

The Day After Tomorrow

A CASSE SYMPOSIUM ON
BREAKTHROUGH RECOGNITION

Compilation of
presentation
papers

Part 2 of 3

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Dr Craig San Roque



Dr Craig San Roque is a Jungian Analyst and Psychotherapist, trained in London. Practicing in Sydney and Alice Springs since 1987, he has been involved in Indigenous mental health services since 1992. His writings are concerned with the challenge to and application of psychotherapeutic principles in complex local Indigenous settings. He has collaborated on several CASSE projects.

A Glass Darkly

'For now we see through a glass, darkly...

This presentation is based on the imagery in paintings by Japaljarri Spencer and by Rod Moss. Each depicts a contemporary situation pertinent to the psychological challenges of 'Recognition'.

Rod Moss is a Centralian painter renowned for his intimate scenes of people and events of Arrernte/Alice Springs life - his two books, 'Hard Light of Day' and '1000' Cuts' include many of his paintings with accounts of people and events surrounding the compositions.

Kumanjai Japaljarri Spencer has unfortunately passed away, December 2015. He is/was a beloved Indigenous thinker, an Aboriginal Community Police Officer and artist with extraordinary ability to distil the 'heart of the matter' of Australian bi cultural affairs. He embodied the practice of 'recognition'. The painting 'Thinking About the Future' is the conceptual basis of this paper.

Orientation

This paper is developed from the visual presentation given at the Conference. The audience could contemplate a picture and I spoke to that picture. This is a typical form of communication in Central Australia, based on diagrams made on the ground while one speaks to a matter or a story. This is a natural form of conversation practised in our region where

people can be seen thinking and speaking together through the use of ideograms.

Two way 'Recognition' means that it is essential and courteous to communicate in forms that are clear and understandable. I have to challenge the conventional style of professionals who give 'papers' or address Indigenous listeners in complicated sentences in English. Conceptual patterns embedded in European languages follow tracks and mazes of their own making. So, too, the patterns of Indigenous thinking follow their own tracks and meaning. Japaljarri Spencer's paintings, for instance, may appear to be simple. A few lines and circles placed in an ordered way across the canvas. In fact many of his countrymen and women, pack their paintings and diagrams with complex, layered, subtle ideas and statements of the reality of our life. 'Recognition' means learning to appreciate each others' complexity and at the same time speaking (not in tongues) but in clear language that communicates essential facts and clear, (not hidden) ideas.

Of course, people of different cultures think from pattern systems that are specific to that culture. The pattern of the Pintubi mind and experience does not follow the patterns of thinking and experience of people raised in the cultures of a Vienna, London or Melbourne. Freud and Jung thought in German. The concepts of contemporary psychotherapy have developed through the matrix of European language. I ask you to consider in precise detail how your own enculturated thinking patterns would translate and meet (halfway) the patterns of mind of Anangu, Arrernte or Warlpiri. The practice of psychotherapy is not an act of projection. European mentalities and desires are strong forces. Psychotherapy is an act of attentive listening.



Senior Warlpiri men and Corrections officers at Mission Creek; discussing recognition of Aboriginal law and court process appropriate to non English speaking youth and defendants. Part of an historical attempt, 1993-1996, to establish some bi cultural equivalence in mediation and the collaborative management of the justice process - *photo. san roque* - note- many of the men in this photograph have now passed away.

I have learned, as a psychotherapist trained in the western discipline but working in central Australia, that practical recognition is about taking the disciplined trouble and time to think clearly together. Understanding clearly. Listening with care. Together.

(It was in secluded meetings, such as the one at Mission Creek, that I began that discipline.)

1 The Interpretation of Dreams

So let us begin with this painting by Rod Moss, entitled *'Interpretation of Dreams'* or *'Freud on the couch'*.



Rod writes - *At first glance this is a simple role reversal with Arrernte elder Patrick Hayes counselling Dr Freud to 'talk about creation stories'...the outside desert is funnelled into the Viennese study via the coolamon on the left. The room houses examples of Freud's renowned collection, now however with Australian artefacts. The morphing of cultures is suggestively transacted, and possessing the driving seat gives Patrick a glint of satisfaction. Hard Light of Day p294*

The couch reminds of Freud's room where the doctor's patients lay for their treatment session, telling dreams, memories, fears, desires. This method was a way of unlocking the gates of inhibition. It was a slow, even cumbersome method. Indigenous healers/ngangkari (who I have observed) are much swifter and direct in their handling of the patient's pain but the images of symptom and treatment are of an Aboriginal poetic nature that would be comprehensible to psychoanalysts familiar with decoding psychic symbology.

The model, Howard Goldenberg, has, over the years, intentionally placed himself in a position of attentive listening to his Indigenous patients. Mr Hayes, the model for the 'doctor' in Freud's chair was delighted to be in this position. He got the joke of the reversal.

It will be enough to contemplate this image and see what it brings to mind.

But, perhaps, while you contemplate recite these lines from Paul of Tarsus' letter to the people of Corinth. 1 Corinthians 11- 12

When I was a child I spoke as a child, I understood as a child. I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

The act of recognition begs for a clearing of 'darkened glass'. And a movement away from paranoid schitzoid thinking and movement towards a maturational 'stage of concern'.

In some humility today, I consider the childlike state of Australia's collective self awareness and our slowness to recognise that some lines in the original 1901 constitution no longer represent the reality of the Indigenous position.

2 # The Intervention' by Rod Moss painted at the time of the 2007 NT Intervention suggests-



This is Rod's description.

"The painting's title is a reference to the Howard Governments 2007 Emergency Intervention in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. But nothing short of divine intervention would be needed to reverse the consequences of Settler impact on Indigenous people, and something akin to a miracle birth would be needed to imagine the ongoing viability of Aboriginal settlements and perhaps even Indigenous culture and identity in general."

It is as though Carravaggio's Nativity (1609) has appeared in the lives of the Whitegate families (Jack, Norleen, Shirleen and Adrian Hayes) offering a chance of rebirth, of being born again."
(*'Hard Light of Day'* p 287)

The Intervention Angel painted at the time of the NT Intervention suggests to me an intriguing (psychological) matter to consider over time. That is – consider the dynamics of 'magical thinking' in our cultural patterns.

Magical thinking is a special form of explanation of cause, effect and consequence.

Magical thinking does not follow the laws of rational (left brain) logic. The logic follows a whim or a way of the human factor, human imagination. In dream or nightmare things might take place that have no rational explanation. In a dream you may see magical thinking in action. Most cultures, religious and even political beliefs of the world's peoples operate on principles of magical thinking.

In a state of magical thinking the causes of something may be attributed to the actions of mythical beings, of God, of angels, of spiritual forces, of malevolent forces, of sorcery, of magic. A candidate for a presidency will promise miracles and he/she will be believed. Examples in contemporary life abound. People may share the same ways of thinking and participate together in actions that they are sure will influence divine forces, spiritual presences, the forces of nature or procure security, goods and money. I could suggest that magical thinking appears impotently in three aspects of human life -

- the matter of death - explanations of cause and aftermath of death
- interpretations of illness, treatment and cure
- in matters of love and sexual relationship

Clearing the darkened glass of 'Recognition' involves us all in recognising how magical thinking operates in Indigenous life – and in non Indigenous mental life, as well as how magical thinking operates in the minds of Australians who are committed to a Christian world view, religious thinking being a form of mythic/poetic/magical thinking.

Please note that I am not criticising magical thinking - it is a form of poetic, mythic and spiritual thinking that is a part of *homo sapient* history.

Magic and magical thinking continues to have subtle beauties and yet that form of logic and explanation of cause and effect brings us into deep trouble in Central Australia, where magical thinking as explanation of death, illness and sexual relations is applied to crime, murder, vehicle accidents, retribution, revenge, sexual violence, intoxication, jealousy, disease and the getting of goods. (see Finnane's accounts of the trials in 'Trouble'.)

We might also consider how magical thinking operates in the minds and offices of those charged with the governance of Indigenous Australians. One form of institutional 'magical thinking' is when a person in authority believes or states to a crowd of voters (generally referred to as 'the Australian people') that – "I have thought this thing. I have said this thing. Therefore this thing is true". "The Gap will be closed". "The little children will be saved". "You will have houses" "There will be an end to poverty."

Successive institutionalised fantasies on how to save, govern, control the Indigenous Australians are on record in our history. Magical thinking, is a presence in our lives. In its full spectrum - from most, most poetic to most, most psychotic - the logic of magic is a condition of the mental life of Australians. Among such latent ideas, that are worth a psychoanalysis, is a pervasive western/christian ambition and sense of entitlement to save - to govern - to control the native soul, the native destiny, mixed with ambition to occupy Indigenous country for self interest, for profit, for pleasure.

It is a hidden network of institutional magical thinking mixed in with the handling of money (and corruption), that Aboriginal people have to deal with day by day in the streets, courts, communities and offices of Alice Springs. On the other hand many Indigenous people hold magical ideas or fantasy expectations on how the white/angel/Toyota delivery system brings salvation - freedom from pain, hunger and want. The recognition dilemma probably crystallises such deeply felt desires and anxieties - desires that pragmatic politicians exploit.

'Recognition' means accepting that magical thinking is at play on both sides of the contact zone. This matter deserves some very careful analysis.

3. Japaljarri 'Thinking about the future'.



This intensely compacted yet simple painting depicts the situation, as Japaljarri saw it, for Indigenous people in transition between traditional Aboriginal life, present circumstances and a bi-cultural or hybrid future. It is this future in which we now live, in Central Australia; the realities of which we are trying to recognise and work within.

Japaljarri asks - How can such different ways of thinking/being/living be able to work together? The evidence of the last 30 years suggests the real differences and difficulties as well as the opportunities.

Responsible Warlpiri people's efforts at developing a bi-cultural handling of law and justice and mediation is a case in point. The failures in this collaboration as well as the lawless anarchic behaviours of intoxicated,

violent men and women also reveals how hard it was, and will continue to be, to handle the troubles of our region. Japaljarri Spencer worked in this crossfire of cultures as an Aboriginal Community Policeman, so his formulations carry some weight.

These are the main elements of this painting

1. The entire canvas represents the Aboriginal country, the linking patterns of jukurrpa/ dreaming stories, sites and a representation of tribal group/communities across Central Australia.

The concentric circle roundels – (a form of traditional iconography) show people (the horseshoe shapes) sitting, talking and thinking across the country. People come into a big meeting represented in the centre of the painting. Here are black and white shapes indicating people thinking together. They are looking at turmoil in the centre of the painting, images represent gaols, drunken circles, drug use, hospitalisation, early deaths. In Spencer's telling of this story he says everyone is a dust storm, no one can see clearly. We all have sand in our eyes.

Everyone is preoccupied with the same problem. It is a recognition problem, a recognition that both Aboriginal and non-aboriginal people are in a difficult situation of transition. I am reminded of the saying of Jesus of Nazareth. 'Before you criticize another person - pointing out the grain of sand in your neighbour's eye please, first clear out the sand in your own eye'.

2. Iconography of culture. On the left (western) side of the map/painting Japaljarri has a pattern of roundels that represent - in iconic form - 6 essential aspects of Indigenous cultural integrity. This kind of pattern talk,

drawing circles and lines on the ground is a familiar style of Aboriginal storytelling - a bit like the blackboard.

Simply stated, the picture is this.

The central circle of this cluster represents the act of 'taking care' (Kanyinjaku). This suggests the full act of taking care/holding care for the four circles at the rim. These are four essential elements of culture and life bound together by the fifth element.

The five rounds.

1. The country and the place where we live. (*Ngurra*)
2. Family and kin relations. (*Walytja*)
3. The cultural stories (*Jukurrpa*) foundational to life, law and relations.
4. The individual vitality/spirit/psyche/soul (*Kurunpa*) of a person who lives within this matrix of country, kin, *jukurrpa*, law.
5. The entire complex is bound together by encircling lines - this represents, in Japaljarri's diagram - the binding qualities of Indigenous cultural law. It is the law, and the following of law, that holds everything together.

In diagrammatic terms this is a compact image of the foundational structure of an ordered life of survival within Aboriginal being.

3. A future hybrid Australia. On the right hand side of the painting is a variation of this original cultural icon diagram, except for two notable features. A fifth circle - a fifth element has come into the picture.

This is the circle representing the impact - the coming in - the presence of white/western people and the white Australian cultural style.

This (the white circle/wheel) has its own way of governing country, using place and its own way of handling kin relations. The Settler and immigrant groups (*kardia*) have their own cultural stories and thinking. They have their own ways of envisaging the individual (soul) and the way of handling human vitality and their own way of taking care of such things. It has its own law system. Its own trade system. Its money.

The White (*kardia*) way can be seen as part of the picture. But notice that Japaljarri has omitted the binding circle of the law. Aboriginal (*Yapa*) Law has been dropped out of the picture. There is nothing substantial to hold everything together. This is a cause of sorrow, of grief, of confusion.

We are in a situation of uncertainty. There is deep tension. No wonder the young people are caught up in a 'dust storm'. There is a fundamental confusion, a failure by the majority of *kardia* (white people) to recognise the integrity of the ties that bound the original life together. The sociological term for this condition is *anomie*. The absence of law. The psychological consequences of *anomie* include depression, rage, hopelessness, addictions, suicidal anxieties, revolt - passive or aggressive. *Anomie* provokes a cultural anxiety that transcends individual psychopathology.

I ask you to consider this representation. It states the matter succinctly. Perhaps you are one of those people gathered in the centre of the painting, looking at the situation, trying to find a way of handling the tension, the contradictions, the confusions, the dilemma.

4. Looking at the present situation. Good Stories.

The Spencer painting was made in 1993 - since then there have been many practical experiences in central Australia where bi partisan recognition and the practice of integration is in fact taking place. These are models or indicators of problems and solutions that meet the requirement suggested by Spencer. I note a selection. There are more but these I know from first hand experience.

I. **Royal Flying Doctor (RFDS) remote primary mental health team.**

This group of practitioners is supported (currently) by the Royal Flying Doctor Service. It has a long history of 'on the ground' community consultations and care based upon long standing relationships, working also with the NT Govt. Remote Psychiatric service and many bush clinics. This team embodies 'Recognition' by working within Indigenous family relationships system, acutely aware of the conditions on the ground that activate depression, anxiety, suicidal behaviour, adolescent confusion sexual violence and the loss of Indigenous psychic order (anomie).

It is very hard for mainstream institutionalised health administration systems to recognise the nature of community primary mental health care in remote and rural Australia. It is nothing like hospital and consulting room services of the cities.

CASSE (the group that organised this conference) supports the Tjilirra project which started moving through the partnership of David Beveridge (RFDS mental health nurse) and Martin Jugadai (RFDS cultural consultant). Their trustworthy relationship with specific local

Pintubi men enabled the Tjilirra project to develop and then be sustained by Jamie Millier and Nathan Brown with the care and backup from Pamela Nathan of CASSE.

II. **The Warlpiri Youth project (WYDAC) aka Mt Theo.** This project begun in 1991/2 was initiated by Warlpiri around Yuendumu as a step towards supporting young people at risk. From the very beginning it was a bi partisan, bi lingual black/white, yappa/kardia project. It has become a significant hybrid model of youth stimulation, care, containment and social work. It continues today as a nationally recognised, best practice model of Aboriginal/ Non Aboriginal partnership in governance and is an example of pragmatic recognition and collaboration. www.wydac.org.au

III. **Alkeyulerre Arrernte Healing and Cultural Project.** Is grounded in Alice Springs at a site in the shadow of Alkeyule/Billy Goat Hill. Alkeyulerre operates as family, child and young people support place, a place of safety for Arrernte local family. It is low key and not an institution. It serves as a stimulus for collecting and dispensing bush medicines and traditional healing and education according to Indigenous principles. www.akeyulerre.org.au/ab#311B6Bt. (see also the Alice Spring News Online article on Alkeyulerre by Finnane.)

IV. **NPY Women's Council Ngangkari work and the Uti Kulinjaku mental health Language project.**
Uti Kulinjaku is an Anangu languages term meaning 'clear thinking' or 'listening clearly'.

It began some 3 years ago at the initiative of the NPY women involved with the tradition healing/Ngangkari project to understand more clearly the language of mental health as used by English speaking professionals institutions. It was clear that the dominance of professionalised mental health language was not really understood by Indigenous patients and family members.

The women and some of the professionals in the Indigenous area mental health were not satisfied with the compliance by patients appearing to understand what the doctors/nurses were saying. As well, there was dissatisfaction with the continuous stream of professionals who had little knowledge or understanding of Anangu concepts of mind, illness, causes and cure.

This project has developed in close collaboration between the traditional healers, other senior NPY women and men and a group of committed mental health practitioners including the clinical director of the NT Govt mental health team (and myself). It has, so far, been supported by the NT Gov health management as a desired direction.

The secret of this successful project is in the bi cultural recognition of language as an essential part of intercultural diagnosis, formulation, treatment and follow through. The projects progress and direction is under the governance of the NPY traditional healer group – that is to say it is Aboriginal controlled and is subject to continuous evaluation.

This is another best practice example of inter cultural recognition and collaboration in mental health operations.
www.npywc.org.au/ngangka#311CE7

There are more examples of inter cultural collaboration and recognition that could be cited. I note some briefly -

The men's violence project undertaken in collaboration through Congress/Ingkintja and CASSE in which Ken Lechleitner is directly involved. The Tangentjere Men's violence project. The Yuendumu family mediation group. The Strehlow Centre, in its emerging new cultural custodial role. The Kintore Diabetes and Purple House project. A range of projects operated within the Central Land Council where Indigenous and non Indigenous collaborations and understanding is fundamental to the productive work in Ranger programmes, land management and traditional sites maintenance, feral animal control, fire regime and wildlife conservation.

The essential point I make here is that practical recognition is in action and can be demonstrated as alive and functioning in Central Australia- despite the bad press.

5. Pushing a rock up hill

This image suggests how hard, exhausting and disappointing the experience of recognition has been since 1967 Referendum.

Many of us constantly working and living in the midst of the black/white contact zone feel and say again and again- 'We are pushing shit up hill'.

The same is said by governance and institutional and infrastructure agencies whose task it is to help handle or solve the 'Aboriginal Question.'

The desperation in the country might be that everyone feels they are pushing this rock up hill time and time again it rolls back down.

How Sisyphus in the myth got himself into that situation is worth noting.

In Greek mythology Sisyphus was the king of Corinth. He was punished for his self-aggrandizing craftiness and deceitfulness, while in authority, by being forced to roll an immense boulder up a hill, only to watch it come back to hit him, repeating this action for eternity. Tasks that are both laborious and futile are therefore described as Sisyphean. (Wikipedia 28 03 17)

And it's also worth noting, as one of the Tjillirra team said, it might be easier if it was more than one man trying to push the rock. It might be easier if black and white people were doing it together.



Sisyphus Australia - Rod Moss

6 # 'Eagle and Crow'



Dr Tabart (psychiatrist) and Japaljarri at Inteppe Camp consult on a matter.

This complex teaching story, 'Eagle and Crow,' by Japaljarri Spencer, sets out the choices an Indigenous man can make in the contemporary circumstances. In a parable like way the aboriginal 'everyman' character grows up and comes to a fork in the road – he follows the Crow Jukurrpa into blood letting, predatory intoxication, family violence and self destruction. Later he is seized by the Eagle - a totemic being for Japaljarri - who by taking the higher view indicates the potential for working both cultures in an intelligent and practical way and thus sustain the life of his people. Spencer himself, in his life, demonstrated this resolution and integrity – as do other indigenous men and women in Central Australia.

The point of showing you this image is not the 'Eagle and Crow' story as such but rather so you see two men seated together in recognition of each other's thinking about the problem and solutions presented in the painting. They are in the recognition zone.

7 # Cast the First Stone.



The contest of the drains- 2008. Rod Moss

'This is a capricious contrivance of an idea marking a point of agreement between two groups - bush and urban people – over land and water flow. It is based on Breugel's 'Christ and the Adulteress' 1565. Moss in Hard Light of Day p 289.

This image - people holding rocks, people holding government folders – a woman in the middle, a man drawing on the ground - returns us to Rod's painting based on the story in the Bible of the woman taken in adultery, faced with stoning as punishment according to Jewish law.

The Rabbi Jesus faces the stoning people. The Priests bait him. He responds by first bending and 'writing on the ground'.

He then says to the retribution group (custodians of local law) - *'let he who is without sin cast the first stone'*. The retribution group slink away.

Here Rod has replaced the holy land crowd with a group of Alice Springs people debating a water and development issue - change that will disturb local sacred sites. This image captures conflict and consternation in the local contact zone. The disturbance and derangement of sites of Indigenous significance, of locations of cultural memory, is a constant anxiety for many locals (black and white).

'Recognition' implies recognition of the mental and emotional significance of local sites and bi-cultural stories. Time and time again such sites are neglected and destroyed. Those of us who come from Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa know that we come from a history where sites of significance have been bombed and obliterated by successive waves of war and invasion. This continues in Syria. It would be nice if the value of the ancient sites of Alice Springs could be recognised as having profound and lasting value for our shared and hybrid culture.

As it is, recent history in our town shows that many sites are wilfully, dogmatically destroyed. This is a symptom of a psychological disorder.

8 This is Nampijimpa.



This is photo of a friend and a family member – she might not like to have this shown but I believe it is crucial to understand that recognition is a matter of personal relationships. This photo was taken by my daughter, in my house while Marlene and her husband, Japaljarri were completing the painting ‘Eagle and Crow’.

When Nampitjimpa was a child and her mother, Nangala, was around 20 years old they were among the Pintubi picked up by truck and helicopter by Jeremy Long to ‘bring the Pintubi in’. Nancy and her brother Jampijimpa were nicknamed ‘helicopter’. She is the chairperson of the Kintore Diabetes project with Sarah Brown. This project, as difficult as it all is, is handling the problem - sugar, diabetes - consequences of the transitions from hunting and gathering to shopping in supermarkets, takeaway and the Todd Tavern.

This is Marlene. Her daughters and granddaughters stay at our house. Her sons spend time in gaol, her younger brother is dead from petrol sniffing. I know the story. There is no bleeding heart here - only the attempt to maintain recognition of the difficulties endured by all. I ask you. Please regard Namijimpa. I ask you why would you not recognise and acknowledge the history and language of this woman in a revised constitution of Australia?

Her family was here before me. Her language was active long before English, German, Italian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic and all the sundry lingo of the planet staggered south. This is a Pintubi woman who inherits the country west of Kintore and Kiwikurra. It is considered that the Pintubi inhabited the western desert 32 000 years ago.

She has made the transition - she has crossed the floor and recognises you. I ask - why would you, as an Australian, not recognise Marlene in our constitution? What is it in the minds of Australian men/women that would not, could not recognise the unique substance of Marlene Nampijimpa Spencer, her kith and kin?

For myself; removing the obscuration in my own eyes and the confused assumptions in my own thinking and attitude has been the discipline of the last 25 years working here. Kieran Finnane's book, *Trouble*, Rod Moss' *Hard Light of Day* and *1000 cuts* and Japaljarri's paintings; Alexis Wright's works, Ken Lechleitner's speeches today demonstrate the daily realities of this arduous process of psychological intercultural recognition.

Pamela Nathan



Pamela Nathan is a forensic and clinical psychologist, psychoanalytic psychotherapist and sociologist and is Director of CASSE's Aboriginal Australian Relations Program, working on violence and trauma with Aboriginal organisations and people in Central Australia. She has supervised, researched, developed programs, trained and taught, and published papers and three books as a psychologist and psychotherapist.

I dedicate this paper to kwemenje Lechleitner, who fought for the recognition of his people 35 years ago, fighting for "No More Empty promises". He stands alongside.

Wake Up Strong: From Terra Nullius to Recognition.

Prologue

In Margaret Mary Turner's book (2010) called *Iwenhe Tyerrtye* she tells the story of the cicadas. I read a brief excerpt:

When the sun gets too hot, people end up getting bad in the head, and all they can hear are the cicadas singing inside their ears. It can make people get over the bend a bit, that hot heat, or may even be from the sound itself... They scream out 'til they drop down dead..... I mean it's not a nice story, but it's a good thing for you to know (p 173-175).

CASSE work began in sorry business and the relentless, suffocating heat in Central Australia in January. I fell into the furnace of the molten coalface of the lives of Aboriginal people, who walk the streets at night, neither sleeping nor dreaming, with no place to be, night patrols cruising, drowning their sorrows, facing cruel condemnation in the courts, fighting to the screaming noise of the singing cicadas, their pain suppressed, their hopes repeatedly whiplashed and dashed, and found the word trauma was deleted from my mind. Mindlessness and indigestible panic

prevailed. Terra Nullius and the shameful heat of it all. An Aboriginal leader, JJ, over lunch said: “We all throw up our hands, we live under constant threat and constant sorry business and everyone asks ‘what to do?’ as the gaols and the hospitals are all full and our people are homeless.” “The cycle continues and it gets wearing” said another leader. JJ continued saying: “People are never happy. There is so much constant sorry business, always problems. People are deadened or despairing.”

What do we know of this world, this war zone, a veritable Holocaust created, unleashed and disavowed by Whitefellahs, when they declared the continent of Australia Terra Nullius? The red Centre of Australia is like a bleeding heart of lacerating pain and the blood of those murdered has haemorrhaged throughout the ancestral lands seeping and congealing into the very foundations of the nation of Australia which has been built on an oedipal crime, a colonial crime and a crime against humanity. It has been a country of soul murder and not a country of soul making. Fearful rage silenced and silences lament. Only the deafening cicadas make the noise, likened to a psychic noise, making sleep impossible and wakefulness, an eternal mental indigestion. Aboriginal Dreamtime lives on but what might become an Australian dream, remains timelessly suspended, in no-man’s land, which psychoanalyst Ogden (1985) describes, as a land where there is neither imagination nor reality, neither forgetting nor remembering and neither sleeping or waking up, (and I add a land where there is no doubt and no hope and no yesterdays or tomorrows), which is different from and worse than a nightmare. **The opposite of a good dream is not a nightmare but no dreams, where a dream cannot be dreamt** (Ogden 2004). It is a land in the words of Bion (1962a) of indigestible panic, a panic which can only be evacuated or annihilated but cannot be symbolized or held. Aboriginal people, who live today in the ruptured world of the racial divide, suffer these imprisoning

crimes ghosted in living memory; at best surviving with love and salvaged goodness and at worst without place, without continuity, without holding and with deadened, unlive lives.

The red Centre is at the point of impact of first contact--the emotional epicentre of life and death, cultural oppression and cannibalised collision--where anguishing pain and primordial anxiety, threat, danger and dread become manifest and where the immediate traumas and longstanding traumas, disturbances and conflicts, converge and songline the dreaming of Australia into a country of breakdown. There are however, breakthroughs of hope and vitality which illuminate this bedrock of death and indeed, this pivotal point of generational impact, can be galvanised and provide a critical, crucible from crisis to change.

Aboriginal people do not have constitutional recognition and many Aboriginal people are not free to live their lives without misrecognitions or with recognition.

The problem with no recognition?

There is a terrible price to be paid for renouncing the recognition of another person. Recognition is as essential to life as oxygen. For an individual who receives no positive recognition it heralds psychic and emotional death. A community or society that receives no positive recognition heralds a communal psychic death and equates to a denial of freedom.

Recognition is a seemingly simple word. But recognition entails life and death struggles. Recognition entails being able to see and know, and to be seen and known. If we cannot see we remain blind. And if we are not

seen, we are a nobody. A lack of recognition heralds a ‘nobody’s land state of Terra Nullius’ – and a nobody state of mind becomes sovereign. Everyone’s birthright is to be recognised. Recognition is only possible in a peopled land of equal and different relationships – a land belonging to and populated by people. A world without recognition spells death to humanity and to life itself; only pathological relationships can flourish in an unchanging world of what is.

The Day before Yesterday: Historical reality of post-colonialism

Paul Keating, in his infamous Redfern speech, December 10, 1992, truthfully described the day before yesterday; a yesterday without memory or imagination:

*That it was we who did the dispossessing.
We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life.
We brought the diseases. The alcohol.
We committed the murders.
We took the children from their mothers.
We practiced discrimination and exclusion.
It was our ignorance and our prejudice.
And our failure to imagine these things being done to us.
With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds.
We failed to ask – how would I feel if this were done to me?
As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us.”*

What is the state of play of recognition in Aboriginal Australia? There is currently a struggle for Aboriginal people to achieve legal, constitutional,

cultural, political and human recognition. This has been a longstanding struggle since the first landing in 1770. There has been a progress of sorts. Aboriginal people were declared citizens in 1967, albeit only 48 years ago. Recognition of the First Nation has led to land rights and a national apology.

The past lack of recognition for Aboriginal culture and identity has a living presence heralding a borderline world of breakdowns, racism, trauma, loss, cultural erosion, violence, suicidality, criminality and substance usage to anaesthetise the pain. Alice Springs, as a case in point, has been called the “stabbing capital” of the world. The brutal force of stolen lands, lives and children, storyline the land of Terra Nullius, written in traumatic songlines.

Trauma trails of Terra Nullius

No language

In the land of Terra Nullius colour coding determined the terrible fate of many Aboriginal children; leaving them with no language to name their pain or communicate in the language of their kin. The trauma trails are alive today.

At the end of a recent meeting in Alice Springs with CASSE and the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC), a leading man in the community voluntarily told me something poignant. He slowly said:

“We were sent north because we were the darkies and the light ones were sent south. There were eight of us. We were all split up. I found my way back to my people and country. I still have the anger. I try to use it

constructively. I've worked with Aboriginal organisations and channelled it. But I don't have the language."

That language was his birthright.

The cry for recognition is buried deep in the psyche of the Aboriginal Man. The cry is wordless and unrecognised. Rex Granite, a senior elder Aboriginal Warlpiri man from Yuendumu spoke at a town forum in Alice Springs (Walk in My Shoes), convened by (CASSE) and The Central Australia Aboriginal Congress (CAAC). At the end of the forum he stood and spoke again with deceptive simplicity, such poise and such truth, saying:

"You do not speak my language".

What is he saying?

You do not know me. You do not see me. You do not know my world. You do not know my name. I do not have a voice in your world. Terra Nullius.

Then Rex Granite said:

"I speak yours".

He speaks our language but we do not speak his language. No. We do not speak the language of Rex Granite. He is forced to speak ours.



CAAC/CASSE 'Walk In My Shoes' Town Forum, Alice Springs, 2013

The language of mothers

Then there is the language of mothers. At a meeting with CASSE at *Ntaria* in 2013, some Aboriginal women sitting huddled in the corner, finding their voice, began to speak about a child, Family and Child Services, (FACSIA) had taken. The women had returned the child to the grieving mother. They were angry. Another woman said she had looked after so many children herself. She quietly said: "They're 'hurting' if they are not with their mothers. They want to be with them!" Another woman went on to say in an anguished voice, "The mother wanted to be with her son and the son wanted to be with his mother". This woman acknowledged the drinking and the drugs but also the humanity of her people. The

woman looked at me beseechingly. The grief was palpable. There is a new stolen generation.

The gut wrenching book *Beloved* by Toni Morrison (2005) is searing and salutary and it is about slavery and bondage. Sethe, the mother of Beloved is a slave. She kills her baby Beloved. Is she a monster or was she driven by anguishing need and oppression and a will to protect her child?

"If I hadn't killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her." (p 236)

How can a child see self or mother as subjects when the society denies them that status? The mother is made incapable of recognising the child and the child cannot recognise the mother. Mother and child are without names. As Sethe said: *"There is no one to want me to say me my name."* Australia forcibly removed children from their mothers and the 'half caste' children, so-called, blackened their faces and ran to be invisible from the Welfare; they did not want to be stolen from the arms of their mothers. As Sethe said:

"Everybody knew what she was called, but nobody anywhere knew her name. Dismembered and unaccounted for, she cannot be lost because no-one was looking for her and even if they were how can they call her if they don't know her name? Although she has claim she is not claimed". (p 333)

Recognition is an early vital need beginning in the first days of life and it is a vital source of psychic nourishment and growth. If the infant is traumatically frustrated in its first love relationship with the mother and fails to receive recognition, then infantile rage is unleashed and love is

made hungry. The induced fear is that one's love will destroy. A pathological internal object relationship, psychoanalyst Winnicott says, develops whereby the mother is the misnamer of feelings and the infant misnames and these mis-recognitions can become a lifelong relationship of despair of not knowing feelings and self. Non-experiences of substitute formations and breakdown replace playing, aliveness and creativity. Psychic noise, using the thinking of psychoanalyst Bion, replaces meaning in a no-man's land of indigestible panic, emptiness and the atrophy of dreaming; of neither being able to sleep or wake up. Herein lies some of the inter-generational trauma inflicted on Aboriginal people.

Then there is more. Separation from the mother heralds trauma. The traumatic environment is the opposite of a holding one, which enhances growth and creative being. A traumatic environment intrudes, inhibits and restricts psychic development. It ruptures concepts of ongoing being and of a human place to experience living and becoming whole. A child who experiences trauma will live with a hypervigilant, fragmented or frozen state of mind. There is not a story self. There is not imagination or possibilities. Sadness, anchored in traumatic rupture, is the legacy of the world of Terra Nullius.

AO Kemarre sadly told me they "call me MK nowadays." She can't be called Margaret-Mary any more as this was the name of her daughter who was murdered a few years ago. Kemarre's words found a permanent place in my mind: "I still have that grief, and tear, and rip in my heart like it happened yesterday. I still have that grief, *Alakenhe*".

To be recognised by the beloved, psychoanalyst Benjamin says, is all the nourishment one needs, bringing coherence into meaningful existence. Recognition, provides in the words Winnicott, a continuity of being.

Aboriginal people have experienced massive ruptures in being, culture and country. Australia has not been a good mother country.

Psychoanalytic work – the story of recognition

Psychoanalytic endeavour is the story of recognition. Do you see me? Do you know me? Do you see my pain? Recognising the unfolding emotional world catalyses the narrative of pain and provides the healing transformations from breakdowns to breakthroughs and from yesteryears to tomorrows.

Recognition is made possible by a facilitating environment, a holding heart and a home. Put simply, mutual recognition, determination and reciprocity in a facilitating environment allows the person or patient to breakdown, emotionally experience, represent and share the truth of suffering, find his/her voice, understand his/her story, undo it, transform it and be rejuvenated in a more human and alive life-world. Therapists do not know what will unfold or emerge, do not intrude, and do not dictate a script of what to do. In fact they sit with no memory and no desire, nor a script of what to feel, what to be or what to become. Not knowing, seeing, reverie, dreaming, concern, care, surprise, respect, empathy, engagement, aliveness, reflectivity, relatedness, freedom and authenticity are both the ingredients and the outcomes of a therapeutic process and each person leaves with their own true story named, recognised, transformed and transforming. From no man's land, a no-one, a no-body, can become a somebody. The story is discovered, on emotional ground, altering what is found and jointly, new truths are created in a dynamic, dreaming, third dimension. In knowing their story, they can tell it, and live the unlived life of new stories, unfettered by the shackles of a story untold.

Indeed the work of the consulting room can provide a template for living everyday life and the development of human relationships and a recognised way of life for Aboriginal Australia.

Psychoanalytic (and some philosophic) thinking on recognition

Some psychoanalysts, Winnicott (1969) and Benjamin (1995) in particular, have written specifically about recognition and some of their work has canvassed the field of philosophy. Winnicott traced our need for mutual recognition from the earliest relationship between mother and infant into adult relationships, sexuality, and public life. Winnicott's famous saying – "There is no such thing as an infant" – describes the mutuality of the mother-infant relationship.

Winnicott, asks and answers a question indirectly posed by Hegel, namely: what is the process by which mother and infant detach themselves from each other in such a way that, ultimately, they learn to accept and love each other as independent, different persons? His account provides some solution toward how recognition can be achieved in Australia and how a recognised state of mind can replace a Terra Nullius state of mind.

Winnicott saw recognition as the emotional response that makes our feelings, intentions and actions meaningful. Recognition, he believed, can only come from another whom we, in turn, recognise as different and valuable in his or her own right. 'Aliveness' or 'being real', Winnicott found, is not inevitable, it can only be achieved through recognition.

Interestingly Winnicott says recognition can only be achieved through destruction which can paradoxically only occur in a facilitating environment. He says we find the realness of those we love and their differences in our unsuccessful (and unconscious) attempts to destroy them, those, who in turn feel pain at such attempts, and then we find relief in their survival and their ongoing aliveness and loving feelings are restored. If not, aggression, mental illness and violence can prevail. Benjamin says that it is this appreciation of the other's reality – mutual recognition – which gives rise to the establishment of *shared reality and empathy*. Ogden says this process of recognition, in the mutual experience of pain, in the face of destruction and survival, both necessitates and heralds, emotional responsivity, lively presencing and the ability to dream.

Hegel defined the elements of mutual recognition in *Ethics of Recognition* (1997, p 69-84). The first feature, *reciprocity-autonomy* heralds freedom but a freedom which holds that an individual is only truly free only when the other is free. The second feature holds that freedom involves *mutual reciprocal union* with the other. The third feature is *self-overcoming* which is the union with another thereby enlarging the individual. The fourth feature *freigabe* (to release) is the relinquishment of domination of the other and achieves in Heidegger's words, *dasein*, an authentic 'being in the world', a being and becoming.

Hegel goes on to speak about a servile consciousness which is the antithesis of mutual recognition. Australia has not been a country of master-slave but a servile consciousness has prevailed. Relationships of condemnation and submission have often dominated the courts and traditional law is no longer recognised.

I think of the magistrate who sentenced a 16 year old girl. Anne and I watched with a cascading sense of horror. An Aboriginal girl was pleading guilty for assaulting a non-Aboriginal woman in a car park. She saw a non-Aboriginal woman staring at her. She walked up to her, poked her in the forehead, spat in her face and punched the woman. She had been drinking with two cousins and was intoxicated at the time of the assault. The lawyer said in her defence that there was "no rational explanation" for the assault. The magistrate suddenly lashed out in fury. "No rational explanation? She [the assaulted woman] had probably had enough of looking at drunks! She probably wanted to tell you to go home! Oh, there is a completely rational explanation." He stared at the girl in the dock. "You were drunk! You were OFFENDED by someone staring at you when you were drunk!" He repeated, "This is her responsibility. She failed... No rational explanation?" "You took offence. You poked. You spat! You stared. You failed! You have no idea what a civilised society is. You have no idea how to behave in a civilised fashion! This is a serious offence...no matter what government, what party, what policy, DRUNKS CONTINUE." He fined her \$800. The magistrate, using legal denunciation, could still be said to be in breach of the Racial Discrimination Act S18c which prohibits actions (or racial vilification) "reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people. One might hypothesise the Aboriginal girl could not speak but only spit and evacuate her Dante's hell which held no rational meaning. Her parents were from Whitegate; a so-called "unauthorised" town camp with therefore, a paucity of infrastructure, on native title land. With increasing horror, I recognised the magistrate as a friend from the past. What happened to you? Later, another lawyer, in answer to my question, said simply: "He stayed. In bearing witness and not protesting - "Stop this humiliating, racial tirade, in the name of humanity" - I no longer

recognised myself. This day became a trauma for me and no doubt, for the Aboriginal girl in the dock.

Recognition - the story of transformation

What can we learn from Winnicott and Hegel? You might say the White colonialists nearly destroyed Aboriginal people but Aboriginal people survived. If we follow Winnicott here we can postulate that this destruction has not led to total extermination or to absolute conflict and domination. Aboriginal people have indeed survived and White Australians need to face the implacable reality of their survival and the reality of their differences.

We need to be constantly challenged by contextual questions of recognition: How does one know? What does one know? How does one find a language for what? How does one not reproduce or enact the post-colonial and racial relations and tensions in the very talk of recognition, problems and solutions? In what way do we dialogue? How does one wait for articulation and representation and not lead with omnipotent scripts and yet not be passive or idle? Indeed, we need to discover what is true and for whom? Recognition of the existence of actual oppression and dominance and of the silence on matters of racial trauma, which permeates and pervades the unconscious and conscious world in Australia, is imperative. Recognition of the concrete, the urgent, the powerless, the rupturing pain, the trapeze of life and death, the trauma of it all is critical to having tomorrows and dreams of tomorrow.

Today Aboriginal people are struggling to reclaim their selves, remembering and telling their stories of the homelands. In rediscovering the yesteryear, new emotional experiences expand and increase

generative life experiences and celebrations, for tomorrow. Kathleen Kemarre Wallace (2009) from *Ltyentye Apurte* tells us of the homeland song:

"This sadness is part of the whole experience. Remembering stories and remembering songs... But parts of the Homelands song were still in my mind. We had nearly forgotten how to sing it, but when my aunties started singing together they remembered the whole thing, little by little. We sang the Homelands song. That song is celebrating; it is about a beautiful journey through our homelands, guided by the ancestors and the country itself." (p 159-161)

How can we put our songs and stories alongside? We have to allow each other to be in 'dasein'.

How can there be a mode of story transformation? Psychoanalyst Bion (1989) "asks us to be in the eye of the storm". We need to allow the raging river to rage between two banks where catastrophic change can occur, but where the danger of catastrophe lies as well. This is the almost impossible place Bion asks us to be in – the emotional turbulence – without gripping onto any banks of certainty to halt movement, and to loosen the grip on familiar anchors until the next storm.

Then the two stances of radical hope described by Lear (2008) and radical doubt by Civatarese (2008) can inform a facilitating environment to transform a terra nullius state of mind to one of recognition. Doubt, *radical doubt*, serves for the attainment of truth through emotional experiencing, which provides a sense of belonging. We need to move forward from a position of *radical doubt*. We know when there is a rupture or a massive disturbance moral certainties and fundamentalist

thinking can be often invoked in order to find solutions quickly. Yet the search for emotional truth *requires a position of radical doubt, a tolerance for uncertainty, for ambiguity and for not knowing*. It is important to feel the pain and frustration of the crisis. In doing so, we may move from crisis to containment and creativity.

Radical hope is the concept that anticipates a good for those who have the hope but as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it, and, I would add, a future yet to be articulated. We need to move forward from a position of radical hope. Searching for the truth assumes that all have a voice, that we are all in a position to have a voice and that all the different voices can be heard. Searching for the truth requires emotional experiencing, potential spaces, and the polarised “yours and mine”, the two-dimensional “them and us”, becomes obsolete, by forming, a newly found, dynamic, third creation of becoming.

The “eye of the storm” becomes a holding place of lived and living emotional experience, metamorphosing raging turbulence into dynamic anchorage, dialectic potential spaces and fluid, vital, new beginnings.

The Men’s Tjilirra Movement



CASSE has facilitated the Men’s Tjilirra Movement in collaboration with the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS). The heart of the Men’s Tjilirra Movement lies in Australia’s remote central and western desert region. Tjilirra are traditional tools of ancient ceremony, Aboriginal Dreamtime and Law. The men of the western desert, many who were the last to ‘walk in from the desert’ – to cease living a traditional nomadic lifestyle - in the 1970s say “they are proud” when they make them. One of the headmen explained: “If we do not have these we have no language, no culture. We have nothing. We are nothing. It’s our history. A part of us”. The elder men are passing on their knowledge of making tjilirra to the younger generation in recognition of the importance of tjilirra to their cultural and emotional being. They are telling their story in memory and it is transforming their world today. The Men’s Tjilirra Movement titles their

second film “Wake up Strong”. They are recovering their Dreaming on country, a holding place, and it is now a dreaming from which they can wake up, live in memory, converse, digest and dream.

Tjilirra symbolise being, continuity in being, in cultural being, affirmation of cultural worlds, cultural place, holding men, kinship relationships, differences, potential spaces, transmissions and transformations. The making of tjilirra is an emotional and cultural experience of recognition for young and old men and for the community. Their emotional experiences are inextricably linked, ground and found on their ancestral lands of songlines and stories. Sorrow, meaning, connection and responsibility is embedded in the culturally sacred, “in memory”. As Martin, ngangkari, says: “making tjilirra is special - it is the spirit of our grandfather inside you”. Tjilirra have survived the destruction of colonialism and of being outlawed. In the making of them, cultural differences are palpable between Aboriginal and *whitefella* worlds.

When the individual is able to move freely through a generative, spatial environment and select objects through which potential is released, the true self will become emergent. The tjilirra is also therefore, a transformational object, from the dead to the living, an object of recognition.

January 2013. That night we travelled through amazing country to Mt Liebig and the next day visited Papunya. We were having a meeting with the elder Long Jack Philipus Tjakamara, an original Tula artist. When we arrived he was sleeping. A little later, he was sitting down, tired and at times silent. Jamie Tjupurulla suddenly left the meeting and rummaged in the V8 four-wheel drive emerging with some rusty old tools of chisel, tomahawk and so on. He gave them to Long Jack in an act of generosity

and kinship. Long Jack you might say woke up! He was overjoyed and kept looking with disbelief and delight at these old rusty tools. They are worth about 150 dollars. Martin Jugadai, beamed and nodded in approval. Long Jack, then inspired, jumped up with alacrity, picked up his spear thrower and held it with pride. He told his wife to go and fetch his spears. He told us about the payback spear. He showed us how to throw a spear. Martin spoke about the one with a barb-the only way out is right through the thigh. He showed us the kangaroo sinew at the end of the miru, the ingenious leaf-shaped spear thrower made from mulga. Long Jack said he was going to be busy making tools in the next months. His aliveness was palpable and unmistakable!



Long Jack Philipus Tjakamara inspecting his tomahawk

Conclusion

So, in conclusion, we can use psychoanalytic and philosophic thinking to take us forward into a new world of recognition – a land of the First Nation. We can share a world – the inter-cultural world – in between two worlds and dream of tomorrow.

Russell Goldflam, the senior lawyer of Australian Legal Aid told me of the wisdom of Kemarre. He was defending one of the gang of young non-Aboriginal men who were alleged to have murdered her innocent, hardworking and much loved Aboriginal nephew, kwemenje Ryder, in the broad daylight of the town at the foot of the sacred hill. RG told me how terrible it was for him to meet her every day in the courts. One day he walked up to her and said, “I’m sorry” and shook her hand in acknowledgement of sorry business and said: “I’m only doing my job”. Kemarre replied: “I know brother” and hugged him.

Let there be a meeting of two worlds and two minds. Let us find a hearth for the hurting hearts. Let us put our stories alongside. To do so, Aboriginal people need to be allowed to live, to determine and tell their story, their story of old and of now. Let us want to name, see and know both worlds in a world of recognised relations, finding freedom and the humanity in the other. Let there be a world where we want me to say me my name! Let us discover and create new stories together in new dreamings.

Paul D, the man who was beaten as a slave in *Beloved* by Toni Morrison (2005, p 322) and had a bit put in his mouth so he was rendered speechless without a voice, said to Sethe in the final scene: “I want to put

my story next to yours.” “Sethe” he says, “Me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow.”

A tomorrow is needed that revokes the world of yesterday and today, depicted in the not so nice story of the cicadas, screaming in the stinking heat of the suffocating mind, over and over, embodying the stabbing, suicidal violence, the terrifying pain and primordial fears, the vitriolic condemnation residing in the courts, a bit like a curse, which can make somebody a nobody, go crazy, go to desert ground, keel over, empty, exhausted, neither sleeping nor waking. There needs to be a new Australian story, to wake Australia up strong, in the cool of sundown and sunrise, which can fill the holes of unlived lives, silence the shrieks and fertilise the dry, desert lands with rainstorms of new truths and dreams, transforming terra nullius to breakthrough recognition. This story can be found on the ground, at the pivotal deathly epicenter, the emotional cataclysm cradled in the heart of Australia.

Recognition does cut to the heart of what an individual needs to have a sound mind - let alone the well-being of our national psyche. To treat the mind we need to address issues of recognition at a personal and individual level. Then healing and dreaming can come in the unleashing of emotional experiences and humanity can prevail. To treat our national psyche we need cultural and constitutional recognition. Australia – WAKE UP - you can – in the words of Martin Jugadai - WAKE UP STRONG.

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Ken Lechleitner Pangarta



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Research into establishing an Aboriginal Men's Shed within the Central Australian Region.

Today we will discuss some findings in truly understanding how one should go about working and living in this mono-cultural structure while possessing Bi-Cultural richness. We need to release knowledge to remedy the collective problems that we have created while trying to manage each other, by legislative force.

We need to unmask our personal and collective fears towards each other's system of cultural civics as people of this Country... now!

So, let's do the unmasking, by me beginning, like this!

I use this opportunity to acknowledge the local Aboriginal tribal groups of this region in Victoria for this part of the area of "ampere" place, past, present and future members, as the "**Kulin Nation**" made up of the "**Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri**" tribal groups.

I also use this opportunity to extend this acknowledgement to all the visitors that came and settled this country, past, present and future. We

don't do this enough my fellow countrymen.

When we start doing this kind of address towards ourselves, we are beginning to unpack and begin to liberate ourselves from our own mental shackles of the past, and recognizing the weight it still has when we choose to carry it into the future.

If we don't deal with these mental shackles, that we all carry with us every day, we choose not to see each other as people with dual heritage and dual responsibilities in shaping the future together, that's ours for the taking.

Our mental shackles will remain with us for ever, as a Nation that struggles to define its self on three calendar dates; Australia Day, ANZAC Day and on NADOIC week. We just go through the motion, in hope that someone will say and do something to truly realise what we have in common as Australians..., it's licking at our heels, some like it and others don't like it at all. We choose to remain closed to all opportunities and possibilities. Only we can turn that around, by seeing each other as human beings.

Here is some unpacking via the research as issues, background, current situation and evidential findings as a guide for this conversational discussion today.

⁶ Aboriginal name for a place where young unmarried males sleep and live to learn about life's skills

Issues:

Research into Aboriginal Men's Shed, as the modern-day word for 'Ingkintja'⁶ where it does this, for men, *Kurrunga Mwarrelijka*, to make my spirit strong within a male's place.

Background:

The research as a tool has led to modern day discovery of Aboriginal men in need of cultural revival.

To reset own roles and responsibilities amongst despair of being stripped of own worthfulness as an Aboriginal man, simply put, you now no longer have your cultural tools to work with.

The need for Aboriginal men to now listen to **David Unaipon**, "**As a full-blooded member of my race I think I may claim to be the first – but I hope not the last- to produce an enduring records of our customs, belief and imaginings**".⁷ We as Aboriginal men have to create places that can reshape our own body, mind and soul. To then imagine our future into what is it going to look like, feel like and taste like.

The empowering step taken by some men, is taking the responsibility as men within the community in shaping the research directives to be reflective of their desired direction.

They are starting to see that being in control of the research is finding

⁷ Fifty Dollar Note

that they can have their say through this very important tool called research, that was used on them to script their lives in the past. But now, a tool to share, as to what they think should happen in an Aboriginal men's shed.

A very important mind shift is taking place amongst men in the modern world and traditional world, and this research is giving them this opportunity in finding oneself as Aboriginal men again. Here are some stories that I share with you all today.

Let's begin with a very fitting little quote from a small Australian movie called '*Charlie's Country*', where Charlie was put into prison for drinking in public and assaulting a Police Officer. His countryman was visiting him, and Charlie had just been processed into the prison system, by having all his facial hair removed.

The Countryman was visiting Charlie, to remind him of his role and responsibility back home on Country. However, he makes this statement to Charlie, **"I can't talk to you, when you don't look like yourself"**⁸. Wow, **"I can't talk to you, when you don't look like yourself"** ⁹! How powerful is that, as the image one portrays, out bush and in Town? It's no wonder we are having a crisis in our minds of how one sees another person. Now, I am not a specialist here today, but I will just let you all think about that.

Current situation:

The Aboriginal men from the community of Alice Springs make up the

Male Leadership Group, as part of the Community Reference members from the community. The empowerment of these men having been advocates on behalf of Aboriginal men for a long time had come to this point.

In the past, there has been numerous researches done on Aboriginal men and in to what an Aboriginal man should do and look like.

These men had historical evidence of what happens to research, and how it can be subjected to funding constraints, that leads to good work being shelved and looked at again in another five to ten years down the track, and nothing done.

These men making up the Male Leadership Group (MLG) all came from different Aboriginal Organisations as their workplace; they recognised the conflict up front where this researching is going to go to manage the outcome recommendation of the research.

Therefore to their credit in exercising their voice as men shaped the research direction, in establishing a mutual body or entity for them to work through in partnership as collective interest group in fixing the Aboriginal men, to then fix the family and community in going forward.

A community cannot live without men being present to build the future and shape it, a community cannot live without women to build the future, and we need each other to make this happen. The men are seeing a much bigger picture for men to play and be taught in how to do this; therefore an entity was established as part of its directives from the Male

⁸ Movie Charlies Country

⁹ Ibid

Leadership Group.

This led to the formation of Blokes on Track Aboriginal Corporation (BOTAC). While it has been the direction from the Males Leadership Group, they are feeling the slight side effects of euphoria - oh what have we done! - because what they said was done and it's lead to this new unknown sound problem... what do we do now?! We have created a body that can do all things we as men desired in dealing with our social determinates, by us having a voice and say in the design of meeting our Criminogenic needs.

Evidential finding

The new word Aboriginal Men's Shed, has led to rediscovery of an old Aboriginal Cultural Institution that had roles and responsibilities to teach its young people in the past to understanding its Cultural Civics.

These institutional terms are 'Ingkintja' for the males and 'Alukura'¹⁰ for the females. Both words come from the Aranda word.

These two Aboriginal Cultural Institutions provided the cultural inductions to its newest members towards understanding of who they are and what roles they play in maintaining sound cultural governance to its people as valued members within its own society as full body and soul.

To be able to participate in cultural economy of hunting and gathering and adding to the humanism of living according to laws give to follow in

¹⁰ Aboriginal word for young unmarried females place where cultural induction takes place

life via the Altjira from the Dreamtime creation.

Kurruna Mwarre Ingkintja make my spirit strong males place research has highlighted some very exciting points for men within Central Australia to recalibrate men's thinking, to allow oneself to fully understand what is really needed to hunt and gather in this new modern world, but on the same ancient landscape.

When many men feel that they don't have the power to turn their life around and are stuck in the middle of a structural frame work that determines their lives for them without their input, where life is being scripted for Aboriginal men, in what they should look like, is also not really that clear, because it begs the question.

When so much demand on the Aboriginal men to change behaviour, but, not knowing how, is a mystery that presents a challenge to the scribe of laws, on what does an Aboriginal man look like, in this modern world that doesn't allow for him to participant in the law-making part to guide him as a person. These are some of the whispered position of Aboriginal Men within the Central Australian Region.

1. The legislative erosion of Traditional Cultural Civics and its responsibilities in controlling and commanding of its own members and its members wanting to live by its processes is being denied.

2. There is no place where intercultural teaching takes place for the Aboriginal men as a group, to self-assess and recalibrate own working cultural policies, by culturally analysing the process, to give it meaning first at hand to then develop the understanding to go with it.
3. The dilemma of carrying too much baggage, in what we want, to trusting each other as Aboriginal people setting new directions, because who talks for whom within the Aboriginal world.
4. The end of this research will confirm, by having some real sample of what men are thinking within this region. Along with which men are committing towards a dream building exercise in securing a parcel of land to host all the required activities to teach young and the old men's understanding of WWKISS - Western World Knowledge Ideology Societal Structure.
5. There is going to be more conference within the year 2017, and yet Aboriginal men's voice is going to be silence, somehow, they are suffering in silence and lashing out at the very people that they love, because it's the only kind of attention or recognition that they are getting, regardless of it being negative, it's still attention. These are some of the story from the men's group session on talking about their own behaviours; stories are slightly different to de-identify the men.
6. Many men feel that they don't have the command of the English language to fully express what is it they would like to say.
7. Here is this one man's story in trying to stop the repeating of offence, that he has tried reporting the action of the wife to the Police. That his wife was giving him a hard time, and coming over to him, and breaking this DVO Order. But the Police looked at him as if he was stupid, wanting to report his partner for breaking the DVO Order. He said he can't move anywhere. He runs away to drinking with other people, however, she finds him drunk and then threatens to ring the Police. He then has enough, so he really did hit her and now he is back in prison again¹¹.
8. The same old story, the men would also get from the female lawyer, about the story surrounding the offence. The Aboriginal Man loses his voice, even via legal representation, because all matters regarding this man is now being interpreted for him from this point on, where the man is told, that being in prison is for your own good, where the man is prepared to plead guilty, even if it was in self-defence from the female attacker. These are many of the Men's stories, when they do talk, it's enough to make another man cry, simply because, the English language and total misunderstanding of this justice system lets them down.
9. In some ways, men are fighting back via running away from the girlfriend or partner. A relative stated this; he was knocked to the bitumen by his partner. But, when he got back up, she had ripped his shirt off him. Where before he would have hit her back. He just said, ok you can keep that shirt, I am going, so he took off and removed himself for that situation and found some more

¹¹ Male member sharing a story about their life in and out of prison.

friendly people to drink with. He had been in and out of prison for over 20 odd years. Then to hear this story brought a smile to my face, for two reasons. One is, he is not going back to prison anytime soon, and the partner is not hurt and lesson learnt in saying enough is enough to being attacked and reacting, and having the strength to walk away or run away for the girlfriend or partner.

10. Ladies and Gentlemen, I will leave this talk at this point, simply because its real and I have witnessed some of these scenarios, even as interpreter, where I had no voice in the matter, because it's not my role to argue for the Offender, and tell the lawyer to do their jobs properly, where it comes down to time and money, there is no justice for the indigent.
11. I presented some finding from the research, it's a work in progress, that allowing Aboriginal men to find our footing to step up to taken on the challenge with gusto in getting themselves right for this new journey in life, with modern day skills to living with ancient principles. To truly understanding how one should go about working and living within mono-cultural structure. While possessing our Bi-Cultural richness and applying it to ourselves as our guiding mechanism in life.

But today is a good start to put this out there, thank you all for your time.



The Day After Tomorrow

A CASSE SYMPOSIUM ON BREAKTHROUGH RECOGNITION

Presented by Creating A Safe Supportive Environment
(CASSE)

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