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A DECOLONIAL DREAMING

Anique Vered and Grace Gibson

Ginnagay¹ = Welcome

To our elders, past, present, and future, who continue to safeguard First Nations consciousness through the timescapes of the country.

And to the memory of Kumanjayi² Walker and all Aboriginal deaths in the custody and victims of youth suicide as a result of the systemic racism still active in Australia today. May we find justice for all.

Ngaawawa, a yarn (Gumbaynggirr/Australian English), is a story, a chat, learning, a thread. This is a yarn. It is a story told by many voices to thread worlds together.

Bunyjinggal = Orienting to the sunrise

/~\ Around the age of 3, I remember my nan giving me this little book about Dreamtime stories of my country, Gumbaynggirr country. I remember looking at this book until something interested me, a picture of a little Koori³ girl talking to a red/orange star. She reminded me of myself, with her orange dress and two plaits. I can't remember the Gumbaynggirr name for this star. However, it was explained that this star looks out and protects all Gumbaynggirr kids when they are away from home and country, no matter how long or how far. I believe that this star keeps me safe and protects me wherever I am. It has also been a pivotal point in understanding my connection to the Dreaming, Songlines, and First Nations spirituality. Thankfully, as I've grown older, that connection has grown stronger within me as a pillar of relationship and belonging by both my ancestral sides. /~\

<^> I remember feeling the heartbeat of the lands now known as Australia. It was 12 years ago, and I had organized a 6-week journey through the Tanami, Western Desert, and Kimberly landscapes. As I stood alone on Arrernte country, the pulse reverberated through my body and out. Since then, my heart beats stronger. It reminds me to take a moment to connect with the lands and waters each time I pass through a place – to share my



respect for its original custodians and my peaceful mission through it and to ask permission to be there. <^>

/~\ I was invited to collaborate on this chapter with a family friend and researcher Anique Vered. I decided to take the opportunity to explore how to find my voice through racialized dynamics. This chapter takes form in two contexts: first, *Myths, Histories, and Decolonial Interventions: A Planetary Resistance*. Second, we hope to transform it into a tool to restore First Nations youth empowerment – by tracing ways to understand ourselves, the (de)colonial impacts on our daily lives, and connection through our heart to the Dreaming. We are both two unconventional Australian scholars⁴: myself, a First Nations Australian-Fijian high school student, and Anique,

an interdisciplinary research-creator, and development practitioner that is driven by “an engagement with difference that makes a difference to what was initially thought” (Bhambra 2007, 880). /~\

<^> This practice has made me deeply sensitive to my place. To the response-ability, I have to share the knowledges bestowed on me, listen to the call for mobilizing system change, and act. I yearn for the First Nations Songlines that connect across time and relations that guide creation through this. And yet, they are not mine. I may feel their magic, but I understand that it is not mine to sing into being. My place is to let my heartbeat connect across borders, differences, and possibilities. So, being aware of my privilege and position as an Australian-born woman descended from minority refugees, I join you here. I join you as my voice goes quiet for others to rise, and my heart shares its beat. <^>

Proposition



You have entered a gathering space of respect and place. By “you,” we mean you as the reader, and therefore, a collaborator with us. By reading, you are co-creating the possibilities of this text into being. By place, we mean the multi-sited displacement and unbreakable sovereignty that is Australian indigeneity today. Together, we find ground in the virtual interconnections of our yarns, for this is *A Decolonial Dreaming*. By

unraveling the threads of our past and yarning futures into creation, this place is offered as one among many for reconnecting with the heart of First Nations' Dreaming.

We open by grounding in the myth-making worlds of Dreaming. We then orient through historical, social, and political contexts of First Nations Australia today. Background into the approach and methodology is offered before sharing a new Songline for connection and belonging in dreaming shared futures. We close with a reflection and call to action to yarn Dreaming together.

Honoring First Nations' storytelling forms and in the face of hierarchies of authority, perspectives and voices are woven together to bridge decolonial scholarship with the lived experience and agency-building of Australian First Nations and non-Indigenous allies. By decolonial, we mean collective knowledges and critical practices that reclaim agency despite, colonial remnants and neocolonial power. Hence, we engage in a decolonial pattern of writing, where our style touches on Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins' *Singing the Coast*, by being "energised through difference. Always sounding the landscape, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal voices, song, music and text opened up a space for a different sort of writing" (2010, 22).

To do so, we incorporate the markings and voices of the oral storytelling central to how myth in Australian First Nations' histories takes form. Here, creatively used grammatical symbols mark different voices through the text such as /~\ <^> and "". They give form to the yarns, notating their emergence, akin to how Aboriginal Dreamtime myths trace the land and waters on which they unfold. These yarns, therefore, become "collective histories," pluriversal enunciations, and "inclusive textual pathways" that "trigger the relational movement between personal experience and a public emergent possibility" (Vered and Mason 2015, 298). For this reason, and to generally extend the informal tone used in the Australian language, the pronouns "I" and "you" and "we" and "(y)our" are employed. In this way, we show that *A Decolonial Dreaming* is a shared and active history-telling, one in which we all have a place and indeed a responsibility.

Thus, as you join through these yarns, we offer you a legend of those voices sounding here. Aligned with the decolonial praxis of "situatedness," which invites people to acknowledge where they are coming from and how this affects the way they relate, we choose to name the voices appearing in this text and their ancestral origins. We are not calling for divisions or labeling, but the pluriversal becoming that makes any creation possible.

/~\ Grace Gibson, Gumbaynggirr and Fijian-Australian, co-author
 <^> anique vered, Australian from the Jewish diaspora, co-author
 ||| Jacqueline "Jack" Gibbs, Yuwalaraay-Gamilaraay, contributor

(:) Sadini Handunnetti, Sri Lankan-Australian, contributor⁵
“” Literature, links and tweets

Yuludarla = The Dreaming

The English language has never been able to articulate the word “Dreaming” in a way that encompasses its intricacy and complexity. Dreaming is the past, but it is also the present and the future. It is not linear, and its ripples still influence and carve the collective being of Australia and the environment around us. The Dreaming explains the creation process through the stories told of how and why life came to be. However, it is more than just an explanation of creation. It’s an entire encyclopedia for a way of living and being. It’s interwebbed into the land itself.

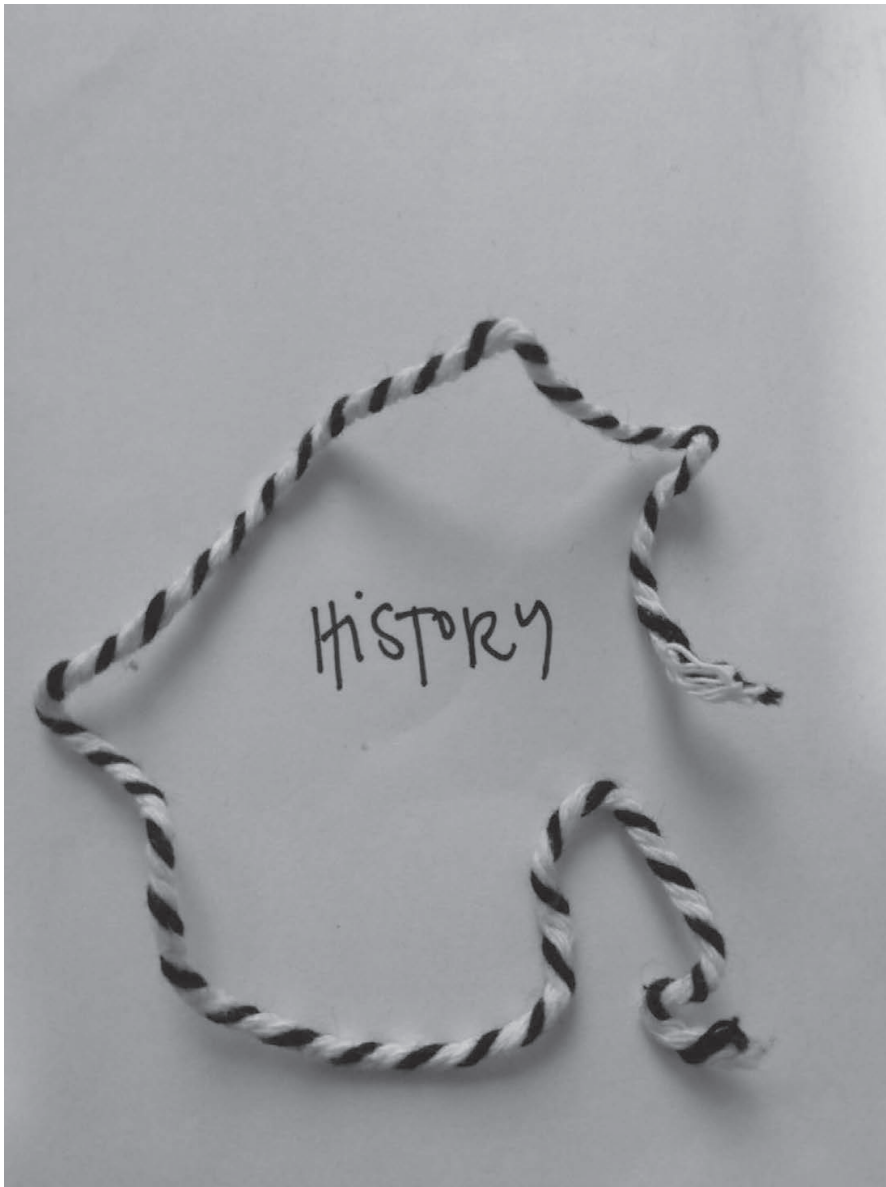
Dreaming is where we are taught the natural lore of country, respect, women’s and men’s business (traditional protocol and initiation of distinct but equal responsibility between genders, which is deeply rooted in cooperation and community), knowledge of flora and fauna, ways of gathering food, movement of the stars, the weather, and time for the ceremony. Dreaming is lived in every moment and the everyday experience.

Songlines reveal the Dreaming – marking the route of ancestral spirits as they created the land, flora, and fauna – and help us navigate ceremonies and natural lore. They are interconnected maps that trace different Aboriginal countries through song, the key to sustaining the land and culture for generations. Even in traditional versions, the Songlines was a yarn where people would sing across the country.

/~\ Yet the Songlines are more than just songs of country or maps. They also trace the ancestral and spiritual route embedded within our DNA, connecting us back to heart and spirit, making sure that we never feel alone or that we don’t matter or belong. This is a big one in First Nations cultures and communities. Even though the land has been taken off the people, even though history has tried to decimate the culture, in each of us, there’s still a little spark that makes us yearn to connect and belong. Not through a sense of ego but because the Songlines are intertwined into our fabric of existence. /~\

History

The Australian mainstream education system teaches a particular history of the nation. It is predominantly told through the perspectives of its European settler colonizers and focuses on the growth of the British colonies and the federation of Australia. In recent years, young people have begun to learn more of the history and knowledge that belong to over 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations that inhabited the lands known as Australia for more than 60,000 years of recorded history. These Indigenous First Nations are the longest living cultures in the world. However, Australians



learning about these cultures have typically been under-educated or miseducated, and attention is now paid to these oversights.

What's more, there is a growing movement of First Nations and non-Indigenous peoples. They ensure that the natural history of Australia's founding – including the genocide of hundreds of thousands of First Nations – is being told. This chapter, this space we share, is one of those stories. Thus, let's orient with the history anthropologist Marcia Langton of the Yiman, and Bidjara First Nations recounts:

The British searched for a place to settle: the *eora*⁶ of the Gweagal, Gadigal, Gameygal, Wangal and Wallumedgal and other clans,

and inland the “woodland” Darug, Gandangarra, Dharawal and Darkinyung language groups, and many others, each owned a territory, bounded by a stream, mountain ridge or headland. One by one, their lands were taken over. Within a few years, the colonists would be pitted against them in a bloody struggle.

(Langton 2008, 4)

When Captain James Cook took possession of Australia, he implemented the doctrine of *Terra Nullius*. This doctrine deemed that the land was empty, enabling colonies to settle without acknowledging ownership by the First Nations. Yet it also gave a path to something more potent, a tear in the foundation of our nation where the disparity is still felt today. Terra Nullius was an act of “white possession” that took human rights and life out of whole societies of people. Aileen Moreton-Robinson from the Goenpul nation-states:

You cannot dominate without seeking to possess the dominated. You cannot exclude unless you assume you already own . . . Thus white possession is a discursive predisposition servicing the conditions, practices, implications, and racialized discourses that are embedded within and central to white first world patriarchal nation-states.

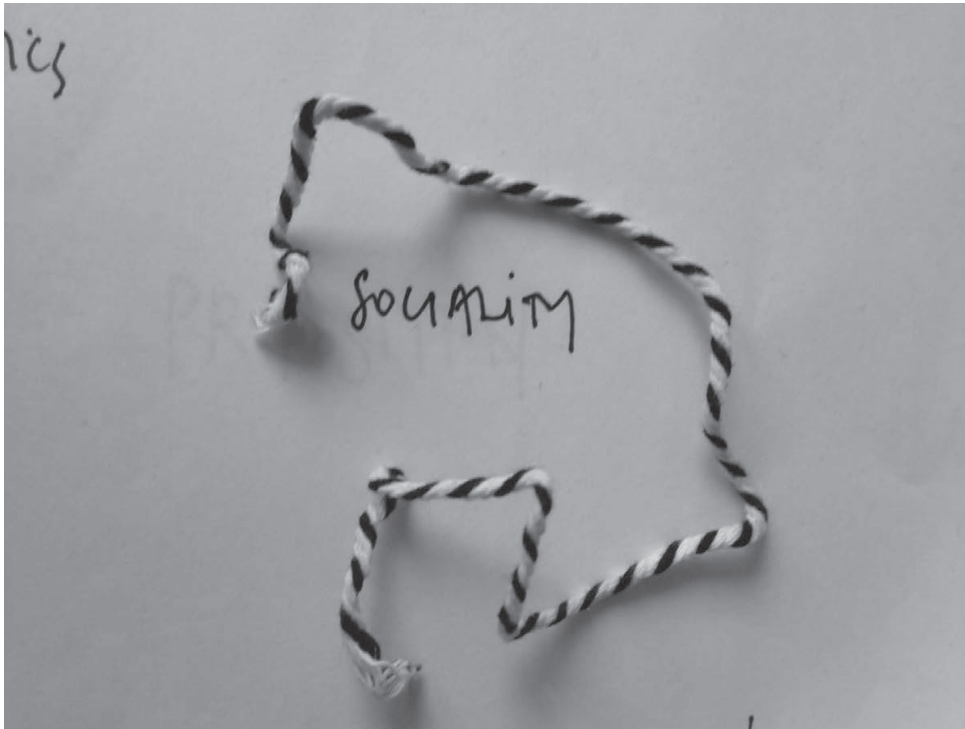
(2015, xxiv)

/~\ Before the 1967 referendum to change the Australian Constitution, First Nations people were explicitly left out because of two distinct reasons: (1) we were seen as a subhuman race, closer to Fauna; and (2) we were a relic of the ancient past, slowly fading away, which is not true. /~\

Alongside earlier policies and outlaws of cultural expression, it was during the Stolen Generations that many First Nations people lost connection to traditional ways of learning. The Stolen Generations were an attempted cultural genocide where the Australian government took First Nations children and placed them on church missions to “bleed the black” out of them. Different policies were set up across Australian states from 1905 to 1972. A census analysis shows that at least 11% of the First Nations children were taken from their families (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018, 9). This has resulted in, among other things, intergenerational transmission of trauma, lost connections to the country, and separation from culture.

/~\ There is a consciousness in Australia that racially stereotyped First Nations youth is affecting our self-worth, identity, and place within society. My peers are trying to find a history of precolonialism that speaks of empowerment, but it’s nowhere to be found. We are still in an educational system tied to colonial history and narrative that doesn’t create inclusivity the society. /~\

Sociality



To many, social awareness of and accountability for First Nations justice changed in 2008, when the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, finally apologized on behalf of the policies of past governments:

There comes a time in the history of nations when their peoples must become fully reconciled to their past if they are to go forward with the confidence to embrace the future. Our nation, Australia, has reached such a time. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry. And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

Apology to Australia's First Nations Peoples.

(2008)

<^>The Apology shifted our collective consciousness. When Rudd finally apologized, he acknowledged a denial so profoundly embedded in settler

Australian DNA that had blinded any possible way forward. He verbalized what had been left unsaid for too long. He called out a system that has been built on theft, genocide, and abuse. And he profoundly called upon all Australians to step into a new way of being Australian. <^>

Yet what remains is not only a system that continues to discriminate against First Nations but also a social distance built on miseducation and shame, a social space that, even 11 years after the Apology, continues to be blind. A gap so wide caused by denial for too long.

However, such spaces are emerging that bridge our First Nations and non-Indigenous cousins. People are joining together to honor the unique cultures that make up Australia today. Allies are gathering – an ally being a person who actively supports and advocates to break down barriers for marginalized and minority groups while not being patronizing in the sense that they are better. Yet, in these social spaces of justice, a challenge has been how all people carry trauma. In coming together, projections of trauma can cause misunderstanding, conflict, and more trauma.

/~\ Whether First Nations or non-Indigenous, it's essential that one connects with their own culture first and then connects more authentically to other cultural experiences. In other words, be grounded and know yourself to assist others in search of identity better identity. /~\

Politics



Elder of the Jagera people, Neville Bonner, was the first Aboriginal Australian to become a Member of Parliament. In 1998, he gave a notorious speech at the Constitutional Convention that spoke to the failings of the Australian political system toward First Nations peoples:

You told my people that your system was best. We have come to accept that. We have come to believe that. The dispossessed despised adapted to your system. Now you say that you were wrong and that we were wrong to believe you.

Fellow Australians, what is most hurtful is that after all we have learned together, after subjugating us and then freeing us, once again you are telling us that you know better.

How dare you? How dare you?

(1998)

Indeed, the Australian political system – a federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy – is deeply embedded in its settler-colonial past. A member of the British Commonwealth and presided over by Queen Elizabeth II, specific policies are simply extensions of those created in the colonial era. Moreover, with the inadequate representation of Australia’s diversity and a significant cultural and gender imbalance among decision-makers, less than 20 out of 226 federal Members of Parliament (MPs) come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and only the Labor party has a gender quota of 40% women (Tasevski 2018).

Regarding Australia’s 3.3% First Nations population, 40 First Nations MPs have served across state and federal parliament, including 16 women. Only in 2019 was Ken Wyatt the First Nations Australian MP to take up the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs position. This is a stark insight into the limited inclusion of First Nations perspectives in policy-making around issues affecting health, education, and land rights.

This political context calls for accurate historical accounts, justice, First Nations-led policy-making, educational curricula, and inclusive healing practices. Pathways need to bridge the history of ostracizing policies with the trauma, anger, and ill-health resulting from such treatment. This includes tending to the challenged sense of worth and identity facing First Nations young people, so that younger generations can reclaim First Nations cultural sovereignty and thrive. Since 2017, a political movement and parliamentary dialog are known as the “First Nations Voice” emerged from the heart of the Uluru Statement.⁷

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata⁸ is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful

relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

(National Constitutional Convention 2017)

The First Nations Voice calls for a group of First Nations Australians to advise the parliament on the laws, policies, and programs affecting their rights and health. It also calls for the Constitution to be changed to enshrine this group in their parliamentary place. Throughout writing this chapter, the senior advisory group met for the first time to co-design it, and in 2020 the government partnered with First Nations leaders on the *New National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. The objective of which “is to overcome the entrenched inequality faced by too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so that their life outcomes are equal to all Australians” (Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations, and all Australian Governments 2020). As the Close, the Gap Campaign Report 2021 states:

Self-determination is critical and to ensure that change occurs, our voices must be heard by governments at every level of society. We perpetually recommend the same approach: to involve us, to listen, to reform and invest. Be it in systemic reform, policy design, service delivery, evaluation or agreeing upon funding, “nothing about us, without us” will be the only successful approach.

(Lowitja Institute 2021, 2)

<^> Our task here is to meet the First Nations Voice in all our power and humility. Like our allies behind its political movement, we are giving rise to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and calling First Nations consciousness forth into the creation of our future. <^>

Daliijami = Our Methodology and Collective Knowledges

This collaboration seeks to open shared creative space for decolonial Dreaming. It employs collaborative authorship to evolve on the dominant orientations of telling histories and futures. In an attempt to blur the semiotics of division and honor Indigenous knowledge-sharing practices, this collaboration weaves together different voices and landscapes in its meaning-making, as Fiona Magowan acknowledges in *Crying to Remember. Telling Stories: First Nations History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand*: “storytelling is, therefore, embedded in ancestral creation but animated by contemporary action, such that the cartography of country is also a cartography of the mind” (2001, 44).

Inhabiting decoloniality, driven by the need to shift away from Eurocentric logic, metaphysics, and ontology, we partake in transdisciplinary processes and collective praxis that co-create space for an otherwise world. Our methodological goal is to engage with knowledges outside traditional academia



to dismantle hierarchies of expertise and open up real-world spaces for decolonial Dreaming. Para-ethnographical approaches – which “are analytical engagements with formations of culture that are not fully contingent on convention, tradition, and the past, but rather, constitute future-oriented cognitive practices that can generate novel configurations of meaning and action” (Holmes and Marcus 2008, 597) – have supported this.

We are guided by pluriversal practices of meaning-making and acting to bring forth inclusive spaces of belonging. As per the Zapatistas, the pluriverse is “a world where many worlds fit” (Kothari et al. 2019, xxxiii). The Songlines’ creation scapes situate us in the coexisting worlds of the Dreaming – multiverses that create as they trace. In this way, the pluriversal space that opens up between co-authors, contributors, and readers might bring forth a new Songline of our belonging.

The yarn is offered as the medium to do so. Referencing new materialisms, the yarn is a symbolic and material continuum of First Nations consciousness into our presents and futures. It is a suitable connector, a thread that acts as a medium for what Elizabeth A. Povinelli calls “ethical substance.” She asks: “How do specific arrangements of tense, eventfulness, and ethical substance make affectively and cognitively sensible and practical, late liberal distributions of life and death, of hope and harm, and endurance and exhaustion across social difference?” (2011, 5).

In gathering the yarn for the Songline, many First Nations voices and allies were invited to collaborate. An online document was opened as a “Shared

Creation Space,” with the option for various forms of expression – images, songs, interviews, and other nonlinear contributions. Delicately crafted, a process of ethical consent was employed to make sure that people felt comfortable and respected through the work’s experimental ethnography. Ethics approach that Tess Lea considers in *Contemporary Anthropologies of First Nations Australia*: “A newer generation is showing signs of the transformational anthropologies that might yet be generated from the Antipodes. Shunning ephemeral moral crises in favor of immersed ethnography, such works show signs of moving toward a contemporary ethic of politicized collaboration”(2012, 197).

In this politicized context between First Nations experience and academic scholarship, questions arise like “‘who owns the past’: whose history is it, who has the right to tell it, and on what terms can and should it be told?” (Attwood and Magowan 2001, xv). Thus, we have been deeply sensitive to inviting voices to yarn and honor traditional Indigenous knowledge-sharing and safeguarding practices. Designed as a place to bridge First Nations and non-Indigenous experience, the Shared Creation Space stated:

To have a voice is a right, a privilege, and a tool. Our voices are used as catalysts to carry the thoughts and words of the collective and/ or of the individual. In this space, (y)our voices are welcomed as they are, with the full right to share what you need to. We hope that together (y)our voices can weave a new Songline into being, one that revives our shared place and First Nations young people’s connection to themselves and the Dreaming.

This space is here to trace (y)our voices, (y)our stories, and the echoes of living (y)our creation. We are all here as those who voice and those who listen – the traces emerge as these yarns weave together.

/~\ Growing up with an eclectic family and different pieces of knowledge has taught me how to shapeshift and understand a broad spectrum of life. We need to be able to communicate with all different mindsets. You don’t have to agree with everybody, but you at least have to have a genuine ability to listen. Constantly my peers have to compromise to work in a system that does not recognize their origins and existence. /~\

Yet, for all our efforts in creating shared spaces of belonging, we are doing so amid a systemic divide that limits First Nations young people’s very capacity to participate in society, literally held back as they make up 54% of youth incarceration (Russell and Cunneen 2019). In this reality, young people like Dujuan Hoosan – a 13-year-old boy from the Arrernte Garrwa First Nations who spoke to the UN Human Rights Council – are calling out to be heard:

I come here to speak with you because the Australian government is not listening. Adults never listen to kids like me, but we have

important things to say. I want adults to stop putting 10-year-old kids in jail. I want my school to be run by Aboriginal people. I want, in my future, to be able to learn strong culture and language.

(2019)

<^>This piece is a response to that call and indeed a plea of its own. We are calling in a connection to the heart. We are calling in the Dreaming spaces to guide us through this mess. Like the Songlines before us, we trust that yarnning Dreaming together can shift our collective consciousness into renewed ways of being and behaving. <^>

In terms of our original goal of the Songline itself, we chose to offer a series of prompts for its emergence. Carefully crafted considering the worlds the Songline might sing into creation, they were loosely assembled into three themes: “on listening,” “on tracks,” and “on belonging.” We asked:

How do you listen? How do you want to be heard? How do you connect with First Nations consciousness?

What kind of tracks do you follow? How do you find your way? How do you connect with the Dreaming? What pathways do we need to create for integrating First Nations spirituality in the lives of our people?

What gives you a sense of belonging? How do you relate to those who are different from you? What can we all do to create spaces for our shared belonging?

As a result, seeds have been sowed. Like the seeds First Nations ancestors planted in the Dreamtime to give birth to souls through time, the voices of the Songline are worlds unto themselves. First Nations and non-Indigenous worlds yarn together, all connected by this decolonial Dreaming.

Songline

/~\ The Songlines is the wisdom keeper for new generations. /~\

<^> They revive myths in their making and offer a sense of belonging in Dreaming spaces. <^>

Dadirri⁹= On listening

/~\ Listening is like the wise elder of expression and communication. Without listening, there is no framework for creation and solutions. In my family, stories are used to communicate everyday learning and lessons of the past. Listening is something that I struggle with, especially with my mother. It’s not that I’m disobedient or that I don’t do what I’m told. It’s just that I tend to get annoyed and not listen to her when she tries to teach me women’s business or everyday life skills. I recognize that this is quite

common between mothers and daughters. Listening is a powerful skill and tool that I realize can only be acquired through the journey of growing up. Even when I have been stubborn, defensive, or rebelling by not listening to my mother, all that in itself is part of a rite of passage to authentic listening. /~\

What I want to talk about is another special quality of my people. I believe it is the most important. It is our most unique gift. It is perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our fellow Australians. In our language this quality is called dadirri. It is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness.

Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call “contemplation.”

When I experience dadirri, I am made whole again. I can sit on the riverbank or walk through the trees; even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness.

(Ungunmerr 1988)

<^> When I truly listen, I listen with my field. With all of my senses and my spirit as it meets what is being expressed. When I hear through the norms that have conditioned me, I listen with filters and a target in mind. I prefer to listen to my field. <^>

Sovereign spirit does not rest.

(Morris 2019)

/~\ One of my Great Uncles can tell stories in nonlinear and fragmented ways for long periods. It can sometimes seem repetitive, but even though Uncle talks a lot, what he’s saying has meaning. One day you’ll look back and reflect and understand that even though it may seem mundane, there are layers of knowledge within what he was saying and what he wasn’t saying, as listening is also about being able to hear what is not being said. This is the First Nations Way. /~\

||| I feel like now I know how important my voice is, and now I know how important it is to share it, and that other people know because we are all human. |||

(:) It’s crucial that no matter how I present or how someone might interpret me to be, I’m always leaving an impact on who I am, in fact. (:)

/~\ When someone is genuinely heard, a space is created where equality and inclusivity can be gifted. To be seen and to be respected, confidence then grows. Both parties gain something. Powerful healing can occur by listening to ancient stories and modern tales of the First Nations community. There is invaluable wisdom of stories of the land, men’s and women’s business, life

and death, and only through listening can this be accessed, for it is a culture of the spoken word. /~\

||| Some of us deal with the same stuff, some of us experience shitty things that hurt and are traumatizing, but you know what, we still try to smile, and we still try to live and show that we're here. We're strong in showing our vulnerability in letting our emotions out and expressing ourselves in whatever way we need to at that time to go through and process those lessons. We have our voices, and we're allowed to be heard. Like our struggles and our lived battles, our emotions matter. What we feel is the deepest part of our connection. |||

Yildann = On Dreaming Tracks

They tried to bury us, little did they know our ancestors planted our spirits and soil all over.

The future is First Nations, I see it, I live it but more importantly I feel it. Longest, living still existing culture in the world.

(Turnbull-Roberts 2019)

||| I feel the Dreaming when I ground my feet and then up through my whole body. When I'm feeling happy or sad, when I pay attention to this, Our Mother talks: through a gentle breeze, a change in the wind or weather, a noise, a bird, something that reminds us of home or allows us to re-experience a moment back in time all over again. Through many ways, we still and will always be connected to that deeper spirit. When I feel these moments, I look up around me and smile. Sometimes I cry because I know I am connected to somewhere deep down within me, to a whole other place or power. |||

/~\ I feel like I connect with it naturally, through the listenings and teachings of ancestors and my elders. /~\

I say, "If you go out bush each week you learn how to control your anger and control your life." I feel strong when I am learning my culture from my Elders and my land. This is who I am and they don't see me at school. I think schools should be run by Aboriginal people. Let our families choose what is best for us. Let us speak our languages in school. I think this would have helped me from getting in trouble.

(Hoosan 2019)

Yhuun yheedun buural¹⁰ my followers. May today take you on a journey that will give you time. May your spirit slow down and just enjoy that journey. Look around and enjoy. Close your eyes and

hear the music of Mother Earth and what she gives. Time. It does slow down if you enjoy it.

(Koori Brotha 2019a)

<^> When my heart beats hard, I know I am on the path. I am grateful for the guidance I am given from the wise people around me: the Shamans and medicine women who share a bigger picture of what's going on energetically; and my family and the words of my ancestors, who remind me of the ethics and mitzvot¹¹ that a Jewish soul with integrity lives by. In Hebrew, the word for wind and the word for spirit are the same. The touch of the wind is my guide, accompanying me with what I do and how I do it. <^>

/~\ A pathway we need to take is not to be afraid of the First Nations spirituality linked to the land that predates colonialism. To create a space for ancient knowledge holders to be seen and respected. /~\

To trace is not to repeat. But we nevertheless recycle the experience of the flesh into our resolution to continue to move.

(Povinelli 2011, 121)

Gundi = On Belonging

And it's the sense of belonging. There's no – they're not like, sort of, you know lost, or they're only lost for a little while, even if something serious has happened in their lives. But they're brought back into the fold. So, you looked after each other and there was no overlapping. If someone had more here than that family there, it was shared. "Oh, take this over to Auntie So-And-So and Uncle." So, you grew up with all that sharing. Then it's up to them if they want to stay there or what they're looking for. But the word we come across was "belonging." So down there, even though you had all those families, the belonging was one family, one family (Flanders in Somerville and Perkins 2010, 85).

(:) And for us, we always try to focus on the common threads, no matter how small they might be, as opposed to the differences. Because even if you highlight one difference, that's the thing that people focus on, and that's where their eye will be drawn, and their energy will be drawn. So, I always try to focus on the similarities, likenesses, shared hobbies, or most minor things that will be a thing that draws us together, as opposed to the smallest of things that divide us the most. (:)

/~\ Belonging is to have a sense of self and home within you, no matter what diverse spaces and consciousness you are currently in, whether that be at home, in ourselves, with each other, with the spirits of place, or the land and waters – having a sense of belonging grants you the ability to sit and be in a space free of judgment. /~\

<^> Belonging is to care. Listening to what has happened, one places, what might need to be done. Belonging is the compass of our heartbeat. <^>

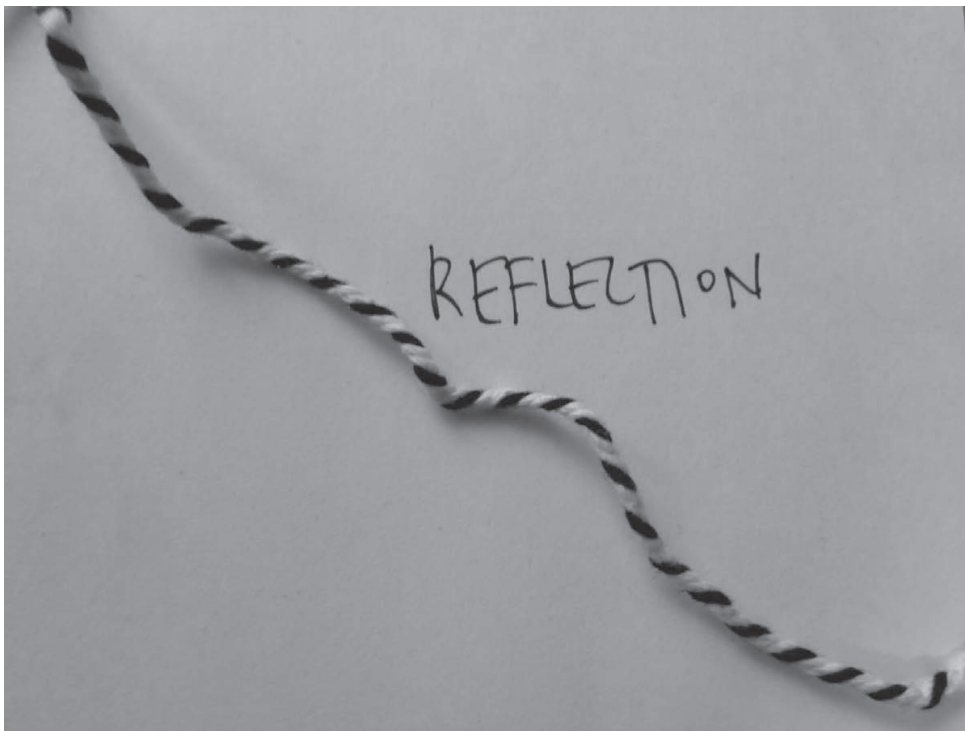
Yhuun yheedun buural¹² my followers. As you go through the day, just pause for a moment and send out your Spirits to those that may need help. Let it Soar high in the sky. As it soars, just reflect upon your beautiful journey today. Life is a journey that needs love, not hate. Love.

(Koori Brotha 2019b)

||| You know, it's just, I want to be seen to be a natural person, and to know that we matter.

Belonging is being part of something bigger than just ourselves. It is a connection held deep within one's spirit or something that I can't put my finger on. It is something that I feel always guides us to a place where we feel whole and safe. |||

Dawaandi = Reflection



This path has not unfolded as expected, but we let go of expectations early on and decided to listen. We listened to our needs, to current events, and we listened to the process of co-creating space for First Nations youth voices.

As an elder of the Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung nations, Wayne Atkinson shares in *Ngariarty: Speaking Strong*:

Grandpa James encouraged his students to be confident in their abilities. He taught them to be proud of their Yorta Yorta¹³ identity and to recognise the empowerment that comes from being able to articulate their grievances through the power of the voice and the spear of the pen.

(2008, 191)

The task we set ourselves was and is still ambitious, our methodology emergent. Indeed, the closest thing to a research question has been listening and understanding one's place while cultivating a shared sense of belonging and agency. This, of course, is underpinned by the key objective of connecting First Nations consciousness and *blakfella*¹⁴ realities with a coalition for Dreaming futures. Allies in bridging the First Nations and non-Indigenous divide, Somerville and Perkins observe beautifully how this is a: "process whereby a storyline, the skeleton of a story, becomes a songline again because when language, story, and country are reconnected, we again open up the possibility of singing the country" (2010, 186).

In attempting to co-write possible pathways to reach this goal, it has been interesting to observe how the nature of our relationship as co-authors offers insights into how to share spaces of belonging in Dreaming. We have noticed that circling our experiences and learnings opens up a gentle self-reflexivity that acknowledges our difference while also calling in the best version of ourselves. This mutual accountability, heart, and commitment to change are robust. It is what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney call "prophetic organization" (2013, 27). They also add:

It is not teaching that holds this social capacity, but something that produces the not visible other side of teaching, a thinking through the skin of teaching toward a collective orientation to the knowledge object as future project, and a commitment to what we want to call the prophetic organization.

(2013, 27)

A Decolonial Dreaming has been just as much about opening space for new ways of being and behaving in the world as it has been about learning and processing together. Gathering virtually every week for 6 months – with 15,000 kilometers between us – has created a unique space, as has meeting across a 20-year age difference. Like in the Songlines, the time and space between us morph, and we seem to orientate from our

individual and collective selves simultaneously. We find ourselves stretching across humility and bravery, for the path from accounting for trauma and privilege to accountability for togetherness is made up of visible and invisible steps.

(:) I think it ties in with stigma, with that self-shaming aspect. I think it ties into fundamental importance, I feel, for everyone to have an opportunity to acknowledge events past and present, and they don't have to agree, but they can all be made aware of it. (:)

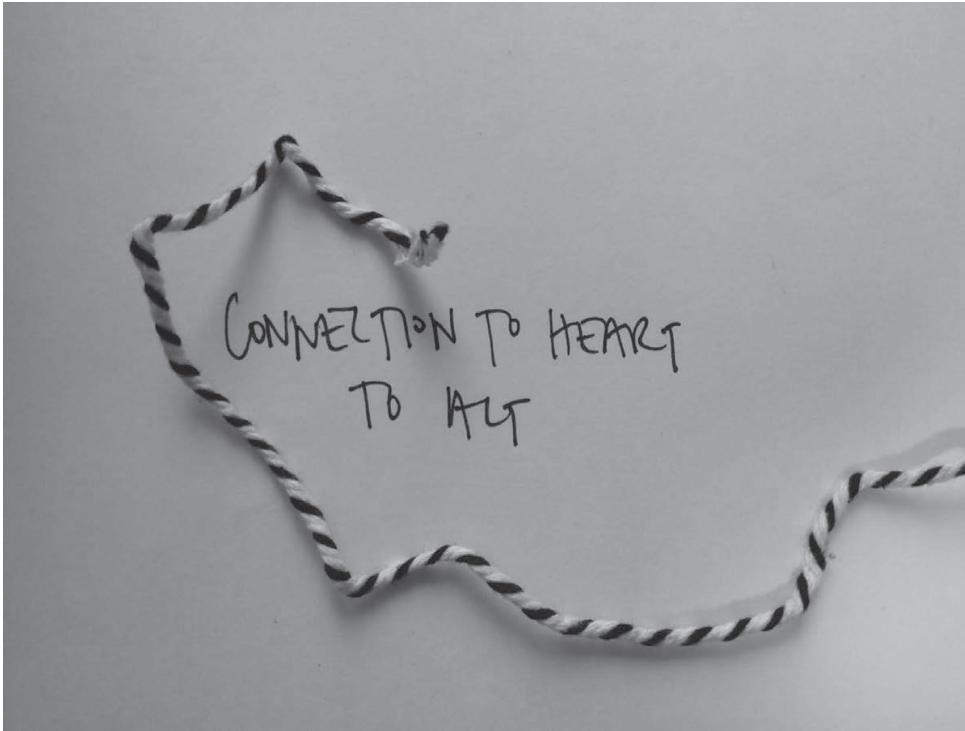
<^> What I've realized in exploring the commonalities between us is that self-stigmatization occurs across the divide. There seems to be a continuum of shame – whether in First Nations experience through the marks of oppression or in non-Indigenous experience for one's implication in ongoing settler colonialism. It seems that the mutual experience of shame, like the heart, connects us all. <^>

Indeed, the critical pivot point in our process has understood that the heart is the center. For all our exploration into listening, it became clear to us that when you hear and connect with another person, it unveils something within yourself. What's more, we've learned that by listening to the heartbeat of the land, we are guided to a sense of belonging and care. Our heartbeat is our common ground.

In tracing these connections and singing a new Songline, we have attempted to bring diverse voices together. While our invitation to potential collaborators saw some kind replies, it did not gain much traction, and we found the Shared Creation Space empty, aside from our own words. This was confronting, and for a moment, it was easy to consider giving up. But we are part of a determined movement, so we gently and respectfully persevered. The outcome was both an interview with two collaborators from the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) whose voices join ours here and a more substantial commitment to our place in all this. We are grateful to Sadini and Jack for sensing *A Decolonial Dreaming* and meeting us in it. The shared reflection has touched us all.

(:) You know not everyone has to be in agreeance for everything. I think that everyone has to come in with, not necessarily with, a shared sense of pride but with a shared understanding of acknowledgment and some sense of dignity about what's going on. More often than not, it usually happens in a sort of yarn circle environment, that authentic round-table atmosphere where you know there isn't ahead of the table, no one is necessarily running that session. Still, everyone feels it's a group effort, and what has been achieved has been a group effort as well. So, I think that's integral. It needs to be a group effort. It needs to feel that the community is coming together no matter what culture. (:)

**Duguulagu Miinggigu Ngirraygam = Connection to
Heart to Act**



Following the example of the *Uluru Statement for the heart*, in 2019, a gathering of First Nations youth devised the *Imagination Declaration*:

In 1967, we asked to be counted. In 2017, we asked for a voice and treaty. Today, we ask you to imagine what's possible.

The future of this country lies in all of our hands . . .

We are not the problem, we are the solution.

We don't want to be boxed. We don't want ceilings. We want freedom to be whatever a human mind can dream. When you think of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander kid, or in fact, any kid, imagine what's possible. Don't define us through the lens of disadvantage or label us as limited.

Test us. Expect the best of us. Expect the unexpected. Expect us to continue carrying the custodianship of imagination, entrepreneurial spirit and genius. Expect us to be complex.

And then let us spread our wings, and soar higher than ever before.

(Garma Youth Forum and AIME 2019)

Alongside our cousins, Aunties, Uncles, and friends summoning the power and place of indigeneity in Australia today, we are here in this decolonial Dreaming. Where ancient, limitless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worlds are guiding us toward healthy futures. Together, we bring forth and sing a new Songline that traces our belonging. We yarn through creation, our ancestors' stories, our systemic divides, and our tracks on. We yarn this Songline as our tool, our tactics, and our togetherness in Dreaming.

Whether it belongs to our heart, it's all about not feeling alone by singing the Songline and creating a place like this. Together, we can carry our yarn Dreaming into diverse spaces. Let's yarn this into classrooms, where Dreaming can forefront First Nations history curricula. Let's yarn this into blakfella realities and transform people's apathy, defensiveness, and incapacity to listen to First Nations experiences. Let's yarn this into the lives of First Nations young people.

/~\ . . for when we feel listened to, heard, we feel empowered. So, to be able to empower First Nations youth, we need to collectively listen and act together to be able to create change. The ability to listen creates connection and belonging across all boundaries. Through sharing spaces with First Nations voices, natural steps to actual reconciliation can happen. /~\

So together, let us listen and yarn *A Decolonial Dreaming*. This work calls for holding the past, present, and future in y(our) hands, for being still with the power of First Nations consciousness with an open heart, and for walking proudly in solidarity.

Notes

- 1 The traditional language words employed here are from the Gumbaynggirr language (except "Dadirri" which is from the Ngan'gikurunggurr and Ngen'giwumirri language groups). As with all translation, often there is not a direct rendition of one as word to another. Furthermore, Grace is still learning Gumbaynggirr language, and expressions may not be grammatically accurate.
- 2 Kumanjayi is a substitute name for a deceased person in the Western Desert language group that is used to respect Aboriginal death protocols, also known as "sorry business."
- 3 Koori is a term referring to First Nations people from the mid- and south coast of New South Wales and Victoria.
- 4 Gibson is 16 years old, and Vered an independent researcher with no bachelor's degree and only a self-curated Masters. By "unconventional" here we mean that due to said backgrounds our contributions may not typically be considered as valuable for inclusion in formal scholarship. It is thanks to the vision and principles of this book's editors that we have the opportunity to bring knowledges normally seen as "unconventional" into this discussion. In this way, we are resisting the matrix of colonial-modern power that suggests some knowledges are inferior to others.
- 5 Gibbs and Handunnetti accepted an invitation by the authors to "participate in a collaboratively authored piece that hopes to contribute to the revival of the

- Australian Indigenous Dreaming and global decolonisation” (Vered and Gibson 2019). Due to time limitations on behalf of Gibbs and Handunnetti, this involved three interviews with Vered based on a “shared creation space” that had been designed with Gibson. At the time, Gibbs and Handunnetti were working at the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME).
- 6 The Eora, made up of the clans listed, are a nation, language group, and the traditional custodians of the lands and waters now known as Sydney, Australia.
 - 7 Cf. Voice Fact Sheet, *Uluru Statement for the Heart*.
 - 8 Makarrata, from the Yolngu language group, is a philosophy that broadly signifies a peacemaking and justice process, and in the context of the First Nations Voice is being used as a synonym for treaty.
 - 9 Dadirri is a word from the Ngangikurungkurr language. Miriam Rose is an Elder from the Nauiyu community, Daly River, Northern Territory.
 - 10 Yhuun yheedun buural means “Hello and Good Morning” in Ngunnawal Language.
 - 11 A Mitzvah (plural: Mitzvot) is a core tenet of Jewish ethics and most simply translates to an individual act of human kindness or good deed.
 - 12 Yhuun yheedun buural means “Hello and Good Morning” in Ngunnawal Language.
 - 13 The Yorta Yorta people are an Aboriginal nation and the traditional custodians of the area around the Murray and Goulburn Rivers crossing the states now known as New South Wales and Victoria.
 - 14 Blakfella is an informal/colloquial term used by Australian First Nation peoples and communities to refer to themselves.

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