort of future so you see for yourself?
Appendix 3: Aboriginal Languages of Victoria Map

Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (2008).

[Copyrighted material omitted]
# Appendix 4: Conference Presentations and Publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Auspicing Organisation</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile Justice Conference (Key note speaker)</td>
<td>RMIT</td>
<td>February 2004</td>
<td><em>Identity issues for youth at risk</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families are Forever: Build Them Strong! Conference</td>
<td>Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)</td>
<td>6th-8th October, 2004</td>
<td><em>Conference Address: Aboriginality</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families are Forever: Build Them Strong! Conference</td>
<td>Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)</td>
<td>6th-8th October, 2004</td>
<td><em>Conference Workshop: Identity</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys To Fine Men Conference</td>
<td>VAEAI</td>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td><em>Conference Address: Gurraniny Borinya-On Eagles Wings</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Indigenous People’s Conference In Education</td>
<td>WIPCE</td>
<td>December 2005</td>
<td>‘Deep Listening With Indigenous Researchers A collaborative approach to post-graduate research in South Eastern Australia’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAEAI Statewide Aboriginal Education Conference 2008</td>
<td>Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated</td>
<td>April 2008</td>
<td>Gurraniny Borinya digital story and overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Education Conference,2008</td>
<td>Catholic Education</td>
<td>June 2008</td>
<td>Gurraniny Borinya educational resource kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Indigenous People’s Conference on Education, December 2008</td>
<td>Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated</td>
<td>December 2008</td>
<td>Gurraniny Borinya educational resource kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciliation Week-Play reading-Daisy Chain</td>
<td>Gurwidj Neighbourhood House</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td><em>Daisy Chain-play</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurraniny Borinya Assertiveness Training workshop</td>
<td>Lake Tyers Early Childhood Group</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>Gurraniny Borinya activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAEAI Early Years Conference</td>
<td>VAEAI</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>Gurraniny Borinya activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciliation week-Play reading</td>
<td>Aborigines Advancement League</td>
<td>3rd June, 2009</td>
<td><em>Daisy Chain play</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAIDOC week-Play reading</td>
<td>Aborigines Advancement League</td>
<td>7th July, 2009</td>
<td><em>Daisy Chain play</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play reading</td>
<td>Aborigines Advancement League</td>
<td>December 2010</td>
<td>Tunno screenplay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Comments from the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority on the Kit.

Please find attached curriculum mapping for the education kit, Daisy Chain and Walwunmutj Bunga. We worked on it as a team and comments are from different team members. I have kept the mapping in three separate documents and in turn the kit document has mapping for each of the sections. We have left it up to you to work out to what extent you want to combine all of this mapping. We really did enjoy reading the material and thanks for the opportunity to undertake the work. If you would like to discuss any of it then please contact me. In the meantime all the best with your PhD.

Curriculum Manager (Humanities)
Acting Manager VELS Unit
Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA)

Gurranyin Borinya Cultural Education Kit – Sections 1&2
I have added some additional elements of the standards where I felt the text provided opportunities for the students to demonstrate them.

Interpersonal development - Level 4 - Building Social Relationships
...demonstrate through their interactions in social situations, respect for a diverse range of people and groups... (This is implied through the kind of investigations the students are doing but it is not explicit in the text)
...they accept and display empathy for the points of view and feelings of their peers and other... (This is implied through the kind of investigations the students are doing but it is not explicit in the text)

Working in teams
... Work effectively in different teams and take on a variety of roles to complete tasks of varying length and complexity...
...work cooperatively to allocate tasks...
...accept responsibility for their role and tasks...

*Personal Learning - Level 4 - The Individual Learner*

... Seek and respond to teacher feedback to develop their content knowledge and understanding...

Managing Personal Learning

... Develop and implement plans to complete short-term and long-term tasks within timeframes set by the teacher, utilizing appropriate resources...

... Undertake some set tasks independently, identifying stages for completion...

... Seek and use learning support when needed from peers, teachers and other adults.

...... (This is implied through the kind of personal learning the students are doing but it is not explicit in the text)

*Civics and Citizenship - Level 4 - Community Engagement*

... Present a point of view on a significant current issue or issues...

...demonstrate understanding that there are different viewpoints on an issue, and contribute to group and class decision making...

*English - Level 4 - Reading*

... Read, interpret and respond to a wide range of literary, everyday and media texts in print and in multimodal formats...

... Identify how cultural values, attitudes and beliefs are presented in texts...

*Writing*

...employ a variety of strategies for writing, including note-making, using models, planning, editing and proofreading...

*ICT - Level 4 - ICT for Creating*

... Use a range of skills, procedures, equipment and functions to process different data types and produce accurate and suitably formatted products to suit different purposes and audiences... (There are minimal requirements in the existing text for students to demonstrate this, as they are expected to produce one power point presentation with little in the way of specific instruction)
Thinking Processes - Level 4 - Reasoning, processing and inquiry
...develop their own questions for investigation, collect relevant information from a range of sources and make judgments about its worth. ... (This is implied through the kind of investigations the students are doing but it is not explicit in the text)

The kit does not claim to incorporate History however, opportunities to demonstrate the following elements of the Level 4 standards are provided for:

History - Level 4 - Historical Knowledge and Understanding
...demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of significant events in Australian history, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander History,
... Demonstrate an understanding of the histories of some cultural groups which make up Australia today...
..They make links and appropriate comparisons with contemporary Australia...
...compare aspects of different cultures and countries, in both the past and present, and ask questions about their own society...

Historical Reasoning and Interpretation
... Use a range of primary and secondary sources to investigate the past... (This is implied through the kind of investigations the students are doing but it is not explicit in the text)
...with support, they frame research questions and plan their own inquiries...

Mapping:
Interpersonal development - Level 4 - Building Social Relationships
...demonstrate through their interactions in social situations, respect for a diverse range of people and groups...
...they accept and display empathy for the points of view and feelings of their peers and others...

Working in teams
... Work effectively in different teams and take on a variety of roles to complete tasks of varying length and complexity...
...work cooperatively to allocate tasks...
...accept responsibility for their role and tasks...

Personal Learning - Level 4

The Individual Learner
... Seek and respond to teacher feedback to develop their content knowledge and understanding...

Managing Personal Learning
... Develop and implement plans to complete short-term and long-term tasks within timeframes set by the teacher, utilizing appropriate resources...
... Undertake some set tasks independently, identifying stages for completion...
... Seek and use learning support when needed from peers, teachers and other adults.
... Demonstrate a positive attitude to learning within and outside the classroom...

Civics and Citizenship - Level 4 - Civic Knowledge and Understanding
...describe the contribution of various cultural groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to Australian identity...
Community Engagement
... Present a point of view on a significant current issue or issues...
...contribute to group and class decision making...

English - Level 4 - Reading
... Read, interpret and respond to a wide range of literary, everyday and media texts in print and in multimodal formats...
... Analyze these texts and support interpretations with evidence drawn from the text...
... Identify how cultural values, attitudes and beliefs are presented in texts...

Education Kit – Section 5
Aspects of the VELS Level 4 that supports vision and empowerment of self and others
The curriculum map at the start of the unit does not link strongly to this section. It would seem that the intention is to just give examples of how it maps to the VELS and
is not meant to be comprehensive. However, even if this is the case, it will not be obvious to many teachers where empowerment and vision are in the VELS and an indication on where it is may support them in their choice to do this section.

*Civics and Citizenship - Level 4 - Community Engagement*

...demonstrate understanding of the roles and responsibilities of leaders...
...they present a point of view on a significant current issue or issues and include recommendations about the actions that individuals and governments can take to resolve issues....

*Writing*

... produce, in print and electronic forms, a variety of texts for different purposes using structures and features of language appropriate to the purpose, audience and context of the writing...
...employ a variety of strategies for writing, including note-making, using models, planning, editing and proofreading...

*Speaking and Listening*

...plan, rehearse and make presentations for different purposes...
...adjust their speaking to take account of context, purpose and audience, and vary tone, volume and pace of speech to create or emphasize meaning...
...when listening to spoken texts, they identify the main idea and supporting details and summaries them for others...
...identify opinions offered by others...

*ICT - Level 4 - ICT for Creating*

... Use a range of skills, procedures, equipment and functions to process different data types and produce accurate and suitably formatted products to suit different purposes and audiences...
...use design tools to represent how solutions will be produced and the layout of information products...
...apply conventions and techniques that improve the appearance of the finished product...
... Modify products on an ongoing basis in order to improve meaning and judge their products against agreed criteria.

The kit does not claim to incorporate History or Geography, however, opportunities to demonstrate the following elements of the Level 4 standards are provided for:

**History - Level 4 - Historical Knowledge and Understanding**

...demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of significant events in Australian history, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander History, European settlement...

... Demonstrate an understanding of the histories of some cultural groups which make up Australia today...

..They make links and appropriate comparisons with contemporary Australia...

... Explain significant events and people...

...compare aspects of different cultures and countries, in both the past and present, and ask questions about their own society...

**Historical Reasoning and Interpretation**

... Use a range of primary and secondary sources to investigate the past...

...with support, they frame research questions and plan their own inquiries...

... Use appropriate historical language and concepts to develop historical explanations...

...present their understandings in a range of forms...

**Geography - Level 4 - Geographical Knowledge and Understanding**

... Compare the various ways humans have used and affected the Australian environment...

...use geographic language to identify and describe the human and physical characteristics of local and global environments depicted by different kinds of maps, diagrams, photographs and satellite images...

**Geospatial Skills**

... Identify features from maps...
Daisy Chain—Comments by the VCAA

While the purpose of the play is to supplement the kit, I think that it could also be a stand alone resource for use at Levels 5 and 6 as well. The curriculum mapping below therefore covers these levels as well.

Provides opportunity for (depending on activities linked to the play)
Interpersonal development

Level 4
...demonstrate through their interactions in social situations, respect for a diverse range of people and groups...
...they accept and display empathy for the points of view and feelings of their peers and others...

Level 5
...demonstrate respect for the individuality of others and empathies with others in local, national and global contexts...

Level 6
...they describe how local and global values and beliefs determine their own and others’ social relationships...

Civics and Citizenship - Level 4 - Civic Knowledge and Understanding
...describe the contribution of various cultural groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to Australian identity...

Level 5 - Civic Knowledge and Understanding
...identify significant developments in the governance and achievement of political rights in Australia....
...they identify and question the features and values of Australia’s political and legal systems. They identify and discuss the qualities of leadership through historical and contemporary examples...
Level 6 - Civic Knowledge and Understanding
...present a considered point of view on an issue about change in the political system and the law...
...they explain how the Australian Constitution affects their lives, and human rights issues, both national and international...
...they explain how citizens influence government policy through participation in political parties, elections and membership of interest groups...
...they explain the development of a multicultural society and the values necessary to sustain it...
...they analyse how well democratic values are reflected in aspects of the Australian political system...
Several elements of Thinking Processes could be relevant but this would depend on the design of the activities.

History - Level 4 - Historical Knowledge and Understanding
...demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of significant events in Australian history, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander History, European settlement...
..They make links and appropriate comparisons with contemporary Australia...

Level 6 - Historical Knowledge and Understanding
...students analyze events which contributed to Australia’s social, political and cultural development...
...students evaluate the contribution of significant Australians to Australia’s development...
...students evaluate the impact of colonization on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the fight for civil and political rights and land rights...

‘Walwunmutj Bunga’
This text provides an interesting insight into the life of its main character, Tess, and provides many opportunities for classroom discussion of values, as well as some issues surrounding the lives of Indigenous people. It is quite appropriate for a class
or individual text at level 4, but I believe its use could also be adapted to a broader range of levels (Level 3 - Level 5).

The story provides opportunity to address the following elements of the VELS standards at level 4:

Interpersonal Development
Building Social Relationships
...demonstrate through their interactions in social situations, respect for a diverse range of people and groups...
...they accept and display empathy for the points of view and feelings of their peers and others...

Civics and Citizenship - Civic Knowledge and Understanding
...describe the contribution of various cultural groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to Australian identity...

Community Engagement
... Present a point of view on a significant current issue or issues...
...contribute to group and class decision...

English - Reading
... Read, interpret and respond to a wide range of literary, everyday and media texts in print and in multimodal formats...
... Analyze these texts and support interpretations with evidence drawn from the text...
... Identify how cultural values, attitudes and beliefs are presented in texts...

Thinking Processes
Elements of these standards could also be relevant, dependent on the design of approaches taken.
Appendix 6  Graphic of ‘Gurranyin Borinya’ research.

[Copyrighted material omitted]