Singing up Country in academia: teacher education academics and preservice teachers’ experience with Yuin Country

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Singing Up Country in Academia: Teacher education academics and preservice teachers’ experience with Yuin Country

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

by

Anthony McKnight

Bach. Ed. (HPE), M. Ed

2017
Declaration

I, Anthony David Blake McKnight, declare that this thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the conferral of the degree Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Social Sciences – School of Education, from the University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Anthony D. B. McKnight

3rd March, 2017
Acknowledgements / dedication

I really enjoy all forms of swimming and this passion started by being immersed in water at the start of my life’s journey. One of the bodies of water where I am currently swimming is in a pool called academia. The pool is man-made and so are many of the processes to keep it clean, however it is still full of water. For me to have been able to spend so much time in this pool and the natural swimming pools on Country, I need to acknowledge and be very thankful to some very important people and beings in my life: my family. I need to especially thank my wife, Carol, and our children, Jeremy, Lily and Ben, who have had to put up with me during my journey of doing a thesis: one big hug. Numerous hugs of thank you also need to be sent to all the people and beings that are part of my family and community.

To my supervisors, Professor Jan Wright and Professor Valerie Harwood, a very big hug each and thanks. A masterful pairing that helped me in all the directions, techniques and discipline required to assist me to be able to swim in a chlorinated pool. It has meant a lot, too deadly. Another important thank you, to be sent out, is directed to all the people that have supported me at various times throughout this period, whether it was a big or small contribution, a reference or a yarn, they were all very significant.

Well Uncle, thanks old fella. To my Ancestors and Ancients thank you, especially Gulaga and Biamanga: thank you Mother. Thanks Country for the slaps, the hugs, tears, laughter, tests and elation, but more importantly, thank you for the teachings.
Terminology

**Aboriginal:** A generalised term for the various Aboriginal peoples of Australia.

**Bundi:** Traditional weapon.

**Growled:** Getting in serious trouble by being told off for doing the wrong thing and/or not doing something that you should be doing.

**Indigenous:** Aboriginal peoples / First Nation peoples in an international context

**Mingadhuga Mingayung:** My Mother Your Mother.

**Reminder Bird:** An Aboriginal guide, friend and support person for non-Aboriginal people engaging in a relationship with Country when in academia and outside.

**Tripartation:** A spiritual passageway between Yuin and Western knowledge site and dualities.

~: Represents a mental and spiritual umbilical cord that connects and separates dualities at the same time.

**Yuin Country:** “Extends from the Snowy River in the South to the escarpment of Wollongong, our northern boundary, and then out to the Southern Tablelands. Our Country follows the coast down and into Victoria” (Harrison M.D. and McConchie, 2009, p. 15).
Thesis by Compilation

This thesis by compilation has three distinct published journal articles that are listed below. The three distinct papers have been published in three significant educational journals. The three publications have been purposely placed and linked into the overall thesis in a logical and coherent manner to meet the University of Wollongong Higher Degree Research guidelines for a thesis by compilation. (For further information see http://www.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@raid/documents/doc/uow193839.pdf)

Publications Statement

This thesis includes chapters that have been written as the following journal articles:

Chapter Four:

Chapter Five:

Chapter Six:
Abstract

Aboriginal knowledge in this dissertation has been intentionally argued as a living entity that moves and shifts like any living entity, such as wind, trees, people, water and sand, because the traditional Aboriginal knowledge system are these entities. Ever since Aboriginal knowledge has come into contact with Western knowledge, Aboriginal knowledge has moved in a form of relationality as it is placed into our epistemological, ontological and pedagogical pattern thinking and feeling. Through a process of colonisation, Western knowledge attempted to remove this relatedness (Martin 2008) of oneness and responsibility of taking care of Country.

This study examines the movement of Yuin traditional knowledge and Western knowledge within six teacher education academics and twenty preservice education students. This knowledge was shared through a cultural experience called Mingadharga Mingayung - My Mother Your Mother. The Mingadharga Mingayung approach was designed to engage the participants in a Yuin education structure and setting to start experiencing ‘tripartation’, a spiritual passageway between Yuin and the participants’ own Western knowledge. Further to this intent was to research how this relationship developed to encourage respectful behaviour and appropriate educational/personal practice to reculturalise Aboriginal perspective in their teaching curriculum.

The problem explored in this study is whether non-Aboriginal people can create their own relationship with Yuin Country; to see how this relationship with Yuin Country could occur through cultural and knowledge connections through similarities. It also explored the aspects of Western knowledge, which needed to be separated or dislocated while the academics were immersed in Country’s teachings.

My teachings from Yuin Country as/with the Yuin old peoples’ teachings and actions were used to explore, utilise and challenge Bhabha’s (2004) third space. This was done to enhance an understanding of the knowledge relationships and feelings present within the in-between space and the movement within/around/throughout/across Western and Yuin knowledge. The research located and explored the colonial
residues that could hinder the knowledge relationships, while at the same time searching for connections, similarities and places for respectful separations.

The ‘methodology of relationship’ utilised in this study exemplifies a Yuin Country-led process and approach in relationship with Indigenous and Western academic methods. My role as ‘observer-participant’ demonstrates the importance to equally observe both the participants’ and Country’s input during the data collection and analysis. Metaphorically the methodology took the form of a Songline with the potential to become an actual academic Storyline/Songline that can contribute to efforts to re-connect Countries academically and spiritually across Australia and the world.
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Prologue

Respect for Country is central in Aboriginal life; Aboriginal people are the custodians of the land(s), water(s) and skies from which we come. What do these terms Country, respect and custodian actually mean when non-Aboriginal people do an Acknowledgement of Country? When an Elder or a custodian ‘Welcomes people to Country’, what do non-Aboriginal people think and feel when listening to the Welcome to Country? Is it just a process that shows respect without any true understanding of the terms Country, respect and custodian? How are non-Aboriginal people interpreting the responsibility and reciprocation that is attached to being Welcomed to and respectful of Country? Or are non-Aboriginal people totally unaware?

These questions are not directly answered in this dissertation, but they indirectly contribute to how all things are connected in a Country-centred approach. The receiving of a Welcome or presenting an Acknowledgement would be very hollow and so would the implementation of Aboriginal perspectives in teacher education and schools, if non-Aboriginal people were unaware of these terms’ meanings, associated responsibilities and behaviours. A custodian’s role is to take care of Country respectfully. This means when someone is Welcomed to, or Acknowledges Country, the respect of and the sharing in the role of taking care of Country as a long-lasting guest with connections and restrictions is established or assumed. The implementation and embedding of Aboriginal perspectives can only eventuate if people understand and practice a respectful reciprocal relationship with Country. In so doing the primary function of this dissertation is to witness this relationship being introduced, developed, and animated in teacher education through the observation of non-Aboriginal academics and preservice teachers participating in a Yuin cultural experience, pedagogy, methodologies and storying approach that introduces Yuin Country. Respectful judgements and explanations will be made on how the cultural experience from Yuin Country’s educational system and processes can be established and maintained in a university teacher education program.
Chapter One: Singing with the Mother
A Dreaming: we can imagine Country back into all the spaces that make us human

Imagine the placing of a mud painting of an Ancient Aboriginal man or woman upon the chest of a non-Aboriginal person so a gift of that old person’s story can be shared. Can this image be imagined into a reality or is it a photographer’s trick or psychological prop that can only be visualised as a desire for the past? The spaces within and in-between mind, body and spirit that is open to Country as knowledge holder can be a fertile place when the communication is seen in oneness. The spiritual sinking in of the mud on the chest is symbolic of allowing Country into your body, not just an intellectual exercise in a tertiary institution.

The unwillingness of not knowing about Aboriginal peoples’ connection to Country should not be part of the picture; that is, it should not be accepted as part of the educational landscape. Taking this stand, any form of cultural experience, on all levels from theory to practical implementation, must be imbued with a spiritual level that can be delivered by Country. Aboriginal people who assist Country in the teaching would have to hold the legacies of the Ancients, who provide and are the mud for spirit to embed itself, in order to be felt and known. An individual who has mud placed on their chest has the potential to take and internalise the mental photographs of the physical and spiritual embodied paintings of story when they walk, look, see, hear and feel the land they are on. I can imagine more people wanting to know and feel the mud paintings and photographs held in memory of Country. It is happening already, although at the beginning stages, but there is no other way to start: by taking the photograph within their mind and body to be felt in spirit. The photo studios on Country are already provided, and in place, as there are plenty of places that hold this spiritual clay full of the Ancients’ essence. The mud is ready and so are the people to place the mud onto the chest. There is, however, a distorted landscape picture that has been placed in people’s minds. Mother Earth’s1 paintings and photographs in people’s cognisance have been viewed without the mud on people’s chest so that they only focus on the view, not the stories. The photographers that

1 Mother Earth in relation to a Yuin concept of the term is best explained by Harrison and McConchie (2009), who state: “Mother Earth births everything for us” (p. 9) and is presented in a oneness relationship with Father Sky, Grandmother Moon and Grandfather Sun.
continue to use the colonial lens mask many views, while the mud holders feel the actual image that was painted on their body and internalised into their spirit. The potential is already there for photographs to show how spirit exists in the landscape. The mud on the chest represents the feel and sight to see spirit, exposing what is behind, underneath and within the view. Mud carries life to death. To continually recycle mud as death to life is the wisdom of life to death, but we, as people, tend to complicate things. Have we forgotten how to dance, stomp and sing in this mud because it appears to be safer to prop up or hang the photographs and pictures on the wall to admire the view from afar? If we are only left to view pictures and paintings hanging on a wall then we are definitely a very long way from connecting to the places we come from, Mother Earth.

*The Spirit of the Research*

The feeling of the mud on your chest or any part of the body is essential to learning; feeling the cool wet mud that can become warm and dry that has a different grip on your skin is how learning can occur. The sharing of certain aspects from Yuin traditional knowledge with our brothers and sisters in teacher education programs, whose Ancestors or who themselves were born in overseas Countries, can create a relationship of connection with Aboriginal people and Country. Maria Bennett and Beverly Moriarty’s (2015) research on producing effective teachers in preservice teacher education programs for Aboriginal students, stipulates the importance of respectful relationships with the Aboriginal community.

Developing deep relationships with Indigenous students takes time for preservice teachers. This process involves using language to demonstrate respect for Indigenous ways of knowing, valuing and appreciating the negotiated space by being aware of the cognitive and affective factors that impact relationships (p. 4).

Yuin Country is presented in this thesis as having its own cognitive, affective and spiritual factors to provide an avenue for non-Aboriginal academics and preservice teachers to not only use a language to demonstrate respect but to respectfully engage, occupy and connect to Country’s invisible pedagogical language of relationship. Neil Harrison (2005) uses psychoanalytic theories to examine metalanguage in classroom
practice of learning in-between Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal teachers. He describes how Aboriginal students are unknowingly positioning a non-Aboriginal teacher into their own understanding of a relationship pedagogical model. The Aboriginal students are attempting to encourage a learning environment (relationship based) outside of the normative Western educational practice. Harrison, N. (2005) argues that:

This learning is produced through a second discourse in the classroom. This is the *discourse of negotiation*, itself a metalanguage that is produced outside the methodologies and cognitive theories of the teacher and beyond the conscious mind of the student (p 879).

Harrison’s, N. (2005) recognition of this hidden practice of Aboriginal students attempting to build a relationship with their non-Aboriginal school teacher (and/or vice versa) may well be an indication of spirit-Country at work. The purpose of this particular discussion is to argue that a process of connection and separation of spirit has always been present in the relationship between the two knowledge sites. The Western scientific language and understanding that is used in this discourse often discriminates against ‘spirit’. The inclusion of Harrison’s, N. (2005) work is an example of how a re-negotiation of language can occur and has the potential to further open the passageway for the inclusion of spirit (Country) into academia. The language that is very often absent in Western academic and school-based research and pedagogical practice is that which connects with the spiritual embodiment of knowledge. Placing the spirit of Country and individuals into teacher education is a gift to help educators move beyond, across and into Country as a knowledge space and site. For example, in the context of this dissertation, when the spirit of Yuin Country is introduced, known and understood it can provide an interconnecting umbilical cord for educators and students to form a relationship with Yuin Country as a knowledge site to create their own respectful relationship space. From this spiritual relationship in ‘tripartation’ (Chapter Four) a new but interconnecting knowledge site is birthed from a relational process that includes and excludes similarities and differences between Country and Western knowledge (sites and spaces). Starting to know, learn from and be thankful for all the things that make and are Country is a system, process and outcome that is in oneness and living. The Yuin educational
system, outcomes and processes are one and the same (Yunkaporta & McGinty 2009), as knowledge has its own life journey. This Indigenous educational positionality of a spiritual relationship with/as Country lessens the importance of Standard Australian English ‘terms’ and or ‘language’ influenced by the colonial actions of Western binaries. Spirit is felt as energy, with feelings and varying communicative interactions forming the relationship to become respectful and reciprocal. Respect and reciprocation is required when learning in, moving across and throughout Aboriginal, Western and the interactive/intersecting knowledge spaces, places and sites in this felt knowledge relationship.

Take for example, the first time you see a cicada coming out of its shell or hold a shark egg that you found on the beach that is not empty, or feel a cool breeze on your face on a hot day. The feeling you get from these things are in relatedness to the spirit world especially when you thank that cool breeze or notice the gift of life coming into being. The research within this dissertation is primarily about observing the introduction of Yuin Country as knowledge holder. This was achieved through analysing stories, feelings and thinking by observing people, spirit and place coming together via knowledge sharing in a two-way educational setting inclusive of Yuin Country.

This dissertation, (which is presented ‘by compilation’) is about placing spirit into teacher education through positioning Country front and centre. Yuin Country is explored and somewhat disentangled from the colonial lens throughout the whole dissertation to provide a readable understanding. The cultural experience utilised in the research was specifically designed to implement a vision that non-Aboriginal people can start their own interwoven web of understanding with Country. The Mingadhuga Mingayung (My Mother Your Mother) cultural experience activated the non-Aboriginal participants’ understanding of Country. Ambelin Kwaymullina (2005) an Aboriginal woman and academic from the Palyku people of the Pilbara region in Western Australia, positions Country through Aboriginal law.

Country is much more than a place. Rock, tree, river, hill, animal, human – all were formed of the same substance by the Ancestors who continue to live in land, water, sky. Country is filled with relations speaking language
and following Law, no matter whether the shape of that relation is human, rock, crow, wattle. Country is loved, needed, and cared for, and country loves, needs, and cares for her peoples in turn. Country is family, culture, identity. Country is self (p. 12).

To form a ‘respectful reciprocal relationship’ with Yuin Country and people, non-Aboriginal people have to be given appropriate opportunities to learn about, know and appreciate our Yuin knowledge (a multi-layered and directional pattern of living filaments and strands [multiple entities within entities] that make a whole) system and process. Everything that is known and unknown is living which includes the smallest to the largest rock: each rock has a spirit that can be sung.

Gulaga (place of teaching) Mother Mountain is a Yuin sacred and significant Mountain with her sister Mountain Biamanga (place of learning). Mingadhuga Mingayung (cultural experience and pedagogy) came into existence through my understandings and relationship with these two significant and sacred Mountains. Looking for similarities is a consistent teaching on Gulaga (Harrison, M. D. & McConchie 2009) through Gulaga Stories. By the means of philosophising similarities in this dissertation, grounded by the Mother’s Stories, teachings, learnings and interwoven entities (trees, rocks, birds, animal and so on) with Western knowledge, an opportunity was provided for participants, Mingadhuga Mingayung to learn and know Yuin Country as a knowledge site and holder. I am using ‘similarities’ in a heartfelt manner that is linked to Yuin ways of knowing, learning, practice and behaviour.
The Mingadhuga Mingayung approach can build a respectful reciprocal relationship with a number of non-Aboriginal people who choose to be open and respectful. In this particular case the non-Aboriginal people were volunteers from the University of Wollongong (UOW) teacher education program. Similarities are used in the context that we all, including what Westerners call non-human entities, for instance trees, have more in common than what separates us. For example, like humans, trees have an extended family and live in a range of communities. The non-Aboriginal participants were taken to the Mountain(s) on the far South Coast of New South Wales (NSW) to find similarities with the Mountains and with Aboriginal people on a physical, mental and spiritual level.

One major intention of the research around the cultural experience and journey described in this thesis was to provide evidence through stories that the participants shared in understanding around Gulaga’s teachings as the Mother. In reciprocation the participants were then able to call Gulaga Mother as well. Gulaga holds our Creation Dreaming and gives us the chapters on how we are all connected through similarities. The concept of ‘giving away’ (Uncle Max Dulamunmun Harrison 2008: personal teaching) applicable Yuin stories through and by Yuin Country to find similarities guided the argument proposed in this dissertation: Yuin Country can have a significant relationship and role in the UOW teacher education program.

The research project described in this thesis sought to understand how six School of Education non-Aboriginal academics and twenty non-Aboriginal preservice teachers engaged in Aboriginal ways of knowing, learning, practice and behaving with Yuin Country; how they learned about self in kinship. The purpose of starting this engagement was to introduce the academics and preservice teachers to a life-long respectful reciprocal relationship with Yuin Country. The research described in this thesis draws on a rich and living culture of Yuin knowledge in story/teachings. This was done (through storying) to consider, in a partnership with Western language and stories (theorising), how best to implement and embed Aboriginal perspectives in teacher education programs.

A shift in thinking had to occur when working in this academic space utilising Yuin storying and theorising in a thesis. The process and outcomes that drove the research
had to reflect the imperatives and conventions of both Aboriginal and Western knowledge sites to engage in a two-way knowledge arrangement. The best way to introduce this concept is as follows: outcomes and processes are one and the same as each informs, and are integral to each other (Yunkaporta & McGinty 2009). Thereby knowledge, when in the hands of Country in relationship with a person, has its own life journey as the expectations of the process and the outcomes are always active, changing, intertwined and living, to maintain a relationship with Country that is life sustaining. The participants in the research were prepared, introduced, came into contact with and debriefed through a cultural experience via a traditional Yuin legacy pedagogy (Chapter Four) from Country. I have called, with approval from Uncle Max Dulamunmun Harrison (a Yuin Lawman and Elder), this experience Mingadhuga Mingayung (Chapter Four).

The learning that ensued from the academics and preservice teachers’ experience was researched through a methodology of relationships that extended Lana Ray’s (2012) convergence approach/theory to a Yuin methodology of connectedness. Ray (2012) describes an Indigenous convergence methodology as one used by Indigenous academics but which still involves Western methods. She argues that the methodology is still Indigenous when it is inclusive of and guided by the researcher’s Indigenous traditional knowledge principles. In this dissertation, the methodology of relationship was informed by Yuin traditional principles, it was directed and guided by Gulaga and Biamanga methodology and methods and hinged with a number of Western and Indigenous academics’ methodologies/methods. This ‘methodology of relationship’ approach was driven and assembled from a Yuin Aboriginal storying (Chapter Four) system, where knowledge is heard, felt and seen (Harrison, M. D. & McConchie 2009, Gotha cited in Christie 2010). Such an approach contains both parallel and transversal lines, which cross, weave and twist together to make connections between Western and Indigenous academic theory. There are many metaphoric means to identify and craft different ways to ‘see’ similarities and connections. My role as the researcher was to observe and identify connections, at the same time examining barriers or tensions that might restrict the identification of similarities (crossovers/convergences/conjunctions: connection) between the preservice teachers and academics’ stories and Country/my stories.
From the start of the program of engagement with the *Mingadhuga Mingayung* cultural experience there was no attempt to dismiss the non-Aboriginal participants’ knowledge system and processes. However, from the beginning, one of my goals as a researcher and guide was to challenge the participants’ sole reliance on Western knowledge systems. During the research project in the context of a Yuin cultural engagement, I took on/negotiated multiple roles. From the perspective of the preservice teachers I was an Aboriginal man, guide, lecturer and academic who taught them to engage in their own personal and knowledge relationship with Yuin Country. For the academics, from my view, I was more of a facilitator and only to a degree ‘taught’. In the context of the research, I was a guide, colleague, participant, researcher, writer and student. However, with my responsibility for ‘taking care of the Mother by means of the Mother’, as a researcher and from my own Aboriginal knowledge site, I was very much aware that it was imperative to uphold Respect Law.

A number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers have pointed to the importance of respectful relationships, respectful behaviour, Aboriginal Law and Respect in academic research that involves Country, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people (Yunkaporta 2009; Martin 2008; Birrell 2006). Mark Edwards, Roberto Biloslavo, Blaze Kwaymullina and Ambelin Kwaymullina (2013) in the context of their examination of wisdom research on global environmental leadership that is inclusive of ancient, scientific and Indigenous visions conclude that: “The sacredness of other forms of life was a central aspect of the Law. Human purposes were pursued in a context where the purpose of other animals, plants, and natural systems were respected” (p. 2). To hold my Respect Law, this thesis was undertaken to pursue relationships between Country and the non-Aboriginal participants to demonstrate the sacredness of Yuin Country and the development of a knowledge that respects and learns from animals, plants and natural systems. Importantly Respect Law also means I do not share traditional Aboriginal knowledge that can’t be shared in a public and/or academic space. This thesis is one form of how I hold my Respect Law and cultural obligation, given to me by Country and Uncle Max. That is Uncle Max would always reinforce to my brothers and me while he was teaching us on Country, ‘you have to give it (cultural knowledge) away to keep it’ (Personal communication 2008).
The opportunity to engage people in an ancient learning process and system from Yuin Country first materialised when I became a lecturer in Aboriginal education (2008) within the School of Education, then as a researcher when I started my Masters by research degree in 2010, which evolved and was upgraded to a PhD in late 2011. All these roles cannot be separated from my cultural position: as an Aboriginal man, teacher, student and researcher, I listened and looked for Country to show me the Mingadhuga Mingayung approach.

From a traditional Yuin knowledge position I had to find a movable balance (tide), which doesn’t always mean equal, through a process that could assist participants from a different knowledge site in forming a respectful reciprocal relationship with Country. I needed to do this with Country so that we could guide the preservice teachers and academics to have the capacity to personally identify similarities. ‘Similarities’ as an English word was intentionally used with a layered and intertwining meaning that is difficult to capture. The complexity is reduced if an Aboriginal pedagogical approach is taken to slowly reveal the interconnecting layering of meaning, conceptualities and contexts over time. ‘Similarities’ emanates from a deep philosophy of connectedness and relationality (Wilson 2008), which can be seen and interpreted on all levels. Similarities move beyond the physical to be felt in the body and then ‘seen’ on the spiritual level. Carol Birrell (2006) argues respectfully that non-Aboriginal people can have their minds opened to see Country with “Aboriginal eyes” (p. 410), viewing Country’s spiritual voice.

In the learning on Country, participants were guided by members of Uncle Max’s close and extended family, including myself, who in turn were directed by the Ancients and Uncle Max. The guides, including Uncle Max, introduced the legacy pedagogy (Chapter Four) to understanding Yuin ways and lead the academics and preservice teachers through the cultural experience while the Spirit(s) of the sacred Mountain, Gulaga showed the sacredness and revealed similarities within the individual. The sacredness is to know and feel spirit within everything; it can be held by everyone with an open mind in order to take care of the Mother who provides us with everything.
The ‘similarities’ of birth and life embedded in the Mountains’ stories indicate we are all connected through the spirit; it was therefore important to provide the academics and preservice teachers with the opportunity to see this gift of similarities. This gift from Country can, and did, trigger recognition, for the non-Aboriginal participants, of similarities between the Yuin sites of knowledge and their own Western knowledge. As Uncle Max states in Birrell (2006): “And if we don’t share just that little bit of sacredness with people, we can never let ‘em think black” (p. 411). This philosophy proposes a potentiality of knowledge site movement by creating a foothold to a new (very old) site of knowledge production. From this little ‘taste’ of a new (for the non-Aboriginal participants) but old Yuin knowledge site, a refreshed action of knowledge movement (living knowledge) can assist in thinking towards sacredness of space and place. The relationship between Aboriginal and Western knowledge sites and the concept of ‘knowledge movement’ is explored in greater detail in Chapter Two. The academics and preservice teachers’ movement and behaviour drawing on both knowledge sites, in respect and reciprocity, informed their relationship and story with Yuin Country. The participants had to be themselves (knowing their own knowledge site while working and learning a new site of knowledge) to learn how they were in relationship to the sacredness of the experience and Country.

Individuals or communities are positioned in relation to Aboriginal knowledge in terms of how they interpret their own relationship with colonisation and Country. The colonial education system inserts and maintains the positional superiority of Western knowledge (Tuhiwai Smith 2012). Traditional Aboriginal knowledge can re-balance this power relationship of intentional interpretational positionality by assisting non-Aboriginal people to look at self in relation to Country. From an Indigenous standpoint position on equity within universities, Tracy Bunda, Lew Zipin and Marie Brennan (2012) state:

At all levels of work and governance, non-Indigenous staff need to culture capacities to appreciate what they are in no position to know about Indigenous experiences, struggles and aspirations, and so to appreciate the gift of Indigenous labour to re-educate the institution (p. 954).
This gift, as stated earlier, for me is the sharing of Country. If Country is introduced to academic staff in teacher education programs and the curriculum in a respectful manner then the power relationships entrenched in human colonial positioning can be disrupted by placing Country as the central power. Country is often seen by non-Aboriginal people as ‘Mother Nature’, who ‘holds power’, which for Aboriginal people goes well beyond a provision of a beautiful or destructive day. Country has the power to communicate, heal, and teach, with many other life-giving attributes. The Mingadhuga Mingayung cultural experience introduced Yuin Country, Aboriginal people and the non-Aboriginal participants (the preservice teachers and the academics) to each other for an opportunity to form a respectful reciprocal relationship. Yuin Respect Law had to be instilled through the cultural experience for the relationship to form and be embodied: this was my responsibility. Respect, patience and tolerance are three simple teachings (Harrison, M. D. & McConchie 2009); understanding and following these behaviours is a journey towards Respect Law. The success of the cultural experience was dependent on participants being open to learn from ‘all the entities’ in respect of Yuin Country, which includes humans, in order to open passageways for movement into another site of knowing, learning, practice and behaving.

Deborah Bird Rose’s (2004) review of her teachings from the Victoria River people explains their frustration with non-Aboriginal people not seeing living laws and only recognising so called ‘dead laws’. She writes about how non-Aboriginal people are “coming up blind”, and bumping into everything. The living presence of the living Country in its own flourishing particularity was not noticed by Whitefellas, whose mission was conquest” (Rose, 2004, p. 9). The knowledge of this living law is alive but Western knowledge has placed Aboriginal knowledge, histories and identity into contestation. Rose (2004) quotes Danaiyarri, a Mudburra man born at Wave Hill, Northern Territory: “the past is contested territory, and so memories, ethics, and narratives are also contested” (p. 11). Conceptualising Aboriginal people, culture, and histories as only existing in the past maintains the dominance of colonisation by separating the living knowledge of Country from moving into the present, through Country’s ways of knowing, learning, practice and behaving today. As Martin Nakata (2007) argues, Indigenous knowledge must contest this territory; however, the ‘how’ doesn’t have to be in a contested space or place.
Instead, Shawn Wilson (2008) presents a relational approach, between a range of entities, human, environment, Cosmos, and ideas. Nakata (2013) argues that in academia Indigenous academics must be inclusive of Western academic approaches, to reduce what Homi Bhabha (2004) coins as ‘mimicry’ (see Chapter Two). Through a philosophy of similarities, relationships can occur in a respectful manner across varying knowledge sites with interactions of ideas that are inclusive of Country, with Country being the connective space to care for in relatedness. This places a lot more emphasis on building knowledge rather than contesting it. To observe your own behaviour in a relationship with Country, people and knowledge is an important respect protocol (Uncle Max Harrison personal communication); the contestation or test should occur with the self, not the other. The invitation of non-Aboriginal people into this framework provides an avenue to achieve a relational approach to both teaching and learning, and research.

*How did this dissertation come about: it was no coincidence*

The main undercurrent of the research project described in this dissertation was to contribute to a shift towards a spiritual movement that assists all students and teachers to have a relationship with Country. This movement is reflected in recent political actions in Australia. A spiritual shift occurred in 2008 after the Australian Federal government apologised to the stolen generations, creating a greater space for non-Aboriginal people to understand the place that is now known as Australia. Australia can be (is) now respectfully recognised as a place that is made up of all the Aboriginal Countries that have always existed. If decolonisation (Tuhiwai Smith 1999) and reculturalisation is to take place, Country has to become known, understood and felt through a relationship which develops respect for sharing and caring of all of the entities that are connected to life as Country. Reculturalisation through my cultural teachings is intended to re-establish an understanding of how traditional Aboriginal knowledge functions in the context of today. Teacher education has a role to play if this relationship is to be extended to all the humans that call these lands home.

A parallel shift to this movement towards an apology occurred with legislation in NSW in 2005 that required all teacher education programs to include Aboriginal Education as a mandatory area of study in response to the report, ‘Teaching the
teachers mandatory Aboriginal Studies. Volume II, Case studies of exemplary practice in preservice teacher education’ (Craven, Halse, Marsh, Mooney & Wilson-Miller 2005). In 2008, the University of Wollongong employed me to implement the Mandatory Aboriginal Education Core subject. This put me in a position to develop curriculum to meet the New South Wales Institute of Teacher Education (NSWITE 2007) requirements. From an Aboriginal community perspective, I was also accountable to the local Aboriginal communities (including my own community), plus aspects of my cultural requirements within the limited framework provided by legislation. During this time period I developed a number of personal and professional relationships that led to me being invited by the Director of the Early Years (EY) to provide professional development to help the EY team implement Aboriginal perspectives throughout their program. During one of our many conversations, we both agreed that it would make sense to link the professional development project to a prospective PhD. Consequently the project on implementing Aboriginal perspectives in the EY program started off as a Masters of Research study and in late 2011 was upgraded to a PhD.

During the early stages of the doctoral study, the Director of the EY program left the University of Wollongong and a restructure occurred within the EY program. With these changes only leaving two EY staff members, the direction of the PhD had to change to include other School of Education staff members. Six staff members, including the two EY staff members from the School of Education, volunteered to take part in an experience of meeting and learning from Country. At the same time, between the Masters and the PhD, I developed a Fourth year EY elective subject, ‘Engaging Koori Kids and their Families’.

This seven-week elective subject introduced preservice teachers to a process of learning with and from Country by meeting the families and communities that belong to Country. As all of this was happening, my own cultural education had been taken into a very intensive stage and, on the basis of this, I was given permission by Uncle Max Harrison to take staff and preservice teachers to meet Gulaga and Biamanga, two significant and sacred Yuin sites. Thereafter the PhD settled into its current form, as my cultural education was melded with my role within the Western world. This melding became known as the Mingadhuga Mingayung (Chapter Four) experience.
and approach, which continued to be developed throughout the research and will continue to develop beyond the thesis. I introduce *Mingadhuga Mingayung* later in this chapter. Before doing so, I will discuss the literature on non-Aboriginal academics teaching about Country in the wider location of my research in South-Eastern Australia.

**Old stories informing new stories of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships in South-Eastern Australia: Reviewing the Literature**

This section reviews the available literature in a specific area of NSW and Victoria to explore non-Aboriginal peoples’ implementation and embedding of Country into educational programs and related research. The narrowing down of the literature review to the region of South-Eastern Australia is intentional, both politically and culturally. The re-culturalisation of Aboriginal knowledge(s), methodologies, pedagogies, respectful behaviours and paradigms, in partnership with decolonisation has found a toehold in university curriculum and research. From my Yuin cultural and Aboriginal political education, the implementation and embedding of Aboriginal perspective by non-Aboriginal (and Aboriginal) educators should be of/with the local Aboriginal Country and its people.

The South-Eastern Australia region was selected, as there is very limited literature on implementing and embedding Yuin Country into educational programs. The best way (culturally and politically) to find close connections with Yuin Country was to identify neighbouring Countries in the South-East corner of Australia: these have closer cultural ties and connections. The further the Countries extend away from Yuin Country, the greater degree of cultural variations. To best help my study, a localised Aboriginal context was required to identify educational, cultural and political issues, both positive and negative from locations of proximity. The localisation of proximity context sought identification of successes and any difficulties to best inform and equip my research to assist non-Aboriginal people to work respectfully and appropriately in this highly personal, political and culturally charged atmosphere.

This literature review focuses on how non-Aboriginal people engage with Aboriginal knowledge systems through examples of research in cross-cultural context. It also
identifies practical examples in a number of university contexts by describing how non-Aboriginal academics are working with Country in their curriculum and teaching practice. My own research was concerned with how non-Aboriginal people might learn to work respectfully with Yuin Country, therefore the literature review focused on non-Aboriginal people already working with Country, Elders and or Aboriginal people who hold significant stories from their respective Country. Country has a “relationship between all life forms” (Koster, Baccar & Lemelin, 2012, p. 198) and people that hold Country’s knowledge have a strong relationship with their Country. The literature review demonstrates the potentiality, similarities and the diversity of approaches that take place when respectful relationships form on a personal and professional level between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal academics. When non-Aboriginal academics and preservice teachers seek, are provided with, and accept an opportunity to have a meaningful and respectful relationship with Country and its people, then a diversity of Aboriginal knowledge and pedagogical practice can be learnt and shared with permission. The majority of the review on the literature will provide a small snapshot of how non-Aboriginal academics are engaging in known, and learning about unknown (allowable/not secret) Aboriginal knowledge.

In recent times Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics such as Karen Martin (2008), Martin Nakata (2007, 2007a) and Tyson Yunkaporta (2009) have provided processes, systems and frameworks to assist non-Aboriginal academics to engage with Aboriginal communities, research, pedagogy and knowledge. I begin by considering the PhD thesis by Yunkaporta (2009) an Aboriginal man who belongs to the Wik family in Northern Queensland. As I have stated above, the focus of the discussion is essentially on non-Aboriginal academics participation in Aboriginal knowledge within academia; however, I am using Yunkaporta’s Country-centered research from Western NSW to demonstrate a representative point. This point of respect is to give recognition, which Yunkaporta does with his PhD thesis, to the numerous known and unknown people, Ancients, Ancestors and Countries that contributed to providing a framework for non-Aboriginal teachers in implementing and teaching authentic Aboriginal pedagogies. However by doing this, it must be clarified, the Country’s knowledge Yunkaporta shares is from and for the Country that holds this knowledge. While the framework can be used by non-Aboriginal and
Aboriginal academics in other Countries, the knowledge from the Country(ies) of Western NSW cannot be incorporated.

Yunkaporta’s (2009) ‘Eight Ways Aboriginal Pedagogies’ utilises and further enhances Nakata’s (2007, 2007a) cultural interface and Indigenous standpoint theories. Yunkaporta (2009) draws on connections between Western and Aboriginal pedagogies to implement practical solutions for non-Aboriginal teachers to respectfully incorporate Aboriginal knowledge. Yunkaporta’s (2009) Eight Ways Aboriginal pedagogy framework consists of the following kinship elements: Story Sharing; Learning Maps; Non-verbal; Symbols and Images; Land Links; Non-linear; Deconstruct/Reconstruct; and Community Links. The Eight Ways framework and process was designed to find a common ground between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal pedagogies by demonstrating their interrelatedness.

Yunkaporta describes how local Aboriginal knowledge/pedagogies from Western NSW and non-local Aboriginal knowledge/pedagogies on a profound level found points of conjunction. This was achieved through a trial project where Yunkaporta worked for six months in a Western NSW school. The purpose of the trial project was to enhance the selected school’s capacity to implement and embed Aboriginal perspectives by designing and implementing a unit of work in a middle school Design and Technology subject. Yunkaporta with and through local Aboriginal community members brought forward the local Country’s meta-knowledge to discover the knowledge overlap between the localised approach and the mainstream curriculum (Yunkaporta 2009). This type of Country-centered approach has contributed to moving Aboriginal perspectives beyond a theme, to bind Country and community into the pedagogical process (Yunkaporta 2009, Harrison, M. D. & McConchie 2009, Martin 2008, Rose, James & Watson 2003). Yunkaporta’s (2009) project illustrates one way in which non-Aboriginal teachers can be invited to access a land (Country) driven curriculum/pedagogical approach to reinforce the importance of Aboriginal land as culture to Aboriginal students. The other benefit of the project was to provide awareness, understanding and skills to develop the non-Aboriginal teachers’ own perceptions and connection to the place they are living and teaching upon.
As outlined, my research project is on non-Aboriginal people engaging and forming a relationship with Country to implement and embed Yuin Country as the core entity and process for Yuin perspectives. Generally, Aboriginal education systems, essentially involve an individual in a family/community context having and continually developing a deep relationship with their Country (Edwards & Buxton 1998). To assist non-Aboriginal people implement and embed Aboriginal perspectives, I had to embark on my own learning journey within this context. By doing this I am meeting my cultural protocols and Yuin cultural education expectations to satisfy my own relationship with Yuin Country. Yunkaporta’s work provides a very clear picture on how he achieved his journey through permission and guidance from the Elders of the Country in Western NSW. My dissertation from a different vantage point to Yunkaporta provides a picture of how non-Aboriginal people can work within Yuin Country from a framework of relationship. Therefore the remainder of the review on the literature will focus upon non-Aboriginal peoples’ experience of researching and utilising Country in teaching programs. The purpose behind this focus has been to assist my learning and research journey with Yuin Country within academia to gain insight to how non-Aboriginal people are engaging in this space and place.

Non-Aboriginal academics’ research journey through Aboriginal community members and Country

I have started with Carol Birrell’s (2006) work because Birrell and I have learned from the same teachers: Gulaga and Uncle Max Dulumummun Harrison. Carol Birrell is a non-Aboriginal woman, my sister, on a cultural level, who has a deep relationship with the Yuin sacred Mountain, Gulaga for many years. Birrell’s (2006) insightful dissertation describes how she as a non-Indigenous person and four other non-Aboriginal people from diverse cultural backgrounds developed a deep engagement with place on the far South Coast of NSW and Aboriginal culture. In her study, four of the five participants were women, including Birrell together with an African American woman, and two Australian women, one with a teaching background, the other a trainee dance therapist. The fifth participant was a non-Aboriginal male who was an American priest. The participants volunteered to learn from Uncle Max Harrison (Yuin Elder and traditional knowledge holder) on various significant Yuin cultural sites.
Birrell (2006) contextualises the research of how non-Aboriginal people can achieve a deep engagement with Country through a Yolŋu metaphor, *ganma*, coming together of fresh water and salt water. This metaphor has arisen from Yolŋu people observing their Country where two different living entities (salt water and fresh water) come together (Brackish water) as part of Country’s web of interconnections to maintain life. Birrell’s (2006) research provides an alternative view of the intercultural space between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge interaction: a space that can be contesting but at the same time a space that is gentle and sensitive. Birrell (2006) through her research shares her learning journey with an Elder, Yuin Country, her participants and Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal research approaches to identify a way for her to find her own metaphorical and real space with Yuin Country.

In her thesis, Birrell (2006) examines the relationships between people and place to determine “the extent to which it is possible for non-Indigenous persons to enter deeply into Indigenous ways of seeing and/or knowing place and the implications of this for their identities” (p. viii). She explores her own and the participants’ feelings as they learnt through the teachings of Uncle Max and Gulaga. Birrell’s research provides a very good platform for understanding how non-Aboriginal people can engage deeply and negotiate respectfully in a space that is often seen as contentious and or contested because of colonisation. For Birrell (2006), however such non-Aboriginal people are,

whites who choose to enter the black world and are able to encounter both worlds in a profound way. This encounter with the black world is not through superficial exposure, borrowing, or wholesale appropriation. It is one of deep engagement through direct experiencing and through direct dialogue (p. 370).

Birrell emphasises that non-Aboriginal people who choose to learn from Country, embrace a dynamic ‘intellect’ open to spirit-filled experiences. A particular section of Birrell’s (2006) research explored the ‘mental frame’ of her participants as they moved within and then beyond the contested space. Birrell’s participants were able to step past the colonial perception that there is only one right way to learn (Western) by
identifying and recognising how Country can join into the research conversation. Birrell (2006) provides the following example of how a participant demonstrated an awareness of the Yuin Country communication (in this case Kookaburra) system during an interview after learning from Gulaga and Uncle Max.

Yes, like dragonfly, I can have a larger vision, a larger hearing, a larger sense of feeling.

If something pricks in, like kookaburra, I suppose that is learned significance: I have learned to listen to kookaburra. There may be other things that I don’t pay attention to, that I don’t listen to.

I have made contact in a place of real knowing, so there’s a history between me and kookaburra.

I use the word awakening, a slow awakening. The awakening to the interrelationship between all things, that spiritual connection (Participant in Birrell, 2006, p. 381).

Birrell points to these comments to demonstrate how the participant recognised and connected the Kookaburra (when it called out during the interview) to the conversation with Birrell in the formal part of the research. The Kookaburra was not seen as separate during the research conversation, the Kookaburra was an important contributor to the dialogue. She argues that if Aboriginal ways of learning remain closed off to non-Aboriginal people or contested then colonisation continues to replace the spiritual connectedness between people and place (Country). Birrell’s (2006) research provides a window into how non-Aboriginal people in a relationship with an Aboriginal Elder and Country can unknowingly and knowingly shift from Western mental frames to learning from and being inclusive of Country as knowledge holder.

Birrell’s (2006) work with Uncle Max Harrison has given cogency to the argument that non-Aboriginal people can have a deep engagement with Yuin Country. For me, Birrell’s research signaled a possibility to expand the capacity of this type of
relationship to an epistemological/ontological/pedagogical relationship: one that could shift how Aboriginal perspectives can be implemented and embedded in Western curriculum structures by non-Aboriginal educators by forming a respectful reciprocal relationship with Country as knowledge holder.

Non-Aboriginal academics operating in Aboriginal knowledge sites within academia: Research and teaching

Like Birrell, other writers have demonstrated how connecting with a Country and its people can be achieved through intensive collaborations and continuous negotiations in personal and professional relationships and obligations. For example, a group of female academics from Macquarie University and University of Newcastle working in the field of Environment and Geography describe their commitment to a Yolŋu (North East Arnhem land, Northern Territory) relational ontology of co-becoming through relationships between Bawaka Country, themselves and a Yolŋu Elder (family) (Bawaka Country, Suchet-Pearson, Wright, Lloyd & Burarrwanga 2013, Lloyd et al., 2012). Co-becoming is their approach and story of challenging their Western ontology to be a part of and in relationship with all things: a Yolŋu relational ontology. For the academics their co-becoming approach was located in relation to the theory and practice of natural resource management.

They make a case that: “Humans care for Country as part of Country, not as separate from it” (Bawaka County et al., 2013, p. 186). The writers share their journey, engagement and findings in terms of a relational ontology of co-becoming, a collaborative caring for Country. For example, the female Yolŋu Elder and academics describe how human participants should experience Bawaka Country as “an integral part of Bawaka Country and cannot and should not be separated from it” (p. 186). The Country itself, Bawaka, the Aboriginal people from Bawaka and the non-Aboriginal academics researched and described their negotiated and collaborative understandings of the intimate partnerships taking place. In attempting to achieve this respectful collaboration, Western approaches were not removed:

In an effort to avoid colonial inequities in these encounters and relationships, we have created a research agreement in which we detail the story of our relationship and discuss actual and potential research projects
with the aim of achieving mutual benefits. The agreement, which can be seen as a legalistic, prosaic tool, is in this context part of actualising a relational ontology in the way it forges connections between agencies, is built upon broad networks of responsibility and reciprocity, and acknowledges temporal and spatial relationships as fundamental to our work (p. 1083).

Reading between the lines, connections in knowledge, understanding of respect, responsibility and reciprocation would have been identified for a formalised agreement in academic structures. These connections are cemented through the researchers being functional members of the community, and via continuous negotiations and obligational behaviour. For me, this enhances the capacity for collaborative research and teaching relationships imbued in the personal as well as the academic.

The living experience of Birrell’s (2006) work and the academics who took part in the stories to co-become with Bawaka Country (Bawaka Country et al., 2013, Lloyd et al., 2010, Lloyd et al., 2012, Wright, S. et al., 2012, Wright, S. et al., 2009) provide descriptions of their relationships with Yuin Country and Bawaka Country respectively. This work can provide ideas on how to develop similar flexible and negotiable frameworks for academics and preservice teachers who might choose to be committed to respectfully enhancing Country’s voice in academia and schools. For me, my cultural education with Country has been very family/community orientated. The *Mingadhuga Mingayung* approach focused on forming a strong sense of community between the participant groups. My research draws on my own experiences with Yuin Country and community to engage similar principles shared by Birrell (2006), Bawaka Country et al. (2013) and Lloyd et al. (2012). This was done to create a framework to encourage a close collaborative community of learners between the academics, preservice teachers, Uncle Max, Country and myself to build respectful reciprocal knowledge relationships.
What underpins the academic programs built from Aboriginal community and Country relationships: Sharing and Caring?

A number of the studies in this review of the research on Aboriginal knowledge and Country within universities in South-Eastern Australia, point to the importance of equitable and obligatory relationships. The programs that were reviewed all confirmed in varying forms the notions of caring as part of the knowledge sharing relationship. For example, John Bradley (2012) an Associate Professor at the Monash Indigenous centre, Monash University, on the basis of thirty years of cultural experience and obligations with the Yanyuwa people of southwest Gulf of Carpentaria in the Northern Territory raises the important issue of caring. Caring, in this instance, is for Bradley’s non-Aboriginal anthropology students completing the subject ‘Hearing the Country’. In the following statement Bradley (2012) recognises that non-Aboriginal students enrolled in his subject had no experience or understanding of a Yanyuwa Country approach:

… because from my own experiences in teaching into such a space it can at times be ambiguous and also for some a destructive place where students sometimes do not cope without the ‘normal’ academic supports of formal lecture and Power-Point (Bradley, 2012, p. 26).

To support learning from a ‘different’ approach to ‘normal’ academic structures, Bradley (2012) was aware that the concept of care in this context also had to shift when implementing the Yanyuwa peoples’ learning approaches. This ‘ambiguous’ educational approach for the non-Aboriginal students had to be counterbalanced by a ‘different’ form of support. Bradley argues that non-Aboriginal students entrenched in a Western knowledge system struggle without support: support which can come in the form of caring. Bradley describes how in his ‘Hearing the Country’ course, through using Problem Based Learning and Reflexivity, he introduced an important twist to the action/idea of care for the undergraduate anthropology students engaging within a negotiated form of Country as teacher. The students were placed into a system called “guided freedom” (Bradley, 2012, p. 27) in class discussion with the approach that there are “no right or wrong answers” (p. 29). That is, there is no direct contestation as there are many answers to a question or ways to know an entity.
Bradley’s (2012) work demonstrates the need to take a different pedagogical approach to disrupt the Western normative response when Country is presented as holding knowledge. In the ‘Hearing the Country’ subject, Bradley employed a two-way knowledge engagement, which built “epistemological bridges” (p. 29). Bradley argues that the learning by the non-Aboriginal students in his classes happened on a very deep level. For example, one student wrote in his reflexive journal during the course:

Why did I not think about this? Why did I think there was only one way to classify the world, a Western way? When I looked at the Indigenous examples I first thought ‘simple’, ‘wrong’ but then I had to admit, I did not even understand half of the details embedded in the way things were being classified. The dugong example just shocked me, the West has one name and then the Yanyuwa have 26, and the detail! I just had to stop and say nothing [Student journal, 2010] (Bradley, 2012, p. 29).

While this student’s engagement with Aboriginal knowledge is clearly demonstrated in this quote, Bradley also demonstrates how the intimate relationship with the actual Country could only be represented through what he terms ‘triggers’. As stated above Birrell (2006) and Bawaka et al. (2013) likewise emphasis that this type of intimate association with Country is required. For Bradley the triggers were materials from his collaboration with the Yanyuwa families, including verses from songs, maps of Country, and artefacts. These triggers presented real life scenarios, but as Bradley (2012) explains, Country as a totality could not be bought into the classroom. The subject was not taught on the Country of the Yanyuwa families, thereby the knowledge from Yanyuwa Elders was not situated in the place the knowledge was from. Monash University where the subject took place sits in the Kulin Nation, a different Country that holds its own knowledge.

The main point for referring to Bradley’s (2012) work is that he was able to provide the students with an opportunity to learn indirectly from a Country. Furthermore, the students were able to observe the importance of the respectful relationship he has with Yanyuwa families, their knowledge and their Country, to achieve a respectful and care-filled pedagogy in the context of anthropology. Bradley’s (2012) research on his
subject also involved examining teacher evaluation forms on his course. One of the students’ comments is reproduced below:

Through out this entire course the lecturer has helped me traverse some of the most confronting material vis-a-vis cross-cultural communication, which has inspired me to pursue this field of research and praxis further into postgraduate study. The lecturer has always shown the utmost respect towards my ideas, and me, and teaches with passion and intellectual flair unparalleled (Monash University Teaching evaluation, 2010 quoted in Bradley, 2012, p. 32).

As Bradley points out, if care is not provided when presenting such confronting materials, then students’ learning would be suppressed and respect left wanting. In the following quote Bradley (2012) describes how he addressed cross-cultural tensions through a mentoring approach:

I choose to mentor students as they explore their responses, emotional and intellectual, to carefully selected exemplar triggers. In so doing, I can free myself from traditional roles, as do the students. We collaborate in creating a liminal space in which the diversity in perspective and knowledge among students becomes the strength of the learning experience, rather than the barrier. Students then model for themselves the means by which they may engage in cross-cultural discourse when relating to and working with Indigenous peoples in the future (p. 32).

This for me is where care was implemented in his teaching. Bradley was able to reduce Western traditional teaching roles and utilise his own experience with the Yanyuwa families to guide (mentor) the students on the “epistemological bridge” (Bradley, 2012, p. 29). In other words, he cared by sharing his experience via the triggers from the Yanyuwa families to expand the students’ knowledge horizons. Bradley’s paper demonstrates how Yanyuwa Country, both as triggers and pedagogy in relationship with his Western approaches, can be used in an academic teaching site. The Yanyuwa families in partnership with Bradley are sharing their story (Country/identity) within an anthropology subject, to represent old stories and
tensions that exist to provide an avenue for the new stories of relationships to be more respectful.

*Conversations with and on Country: Learning in an Urban Setting with Aboriginal artists to converse about old and new stories with Darug Country*

In another example of Country being utilised in a university teaching context, Neil Harrison, Susan Page and Leanne Tobin (2015) documented their community arts project designed to engage Aboriginal people, academics and preservice teachers with Darug Country. The preservice non-Aboriginal teachers experienced Darug Country within Sydney, through Darug artists, in order to learn how Aboriginality and Aboriginal knowledge derives from Country. As part of a community arts project at Macquarie University in Sydney, Neil Harrison and his colleagues, in collaboration with a family of Darug artists designed “creative and imaginative resources” (p. 3) to reconceptualise and re-represent an understanding of Aboriginality and its intertwining connection to Country to urban preservice teachers.

A purpose of the project was to get the preservice teacher out of the traditional university classroom and participate in partnership with the artist to paint three murals outside on Country. The focus was on engaging all involved to talk about their experience of working together when engaging with Country as teacher. As part of the project, the researchers interviewed one of the Darug artists about her connections to Country. This interview from the community art project was utilised in the Harrison et al. (2015) article to demonstrate the importance of Country to Aboriginal people in an urban setting today. The quotes from the artist help the reader to understand how the participants required an open mind when working with Country, how Country teaches, and the importance of looking for the connections between entities.

In another section of the paper, a description is provided on how the Darug family of artists and the ninety preservice teachers worked together on the project. The Darug artists and preservice teachers worked side by side in completing three murals on campus to share culture and create new stories of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples living and being on Country. Harrison and his colleagues made use of Somerville’s (2013) work to argue that non-Aboriginal people need to change their
relationship to place. The Darug artists shared the old stories of Darug Country and conversed with the preservice teachers to demonstrate how Country (including the old stories) contributed to the interactions during the project, their discussions and what they painted. The conversation between people and Country is how Harrison and his colleagues attempted to assist the preservice teachers create new stories with Darug Country.

The artists reinforced the idea that although Darug Country had a large metropolitan city implanted within its boundaries it could still connect to people. The preservice teachers learned through ‘indicators’ (Harrison, N. et al., 2015, p. 9) provided by Country and through their collaborative work with the Darug artists. Indicators for Harrison and his colleagues:

are plants, flowers and animals. Indicators are also wind and water. In working outside, students and artists were interrupted and unsettled by the dust and rubbish kicked up by the blustery winds late one afternoon while painting; they were affected by the changing light, and the emerging darkness, by the evening cool on their skin (p. 9).

All these indicators had an effect on the conversations taking place and how the mural was painted. When the main mural commenced, the ‘old’ Darug creation story of the Port Jackson inlets was shared. The indicators signal that the same ‘Ancients’ story’s’ invisible voice (e.g. changing light) still exists in Sydney - Darug Country. Each stage of the day, for example, a flower, plant and or animal can contribute to the teachings (from Darug Country) taking place as each entity is their own ‘Ancient story’. For the Darug artists, Harrison and his colleagues each entity is an indicator of the old stories that still live and are active today to inform the new stories of Darug Country. The artists provided the old and present connections to the preservice teachers to inform “the new stories of coexistence” (p. 1). This is important, as a personal story with Country for many non-Aboriginal people has never existed in the context of having a relationship with Country.

The old stories and knowledge of the indicators held by Aboriginal community members assisted non-Aboriginal preservice teachers to form and share new stories
that were not stifled by colonisation but could lead to relational accountability. As Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2011) succinctly states, “the Dreaming is not new” (p. 422) and to reculturalise understandings of Country old stories are essential in preservice teacher programs. Aboriginal people have always and still continue to follow the indicators, because they communicate, and are our Dreaming(s). The indicators are just as important as the people and live in their own family groups and communities. The varying communities from Country need to be respected, cared for and heard. These families and communities are a major part of my/our community that need to be involved in the collaborative work, taking place within my research.

Two non-Aboriginal Academics and Ngiyaampaa Elder sharing stories on Ngyampa/Barkandji Country

An article by Hill and Mills (2013) demonstrates how the concept of location(s) on Country contributed to improving relationships between Charles Sturt University (CSU) and the many local Aboriginal communities that are located within its many campuses. The exploration of rural Australian land ownership of location was seen as an avenue for CSU to step towards Aboriginal reconciliation and overcoming social justice issues. Hill and Mills (2013) describe how they participated in a project initiated by the CSU Indigenous Education Strategy in response to the Australian government-funded Bradley Review (2008). A cultural experience with Aboriginal people was designed for a small group of academics staff to situate ‘location’ as a primary form of culture competence for teaching and learning practice. The key aspect of the project was an adventure learning experience on Ngyampa/Barkandji Country with an Ngiyaampaa Elder and staff from CSU. This was done to instigate a change in the university’s pedagogical approaches to be more inclusive of Aboriginal students, and to reduce the under-representation of Aboriginal people in tertiary education.

The intention was to provide an opportunity to reposition (dislocate) the academic colonial historical mind-set to a ‘landscape as pedagogy’ position. Location was utilised on a physical, mental and spiritual level for the old and present stories of Country to assist staff to reflect upon their teaching and on colonialism. As the authors state,
location made it possible to learn about the significance of (dis)location for learning and teaching practice and to begin the process of thinking about the pedagogies that need to be discarded as well as those for which a cartographical imagination must be employed if we are to create new orderings of learning (Hill & Mills, 2013, p. 73)

The dislocation of Aboriginal students’ access and retention within CSU system and structure was represented through the dislocation of Country in the Western mindset.

The project provided an opportunity for the inclusion of location (Country) with stories to reflect, and challenge pedagogical practice within the university’s tertiary education programs. The project implemented a Western ‘adventure-learning’ pedagogical approach to form a collaborative environment for stories to be shared by an Elder, her family and the other members of the CSU group during the cultural experience with and on Country. According to Hill and Mills (2013) the pedagogy provided a learning environment to help participants to be reflective through collaboration to impact on their prior knowledge of location. The collaborations assisted the learners to understand how they learned and in turn to recognise the knowledge processes and systems they currently function within, in the context of a new knowledge site.

Elder, Aunty Beryl Carmichael, Yungha-dhu walked the group of Charles Sturt staff members on her Country for two days with storytelling as the major focus towards developing the non-Aboriginal participants teaching skills and building a sense of a mutual community. Yarning was the central method utilised to share each other’s stories in order to build a capacity for collaborative learning and construct understanding in new knowledge for the academics. According to Hill and Mills (2013), adventure learning was a purposeful experience, which assisted in “linking location to a pedagogy of cultural competence” (p. 70) to “promote fluid roles between teacher and student and, by offering a learning experience that occurs through dialogue based on collaborative opportunities and authentic experiences, encourages transformative learning” (Doering, 2006, cited in Hill & Mills, 2013, p. 67). Hills and Mills point to respectful collaboration and the authentic experience of
being on Country as crucial to their personal and institutional goal of addressing cultural awareness and advancing to a level of cultural competence.

The collaboration was achieved through experiencing each other’s stories on a location that was, and still is, very important to Aboriginal people. The terminology of ‘adventure-learning’ can be seen as being problematic as adventure is fundamentally linked to colonial terms towards location or recreational ‘fun’. Thereby the term adventure could easily be misinterpreted, but taken in the right context the cultural experience with Ngyampa/Barkandji Country and Aboriginal people certainly would be an adventure! If a non-Aboriginal person has never experienced Country as a location to learn from and with, then it would be an educational adventure. Or perhaps, this experience could be seen as a way to challenge the ‘colonial’ manner adventure is conceptualised.

Hill and Mill’s research reinforces how particular Western approaches, adapted as ‘adventure learning’ can work alongside and in connection to Aboriginal stories on Country to shift academics’ reflections on Western pedagogy. Hill and Mills (2013) identify that there is a large amount of ‘unknown’ knowledge that is held by Aboriginal people and Country. The authors believe this knowledge is a crucial factor for the development of an interconnecting knowledge relationship to assist non-Aboriginal people to engage Aboriginal people within CSU. Consequently, Hill and Mills (2013) emphasise that non-Aboriginal people need to start an intensive collaborative process with Aboriginal people of knowledge and Country if universities want to reduce the under-representation of Aboriginal people and knowledge in Australia’s educational space.

Pedagogy is intrinsically linked with Country, and as this review has demonstrated. Western pedagogies can work alongside and with Country. For my research, pedagogy is infused within Yuin epistemological and ontological positioning. Chapter Four explains my description of a Yuin ‘legacy pedagogy’. Whereas in Chapters Five and Six, information is presented on how a number of Western pedagogies worked in conjunction with the ‘legacy pedagogy’.
Why are these stories important for my research?

All of cultural experiences described above transpired through a relationship between Aboriginal knowledge (Country), Aboriginal people (Country) and non-Aboriginal people working within Western academic structures. The non-Aboriginal academics discussed in this literature review sought Aboriginal knowledge by working in collaboration with Aboriginal story holders and Country. Each of the articles demonstrates an aim to understand appropriate cultural partnerships and, in turn, behaviour to be able to respectfully practice research and implement suitable teaching strategies. To achieve this type of relationship the non-Aboriginal academics learnt with Country through knowledgeable Aboriginal people to form negotiated spaces in academia and obligations to the Aboriginal community or Elder (including their family). The Country-based cultural experiences informed the cross-cultural engagement and, importantly, Country had a significant role in the formation of the learning process in the examples above. In these practical examples of Country’s involvement in the curriculum and pedagogical practice, stories were used either indirectly or directly from the community to demonstrate Country as teacher.

In each of these stories (research articles), each academic’s encounter with the varying Countries and their people, led to a range of different views, solutions, descriptive language, stories and approaches. However, the differences contain a number of similarities. For example, the use of a Western understanding of a Standard Australian English term to describe Country’s entities as teacher. Bradley (2012) uses the word ‘triggers’ and Harrison and his colleagues (2015) talk about ‘indicators’. All the authors incorporate the terms, ‘story’ and/or ‘stories’ in their descriptions of the different projects. In Harrision et al. (2012), the Darug artist interviewed used the term old stories very directly to emphasise a significant Aboriginal pedagogy. I would argue that all of the literature in this review demonstrates the gravity of Countries’ old stories in the building of new relationships and stories between Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal people and Country.

The term Country is employed by all authors to refer to Aboriginal epistemology, ontology and pedagogy at various levels and stages of understanding with particular teachings (including metaphors) from Country. These varying understandings and
relationships were used to find points of conjunction between Western approaches and the Aboriginal knowledge that came from Country. For example, Birrell (2006) uses the Yolŋu peoples’ ‘Ganma’ (Yolŋu for a confluence of knowledges) metaphor of salt water (Western knowledge) and fresh water (Aboriginal knowledge) to find links with place-based theory to form a deep and intimate relationship (Brackish water) with Country. Bawaka et al. (2013) and Lloyd et al. (2012) combine natural resource management theory with Yolŋu ontology to constitute the concept of co-becoming. The word story is important throughout each paper, even though it is an English term; it is a feasible, valid and respectful term to explain a major approach/pedagogy on how Aboriginal knowledge is shared. The words ‘story’, ‘indicators’, ‘triggers’ establish how Country through various relationships can be expressed in the numerous relationships that exist.

In each research project or subject description described above, academics applied a theorised pedagogy that could work in relationship with what they have been learning from Country and their respective Aboriginal community members. For example, in Hills and Mills (2013) paper, Country was connected to an ‘adventure learning’ pedagogy with Country expressed through the term ‘location’. In Bradley’s (2012) description of his subject ‘Hearing the Country’, connection was made with ‘problem based learning’. On a number of occasions in his article, Bradley refers to the importance of his relationship and to the bravery and inventiveness of the Yanyuwa families. For me, Bradley illustrates the connection between ‘problem based learning’ and how the Yanyuwa are trying to solve the problem of protecting their knowledge while at the same time developing better relationships between academia and Country. Harrison et al. (2015) worked pedagogically with Somerville’s (2013) place-learning approach to inform a direct teaching dynamic within an urban context/community.

The pedagogical descriptions described above, all reinforce and reestablish the importance of Indigenous relatedness (Martin 2008) and relationality (Wilson 2008) and how these can function appropriately and respectfully in educational institutions. These research articles (stories) reinforce the intertwining Indigenous epistemological, ontological and pedagogical term called relationship. In addition, they establish the importance of people to people relationships, and people to all entities from Country relationships, all drawn in together in a collaborative framework with Country at the
center of the Aboriginal and Western knowledge relationship. Through my relationship with Uncle Max Harrison, my Ancestors and with Yuin Country my research exhibited and, this thesis reflects, many of the principles described above.

A brief introduction to the cultural experience: Mingadhuga Mingayung

For me, Mingadhuga Mingayung is the spiritual Mother, Gulaga, of Yuin Country who can communicate to people through an umbilical cord (Tripartation, Chapter Four) to embody knowing and learning. All people have an umbilical cord at the beginning of their life. Through a teaching from Gulaga, people still have a spiritual umbilical cord back to the Mother Earth that has birthed all life. A number of humans may not be aware of this spiritual reality, but at some stage in our evolution their Ancestors did. The Mingadhuga Mingayung cultural experience and approach provides an opportunity to re-introduce this ancient teaching and way of knowing, learning, practicing and behaving: legacy pedagogy (Chapter Four).

The cultural experience, described in this thesis and which formed the context for the research with the non-Aboriginal academics and preservice teachers began with Gulaga, Mother Mountain who is My Mother and Your Mother. Mingadhuga Mingayung as the cultural experience has its own life and was also an interconnecting living entity of the research project. Biamanga, Gulaga Sister Mountain, is also my Mother. Traditionally and for some people today, your Mother’s sisters are also your Mother. Uncle Max and Biamanga gave permission for Biamanga to be part of the cultural experience for the academics. Biamanga, a place of learning was included to enable the academics to engage and further experience the ‘legacy pedagogy’ (Chapter Four) approach while on the field trip with Country. The preservice teachers engaged in further activities to develop an understanding and the skills of the legacy pedagogy during the elective subject, ‘Engaging Koori Kids and their Families’. The philosophical aspect of the Mingadhuga Mingayung approach, including the legacy pedagogy approach, is explained at a greater depth in the first published article in this
dissertation, Chapter Four, *Mingadhuga Mingayung: Respecting Country through Mother Mountain’s stories to share her cultural voice in Western academic structures.*

**Gulaga and Biamanga seen in Respect: the main teachers of the Mingadhuga Mingayung experience**

The cultural experience was delivered by two important participants: Gulaga and Biamanga through the overall guidance of Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison. My role was to embed respect in the spaces and places of the *Mingadhuga Mingayung* experience, by sharing my teachings and what I had learnt from these three teachers. In the context of the research project, I guided the academics and preservice teachers through a journey similar to the one I have experienced over the years with Yuin Country.

Gulaga and Biamanga are two very sacred Mountains on the far South Coast of NSW. As Birrell (2006), who has experienced Gulaga numerous times, explains:

> It is Yuin country in which Gulaga holds sacred significance. She now holds sacred significance for me, too. When we go to the mountain, Uncle Max inducts us in the ways of thousands of years—through ceremony, through teachings, and through respect (p. 3).

Birrell, with respect and feeling, argues: “Aboriginal Australians can teach us much about this land, about relationship with country, about spirituality, about the intelligence of nature” (p. 7). The *Mingadhuga Mingayung* cultural experience was and continues to be steeped in ceremony, ritual and silence where the individual was introduced to the intelligence of the ‘text of the land’ (Harrison & McConchie 2009) to learn how to see Country talk/teach without voice.

This intelligence of nature through the Yuin cultural experience was instilled in respect through a reminder: the red headband that was worn throughout the visit to the sacred site. The red headband was provided to each participant. As was done for me, I explained the importance of the red headband: the headband was their passport onto the sacred site on Gulaga and Biamanga. Importantly, the red headband was a reminder of the respect protocol that is essential for this experience. Both sacred sites
have the capacity to, from my observations, and as will be outlined in this thesis, make an impact on a level where respect is an automatic reaction. This was clearly evident, for the preservice teachers and the academics, when permission was given through ceremony to enter the cultural sites (personal observation).

Silence is expected on both sites and provides the place and space to look at self in relationship to the Mountain(s). Gulaga, in particular, tests and teaches visitors on all levels, physical, mental and spiritual, as it is a steep one to two-hour walk in silence. The stories/teachings/chapters on the Mountains shared by Uncle Max, myself and other Aboriginal people are intended to activate connections to a visitor’s own life. The teachings are about a journey, a journey we all share from conception, birth, baby, through to the teachings at the rock called high school. The final chapter of the teachings at the site on Gulaga finish, but never finish, at the chapter called ‘future rock’. And so by these means Gulaga provided a unique shared experience by opening up an avenue for the academics and preservice teachers to experience her Dreaming first hand.

*Mingadhuga Mingayung for the preservice teachers*

Preservice students who were enrolled in the elective subject ‘Engaging Koori Kids and their Families’ were provided with a gift of meeting and experiencing Gulaga, our sacred Mother Mountain. The fourth year elective subject provided the preservice teachers with the chance to be a community of learners to create and extend their networks of Aboriginal partnerships-relationships to support Koori kids, their families and communities from Country. Fourth year Early Years and Primary preservice teachers can elect to do the subject ‘Engaging Koori Kids and their Families’ after the third year Mandatory Aboriginal Education subject, Aboriginal Education. The elective subject introduces and places the preservice teachers into a Country-centred learning experience, where they engage in a whole range of learning experiences (gifts) with a number of Yuin Country’s families and communities to develop skills to be inclusive of Yuin Country in Western school practice. One of the central experiences is a visit to Mother Mountain, Gulaga with Uncle Max Harrison and his family.
All of Yuin Country is sacred and significant and it is Gulaga who holds the Creation Story of the Yuin people, a gift in the form of observable teachings, to help people see the sacredness and significance of life. One part of this process to assist the preservice teachers to be receptive to observing this gift involved the building of a tight-knit community of learners. The major focus of the elective subject before, during and after the Mingadhuga Mingayung cultural experience was to establish and continually maintain a small community of learners in respect with a network of Yuin community connections.

The Gulaga trip provided the context for the group to bond over something that was, as stated above, a spiritual gift. Furthermore, it provided the skills to read the landscape with sight that was continuously built upon as part of the relationship with Country through activities outside and inside of the tutorial room. For example, the preservice teachers were asked to draw a place that was special to them via a four-step process. The first step was to draw the physical journey to the place and the place itself; the second step was to draw the feeling of the place; the third, to draw the behaviour that was required at the place; and the final step was to combine all three previous steps into an overall artwork. The preservice teachers then shared their stories from their drawings. This personalised the intimate learning approach as a community of learners that enhanced the collegiality and the positive synergy of the group. This energy was important for their meetings with a number of Aboriginal human community members and non-human community members and families that come from/of Yuin Country. The Elders and various community members were able to sense the respect and positivity of the preservice teachers, which helped the dynamic of building relationships and sharing stories. The stories shared by the Aboriginal community members included stories around building partnerships with the community, Elders’ experiences at schools and stories from Gulaga herself.

The intention after the visit to Gulaga was for the preservice teachers to put into practice, with guidance from the lecturer, the new skills that were learnt in a number of different places and spaces on Yuin Country at and near the University Campus. This was done so that the preservice teachers could continue their learning from non-human entities as well as Aboriginal community members. The preservice teachers, through the Mingadhuga Mingayung experience, initiated their own understanding of how to
establish Aboriginal community networks and partnerships that were inclusive of Country. They created a new filament and wove their own thread into the pattern (web) of Aboriginal relationships by embedding Country into their own stories and vice versa. These stories were the points of conjunction within their classroom curriculum that embedded Yuin Country. At the same time this understanding of Country made their classroom and curriculum approach, which is currently informed by an Aboriginal community and School partnerships, more conducive to a Country centred focus.

‘Engaging Koori Kids and their Families’ provided a number of opportunities on Gulaga and after the visit to Gulaga for the preservice teachers to read the text of the land (Harrison, M. D. & McConchie 2009) and meet a range of community members as Country, thereby instilling the imperative of relationships. A major part of the pedagogical approach was building relationships and feelings attached to relationships. Senk (2014), when discussing the decolonisation and Indigenising of Arts education, states, “Central to Indigenous conceptualizations of education is this pedagogy of relationship” (p. 102). This relationship pedagogy is intrinsically woven into the legacy pedagogy that is explored in Chapter 4. The sharing of stories in relationship to Country with the Aboriginal lecturer and the tutorial group was designed to intensively emphasise the need for personal connections and relationships. The aim was to create a space and place for sharing personal knowledge through stories drawing on the legacy pedagogy and content within an appropriate context to which all people are connected: Land, Sky, Water and Relationships. This emotional aspect was the preparation required for the preservice teachers to move into a learning space of feelings and emotions: Gulaga. The visit to Gulaga has the potential for the participant to recognise their own and Yuin Country’s legacy pedagogy and conceptualise their capacity to feel the teachings.

*The Mingadhuga Mingayung experience and the university academics*

For the academics, the journey included both Gulaga and Biamanga (Western name: Mumbulla Mountain). Biamanga is the place of learning, where we all sat on the serpent’s head to hear the story of the people coming together for ceremony. The academics’ journey began by participating in a ceremony of healing for the destruction of a significant natural artefact at Biamanga that made way for a Western
communication tower.

The destruction of the ‘natural artifact’ is described in a Plan of Management (2014) presented to the Minister for the Environment by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Boards of Management for Gulaga and Biamanga (NSWBMGB). A section of the Management Plan describes the history of non-Aboriginal peoples’ early contact with Gulaga and Biamanga and the establishment of trigonometric reservations on the sacred Mountains that caused the destruction of a powerful tor:

firstly the ‘Mt Dromedary (south) Summit’ trig in 1894, followed by one on the Summit of Mumbulla Mountain in 1897. Some seventy years later, large communication towers were built on the trig reservation on Mumbulla. These towers were erected on and near our sacred sites (NSWBMGB, 2014, p. 41).

Following the ceremony of healing, a swim was offered at the sacred water hole, accompanied by the stories that are aligned to the story of Biamanga.

After the academics visited Gulaga they were invited to do a task to design and present a representation of the experience, using any creative format of their choice. This was an ‘indirect request’ with the intention to help the academics express the feelings they had felt from the experience. This step contributed to the process of identifying, understanding and utilising the similarities philosophy to show respect and re-energise/renew the Mountains. Jennifer Coralie (2008) from a ecophilosophical and ecocritical position, explains:

There is a living interaction between human and non-human worlds in the form of the dance and in painting which is constantly renewing itself, and which has entered the world of Western culture in new forms that refer to the past but are enriched by encounters with the modern world (p. 60).

The communicative tools of Western creative art are a practical example of similarities with Aboriginal literacies to enhance and reinforce an understanding of the similarities
concept learned from Gulaga. Concurrently, the creative task was intended as a guide for the academics’ engagement in, and understanding of Aboriginal literacies such as paintings to help their expression of their own reciprocal relationship with the Mother. The task could be in any form other than a written task. This process was created to help the academics translate the feelings held in the body into the mind/consciousness by a purposely, indirect instruction that could be taken on or ignored (it is a ‘test’ in a sense, as not everything can be told in the direct Western manner). Another learning system other than Western can be often described as being obscure or cryptic as it is not known in Western structures. Therefore, to assist the academics to take steps towards learning through Country, a two-way learning task was designed from identifying what can connect between Aboriginal and Western artistic literacies. The creative task was one way to provide the academics with an opportunity to learn how to feel Country. The creative task was also a hidden test to identify their commitment to the learning process, plus ‘a hint’ on how learning can be interpreted across intersecting spaces within the human body.

This type of two-way learning through similarities has a number of intersecting spaces within the individual participant where the contestation (Nakata 2007) is with self, not the other. It was important to provide an opportunity for the academics to identify a similarity in and between Western and Aboriginal literacies to assist the learning process. Aboriginal people have always had literacies through paintings, dance, song, carvings, and various artefacts and still do today. As Gulumbu Yunupingu who lives in Gunyungarra and Yirrkala, Northern Territory, states in Perkins (2010), “Now we are painting these designs for non-Indigenous people to tell them our story” (p. 262). Western culture(s) through their various art forms as literacies also tell stories.

However, it is important to be mindful of Western definitions of art: ‘the disposition or modification of things by human skills, to answer the purpose intended. In this sense art stands opposed to nature’ (Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged, 1979, p 105). There are differences, but the focus of the creative task was on similarities to help the process of identifying a new knowledge site with Yuin Country. A relational model (Martin 2008; Wilson 2008) portrays a mindfulness that is felt in the body through spirit to identify similarities, however, differences also play a significant role to reduce appropriation.
Appropriation is always present, whether in a respectful or disrespectful context. When Country and spirit is removed, then this disrespect notion of appropriation can be termed as dishonest. In turn, appropriation is also a necessity for spirit to be balanced or grounded with Country. As Louis (2007, p. 133) explains in relation to Momaday’s (1976) metaphor of reciprocal appropriation: reciprocal appropriation occurs when “man (sic) invests himself in the landscape: and at the same time incorporates the landscape into his own most fundamental experience” (p. 80). Respectful appropriation happens if the ownership of the land and/or its knowledge remains with the land or Country and custodianship given to the people born of that Country. Maintaining this difference and a separation of ownership, plus the separation of colonial knowledge that reinforces disrespectful appropriation is one-way similarities and difference function together to maintain a oneness of respectful relationships.

The responsibility of respect and learning is left with the individual. From an Aboriginal knowledge site protocol, the land or Country holds the person and the intellectual property, not the human; the human holds respect for the knowledge holder. A purpose of the creative task was to reinforce the idea that the intellect had only a minor role in the learning process. Furthermore, the completion of the creative task was a small representation of respect by (re)membering place. For learning to occur, the participants had to discover within their own selves that the dislodgment of intellect as the primary source of knowing was necessary. This dislodgment could then ‘move’ the intellect to a level of equity with the holistic concept of mind, body and spirit. Learning can happen when your eyes manifest a feeling within the body to trigger a spiritual sight of connection between the human and Mother Earth.

**Responsible Behaviour: Giving culture away to keep it**

How much can I share in this thesis that does not impinge on the intellectual (intellectual, physical and spiritual) property rights of Country and adhere to the university’s Ethics protocols for this research project? This is an important ethical question. I knew the Ancients and Uncle Max trusted in me, when I was given permission to share the gift on how to read the text of the land within the university’s
At first I was taken aback by this task and I questioned that I might be giving too much away; I shared my concerns with Uncle Max. Uncle just growled at me, and so the journey of the dissertation began. ‘Tar old fella’. In fact, I can just hear him ‘laughin’ with a Bundi (traditional Aboriginal weapon) behind his back… hahaha.

The sharing of culture through the Mingadhuga Mingayung experience helped me to keep my culture. The more people who hold a respectful reciprocal relationship with Country, the greater the possibilities for people from all walks of life to want to take care of Country: we can all keep this gift that sustains life. Mountains breathe (Birrell 2008 personal communication) and people can learn how to breathe like a Mountain. This way of thinking through metaphors and feelings motivated the design of the Yuin cultural experiences described in this research and how the thesis was written. What I have to make clear is I have always followed the guidance and permission of the Ancients and Uncle Max Harrison, thereby being very much aware of how much I can give away. Gulaga and Biamanga have ownership of the Mingadhuga Mingayung cultural experience because it is their sacred stories that have been shared to connect non-Aboriginal people to Yuin Country. As a custodian of the approach I have been wary of not sharing too much; by this I mean any secret stories, or any stories without permission, were not shared. I value my Yuin education and do not wish to be separated from this system or have any part of my body separated (Bundi- see Chapter Seven) by giving away information that is not seen as public by myself, and importantly my Elders and Ancients.

Another point that has to be made clearly in this dissertation is that the preservice teachers and academics were explicitly informed on their role of embedding and sharing their stories with the Mother in the curriculum and classrooms. Importantly, I have to remark through the philosophy of similarities there is no difference between black and white spirit. After making this statement in a Yuin notion of respect to the participants, the academics and preservice teachers’ role in this system and process of placing Country central was repeatedly clarified. While Aboriginal people share the actual cultural experience the preservice teachers and academics cannot do (lead) what was done during the Mingadhuga Mingayung experience on the Mountain(s). They cannot take their students by themselves to the Mountains and share the Mountains’
stories, but they can share what they experienced themselves during the *Mingadharga Mingayung* experience.

The preservice teachers and academics can introduce their own students to Country to initiate a relationship with Country in partnership with the local Aboriginal community members that hold the stories of Country. This is an important Respect Law and an integral part of forming a relationship with Country for the academics and preservice teachers to appreciate and follow: Country owns the knowledge and respect must be given to the Aboriginal people who are the custodians. This respectful behaviour enables the sharing of their story in relationship and reinforces the necessity of Country, Aboriginal community and school partnerships to embed and implement Country in the curriculum. What they can do by themselves is to continually build their own relationship with the Mother, then share the stories of spirit in action from this relationship. Non-Aboriginal people have the right to share with people their stories of how they take care of and learn from Country. During this whole experience for me, I had to follow my Respect Law as Uncle and the Ancients made the boundaries and borders very clear. Similar boundaries and borders were set out for the academics and preservice teachers so that they can share their story of how spirit from Country was at work within them in the context of the research and in their future teachings. This has to be a shared responsibility in the development of Aboriginal perspectives, pedagogies and approaches in Western structures.

The preservice teachers were given a number of opportunities to learn and put the teachings into practice within the capacity of the UOW structure in the seven-week elective subject. Meanwhile the academics were also given a gift of responsibility (teachings/learning/practice) as they engaged in the research project. Current university professional development structures limit such Aboriginal projects due to time constraints caused by Western cultural commitments and priorities. One of the common limitations Ma Rhea (2012) identifies in her examination of Australia’s postcolonial policy provisions towards Aboriginal education is the following:

[There is] no evidence of structured policy or resourcing commitment across Australia with respect to teacher professional development in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domain as being a
workforce development issue (Ma Rhea, 2012, p. 7)

However despite these restrictions and in the tradition of our Aboriginal Elders and other Aboriginal people, this project worked within the constraints to push the boundaries for change to occur. Through the context of a Yuin ‘legacy pedagogy’ (Chapter Four), the Bundi (traditional weapon and metaphor explored in Chapter Seven), a ‘gift of responsibility’, was observed throughout the research project in the context that the participants are adults. In this manner it was the participants’ responsibility in relationship with me, and Country to be respectful with what has been shared. This responsibility in their understanding of respect derived from their new relationship through similarities in their own knowledge system with what respect means from their learnt experience in the Mingadhuga Mingayung approach. My understanding of universal words/concepts such as respect may well be what Nakata (2007) calls the contested space within the cultural interface, where it is the responsibility of each individual adult to be respectful to the relationship when learning in another knowledge site. Each individual must learn to hold their own Bundi to maintain their own discipline of respect, responsibility, ethics and intellectual, physical and spiritual property.

Hoffman (2013), in an Indigenous research context, shares four guiding principles that need to be followed in an Indigenous research context. These are: respect, responsibility, relationship and reciprocity. ‘Responsibility’ is a key ethical consideration for research with Indigenous people to reduce colonial harm. As Hoffman (2013) states, “The onus of responsibility lies with the researcher to frame, conduct and disseminate the research in a manner that is conducive to the social and cultural values of the people involved”, (p. 195). This same onus shifts to non-Aboriginal people when engaging in teaching Aboriginal perspectives through Aboriginal pedagogies with Country. The non-Aboriginal academic/teacher has reciprocation in responsibility to share their personal experience that focuses on reinforcing the custodianship of the knowledge to remain with the Aboriginal people. Giving this ownership (accepting/recognising) back to Country and custodianship to Aboriginal communities by acknowledging the cultural property of Country, her ~ his (its) Aboriginal people and their literacies origins are two forms of reciprocal behaviour that need to take place in research and teaching practice (Hoffman 2013;
The Mingadhuga Mingayung cultural experience permitted the preservice teachers and academics to engage with Yuin Country and Country’s stories that were shared. The cultural experience provided an opportunity for the participants to identify their own (new) story(ies) with Yuin Country to contribute to the interconnecting storying weave of oneness with Yuin Country. The social and cultural values of Aboriginal people do not permit non-Aboriginal people to hold cultural authority and ownership. Archibald (1997), when discussing respect in regards to a non-Aboriginal researchers relationship with an Elder, stipulates the importance of “honoring the authority and expertise of the Elder teacher” (p. 67). My thesis project takes this crucial point a step further arguing that the same respect should be shown to Country as teacher when utilised by non-Aboriginal people embedding and implementing Aboriginal perspectives. The non-Aboriginal participant when connecting with Country has a responsibility to share their authentic relationship respectfully. In the context of my study this could occur by the academic or preservice teacher respectfully demonstrating in their story that the custodianship of caring can be shared, but the authority remains with Country. This is a respectful way of stepping into another knowledge site to learn by recognising and being aware of how to limit the influence of their colonial behavior/heritage and behaviours.

The cuckoo may have pushed the eggs out, but I must hold my responsibility in looking after what I have been given: Country as teacher

This section of the thesis was difficult to express, as my feelings were extremely uncomfortable about thinking and writing on the tensions and constraints (cuckoo-testing out respect) experienced throughout this research project. This feeling began right at the start of the dissertation journey when someone during my PhD proposal presentation asked how I was going to examine the tensions and constraints. My response was quite surprising as I automatically experienced a feeling of rejection; tensions and constraints are not the major focus of the dissertation. Otherwise the tensions and constraints would consume the experience and research, maintaining the colonial mist that distorts the truth around Country as teacher. The tension that was
triggered in my mind, and felt in my body was, ‘I cannot focus on the negative’. If a
cuckoo pushes out the magpie’s eggs and lays its own, the magpie still takes on the
responsibility of caring. I came to realise I could examine the tensions and constraints
in a respectful manner that was in awareness of any disruptive negativity. This,
however, took a very long time to surface within my mind (on an intellectual level), as
did resolving how I would use the academic language to support and clarify the
dissertation’s positioning and findings. Furthermore, I knew I could not separate the
tension/constraint section, as it is part of the path in completing this doctoral study.

The research is on non-Aboriginal people being introduced to a Yuin education system
and process to form a relationship with Yuin Country to embed Aboriginal
perspectives. From a Yuin teaching that I have been given, ‘we must give it away
(culture) to keep it’ (Uncle Max Harrison, personal communication); trust is very
much involved. The writing became ‘tricky’ because it involved finding a place and
space where I felt I met my responsibilities through my relationship to both my
Aboriginal and Western knowledge (dissertation) sites. Thereby a number of
constraints and tensions surfaced right at the start and continued to pop up throughout
the whole journey of the dissertation, for which I am most grateful, but was not always
when they first arrived.

The constraints and tensions have taught me a lot about myself, the cultural experience,
the participants, university structures, research, writing and, most importantly, how I
currently see Country in these interrelated relationships. Furthermore, the tensions and
constraints steered: how I had to use language; how I could talk about constraints; how
I think in this space; how to write in this space; how to work through the varying
interconnecting dynamics of placing Country central in all the aspects that created this
dissertation. Overall the learning journey attests that I can’t provide a one size fits all
solution.

An interesting tension, which was not a tension, that was very specific for me during
the time of writing, was how I could maintain my cultural teachings in a shared space
while I was writing the dissertation? My learning is continuous and my cultural
education/learning is in relationship with Country, Elders and other people, however,
the learning is performed by self in relatedness to these relationships. I had to
continually figure/refigure/feel and think out the teachings by myself but at the same
time negotiate these in a context of sharing and receiving knowledge from Country
and academia.

In the research, essentially, I just pieced all the stories that I was able to identify at the
time, together. The stories all came from Yuin Country, from non-Aboriginal
participants, the research, the literature, the Mingadhu Mingayung program and my
own stories. When I sat with the stories that made up the dissertation, there is a lot to
every part and to the interconnections that demonstrate their relatedness. My process
was to weave in a number of threads that makes the picture in this moment of time in
the manner in which I currently hold respect.

Yes, Respect in a two-way process
Respect is the central point of the inquiry on the tensions and constraints. Respect is
more than just a theme it is the underlying concept throughout the whole dissertation.
I had to be patient, especially with the tensions and constraint of the research, as
Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann (quoted in Jackson-Barrett, Price, Stomsiki and
Walker 2015) asserts when examining research methods in Aboriginal communities:

It is important to note whether one is Indigenous or non-Indigenous it is a
deply respectful protocol to sit and listen. When you sit and listen you
begin to get a sense of awareness of connecting to the ‘country’ on which
you stand and also to the people you have come to ‘yarn’ with. By
listening, you learn much by not asking questions: watching and listening,
waiting then acting (p. 41).

I eventually learnt that I had to sit and listen to the tensions and constraints with
Country and in particular a significant teaching called Middle Rock (Chapter Seven).
This element of respect contributed to, and importantly diminished particular aspects
of the tensions and constraints around the purpose of the research.

Themes surrounding the relationship with my cultural learning and teachings within
the thesis journey will be explored in the final chapter of the dissertation. The aim of
this research is to enhance the university’s capacity to embed and/or respectfully
reciprocate Aboriginal systems and processes in university settings. I will make a number of arguments that lead to recommendations that may well assist the university to find a philosophical and practical space to be inclusive of Country. These points will encompass the overarching theme of educators having an opportunity to form a relationship with Country.

It has become obvious for me that there can’t be one clear solution that helps the varying relationships that exist and can exist when Country is embraced. Relationships can take many forms. I can only share my own stories in relationship to the cultural experience, research, writing and the participants but these musings may well help others including institutions in some way relate in reflection to their own relationship with Country.

**How to read this dissertation**

A comment that occurred many times from my supervisors throughout the writing of this dissertation was ‘Anthony you need to explain this particular statement, as it is too cryptic’. My explanations of cultural education could be seen as cryptic or obscure by non-Aboriginal people as the educational system is relatively unknown to the Western world. In a way I took the comments of ‘Anthony this is too cryptic’ as a great compliment and at the same time a tension. My knowledge wasn’t just handed to me I had to feel it out on a physical, mental and spiritual level. On many occasions, the teachings prompted by my Elders, not many words are used and this, of course, in this place and space of academia well…! Thereby to read this dissertation there is an element of ‘cryptic’ writing, playing with Western words through a jigsaw and/or painting that can be put together. Each chapter is written somewhat cyclically but remains consistent to the format of a dissertation. Overall, this dissertation is written in the format of Western knowledge requirements, with a ‘slight’ attempt to push the boundaries, as being respectful is a big part of my cultural teachings. In Chapter Seven, I present an argument that explains the way I wrote this thesis.
Figure 4 A Snapshot of how I see the interactions between Aboriginal and Western Knowledge sites through points of interactions ~ departures and Arcs (Can you see the Lyrebirds?)

Chapter Two: A step towards examining the research problem
Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge is not stagnant

The purpose of this chapter is to share how I have slowly unfolded and figured out the research problem. The chapter opens up a discussion about how knowledge moves like water to introduce the concept of observing Yuin traditional knowledge as a living entity: all things are living and hold knowledge, such as rocks, water, the Moon and the Sun. Yuin traditional Aboriginal knowledge moves as do people in relationship with all entities that are of and live on Yuin Country, including Western knowledge within today’s contexts. As Edwards et al. (2013) maintain:

When Indigenous systems model the whole in the part they create a responsive framework built on shifting relationships. This might superficially appear to create uncertainty, in that it is not a model that is defined and absolute, but it is an approach that is highly responsive and adaptive to change (p. 24).

Traditional Yuin knowledge continues this ancient pattern of moving within the web of physical, mental and spiritual relationships. Western colonial knowledge is disconnected, due to the human created human/nature duality, which has intruded on, interrupted and disturbed the movements of traditional Yuin knowledge. Later in this chapter, I will be incorporating the term Arc to represent the various directions and movements of knowledge that I have observed within the relationship between Western knowledge and Country as knowledge holder. Briefly as an introduction, the Arcs can either go back to an original knowledge site or form a ‘new’ knowledge site that is disconnected or connected to Western and/or Aboriginal knowledge sites (Figure 4). For now it is important to re-state that traditional Yuin knowledge was not removed by the fast-moving attempts of Western knowledge to Europeanise Yuin Country. Yuin knowledge placed Western knowledge into the numerous living filaments and strands that weave the interconnecting web of Aboriginal knowledge that is Country.

One of the problems explored in this dissertation is the challenge of how to re-direct thinking around the dynamic and (what appear to be) chaotic movements of Yuin knowledge in relationship with Western knowledge. Interwoven within this problem is
the exploration of my learning journey that will be discussed throughout this chapter and the overall dissertation. Yuin Country, the Aboriginal people born from this Country, including myself, hold/possess varying physical, mental and spiritual relationships with Western knowledge to maintain Country as a living knowledge site. Indigenous people across the world are all engaged in varying forms of decolonising and reculturalising processes. For example, Marie Battiste (2002) a Mi’kmaw educator from Potlotek First Nations, Nova Scotia, writes in her paper responding to the Canadian Government’s approach to enhancing First Nation people’s quality of life and education, describes how:

To date, Eurocentric scholars have taken three main approaches to Indigenous knowledge. First, they have tried to reduce it to taxonomic categories that are static over time. Second, they have tried to reduce it to its quantifiably observable empirical elements. And third, they have assumed that Indigenous knowledge has no validity except in the spiritual realm (p. 10).

Yuin knowledge has never been static, especially when a foreign knowledge system enforced a disrespectful and invasive relationship. Yuin Country and its human knowledge holders have responded in various ways to maintain the validity of Country within its own knowledge system and processes. Throughout the 247 years knowledge relationship between Yuin and Western knowledge, Western knowledge (manoeuvre) in response to Aboriginal knowledge has slowly allowed (controlled) Aboriginal people (knowledge custodians) into the Western knowledge production site of academia. This slow and often constrictive relationship is gradually revealing Yuin Country’s (Country) integrity to Western scholars. As Battiste (1998) strongly emphasises:

In the relentless cycles of renewal and reform, Aboriginal people are living in an extraordinary time. Aboriginal people throughout the world have survived five centuries of the horrors and harsh lessons of colonisation. They are emerging with new consciousness and vision (p. 16).

These new visions and forms of consciousness epitomise the same continuous
movement of traditional knowledge that has always occurred when a balance of relationships is sought. However, arguably not all of the new visions from Aboriginal people have been grounded and balanced by traditional knowledge into the interconnectedness framework of Country (Wright et al. 2009). The impact of colonial derision has disrupted or hidden the knowledge from Country for a number of Aboriginal people. In these situations the emerging consciousness and visions are produced from a new form of politics, belonging and identity, which could be characterised as Bhabha’s (2004) concept of ‘third space’. Significantly, however, this is not a ‘neutral new’ space, but rather it is much more aligned to Western knowledge than it is with Yuin knowledge.

When Captain Cook planted the English flag in 1770, in what was to be called ‘Australia’, so began the denial of traditional knowledge. This event was also the underpinning cause for the commencement of a ‘third space’ (Bhabha 2004) in the hybridity (something new) of knowledge and knowledge practices. However, as is indicated above, the tendency is toward an overemphasis on Western knowledge. Consequently, for a third space to usefully exist in relation to traditional knowledge and Western knowledge, it must be viewed differently from how hybridity is generally understood and applied. For instance, knowledge that comes from Country will always come from Country. This knowledge does not and will never come from what could be named as a new human-invented merged space – what is usually termed the ‘third space’.

The issue here is that while Bhabha’s (2004) third space might be useful, it could be harmful if there is the suggestion that Country could be removed as knowledge holder. For this reason it is important to ‘flip’ how the third space is seen; which is to view it from a Country centred position. One of the issues with the idea of the third space is how traditional knowledge moves in response to Western knowledge. For instance, relatedness and disconnectedness has been in an accelerated state due to the speed of colonial ‘progress’ in Australia. With the arrival of the British settler fleet in 1788, a traditional Aboriginal knowledge of resistance (Sefa Dei 2002) emerged. Traditional Aboriginal knowledge and traditional knowledge of resistance formed a triad of knowledge relationships with Western knowledge, because of the destructive colonial system forcefully implanted onto Aboriginal Country(ies). Aboriginal people were
resisting colonial destruction/impositions by moving in relationship/response to Western knowledge and maintaining their knowledge system of connectedness/oneness.

Traditional knowledge systems and processes have remained relatively hidden because of colonial impositions that have created what Bhabha (2004) describes as a colonial *hybridity* and *mimicry*, where Western characteristics are imposed on Aboriginal knowledge. In today’s context, George Sefa Dei (2002) notes the focus on resistance, arguing from an anti-colonialist position that:

> Ultimately, we have to consider the role of Indigenous knowledges in the academy as primarily one of ‘resistance’ to Eurocentrism; that is, resistance to the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge as the only valid way of knowing. It is resistance to Eurocentricism masquerading as a universal body of thought (p.16).

The resistance towards Western knowledge as the universal body of thought is an imperative to maintain a balanced view of the world. However, in Australia this cannot occur from a ‘resistance’ Aboriginal knowledge framework premised on Bhabha’s (2004) concepts of mimicry or hybridity; nor is it appropriate to apply these to the notion of the mimicry or hybridity of colonial actions. Such an application is problematic because the separation of Western knowledge or doing what Western knowledge did to traditional Aboriginal knowledge has not been grounded or informed by traditional Aboriginal knowledge of connectedness.

In this chapter I discuss the ways in which a number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have separated traditional Aboriginal knowledge from its relational ceremony of balanced oneness and examine the consequences of this for a respectful reciprocal knowledge relationship between Country and Western knowledge. From this discussion I introduce and incorporate the term ‘resistant’ to demonstrate a Yuin binary to Aboriginal resistance knowledge. Resistance Aboriginal knowledge attends to separating knowledge sites only; whereas I propose resistant Aboriginal knowledge has a resiliency to colonial encroachments.
The implications of Bhabha’s (2004) notions of hybridity and mimicry for understanding resistance and responsive (Grieves 2009) Aboriginal knowledge will be examined from the basis of my knowledge relationship with/as Yuin Country. My understanding and explanation comes from two key places. Firstly my own observations from Country especially in this case, the Lyrebird, who is a noble and wonderful mimic. Secondly, Uncle Max’s cultural teachings from the old people of Yuin Country.

The Lyrebird is a large ground-dwelling songbird that can mimic artificial and natural sounds on Country. The Lyrebird records knowledge on/from Country and is a very culturally significant totem for Yuin people. The Lyrebird’s teachings have guided me in my exploration into Bhabha’s (2004) ideas of mimicry and hybridity. Respectful scrutiny of Bhabha’s (2004) ‘third space’ and of constructions of hybridity and mimicry is imperative as they impact upon Aboriginal knowledge(s). This is needed in order to shift the focus from human thinking towards a Country-centred approach. This demands that work needs to be done on the middle ground (Nakata 2013), which is a task that is coupled to the problem under examination in this study: providing an opportunity for non-Aboriginal people to identify Country as a place that ‘grounds’ knowledge. It is important to acknowledge that when exploring the middle ground I cannot leave myself out of the discussion because the research problem is part of my story of finding connections and separations to the knowledge sites that I hold. One of the consequences of this is that the middle ground cannot be ‘rooted’ in one spot because my relationship moves in response to the various knowledge systems that I hold.

The research problem is also linked with the ongoing healing of my spirit, where I am responsible for my-self (my own healing). In a Yuin cultural sense, only self can heal self, thereby Western knowledge needs to heal itself in relationship with the place it is placed upon: Country. Western knowledge is required to move in relationship with Yuin traditional knowledge in this healing process. This healing has to be done in a respectful reciprocal relationship with non-Aboriginal people to lessen the colonial influence of separating each other from being connected to Country. Country is the one thing that can bring all people together. Thereby for the healing of this knowledge
relationship with Country, all the knowledge sites that have shaped the current knowledge relationship need to be included and this includes me.

The research described in this thesis involves identifying how six academics and twenty preservice teachers thought and felt while *craefting* (old English: strength, skill) and engaging in a new (vessel) from a very old knowledge site (Country). The nuances to be examined are the associated movements recognised by me as the researcher between and within their Western knowledge site and the emerging site and relationship with Yuin Country. The program described in this research, and the theoretical reflections it has prompted, is not about the provision of a cultural experience for non-Aboriginal academics to initiate a new site of knowledge to implement Aboriginal perspectives. Rather they are concerned with how people move theoretically, methodologically and practically to connect ~ separate (Yuin duality of connection with separation) the old ~ current (Yuin) and Western sites to learn from Country to form a respectful and reciprocal knowledge relationship. The symbol ‘~’, indicates the Yuin duality and or binary of connection, rather than the separating (/) slash (Chapter 4). The symbol ‘~~’ represents an umbilical cord that connects and separates at the same time. Even though a human umbilical cord is cut off from us at birth we are always connected to our Mother(s) through the spiritual element of the cord; it always remains.

To consider this emphasis, this chapter investigates the insight that knowledge is positioned in the context of relational movements. The purpose of trying to understand these movements of, in relation and between Western and Aboriginal knowledge(s) is to demonstrate the learning movements the research participants will engage in to form their own relational knowledge site with Yuin Country in a respectful and reciprocal manner. Within this knowledge movement framework this chapter will explore how the old people on Yuin Country were intellectually, emotionally, politically and spiritually aware of the interacting dynamics with/between the introduced Western, and their own knowledge system. The old Yuin people that I am referring to are the spiritual intellects that were able to hold their Lore and implement Law even in the damaging flux of colonisation. These old people were assisted by their old people that had strategies of survival already in ‘place’ (for many centuries) for traditional knowledge to be held through the Lore ~ Law of the
land and the people. As Grieves (2009) explains, ‘The Law ensures that each person knows his or her connectedness and responsibilities for other people (their kin), for country (including watercourses, landforms, the species and the universe), and for their ongoing relationship with the Ancestor spirits themselves’ (p 7). Yuin Country through Lawmen and Lawwomen hold many things including access to knowledge and Lore ~ Law, where it is held within the ‘bloodlines’ (Harrison M.D. & McConchie 2009), through Kinship and cultural ties that exist throughout all the entities that are of Yuin Country.

Colonisation as a dead knowledge entity of law (Rose 2004) sought to break these connections. However, the people that enforced colonisation were unaware of how Aboriginal knowledge systems functioned. The spiritual connectedness of our old people with Country was underestimated and/or undervalued. For example, according to Sveiby and Skuthorpe (2006), in their discussion of Nhunggaabarra law, this law “provided a moral authority outside the individual and beyond human creation” (p. 98). Lore ~ Law is the trigger to access the knowledge in the bloodlines of Country and how to keep it safe. If people are seen as fish and want to be caught by a dolphin (Elder), then the life of the fish and dolphin is preserved through the movement of oneness that is in a context of sharing not contestation.

**Why do fish let dolphins catch them? Overturning how knowledge can be seen to recognise knowledge as a movement**

As part of clarifying and extending the reach of the research ‘problem’, an introductory exploration of traditional Aboriginal knowledge (Country) and responsive (Grieves 2009) Aboriginal knowledge systems is required. The focus of this study has been intentionally reversed from research on Aboriginal people to an Aboriginal researcher researching non-Aboriginal people experiencing Aboriginal ways of knowing, learning, practice and behaviour. Both Western and Aboriginal knowledges are still present; just turned over to see the underside of the leaf and its role in understanding how a present day tree breaths. The words ‘overturned’ or ‘flipped’ have been utilised to indicate that the same relationship of interacting knowledge systems is being examined. The point is that it has been propelled in another direction of knowledge energy to rotate the understanding of the relationship. The circular
movement in the overturning is invisible and outlines where a new knowledge site can be positioned that has two sides, which are connected.

Since the arrival of Captain Cook in 1770 various forms of positive and a great number of negative relationships have occurred between traditional Aboriginal and Western knowledges. Bruce Pascoe’s (2014) reading of many journals, diaries and letters from the early settlers, explorers and colonists in Australia demonstrates that Aboriginal people had a “pre-colonial Aboriginal economy” (p. 12). This refutes the first fleet’s botanist Watkin Tench’s position that for Aboriginal people, ‘to cultivation of the ground they are utter strangers’ (quoted in Williams & Frost, 1988, p. 190).

Colonial knowledge, as part of the overall colonial movement attempted to remove this Aboriginal knowledge-based practice to distort their own justification of knowledge implementation on a ‘new’ landscape. However, the Western knowledge system of recording knowledge has disputed their-own human (centred) generated discourse on Aboriginal knowledge and related practice.

Ever since 1770, these varying knowledge relationships and productions between and in-between Aboriginal and Western knowledge have grown and diverged in many beneficial and adverse directions. A continuous feature of this relationship is an ‘artificial context’, whereby there is a mistaken belief that [humans] create a modern society as a human artefact (Henderson 2000). Due to this ‘artificial context’, a corruptive influence exists within modern Western knowledge where Western knowledge is represented as bringing ‘progress’. For example, Patricia Brady (2003), quoting the Romanian historian Eliade (1974), demonstrates how settler societies made claims to transforming ‘uncultivated’ countries as an act of ‘creation’:

“Settlement in a new, unknown, uncultivated country … is equivalent to an act of creation. To greater extent, it echoes a primordial act: the transformation of chaos into cosmos” (p. 264). This perennial theme has created a lot of damage to Country and chaos to people’s relationship with Country that provides everything we need to survive if respected.

Aboriginal land is not chaotic and most certainly not uncultivated (Gammage 2012). Thereby, listening to and working with Aboriginal people to form a relationship with Country can help non-Aboriginal people see that Country is not chaotic, as it has
already been created. This Western ‘unseeing’ has to be both challenged and the ‘artificial contexts’ incorporated into a respectful dialogue. For example, James Youngblood Henderson (2000), a First Nation Chickasaw man, argues “from an understanding of artificial contexts, Indigenous peoples can understand how to inspire alternative contexts to end the domination and oppression that are the residue of colonialism” (p. 14). Aboriginal people must demonstrate that Country is known, cultivated (Pascoe 2014) and very old, while at the same time ‘accepting’ that Western knowledge systems are made up of people who can learn, understand and contribute to life. To do this in a respectful manner, traditional Aboriginal knowledge must be shared in its own context to assist in its continuation (Harrison M.D. & McConchie 2009). In this manner we as people who live on the Countries that make up Australia can keep the country in the chaos (the settler perceived notion of Aboriginal Country) that is not, by revealing the patterns that are thought of as chaos in a readable format for the non-Aboriginal participants.

Traditional knowledge still exists in its purest form as it comes from Country itself, in a way, a handing up of knowledge. Norman Sheehan (2011) presents Indigenous knowledge (IK) as generally:

ontological because inquiry is situated within an intelligent and intelligible world of natural systems, replete with relational patterns for being in the world. IK understandings arise in partnership with these existent and sustaining patterns of relation (p. 68).

These patterns of relations are spiritual and are felt. How IK or traditional knowledge exists in the human entity of Country depends upon the colonial distortion that all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples have experienced and hold. Colonial distortions are now in relationship to how Yuin traditional knowledge is perceived by non-Aboriginal people within the bloodlines of Aboriginal people (Harrison M. D. & McConchie 2009). The access to Yuin traditional knowledge that is handed down by the Elders and up by Country is a matter of variations in relationship to colonisation. Budd Hall, George Sefa Dei and Dorothy Rosenberg (2000) state “an important dimension of indigenous knowledge relates to how traditional forms continue to emerge and coexist in diverse situations and settings as part of a local people’s
response to colonial or imperial intrusions” (p. 19). It is important to argue that Yuin
traditional knowledge is about maintaining balance, stability and connection to all life
(Rose 1992), which is not always an easy task when including some of our non-
Aboriginal sisters and brothers in the known/unknown borders and boundaries of
Country.

Borders and Boundaries

There is a particular relationship that needs to be discussed when approaching and
moving across the boundaries and borders of a known or unknown knowledge site.
For this reason, the discussion on knowledge as movement in this dissertation refers
at times to metaphoric borders and boundaries of Country. Moving beyond metaphor,
I will also argue that these are real borders and boundaries from traditional knowledge,
which exist throughout Country. Rose (1996) explains Aboriginal borders as follows:

Each whole country is surrounded by other unique and inviolable whole
countries, and the relationships between the countries ensure that no
country is isolated, that together they make up some larger wholes—
clusters of alliance networks, Dreaming tracks and ceremonies, trade
networks, tracks of winds and movements of animals (p. 12–13).

The sand on a beach or the slippery rocks around a creek let us know that we are on a
border and a boundary, with protocols to uphold if we choose to, for example, enter
the ocean; the shark is one ‘big’ reminder of the respect protocol. The ‘how’ is a
question that will always exist with choices to be made in order to minimalise damage
to knowledge sites (either way, Western and Traditional Aboriginal knowledge). The
‘how’ is the choice of being respectful or not, as well as the use of protocol to achieve
respect. In a sense there is a ‘choice’ whether to do it the ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way.
What constitutes ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ relates to how ‘choice’ is interpreted and how
relationships to those borders and boundaries are felt and kept respectful.

Boundaries are in place for a reason and need to be clean; they are not frontiers, as the
boundaries must remain readable. A frontier is almost always focussed on the human,
removing everything else from the discourse, in which the readable text of the land,
sky and water is diminished or destroyed by human violence. As Coralie (2008) explains, “Violence to the land does not appear as violence to white Europeans: it is invisible to us” (p. 53). It is invisible as there is no spiritual connectedness to the land. There is always more to learn when respect is put in place, the learning may not be logical to the mind but this is the exciting place where interchange(s) between the body and mind can learn with spirit. Yunkaporta (2009) discusses a similar concept through describing how opposites overlap in nature, creating a dynamic synergy. The overlapping space is the introductory, permission seeking and re-adjusting/settling in of spirit with the entities that are present in that moment. This overlapping moment occurs in a place and space in anticipation of a potential movement into a new space or ‘(m)othered’ knowledge system. For example, for Germaine Greer (2003) a question surfaced, “can it be possible to make a U-turn after 200 years of careering off in the wrong direction” (p. 15). Non-Aboriginal people have to make this choice to step into the overlap. Then the individual has a choice as to what direction or pattern of movement they move into, across, through and around after their engagement with the cultural experience of Country.

The term around is important as it notifies a continuous journey of staying in relationship to both a Western and new relationship with Country. As Greer (2003) writes, after the gifts of Kulin Country were shared with her by Kulin women from Fitzroy, “I went back to my white world and got on with earning a living, seldom thinking of the Aboriginal people who had been so generous with their time” (p. 24). If non-Aboriginal people choose to go beyond Greer’s experience, they can know, learn, behave and practice in an ancient system and process.

This system and process provides a way of being that is connected to Country. For example, when Willie Ermine (1995) writes about the ideology of Indigenous epistemology he also emphasises the importance of knowing self in relation to knowledge. Ermine’s discussion of knowing the inner self relates to my discussion of Yuin epistemology of knowing Country as self (Chapter 4). Ermine (1995) states:

Aboriginal people found a wholeness that permeated inwardness and that also extended into the outer space. Their fundamental insight was that all existence was connected and that the whole enmeshed the being in its
inclusiveness (p. 103).

The insight of learning in a oneness approach is interrelated to how the body (human) works in understanding the relationship between the outer spaces of the body with the inner and vice versa. This ontological space(s) contributes to and constitutes the individual’s relationality of identity and can remain stable in this going around movement with traditional Aboriginal knowledge. The individual should always recognise that their identity is linked to their Ancestors, born from their Country(ies) of origin. Holding this known or unknown identity informs how a non-Aboriginal or Aboriginal person can form a new relationship of belonging to another Country as knowledge holder. The non-Aboriginal individual may have been born on ‘Australian’ land, but they have not been born by/from the Countries’ (for example, Yuin Country) line of lineage. In this context through accepting their lineage, known or unknown (no shame in not knowing or knowing), the non-Aboriginal person can potentially connect on [a spiritual level for] a physical, mental and spiritual level [belonging of connection] to a Country.

Such movement can occur within our bodies and across cultures as in Country. This form of learning can occur because of the many borders and boundaries that are interconnecting intersections of knowledge. The learning at these intersections is conveyed and translated through known and unknown feelings, which are driven by the individual’s respect of knowledge interactions at borders and boundaries. At the same time Country feels and protects through a range of cultural barriers. This raises the question of ‘choice’, or the ‘how’ of choice. For instance, if the following question arises “how many generations does it take to become indigenous to a chosen homeland?” (Mulcock, 2007, p. 64), then damage to respect and spirit of self is taking place. This is because the term chosen is the key to unpacking this problem that has been fashioned by colonisation. In this instance, the problem is not only whether or not one can become Indigenous; the problem is in the very posing of this question. For this question can only arise from a coloniser third space that hasn’t been flipped; that is, it hasn’t been grounded in Country. The response to such a question is that a non-Aboriginal person cannot claim to be Indigenous to a Country in which they have no ancestral connection.
In asking this question, a second point becomes clear: by asking such a question the person has chosen to not recognise his or her own ancestry. This means the non-Aboriginal person has selected to remove themselves from themselves through a denial of themselves as Country, which is to deny the lineage of their being. Even if the colonial quandary (what is described above as a third space) is not grounded in Country (which caused the situation), there should be no attempt to remove the unknown as the unknown is known by the individual’s Ancestors. A teaching I received from Yuin Country taught me that if we as humans don’t know our ancestry, our Ancestors have always got their fingers on us (Yuin Country personal communication 2008). For this teaching I only know back to my Great, Great, Great Grandfather (Kut ti run) because of colonisation (accepting the artificial context). The non-Aboriginal individual seeking indigeneity has inappropriately crossed a border (continuing colonial exploits) that will counteract any true relationship with the new (chosen) Country they now call home: a blockage on a spiritual level. This blockage hinders the individual’s ancestral Country’s spirit meeting and the possibilities of knowing the spirit of the new adopted Country’s spirit and vice versa on a respectful level.

Exploring the known and unknown borders and boundaries

The article ‘Caring as Country’ (Bawaka Country et al. 2013) is credited to the Country that provided the teaching for the learning that was undertaken by all the authors. One of the authors was an Elder from Bawaka Country who guided the non-Aboriginal authors through the teachings that have their own borders and boundaries. Borders surrounding entities, according to Bawaka Country et al. (2013) are within an “ontology of co-becoming, [in which] beings, things, non-tangibles have less clear boundaries. They can never be entirely known. They escape us as they are also part of us and part of each other” (p. 189). In this article they argue that this acceptance, that the logical mind does not have to totally know, creates stability within the body, whether human or Country. If Country and the human are in connection, the message that is being produced in the space of a border or boundary can be felt and understood.

Rose (1996), in her exploration of Yolŋu boundaries, describes how boundaries can be crossed if permission is sought and the context is appropriate. ‘Permission’, ‘respect’ and ‘patience’ are terms for non-Aboriginal people to understand, act upon and live,
when they want to cross a human border of knowledge and a boundary of Country as a knowledge holder. For humans translating these concepts as they work across knowledge sites, there is not always a need to know the answer in the now. This acceptance returns us to the quote at the start of this paragraph; there are borders and boundaries because we will never need to know the whole because Country has its own guardians and secrets. However a boundary can be crossed; the custodians of traditional knowledge have a right to allocate permission for engagement with others not of their Country (Williams & Hunn 1986). This engagement requires respect and access to Country can, as a consequence, takes time. Time is also important to be able to ‘feel out’ the knowledge shared by Country. This way of learning knowledge can be expressed in the metaphor of a very big and old tree that takes a long time to grow. This represents that learning will take place when, firstly, you realise that you don’t need to know the answer (knowing will occur in its own time) and secondly, you let go of wanting to own the way of knowing and learning. This learning is a respectful way of moving into the intersection of knowledge sites when travelling towards holding (being in) a relational knowledge site with Country.

Knowing that I do not need to know is the space which provides the means to examine how a Yuin Country-led understanding of, for example, hybridity can redirect understandings of knowledge production in relevance to Country. Birrell (2006), for instance, explains hybridity through the illustration of a barramundi [that is from Country]. She illustrates the notion of a cultural hybrid, a type of transformation, which has evolved as a result of a deep engagement with Country. This type of person is able to identify the borders and boundaries, understand them, cross boundaries and engage with respect. This person is like the barramundi, a fish which has “evolved into a new diadromous species” (p. 404), which is a species that can move from fresh water to salt water and change gender when they reach a certain weight, and when salt water is available. This example illustrates how Country and entities like the barramundi can assist us to challenge and rethink terms such as hybridity.

Can a non-Aboriginal person respectfully step across Aboriginal knowledge borders and boundaries?

Birrell’s (2006) thesis explores in a respectful and insightful manner how she and other non-Aboriginal people respectfully negotiated Aboriginal boundaries and
borders like a barramundi. Meanwhile the above section on the disrespectful appropriation when crossing an Aboriginal border and boundary has raised an important question. The question on settler ~ invader descendant ‘indigeneity’ and or non-Aboriginal people existing in a relationship with Country is in direct contrast to Birrell’s work on learning how to respectfully hold (being in) a Country-centered knowledge site. Acceptance is a word that is important in this discussion on ownership, belonging and identifying with Country. Non-Aboriginal people trying to find a stable sense of identity in relation to their adoptive Country, no matter how many generations have been born on Aboriginal Country/Countries, need to accept that they are not born from the ‘bloodlines’ of the Countries of this continent Australia: for me this is a very clear boundary. On the other hand there is a possibility, directly linked to this research, for non-Aboriginal people to cross a border respectfully to know, learn, behave and practice the adoptive Country’s knowledge through a respectful relationship of knowing/unknowing self as from a Country (overseas) and recognising their identity in connection with (Aboriginal) Country(ies). This journey can be a very unclear passage for people who may feel lost because of the many disrespectful crossing of borders and boundaries by colonial knowledge. The concepts of not needing to know, of acceptance, and respect have a very prominent role in determining if non-Aboriginal people can move across, through and around two knowledge sites respectfully.

**Borders, boundaries and movement: crossing with what purpose (beginning of movement)**

The following discussion illustrates how Yuin knowledge is alive, moves and functions in allowing us to understand the concepts of mimicry and hybridity as they apply to the ways of being with Country. By looking for similarities and differences in a philosophical relationship between Yuin and Western knowledge overlap, non-Aboriginal people may find opportunities to re-think and feel the space between the third space. As Uncle Max and Gulaga have taught me, people can move across borders and boundaries to learn in another site of knowledge on a physical, mental and spiritual level. This can be achieved if the comprehension of knowing what exactly happens is of less importance.
This knowledge process from Country is not an Aboriginal only knowledge, but a knowledge system grounded in Country with people who learn by means of and from Country. As Ross (2006) argues when he compares the relationship between Indigenous and Western pedagogy:

This [Aboriginal] education... did not focus on teaching each person exactly what to say, think, or do - a product-based teaching. Instead, the Aboriginal education taught that life was a ‘matter of responsibility’ born by all people at all times and children were taught the personal qualities they would need to be able to carry those responsibilities (cited in Ireland 2009 p. 14).

Responsibility in an Aboriginal pedagogical approach is placed on individuals to learn through their own strengths (including monitoring the space within their own borders and boundaries) in relatedness. Importantly, doing this contributes to maintaining the patterns of connection through the line of sight in the acceptance ~ resistance binary. The ethics of responsibility in maintaining life between Aboriginal people and Country according to Coralie (2008) “involves responsibilities which have the force of jural principles” (p. 66). To hold responsibility (Law) is to maintain and if judicious, share with non-Aboriginal people the knowledge that all things (entities) on Country breathe. This lens can shift how breathing in (taking in and on the responsibility of learning with Country) traditional Aboriginal knowledge can lead to a balance in understanding colonial forms of hybridity and mimicry.

The breathing metaphor introduced above provides one suggestion of how people can contribute to Country overcoming or healing foreign forms of hybridity and mimicry. This provides an opportunity to think about how people can be a part of a respectful movement of knowledge to reinvigorate life in the pattern of interconnectedness. After respectfully breathing the knowledge of Country in, on the breath out you cannot choke (falter on your responsibility to maintain oneness). Thus, when the knowledge is taken through self like oxygen, great care is required to make sure the knowledge production within self is about taking care of Country as self: no separation. Breathing is used to show how a Mountain still breathes today and so does traditional Aboriginal knowledge in the relationships it has with all entities, including people.
today. Aboriginal knowledge holders such as a Mountain are still very much alive with life, which is knowledge.

Before exploring hybridity and mimicry further, the interrelating and containment movements initiated in and by the borders and boundaries of Aboriginal and Western knowledge will be raised. We all have a responsibility of being mindful on all levels (physical, mental and spiritual) on the role we have towards hybridity and mimicry. The production of hybridity and mimicry from Western and Aboriginal knowledge sites all impact on how traditional Aboriginal knowledge (Country) is perceived if it is going to be seen in its true manner of a living and breathing entity.

Including the word Movement in relationship with people and knowledge

In this section I share snapshots of traditional knowledge delivered in a Western format to demonstrate for the reader a deliberate picture of how traditional knowledge is alive and how it shifts for the time in which it exists. A number of Elders today still share knowledge on Country and at the same time utilise academic and non-academic publications to share Country’s teaching to a larger audience to maintain their responsibility for/of taking care of Country. Bell (2010) shares a teaching from Ngarinyin lawman Paddy Neowarra about the whole pattern of life:

See that Milky Way; that Wanjina lying down. ‘E got his foot in the water. Wanjina (as the watery heavens) come right down to the ground at night time. We in that water right now; only this fire keep us dry! Spirits floating around all the time, night time, in that water. We nearly all water ourselves. That’s why we all joined together; trees, animals, plants, humans, heavens, waterholes. We all joined in water. When you breathe out you see that water. Early morning you see cloud going up again, off that lagoon, going back up high with other clouds. Wanjina form into clouds and bring rain. Cloud going up. Join up with other clouds. These Wanjina clouds ... you can see that penis hanging down. Lightning brothers those clouds ... they moving across sky. When they
all join up they make big storm, ‘Bang!’ That the lightning Wanjina chuck 'im down (quoted in Bell, 2010, p. 6).

Spirit is placed in with Western science knowledge through relatedness of the whole with people being a part of, not separate. Learning in this context is learning how to look, listen and see (Harrison, M. D. & McConchie 2009) this is a relationship of oneness, a relationship, which is not ‘owned’ by the Indigenous.

Kwaymullina and Kwaymullina (2010) share that the various traditional stories are all connected, just viewed from different places. To emphasise this, I will now segue from the story by Neowarra to a story from Uncle Max Harrison (2009) on the truth of traditional knowledge.

The two lads in the water … are my grandkids. They are in the river so they feel the cold. See, that’s a pretty cold river. But the other thing I got them to feel was an understanding of the power of the water and the cleansing of the water and what it was doing for their bodies.

When they got into that cold water, I told them, ‘Now you stay there until you’re a little bit colder and then when you come out your body temperature will just shoot up’. They said, ‘Pop, we’ll freeze to death!’ and I said, ‘No you won’t, you’ll learn a little bit of truth about going from freezing to warmth, and you must believe me on that because that’s the truth of the knowledge that my grandfather and Uncles have passed onto me’ (Harrison, M. D. & McConchie, 2009, p. 67).

The truth will hit the two young fellas in Uncle Max’s story through their own time, when they get out of the water, when it does it will hit like lightning.

These two stories if told on Country would again have a totally different feel, than reading them here, from a computer screen or on the printed page. The purpose of telling these stories is to provide an indication of what is traditional knowledge, with the truth of how it is still alive today in the context of today: at the same time demonstrating clarity of its existence as a movement in itself as Country.
Responsive Aboriginal knowledge

Western knowledge’s movement during the first one hundred years in Australia is expressed by Kwaymullina and Kwaymullina (2010) as: “‘Knowing’ that dominated during the colonial era where the powers of the West believed they had a mandate to take dominion over the earth, and it continues to exert a strong influence over Western ways of knowing” (p. 196). As suggested above, during this time a form of Aboriginal knowledge developed in response to protect Country. Traditional resistance Aboriginal knowledge was at first connected to traditional knowledge. However, in response to the destructive actions of Western knowledge, another Aboriginal knowledge evolved (moved) over time due to the context of the ‘knowledge relationship’. Grieves (2009) has called this ‘responsive Aboriginal knowledge’, a concept which captures how:

Indigenous peoples stand in a very particular relationship to the Western knowledges that have been used to repress and oppress them. This does not imply that Indigenous knowledge is necessarily antagonistic to Western epistemologies, only that it stands in a particular relationship of critical dialogue with the knowledge systems recognised by the dominant society within which Indigenous peoples find themselves (p. 2).

Responsive Aboriginal knowledge can be connected to traditional knowledge in various forms, from a light to heavy comprehension. What can be said about this comprehension is that because of colonisation some of our people have very little or no understanding of traditional knowledge. Responsive Aboriginal knowledge produces knowledge in response (Grieves 2009) and/or in resistance (separation) to Western knowledge. One of its by-products is that resistance Aboriginal knowledge can mimic colonisation (Nakata 2013; Bhabha 2004) due to the Western knowledge process of separation. Resistance knowledge (Sefa Dei 2002) and its physical and mental attributes were and are still required to diminish colonial residues and manifestations. However, as Nakata (2013) argues in today’s academic context resistance knowledge production can be unproductive to new relationships in Indigenous knowledge discourse. Resistance Aboriginal knowledge has the capacity to isolate itself from the originating foundation of everything in connection: traditional
Aboriginal knowledge. This whole issue surrounding what is Aboriginal knowledge can be divisive. However if traditional knowledge is used in its correct context, it can provide healing (Harrison, M. D. & McConchie 2009) and is a stabilising process that brings people (as knowledge holders/custodian: held in their bloodlines) and knowledge back to the patterns of relations (Sheenen 2011; Martin 2008; Wilson 2008; Kwaymullina 2005) with Country. This is what I term resistant Aboriginal knowledge.

**Movements within Movements: Expanding upon the relational movements with the inclusion of hybridity and mimicry**

The successful and unsuccessful attempts of colonisation to remove and ‘rescue’ (Carlson, 2016, p. 30) traditional Aboriginal knowledge saw traditional Aboriginal knowledge acclimatise to protect itself. In addition, with the hindsight of time, it is important to consider the influence of responsive/resistance and traditional Aboriginal knowledge (resistant) in action over time. The efforts by non-Aboriginal academics starting in the 1960s to ‘rescue’ (Carlson 2016; Barnes 1988) Aboriginal knowledge can be seen in both lights; as a contributor to an assimilatory contestation and a donor to healing. This repositioning encouraged the appearance of two incongruous movements to find points of conjunction. The voracity and ferocity of the colonial knowledge movement instigated in 1788 created a number of responses through or from knowledge as traditional Law to maintain the relationships that have existed and been shaped by Country from the beginning of time. Due to an enforced relationship between Western knowledge and traditional Aboriginal knowledge in a living connectedness ~ separateness of oneness: responsive resistance and resistance knowledge evolved. Traditional Aboriginal knowledge holders learnt very quickly from colonial knowledge, actions and ways of being to utilise this knowledge together with traditional Aboriginal knowledge to protect Country and its people. This ever-evolving responsive resistance knowledge production was underpinned and directed by traditional knowledge. Over time responsive resistance knowledge that was firmly attached has separated from traditional Aboriginal knowledge practice and Country.

This (k)new Aboriginal knowledge system in response and resistance has grown in various directions. Responsive Aboriginal knowledge (Grieves 2009) moved in two
generalised directions in relationship to traditional Aboriginal knowledge and Western knowledge. As stated earlier, for me this is the first step into examining knowledge as movement and therefore provides a possible starting point to re-position Country as knowledge holder in a humanised context to understand working in and across multiple knowledge sites. To help explain my understanding of resistance knowledge transformations (constructive and adverse) I am using the concept of an ‘Arc’ to represent knowledge moving in a circular way like water moves in the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Foreign propulsion mechanisms of colonial power from the Northern hemisphere redirected some natural movements of knowledge in the Southern hemisphere (that should not occur to maintain balance) through brute force and manipulation.

To assist this description, the term ‘Arc’ will be utilised for the way in which I see Aboriginal knowledge (Orange circle in Figure 4). I ask the reader to visualise Aboriginal traditional knowledge in their mind as a circle. The movement within the circle is rotational in an anti-clockwise direction. The Arc that comes out from the circular movement is a connected form of new knowledge. Each Arc that is created from the relationship with Western knowledge is a pathway to a new knowledge site. The Arc coming from the traditional knowledge site is influence by a curvilinear motion affected by either centripetal or centrifugal forces. I am suggesting that the existing Arcs are always under pressure to move with new Arcs continually forming and moving in connection with, back to, and or away from, the traditional knowledge (circle) holder: Country. The following quote from Uncle Max Harrison (2009) may appear cryptic, however, it is a very effective way to explain this actual ‘metaphor’ and concept: ‘Whales used to be Elders on the land, flesh Elders, but then they moved to the sea to protect the fish and look after the food and medicines there’ (Harrison M.D. & McConchie, 2009, p. 129). The Whales bring this knowledge from the sea back around to the people when they beach themselves (Uncle Max personal communication 2008). This can be a time for ceremony and feasting on the whale to share knowledge from the sea; movements of knowledge back to the land from the Elders of the sea. In contrast, on many occasions in today’s context of a disconnected knowledge site, when a whale beaches itself, it is time to push the Elders back out to sea. This action derived from a Western knowledge site stops the Elders holding their Lore/Law of sharing the knowledge from the sea. The new knowledge Arcs that
separate themselves from traditional knowledge and the body of Western knowledge are unaware of the tradition link between people, whales and knowledge.

![Figure 5 Knowledge sites, Arcs, Movements and Lyrebirds](image)

The following commentary will further clarify my argument above on responsive, resistance Aboriginal knowledge through the Arc metaphor.

One Arc of movement that developed to protect traditional Aboriginal knowledge over ‘time’, resistance, has ‘progressed’ (colonial) into a clockwise trajectory, embarking onto mimicry (Bhabha 2004). This responsive resistance knowledge Arc fashioned from traditional knowledge transformed from an anti-clockwise direction of curvilinear motion into a clockwise-mimicking Western knowledge movement and the centrifugal force produced a movement away from traditional knowledge. This movement away from its originating knowledge site, Country, creates a disconnecting behaviour and a potential detachment. An Arc of responsive resistance Aboriginal knowledge, as a concept in relationship with identity and imagery, can take a form of ‘rivalry osmosis’. ‘Rivalry osmosis’ can occur when Aboriginal people absorb colonisation in protection of Country. However, they end up reflecting elements of colonisation (conflict, oppositional, competitiveness: rivalry) that contribute to a distorted truth of traditional knowledge (resistance as acceptance) to become similar to the colonisers (Bhabha 2004). Bhabha (2004) describes mimicry as:

> [a] desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that
the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce a slippage, its excess, its difference… Mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal (p. 122).

This disavowal is what the colonisers have been doing to themselves ever since they separated themselves from the Mother (Earth), and in turn her spirit. Known as European or Western scientific knowledge, this paradigm of a knowledge site displaces Aboriginal peoples into a structure without spirit in its knowledge system and process. One of the many suggestions from Jean Lafrance and Betty Bastein (2007), following their reflections on reconciling Indigenous and Western knowledge within Welfare approaches in Alberta, Canada, involves the revitalisation of Indigenous spirituality. They describe the prevailing Western models from Europe as a mechanistic, dividing approach, in which:

European thought was strongly influenced by the Cartesian dichotomy of mind and body, which led man (sic) to view himself as an isolated ego within a material body, which he was then to control. Descartes fundamentally affected the Western world by dividing nature into two separate and independent realms: that of mind and that of matter. This allowed scientists to treat matter as dead and separate from themselves, and to see the material world as a multitude of objects assembled into a huge machine (Lafrance & Bastein, 2007, p. 106).

This damaging way of thinking, which denies inclusion of Country’s spirit is still occurring on Yuin Country and all other Aboriginal Countries. In this chapter, however, the purpose is to slowly show how movement within the Yuin duality was utilised by the Yuin old people to maintain Yuin traditional knowledge. How did the Ancestors maintain the spiritual umbilical cord that connects and separates everything into oneness? This is a question that helped me figure out the research problem.

**Introducing the Yuin mimic: the Lyrebird**

The old people and people like myself today knew/know that the Lyrebird holds a
number of dances and songs that mimic its world; the mimic is sung back to protect itself. The Lyrebird uses the coloniser’s own language, for example the sound of a rifle shot to protect itself. The old people had been observing life for many many centuries and the Lyrebird was one of those beings with borders and boundaries that records and protects. When Aboriginal people were timber cutters in the early 20th century the Lyrebird would let them know that this is not a place to cut the trees, by mimicking the gun shot (personal communication, Uncle Max Harrison). This still occurs today with the Lyrebird and other entities born of Country, and that are Country, singing out warnings to be observed in these destructive times of flux. The old people would have also observed the hybridity and mimicry happening within their own people from colonisation, becoming aware of mimicry’s disavowal. The old people may not have known/used/deployed the academic terms of mimicry or hybridity but would have observed and known the actions and reactions in terms of power, control, manipulation, protection, purity and so on. Throughout the centuries our own Laws sought to place these same actions in our culture into a relationship that maintains-balance with/as Country.

The damage to and of Country, including Yuin and non-Aboriginal people, was and is still unfolding, for example, suicide (Gooda & Dudgeon 2014) and de-forestation (Bradshaw 2012). The movement of knowledge and spiritual energy from Country that sustains the patterns of knowledge is blocked or a gap is created where a knowledge movement is intentionally or unintentionally disrupted. Traditional Aboriginal knowledge has been interrupted by violence towards the landscape and by the colonising violence of Western Law. Coralie (2008) presents British/Australian law “as a strategy of exclusion (if not as a blunt instrument), and that this is not a thing of the past: it is useful to remember that the law has always been implicated in the history of imperial dominion” (p. 56). With Country, a living entity working with the old people of Lore can find ways to bypass injunctions of disturbances, providing another avenue for a choice to be made. Uncle Max (2011) shared:

The Lyrebird is observed today by Aboriginal people because the Lyrebird still holds the dances of our peoples’ Ancestors. The Lyrebird continues to pass on these dances to their young over many generations, after their own Ancestors observed the Yuin people of old dancing
This is a mimicry from/of Country, which we can choose to observe or not.

Choices can be made by non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people. For instance, people can *move* towards a stabilised ‘sight/vision’ of Country by mimicking Country; or people can choose to accept colonisation; or, for Aboriginal people, choose to hold a relationship of detached *resistance* from traditional Aboriginal knowledge. This could be an easy or difficult task if the colonised individual does not recognise the colonial mimicry-taking place within his or her own body and vision. The colonial (k)not, that is to be untangled needs to be affirmed as part of the relationship with the Country(ies) that make up Australia today. The capacity of the disavowal or healing of the two-way (Aboriginal ~ non-Aboriginal) mimicry relationship depends upon how each individual seeks and chooses to hold traditional Aboriginal knowledge. Whether this knowledge movement is little, light, medium or a heavy influence to their knowledge sites, it can introduce the Lyrebird to understanding mimicry in connection ~ separation. The Lyrebird is one of the best mimics of nature and is a testament to County’s knowledge. If there is an understanding of traditional Aboriginal knowledge then issues of distortion/disruption/blockage can be challenged.

Colonisation was not only a physical act of destruction it occurred on a knowledge level that separated, compartmentalised, commodified, and corrupted respect; it institutionalised a hierarchy by imposing Western knowledge systems and processes (Martin 2008; Findlay 2003). Country, the people and the teachings on how to access the knowledge system went ‘underground’ as the colonisers enforced a new knowledge system to ‘live’ by. This image if seen in reflection held by a mirror (colonisation), not a glassy river (Country), encourages a *resistance* (responsive) to Western knowledge; a mimicry that induces a hybrid Aboriginal knowledge that contributes to what I have characterised, as a ‘self-totalised ambivalence’. I coined ‘self-totalised’ from Adital Ben-Ari and Roni Strier’s (2010) exploration of ‘totality’ and the ‘other’ in their analysis of dominant societies’ conceptions and values of cultural competence. The minority ‘other’ can totalise their own self, when their focus is fixated on the dominant ‘other’ as human only, removing/limiting spiritual connections to self as Country and Country as self. This disavowal in understanding
traditional Aboriginal knowledge damages individuals and can only protect Country in a pseudo fashion. My use of the term pseudo suggests a false sense of security, if colonisation is mimicked then healing is not occurring as an unstable and unbalanced situation is still in place.

Figure 6 Lyrebird the stabilising Arc and site (Webb 2012)

Stabilising Arc

The first Arc I have discussed formed a resistance knowledge site. The next Arc to be discussed stems from traditional responsive Aboriginal knowledge and moves in the same direction as traditional knowledge that is an anti-clockwise direction with a centripetal force; not meeting head on but moving alongside Western knowledge (moving in northern hemisphere clockwise direction) to form a new relationship in the living pattern of thinking. This Arc in response to Western knowledge initially reacts in a centrifugal manner but is pulled back (drawn back to the Mother) towards traditional Aboriginal knowledge while never leaving it (acceptance as a resistant strain). This Arc can move around to pick up the people affected by colonial mimicry and hybridity for healing, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Furthermore the movement maintains the Lore/Law that encrypts the knowledge that provides meaning to what is the truth; Country and Aboriginal people can exist in tradition. What the Yuin duality can do is to draw on Bhabha’s (2004) mimicry concept, connect with the long held knowledges of the Lyrebird, and use this to ‘overturn’ these
concepts in connection ~ separation and acceptance ~ resistance. This would show that Aboriginal people are still mimicking animals and birds like the Lyrebird born from Country in the present day. The truth is knowledge from/of Country is still a pure movement not simply a type of hybridity somehow diluted or ‘less authentic’ due to colonisation.

*My perception and exploration of the old people of Yuin Country and their relationship with Bhabha’s third space, mimicry and hybridity*

Before I engage in a discussion about mimicry and hybridity, I would like to flag the importance of this section. The purpose behind sharing a story to contextualise Yuin knowledge is to counteract the claims that Aboriginal knowledge has been lost in the South-Eastern corner of Australia (and indeed the idea of loss throughout Australia). Yuin traditional knowledge processes and structures are very much alive today. Therefore through a Yuin Storying (see Chapter Four) approach that has found connections with Western scientific procedural formats such as the idea of ‘theory’, this section shares my cultural story of Yuin knowledge since colonisation.

The emphasis made on sharing this story is because it is a major discussion point that informs and contributes to the unpacking of the research problem: can non-Aboriginal people form an epistemological/ontological/pedagogical relationship with Country?

*Stories are not always clear, just like rivers.* This is one of the many reasons why I am giving my culture away with permission to keep it. By sharing specific knowledge, it may help the many rivers of knowledge to flow into a relationship of interconnectedness (the ocean).

When considered in relation to Yuin Country, Bhabha’s (2004) concept of the third space can be viewed as partially correct; that is, partially correct in terms of the cutting edge of the ‘third space’, the *in-between* space:

that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-national histories of the people. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the polarity and emerge as the other of our selves (p. 56). 

The other of our self is Country. Here, hybridity has a role in the resistance to enforced colonisation. At the same time, however, hybridity can be understood as part of the problem.

The problem is that corruption occurs when our vision is fixated towards people only. This is because such an indistinct perusal towards human authority essentially excludes any line of sight for protection towards the ‘others’ that are not human. We therefore must not lose sight of protecting all the entities in Aboriginal ‘pattern thinking’ (Kwaymullina 2005; Mowaljarlai 1995). If this ‘sight’ isn’t maintained the roles in relationship with colonisation might appear to have changed, but the mimicry of colonisation will still persist.

Aboriginal traditional knowledge stayed alive in the relationships produced by colonisation through the double-dealings of deception from non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples. Traditional knowledge as a system, process and approach went ‘underground’ with the Aboriginal people that held the knowledge while it appeared to be ‘disappearing’ in full sight. This was made clear by Uncle Max, when he explained to me that: “When significant sites are damaged, the spirit(s) of that site go further down into ground to protect their existence” (Uncle Max Harrison 2008, personal communication). Elders of knowledge existed and slipped (increment) into the webs of illusion within Country. The Elders of Lore/Law, were often declared, via Western knowledge, ‘as the last fully initiated black fellow’ when they passed on. What was not/is understood many also passed on the Law so the Aboriginal architectural landscape could continue to be seen without voice (human voice).

Country holds the knowledge, with the Law showing how to read the inscriptions dispersed across the land by the clever old people and Ancients. At the same time, not forming a personal and educational relationship with their Country, a number of Aboriginal people became separated and resisted traditional knowledge in their mimicry of colonial values.

As stated above a choice can exist, to resist everything and generate resistance knowledge. Or another choice can be to trigger the resistant strain that we hold within
our bodies to counteract the colonial affects/effects of Western knowledge. If a resistent knowledge site is chosen, we can contribute to Country maintaining a stabilised and balanced traditional knowledge to be shared in the now. This relationship derives from an understanding of Country as teacher and how to mimic in the tradition of the Lyrebird. The stabilising affect/effect is maintained by connecting people to the land itself, identifying usable similarities not human power relationships. An important outcome/process is in the learning and knowing how to connect ~ separate with all the knowledge sites that an individual holds, especially Country. Country can stabilise learning and enhance the opportunities for a hybridity and mimicry in Country’s own tradition: it doesn’t sell out itself. The Lyrebird can mimic a cross-cut saw as it is a traditional form of protection learnt from the genealogical memory of the Lyrebird; this is not colonial hybridity. It is important to pause, feel and think how this is possible with Country.

Hybridity, therefore can be situated in connection to traditional Aboriginal knowledge or it can be viewed from a colonial context. Bhabha (2004) argues that the collision between two cultures creates something ‘new’ that implies a colonial domination of the new, which in some cases may well be appropriate. In the giving away of traditional knowledge to keep it (Uncle Max Harrison 2008 personal communication), toxicity from the dominant culture’s participation provides a possibility to resist (Kemper 2012): a border. Any sign of self-gain in a colonial sense de-stabilises the relationship to learning in this new but old site for non-Aboriginal people. In connectedness to this resistent knowledge site, in her dissertation on non-Aboriginal people engaging in Yuin teachings, Birrell (2006) presents Uncle Max’s explanation of a boundary,

to resist making people feel uncomfortable about what we whites have brought to bear on this land? Could it be that he [Uncle Max] knows only too well that people under attack tend to shut down or go into defensive mode, thus blocking the advance of any new teachings? (p. 356).
**Power of the human**

The colonial influence since 1788 in Australia places the human as an authority and owner, displacing the connection of self (human) in oneness with Country. This intentional product of Western knowledge was put into place to separate the people from the old people of traditional Aboriginal knowledge, as has been the case for example, of the Stolen Generations (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997). Western knowledge processes by their nature are colonist because they impose and cement a foreign localised knowledge system onto Country. The colonial residue is evident in the way Western system places the responsibility of the colonised to prove their identity (self) of belonging to self as Country. Henderson (2000) discussing Du Bois’s double consciousness, writes that a “double consciousness occurs when the colonised assert that they are human but the dominators reject this assertion and impose their standards as universal and normal” (p. 64). In the colonial period this Eurocentric view constituted Aboriginal people as sub-human or as fauna and flora. “The failure to fully recognise Aborigines as the prior inhabitants and rightful owners of the land also rendered their connection to the land invisible and made it possible to claim that they lived like wild beasts” (Wright, 1981 quoted in Coralie, 2008, p. 56).

From an Aboriginal epistemological/ontological viewpoint, Aboriginal people today, in the future and in the past, were/are/will be connected to fauna and flora and separated as human at the same time. It is important to keep in mind when examining the past and present with the connected ~ separation binary, that being recognised as human was/is/will be an imperative to maintain our identity and culture. It was not, and will not be acceptable if this was at the cost of being separated from the other entities born from Country. This enforced Western enactment of dehumanising Aboriginal people led to a hybridity as the resistance/responsive colonised person, detached from traditional Aboriginal knowledge, had to prove their humanity and belonging to their Country.

To make an important point, Henderson (2000) uses an Indigenous concept to “[represent] a cognitive force of artificial European thought” (p. 58), the ‘anti-trickster’. The anti-trickster is the twin brother of a trickster who for many First Nation
American people is a paradoxical force in nature. The anti-trickster is a “guise [that] represents a cognitive force of artificial European thought, a differentiated consciousness, ever changing in its creativity to justify the oppression and domination of contemporary Indigenous people and their spiritual guardians” (Henderson, 2000, p. 58). People got lost in the trickery (which is the removal of traditional knowledge) and caught in the artificial context created by the colonisers to see self as only human.

An unnatural (or Western) understanding of self maintains the human as separate from Country. When Aboriginal knowledge is presented as separate from Country, Western knowledge can obtain ownership as it is placed into a thought process that Aboriginal knowledge has to be salvaged (Carlson 2016). Marcia Langton (1993) argues:

the most dense relationship is not between actual people, but between white Australians and the symbols created by their predecessors. Australians do not know and relate to Aboriginal people. They relate to stories told by former colonists (p. 33).

For this reason there was no real relationship with the people, but a slippage, Aboriginal traditional knowledge was interpreted as slipping away in acceptance of the separation that the truly ‘Aboriginal’ no longer existed. Aboriginal peoples have been and are still positioned as victims of colonisation and/or reduced to the colonisers’ idea of a ‘true Aboriginal’. Significantly then, the difference between the mimicry of Country and the mimicry of colonial action is that Country shows people we are human and at the same time our relatedness to everything.

Aboriginal knowledge was declared dying by the coloniser due to their human-centric perception that the ‘true Aboriginal’ was disappearing and so therefore was Aboriginal peoples’ knowledge. A concerted effort was required by the colonisers to ‘preserve’ non-Aboriginal recordings and understanding of Aboriginal culture (Nakata 2004). What was not recognised, or ignored, was that the culture was already preserved in Country. However, the Western system could not see the double deception woven into the Yuin binary of separation ~ connection by the old people holding traditional knowledge, through Country’s understanding of mimicry. The first reinforcement of the illusion ~ reality that Aboriginal knowledge had to be saved by Western
knowledge occurred in 1959. Sir William Wentworth (who was instrumental in the establishment of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, now the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) originally proposed a national Institute of Aboriginal Studies that was to be based on ‘the lack of progress’ in anthropological departments’ recording the ‘declining’ Aboriginal culture (Nakata 2004). Barnes (1988) describes the inaugural Conference on Aboriginal Studies held in 1961, “as a rescue operation … before the Australian Aboriginal population became fully converted into Aboriginal Australians, indistinguishable from the rest of the inhabitants of the continent” (p. 269). As Carlson (2016) argues, “anthropology was interested in gathering data on the primordial nature of man before it vanished” (p. 30). This is a clear demonstration of ignorance and dominance by a knowledge system (Western) deprived of a living framework in connection to all things that are of Country. Nevertheless it has led to a system and process where these misconceptions on Aboriginal knowledge can be challenged and something else accepted. Furthermore the observations of the connecting duality relationship can demonstrate the brilliance of the old people to hide traditional culture in plain site/sight to maintain their knowledge system in connection with Country and to keep it at ‘arm’s length’ (separate) from the colonisers.

There are numerous physical, mental and spiritual shifts that have occurred to build the momentum for Country’s knowledge to be shared in a growing discourse of connecting Western scientific and Country’s knowledge. For example, Elders’, such as Uncle Max Harrison, sharing of traditional knowledge through his maxim ‘giving culture away to keep it’ has introduced many non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people to the chance to form a relationship with Country. The above exploration of the power of knowledge in ‘human hands’, points to the major problem considered in this study: how can non-Aboriginal people at universities learn to see living Country and mimic (Lyrebird) Country within their own identity of connectedness ~ separation. This brings the discussion back to power and how power is related to the research problem, and how power (of the human) can still corrupt traditional Aboriginal knowledge.

‘I’ve got the power’: Mother Earth’s knowledge from underneath our feet

Imam Ali (599-661) is credited to have been the first to produce a written document of
the phrase, ‘Knowledge is power’, in the tenth-century book, ‘Nahj Al-Balagha’. The claim of ‘knowledge is power’ is an issue that needs to be critically examined to re-think power relationships. As Nakata (2013) argues, when power is only mobilised in, what I have termed, Aboriginal resistance, it corrupts the process and representations of Aboriginal knowledge in relationship with Western knowledge. In the following quote, Agrawal (2005) presents the paradoxical and potentially damaging relationship that Indigenous knowledge has with Western scientific knowledge. As Agrawal argues, Indigenous knowledge:

is useful in improving scientific knowledge, it is useful for pursuing development, and so forth. This is somewhat puzzling because it is development that to begin with threatens Indigenous knowledge – it is the progressive spread of science and scientific knowledge that threatens the ways Indigenous cosmologies and knowledge work (Agrawal, 2005, p. 73).

In response to this persistent threat to Indigenous knowledge, the responsibility of taking care of Country as self, self as Country, is not only the responsibility of the Indigenous, it is also the responsibility of our non-Aboriginal brothers and sisters. The cutting edge, third space (Bhabha 2004) is instilled with responsibility that can be interpreted in many ways and taken into many directions. The ‘cultural interface’ (Nakata 2007), Yunkaporta’s (2009) ‘dynamic overlap’, Bawaka Country et al. (2013) ‘co-becoming’ and Birrell’s (2006), ‘confluence of knowledge’ are all interrelated examples of academic collaborative negotiated approaches to include Aboriginal knowledge respectfully in academia. More specifically, Yunkaporta (2012), Bawaka et al. (2013) and Birrell (2006) have all placed Country by different means into a collaborative power dynamic to achieve a respectfully negotiated reciprocal relationship.

When Country is positioned as the knowledge holder, power can be limited within the human realm to enhance human collaborations to embed respect filled ‘knowledge’ from Country. Here the inclusion of humans in collaboration with Country means this interconnecting relationship can be cared for to sustain Country/Self as a life force. There is already a very old precedent in place to assist this process. Non-Aboriginal
peoples’ own genealogical memory that has an imprint of a location (Country) holding power, buried deep within their current body of Western (human-centered) knowledge. At one stage or another in the history of people, all humans were guided by Country in their day-to-day lives.

Western knowledge’s own self-inflicted movement away from their once close reciprocal relationship with their ancestral Country can be examined through the lens of Bhabha’s (2004) understanding of mimicry and hybridity. The focus on a ‘productive’ economy is a ‘slippage’, a difference that ‘other’s’ their own-selves from Country; this means not knowing the spiritual self and thereby removing connectedness to Country. From this colonial personification, non-Aboriginal people have attempted to implant the (their own) same disconnected relationship onto Aboriginal people by positioning Aboriginal people, as outlined above, as the, ‘other’. This ‘other’ can be summed up colloquially, as the claim of ‘power over people and life’. In this way the colonised Aboriginal person is positioned as the ‘subordinate’ and furthermore, in Levinasian terms, as an unknowable ‘other’ (Levinas, 2006, p. 5). What remains constant in this colonial mimicry (people mimicking people to obtain/maintain power) is the persistence of colonial values being imposed onto Aboriginal people. These colonial values have not slipped away. Indeed, when non-Aboriginal people make disavowals of Country, colonial values become ever more entrenched. In remaining the same and not shifting colonial values of ‘power over’, the colonial context of power and its ‘othering’ impacts Aboriginal people as well.

Western dominant culture’s continuing differentiation and overlooking of its own mimicry and hybridity of Christian and/or Western values is pointed out by Bhabha (2004). As he states, “Despite its firm commitments, the political must always pose as a question, the priority of the place from which it begins, if its authority is not to be autocratic” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 92). Drawing from this quote, it can be proposed that it is important to recognise the human intellect as a place and point of beginning in order to understand how human power over is formed. This is a crucial understanding, as we need to appreciate how power over operates if we are to think and act differently in our relationship with Country. For instance, it is via these mechanisms that the colonisers’ relationship of power over the minority Indigenous ‘other’ is maintained.
Western knowledge has a limited process (sameness) in trying to stop the slippage of autocratic practice as it has already initiated the slide away from its original knowledge base: Country. When self is removed from a oneness relationship with Country the power relationship moves from Country to people: the interests of Country are diminished. When power is seen to be in the ‘hands of humans’, it sanctions and or permits negative social behaviour from the ‘powerful’ (coloniser) towards the less powerful ‘other’ (for example Aboriginal people).

The best way to describe the current state of colonial mimicry in regards to power-relationships on Yuin Country is to say that non-Aboriginal people have power over people and Country. Meanwhile, when power is held by Country through resistant and/or traditional Aboriginal knowledge (Country’s mimicry), Aboriginal people, or the ‘other’, has power ‘underneath them’: Country. We can mimic who we are, Country. When the Western concept of ‘power over’ is placed into tripartation in a two-way knowledge relationship, power underneath is place into a duality: power over ~ underneath. ‘Power underneath’ from a Yuin Country standpoint, has its own binary, where power derives from Mother Earth that is ‘underneath us’, but at the same time (triptartation), power is ‘over us’ from Father Sky, Grandmother Moon and Grandfather Sun: a oneness.

Through the following descriptive phrase, ‘power coming from underneath deep from Mother Earth’, people can mimic Country. Whereas, colonial mimicry perpetuates power over people. This is when people mimic ‘people’ (and not power from underneath) and in so doing apply the coloniser’s power relationship of knowledge over people. The power and influence of human knowledge ‘over people and Country’ is a continuous human made construction to maintain power structures and status within human control. This has a consequence for Country and people outside of power that can result in the ‘other’ making a political claim to demonstrate a ‘difference’ (Bhabha 2004) in knowledge and culture. This difference maintains the colonised status quo through the foreign imposed and mimicked effects of knowledge hybridity and mimicry towards Country. If people mimic Country, the mimics’ ‘patterned’ (Mowaljarlai 1995) behaviour of power is re-established to place power (knowledge and culture) back underneath with Country that is different, but in oneness.
‘Cultural hybridity’ for Bhabha (interview by Rutherford 1990) “gives rise to something different something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (p. 211, emphasis added). The new and ever-changing new, is the Western and Aboriginal knowledge that is in a responsive resistance state. The old Yuin people, faced by the coloniser, used resistant knowledge to meet hybridity’s unrecognisable action and mimicry’s ‘something different’ to uphold the knowledge that informs the power that comes from ‘underneath’. The old people maintained a slippage (‘sleight of hand’) and its difference in mimicry from/for traditional knowledge to stay the same (hidden ~ visible) in its shifting nature in relationship with colonial knowledge and power. If colonial damage was occurring Country itself and the old people took the stories deeper (underneath) into Self. This occurred because the old people were aware that Western knowledge was not going back to its location (overseas), because power (knowledge production) had been transformed into the people themselves. In addition, the old people recognised that colonial Western knowledge had replicated success through responsive resistance slippage and difference of their own Western knowledge. Western culture had to re-create a history and identity of knowledge for a ‘new’ but similar Western culture (knowledge) to be established on Countries that they did not come from. The ‘call’ of, I’ve (human) got the power and ownership, energises Western knowledge to knowingly promote colonial residues in knowing and behaving within Western and over time Aboriginal resistance thinking.

In the following comment on the third space, Bhabha’s (2004) discussion on power and cultural hybridity makes a problematic claim,

The native intellectual who identifies the people with the true national culture will be disappointed. The people are now the very principle of ‘dialectical reorganisation’ and they construct their culture from the national text translated into modern Western forms of information technology, language, dress. The changed political and historical site of enunciation transforms the meanings of the colonial inheritance into the liberatory signs of a free people of the future (p. 55-56).
This statement seems to be making the claim that ‘Aboriginal people can no longer produce the traditional knowledge that informs Aboriginal culture and life’. Bhabha’s (2004) work on the third space has made a very important contribution to the discourse on cultural hybridity and mimicry. However, his use of the word ‘native’ gives an indication of misinformation he also carries and places within the critical body of work that can develop respectful reciprocal relationships between Aboriginal and Western knowledge structures. To coin Bhabha’s use of the term ‘partial’ within the separation ~ connection concept, the above quote contains a partial truth when placed within the boundaries of Western knowledge. Aboriginal people do and can fall victim to the ‘dialectical reorganisation’ of constructed Aboriginal culture. The resistance responsive knowledge sites, both Western and Aboriginal, may well sit in this space: the partial truth. Arguably, a number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have accepted the human, as the knowledge producer to corruptly use Country as a resource only to reinforce human power and a separation discourse.

However, the third space dilemma in some instances was outwitted by Yuin Country and those who learnt from knowing that they are Yuin Country in a oneness that separates ~ connects. To respectfully challenge Bhabha’s discussion on ‘dialectical reorganisation’, in the case of my understanding and relationship with Yuin Country, the location of culture is in the land, sky and water itself. Yuin Country has never opposed itself and its knowledge has never been developed from human logic and power. Aboriginal people have followed and protected Country’s patterned system as the custodians of knowledge. Aboriginal people come from their Country’s bloodlines, with Country providing us with everything that we need (Mother). The ‘down-to-earth’ way the old people knew how to maintain traditional knowledge was through the bloodlines that are triggered by Country. The knowledge from Country has not been destroyed, as Country exists. Country has an interwoven epistemological ~ ontological ~ pedagogical relationship system which is held by Aboriginal people of traditional knowledge. Pat Dudgeon and John Fielder (2006) state an “ontological belonging means that Indigenous people have a spiritual sense of belonging to land/Country. Colonisation has not yet destroyed this relationship” (p 403). Yes, the new technologies from Western knowledge are employed, but the knowledge from Country is still mimicked in the tradition of the Lyrebird. Country, to paraphrase
Bhabba (2004), ‘is the true national culture’ with the people holding the role of caretakers and custodians.

**Power to Country**

The Aboriginal borders and boundaries that are interwoven with respect protocols and Laws still exist if people (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) choose to access Respect Law and implement their responsibility in taking care of Country. The more Country is understood, the more the various colonial power intrusions over people and Country can be limited and people’s connection to Country as having a living knowledge system and power can be reinvigorated. However, stating this, a re-stabilisation of Western and Aboriginal responsive resistance knowledge(s) with traditional Aboriginal knowledge requires a reconciliation to counter mimic colonial mimicry. Conciliating with people includes Country, as the reconciliation process in Australia at the moment tends to focus on the relationship between people, with minimal attention to people reconciling with Country as a living entity (Moore & Birrell 2012). Country within the mainstream context of reconciliation tends to be acknowledged as a hybrid form of its true meaning, because Country is often limited to explaining Aboriginal peoples’ identity as traditional owners. In the following quote, Uncle Max Harrison, emphasises:

> [his] desire to bring about the reconciliation of all people, not just his own people, with Mother Earth. He firmly believes that we have all become disconnected from the Mother, from nature herself. This is his heartfelt notion of what reconciliation is all about, unlike what is defined as reconciliation in mainstream dialogue, as reconciliation between black and white on this land (Birrell, 2006, p. 110).

Traditional Aboriginal custodial knowledge holders are indispensable for this reconciliation/conciliation of peoples and Country(ies). Through a relationship with people from the various knowledge sites in their connections ~ disconnection or connection/separation to traditional knowledge, the custodians of Country’s knowledge are required to provide a balanced platform for reconciliation. Traditional knowledge holders have a responsibility to take care of Country because they hold (give it away to keep it) knowledge of/from Country, not power over people.
To achieve knowledge reconciliation/conciliation there is a separation (~ in connection) that entails a broader critique of mimicry and hybridity. Maria Amoamo’s (2011) discussion of Bhabha’s (1994) hybridity within Maori tourism “suggests that hybridity is inclusive in that it initiates new signs of identity and creative collaborative sites where new contestations can occur” (p. 1269). Hybridity in this story of Mingadharga Mingayung does not produce a new identity or culture but does generate a new contextual platform to reveal Country’s stories and teachings for an identity of connection to Yuin Country. The Ancient sites stories that provided the knowledge within this dissertation, Gulaga and Biamanga, remain the same. The ‘new’ is the relationship between, Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal people, Gulaga and Biamanga. This new form of reconciliation through a respectful relationship into a co-becoming (Bawaka Country et al. 2013) of reciprocation can help non-Aboriginal people to have an identity of connection to Country. At the same time non-Aboriginal people are required to recognise (knowingly or unknowingly) and maintain their connectedness to their own (overseas) ancestral knowledge site. Knowledge is then owned by Country. Therefore Country as a knowledge (power) holder and teacher can be brought back to the surface through a relational dialogue with Country.

**Conclusion**

The Yuin duality that informs a similarities philosophy for this dissertation is important because the relationship between, traditional, responsive, resistance, resistance, resistant and Western knowledge can be seen as an inter-connective relationship. However, at the same time, aspects of the relationship can be disconnected when appropriate. Responsive resistance Aboriginal knowledge in academia can Arc back around with a resistant knowledge Arc. For resistance knowledge to achieve this journey back to traditional knowledge a resistant knowledge Arc needs to be deployed by self, to seek a respectful and reciprocal relationship with traditional knowledge holder(s) and/with Country. The recognition of colonial mimicry and hybridity in responsive resistance and any emergence in resistant knowledge needs to be continuously and diligently identified and separated. With discernment this observance contributes to the disconnection of colonial mimicry to engage in the mimicry of Country. The mimicry of/with Country is a
crucial part of traditional Aboriginal knowledge whereby academia must respect such Aboriginal ways of knowing by being prepared and capable to accept the realities and spiritual nature of Aboriginal ontology (Hoffman 2013). This understanding of respect can build a story that includes various voices especially the relationship with the space and place that provides and is the middle ground: Country that connects all entities. Traditional knowledge from Country can and is critical towards colonial knowledge but recognises Western knowledge as a part of the ‘pattern thinking’ (Mowaljarlai 1995) to heal and healing for Country.

My research: We are still following and respecting the Country’s nourishment that sustains life through relationships

Each participant in this thesis project was encouraged to form their-own respectful reciprocal relationship or co-becoming (Bawaka et al. 2013) with Yuin Country. This opportunity to form a relationship with and in-between Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal, people and Country was designed to assist them to identify their own site of knowledge in relationship with Country. The Yuin stories are interwoven into and are the whole body of knowledge with Country. The interconnecting knowledge system of Country can and does weave in Western knowledge. This interconnected knowledge can be understood through dualities, such as connection ~ separation of understanding and knowledge; the stability ~ instability of knowledge and understanding; and the acceptance ~ resistance of each knowledge site.

An opportunity was provided for the participants’ stories of identity in connection with Yuin Country to be included into the relational weave of knowledge (Wilson 2008). The weave is achieved because the participants and their stories are provided with an opportunity to be placed in a relationship with Yuin Country’s stories through the Mingadharga Mingayung experience and approach. The Mingadharga Mingayung approach provides the participants with an experience to meet Mother Mountain and learn how to read her text of the land. The experience offered a framework to stabilise the affects/effects of Western and Aboriginal responsive resistance knowledge. Taking the opportunity to walk to, step into, and around a new site of interconnections is a learning journey with Country. A journey within this learning journey is to also take the time to be in-between knowing and not knowing.
The Yuin dualities taught to me by Country in this moment and place of a dissertation play a key role in my own understanding of how I can connect and separate the knowledge sites in which I sit, and Country in which I hold: am. Learning to understand where I place and remove myself in these movable understandings contributes to my healing through a dissertation. This is very much a work in progression ~ regression to learn who I am in relation to my Ancestors and academia, thereby seeing how to hold the knowledge that they held. I needed to do this so I can live in the present with the intersubjective others within and outside me to make sense of the now. However, I am not examining me as an ‘illness (dialectically and/or spiritually reorganised) or ‘victim’ but in the relationship of learning about self with others in relatedness to Country and Western knowledge. Having a relationship with a rock is not an illness but is a subjective relationship to my identity. Aboriginality, as Langton (1993) succinctly argues, is “understood in terms of intersubjectivity, when both the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal are subjects, not objects” (p. 32). In this particular quote Langton’s discussion is focused upon the human context, making an important point about human relationships. It is important here to note that this extends to a rock, because a rock is not an object: it is part of the Mother. The gift of knowledge and presence of time is relational to all who participate within the research, including me. The Mingadhuga Mingayung experience and approach is learning to know (y)our own past and present is a true body of knowledge from Country’s stories that is inclusive of the stories from theory (human power) to be placed into an ever-moving relationship with Country.

In the world’s current position with power sitting in the human realm (Merchant 2003), then there will never be a balance of power. However, if power is given back to Country then this opens up a whole new discussion on power, ownership and control: placing spirit back into Western knowledge. As I see power at the present moment, the ‘balance of power’ is not balanced, but I can control and be respectful with my own power, which is a lifelong journey and healing. I have the power over what I hold and separate within me. This is how I see at the present moment, how the old people of knowledge kept our knowledge alive as it is still all in Country.

The research problem for this thesis is not a problem, but at the same time it is a lot bigger than just my participants and me. All I can do within this dissertation is to
focus on my story in relationship with Yuin Country and all of the other participants involved in this research project. When I was writing this chapter I identified an important concept of ‘not needing to know’ and at some stage I will/might be shown the answer. This is why the research problem is not a problem, I do not have power over knowledge. Country in relationship with me has led, informed and told this story. I interpreted the knowledge from Country and the participants, not always knowing exactly in my mind or intellect what was happening. But as I have been taught on Country I had to ‘feel out’ (respectfully) the answer or analysis to be explained the best I could in this Western-knowledge format. The ‘feel out’ context is the movement of knowledge from Country within my own body, mind and spirit and all the borders and boundaries that are within, outside and in-between me as self and Country.

Going back to Birrell’s (2006) example of the barramundi and asking the question: do we need to exactly know how a barramundi can change gender and influence human gender roles? For me it is more important to marvel how awesome it is for a barramundi to teach us about hybridity and gender roles. I then would reflect on how as a male, I can be taught by the barramundi that I am also female because I am birthed through the Mother that continually mimics how to behave in relationships. I don’t focus on the why and how the barramundi changed. The same sentiment can be given to the Lyrebird; do we have to exactly know how he/she can mimic so precisely other sounds from Country? What I have done in this chapter is to be open to the power of the Lyrebird’s teaching to help guide the discussion in this chapter. Country as knowledge holder and teacher also had the power to guide the non-Aboriginal participants’ to form their own epistemological/ontological/pedagogical resistant knowledge site to respectfully embed and implement Aboriginal perspectives. The following chapter, ‘A Methodology Towards Connectedness’, continues to explore how knowledge moves and how the research identifies and shares the participants’ story of a relationship with Country.
Figure 7 The Pattern of Collecting Data

Chapter Three: A Methodology Towards Connectedness, inspired by Yuin Country: methodology of relationship

This drawing (Figure 7) contains nine separate drawings that form one larger drawing (Methodology). The larger overall drawing is interconnected by the journey from left to right represented by an oyster in red being slowly opened up (open mind). The circular tracks that move throughout the whole drawing are from the Crimson Rosella with its tail dragging on the ground to represent respect, responsibility and reciprocation. The blue lines surrounding the drawing represent negotiation and collaboration.
A Methodology of Relationships

Yuin Country (as) methodology is the way I was inspired to think differently and naturally around how methodology is connected to this research project. What I mean by the term naturally will be explained within a manner of folding your arms together: a crossing together of two limbs. The nature of Western research (top limb and fold) is that it requires a methodology to explain how, what and why the research was done. Thereby, the second (limb) fold that ‘underlies’ this research is that Country intuitively has its own methodology and methods. Country has its reason for why, what and how it shares knowledge to be gathered in the human world. The explanation of this relational-based methodology towards connecting Yuin knowledge and Western knowledge systems is intentionally ‘specific’ as well as ‘broad’. Specifically, ‘I must give culture away to keep it’ (a constant reminder from Uncle Max) to build a relationship between knowledge systems. Similarly, detail is a requirement of a Western thesis.

A broad approach was required to protect Country, because ‘there is knowledge I can’t share’ (a constant reminder from Uncle Max). Additionally, the broad writing on concepts and ideas, helped to weave in my cultural pedagogical approach within my explanation of the methodology. In setting out to discuss this methodology of relationship, this chapter will try and explain a form of knowledge production and transferal as one coming directly from Country. The inspiration for the methodology was from the relationships I have previously described with two Yuin sacred Mountains, with Yuin Elder and Lawman Uncle Max Harrison, and with Indigenous academics living and writing in the relational methodological space, where I am the connective tissue.

These relationships (or this relationality, see Wilson 2008) are the reason why I have devised, designed and written an interconnecting methodology where I am required to locate myself in these varying knowledge site realities. It is impossible to locate myself in someone else’s methodology; the methodology must reflect my relationships, faults, strengthens and self. I must reflect my Ancients and Ancestors in the current space and place in which I find myself in mind, body and spirit. I cannot do this on my own because the powerful dynamic of being connected enables me to
listen, see and learn from a range of entities that constitute my reality: this is a ceremony. Ceremony as research gives recognition, provides thanks and is a respectful way of recording Country’s knowledge in the human world of accountability that is in the context of spiritual interconnectedness (Wilson 2008). In this instance I must also be respectful of other Indigenous academics and their stories as well as non-Indigenous peoples. My connectedness and ascription of meanings to this methodological approach is difficult to intellectualise or to adequately express using only Western academic processes. The creation of a methodology in this academic space assisted me to respectfully disrupt colonial methodologies, to narrow its influence without entirely removing Western knowledge approaches. This is not an anticolonial approach; it is an approach to be inclusive of similarities that assist academics to read how I, as an Aboriginal man, exist in this space respectfully. This approach also, potentially offers another Indigenous interconnecting (intra)framework for others to craft their own capabilities to hold and work in a number of knowledge sites respectfully.

The methodology was inspired and guided by Sister Mountains, Gulaga and Biamanga (Mingadhuga Mingayung). Each Mountain situated on Yuin Country holds a number of chapters that are teachings and learnings on how an individual, in relationship with everything, can feel, be and act on a physical, mental and spiritual level. Guidance also came from the work of a number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics, in particular, Shawn Wilson’s (2008) Research as Ceremony, Karen Martin’s (2008) Please Knock Before you Enter, Lana Ray’s (2012) convergence methodology, Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999, 2012) Decolonising Methodologies and Nakata’s (2007) Cultural Interface and his notion of ‘middle ground discourse’ (Nakata 2013). The process of doing the research was in the form of negotiations with the participants: between the academic methodological discourse, the Mountains and my community, especially the guidance from Uncle Max, my supervisors, and then me.

Catherine Longboat (2008) rightfully argues that negotiations in ethical Indigenous epistemic realities in academia can help:
... Aboriginal peoples seek to understand themselves and embrace their own culture, they will then be able to embrace other cultures and begin the methodological steps to interpreting data in words that will transcend the grips of colonised knowledge. We have the tools of story, family and community, and Elders to encourage us (p. 82).

Led by the two Mountains, Gulaga and Biamanga, Elders such as Uncle Max, my interconnecting families and communities (including the academic community) and myself all contributed to the cyclic negotiations of the methodology for this thesis. I initiated, was entrusted with, and then completed the methodology of relationships to maintain and continue the negotiations necessary for maintaining my responsibilities in the production of knowledge from the multiple knowledge sources participating. Yuin Country, Elders and academic colleagues provided the tools, which guided me as the researcher to inform the discussions that I found and felt in the negotiated methodological steps taken as I conducted the research.

The first step of the process after I initiated the research was to obtain permission from Uncle Max, who guided me by a ‘continuous slow drip cultural educational process’ (my own observation of Uncle Max’s approach to teaching myself and others) that is very indirect and patient. At first the negotiations of the steps to involve Country through Uncle were not direct. This ancient process, which is relatively new in academia, occurred through Uncle Max, what I coined, the ‘legacy pedagogy’ (see Chapter Four). I have observed Country with Uncle Max’s guidance over twenty-two years so far, to have my own Yuin Country knowledge relationship. For example, Uncle would take me and other people out onto Country and would comment, ‘trees are female and male’. After a period of time we might be provided with a number of guiding questions. The statement, ‘trees are female and male’, is an example of how Uncle Max opened up an avenue for me to see the trees as teachers in this ancient teaching approach. This is an example of how I had to learn to connect Country and the other contributors to the methodology of this research. These teachings helped my reading of the text of the land on Gulaga and Biamanga, the text in academic papers and myself, as an Aboriginal man and a researcher in academia to negotiate both responsibilities. The next step of the interconnecting cycle was to examine and identify Western methods that contained similarities to the approaches taught to me
by Uncle Max and the Mountains. This step extended to a negotiation between these methods through my cultural knowledge and my understanding of Indigenous methodological discourses. All these negotiations occurred within me, assisted by my communication with my Country and supervisors including Uncle, in a cyclic action until it made sense to me.

Indigenous methodologies in partnership with Western methods can contribute to keeping Traditional Aboriginal knowledge and all participants safe in an academic context that has been immersed in colonial doctrines. The individual researcher, however, is required to find their own balanced methodology between the knowledge sites that are respectful of their Country, which includes their Ancients, Ancestors, Elders, community(ies), families and self; we have to position ourselves to be respectful to the knowledge sites we are working in. Bunda et al. (2012) discuss “the congruent and diverse grounds whereon Indigenous people are positioned to interrogate whitestream institutions” (p. 950). The term positioning represents the ways Aboriginal people and our Country-based structures, systems and processes, including culture, knowledge, Lore, Law and so on are placed within Western structures, systems and processes. Country is not in a position to have a strong voice in academia, due to lack of understanding and the positioning of Aboriginal people in academic structures. Bunda et al. (2012) explore how Indigenous people are positioned in less powerful positions or subordinated status in regards to social, political, epistemological, ontological, and employment stations in academic institutions. Indigenous academics within their own journey in connection to their communities (black and white) are required to re-position themselves in the academic contexts in which they find themselves. This is important if they are to assist in the respectful unshackling of Western binaries on Country; for Country to be placed into a central position of offering knowledge in everyday and academic life.
Methodology in the context of Storyline / Songline

On the basis of her work with Country, Martin (2003) proposes eight structures of Indigenist research: re-set, re-claim, re-view, re-frame, re-search, re-visit, re-connect and re-present. The structures are a valuable guide for non-Indigenous researchers to shift their own research paradigm in a respectful manner to be inclusive of Country. Martin’s (2003) eight structures of Indigenist research demonstrate the importance to protect, inject, maintain relations, contextualise, utilise, give voice to, and maintain the cultural protocols that came from the entities of Country. In addition to Martin’s eight structures I would argue, on the basis of my teachings (learnings) on Yuin Country and my readings of Indigenous scholars (Bunda et al. 2012; Wilson 2008; Martin 2003), that the positioning of Country and re-positioning of academics into a knowledge building process that is Country-centred in academia is another crucial structure in Indigenist research. Traditional Aboriginal knowledge is about maintaining life through the connection of entities that are of, and exist throughout Country; this includes the knowledge from Country. This prominent spiritual concept
has a minimal standing in academia but its position is now being respectfully discussed and included due to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people using Western and Indigenous structures to introduce this framework.

Well-known examples of this spiritual inclusiveness in Australia are Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr’s (2003) sharing of *Dadirri* and David Mowaljarlai’s (Porr & Bell 2012) use of a ‘Bush University’. In the first example, Ungunmerr (2003) an Ngangikurungkurr woman from the Daly River region (Northern Territory – Australia) offers an Aboriginal gift of *Dadirri* an “inner deep listening and quiet still listening” (p. viii) to the Nation of Australia. Ungunmerr (2003) seeks for all Australians, the possibility to blossom where information is shared on a number of levels including the innermost level: *Dadirri*. In the second example, Mowaljarlai an Ngaringin Law man from the Kimberley region of Western Australia through his vision of a Bush University for non-Aboriginal people, talks about a deep feeling in your heart. As Mowaljarlai (2012) shares:

> You have a feeling in your heart that you’re going to feed your body this day, get more knowledge. You go out now, see animals moving, a tree, a river. You are looking at nature and giving it your full attention ... Your vision has opened you and you start learning now (quoted in Poor & Bell, 2012, p. 167).

The positioning of spirit that derives from Country to inform knowledge production in academia is an *inside Country methodology*, with the *Western out of Country methodology* providing opportunities for a side-by-side relationship. This side-by-side relationship assisted me to find my own centring point to form a relational methodological approach. The centring point does not mean it is in the middle of the side-by-side relationship. Respect for other academics and for in and out of Country methodological approaches was thereby required to help find the methodological ‘plugs’ (electrical metaphor) that could connect into the ‘sockets’ provided by Yuin Country to supply appropriate knowledge synergies.
The re-attachment of Respect Law from traditional Aboriginal knowledge helped to guide the development of connectedness to the methodology of relationships.

**Responsibility to Country**

It is important to connect other academics’ methodology into relationship with Yuin Country to position my approach into the ever-developing respectful flow of Indigenous methodologies into academia. This process is heavily loaded with responsibility: the methodology can be placed in a side-by-side relationship or utilised to inspire a different but related approach. I cannot utilise someone else’s connection to Country and use it as my own, otherwise it is cultural and intellectual appropriation. What I can do from my understanding of Respect Law and academic structures includes: utilising another Aboriginal/Indigenous academic’s work as a guide for working as an Aboriginal/Indigenous researcher; contribute to strengthen the Indigenous research discourse by telling my own story of connectedness; and adding to the overall Indigenous methodological Storyline or Songline to re-connect to Aboriginal concepts of oneness (the flow of creeks and rivers into the ocean). Furthermore, I can utilise Indigenous and non-Indigenous academic language in English to demonstrate my methodological approach in relation to Yuin behavioural protocols. In the following quote, Wilson (2008) writing about relationality, explains something of Indigenous cultural discourse patterns:
… there is no need to be critical of or judge others’ ideas or theories if all are thought of as equally valid. Rather there is a need for each person to develop his or her own relationship with ideas and to therefore form their own conclusion. One person cannot judge someone else’s conclusion, or even attempt to make a conclusion for someone else (p. 94).

Thereby I cannot use or appropriate another academic’s and their Country’s methodology or story, for example Martin’s (2008) Quandamooka ontology or Quampie Story. Rather, I make my own conclusions, with Yuin Country guiding me, and use the experience and work of other Indigenous methodologies to contribute to the re-positioning of Country into a multiple knowledge site process to embed Aboriginal perspectives by demonstrating how Respect Law can exist in academia.

Country as Methodology in Relationship

The methodology used in this study cannot be separated from the whole story, Mingadhuga Mingayung. The methodology is a thread that is woven into and is a part of the Yuin story; it interconnects the approach to theory, the writing of the thesis chapters, the cultural experience, the teaching/guiding of the Gulaga and Biamanga Storylines/Songlines, the learning with and for all the participants and the analysis/discussion. The methodology in relationship informed by Gulaga and Biamanga was built around developing, maintaining and questioning the human elements in relationship to all the human and non-human entities of Country to find connections. Wilson (2008) describes this as ‘relationality’: “just as the components of the paradigm are related, the components themselves all have to do with relationships” (p. 70). This methodological relationship required a process to identify, find and negotiate connections when barriers were found to maintain the relationship and reduce possible damage. For example, if gender relationships were to be explored during this project, it would have required a woman to co-lead the project with me, the male researcher, to obtain a balanced exploration.

Grounding the methodology: Thank you Country, the Ancients and Elders

I must thank Gulaga, Biamanga, the relating Ancients, and the Elders that have guided me on this journey especially Uncle Max Dulamunmun Harrison. The chapters
from the Mountains, and what our Ancients and Elders hold, taught me the connectedness of the mind, body and spirit in developing my understanding of who I am and how I am placed on Yuin Country and in this research. The methodology in relationship moved the subjective conceptualisation beyond the mind to an embodiment of how I thought through, felt and understood the data (in relationship). This was achieved through the continual examination of the partnership between my Yuin cultural education and my Western education. Subjectivity, in this instance, is not just a judgement from within; it is influenced by the relationship with Country, which, in my Yuin epistemology and ontology, is in turn me. Thereby subjectivity is judgement as being one with Country: the inside is the outside and the outside is the inside while finding the middle ground to be me as Country.

Country as yarning in relationship with Methodology

Wilson (2008) discusses multiple realities in Indigenous ontology: “rather than a truth being something that is ‘out there’ or external, reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth” (p. 73). Therefore what has not been said throughout this dissertation is just as important as what has been written. To find a truth in the relationships that were taking place in this research project, cross-cultural yarning (Melissa Walker, Bronwyn Fredericks, Kyly Mills & Debra Anderson 2014) and yarning (Dawn Bessarab & Bridget Ng’anda 2010) with non-human entities (Bawaka Country et al. 2013; Martin 2008) was utilised. Larry Towney a Wiradjuri man (2005) emphasises that yarning “is, and always will be, a unique part of our culture which we have been practising for many years. It connects us to our spirituality” (p. 40). Val Plumwood (2002) proposes that colonial knowledge systems removed the human dialogue with non-human entities, thereby ‘othering’ this observed spiritual form of communication. When yarning is practiced in a spiritual context then the truth of self in a relationship with Country is activated. If not truthful, then the spiritual element is denied and yarning is just an intellectual exercise.

The other important method in this holistic methodological approach was observation (observer-participant). The Western participant-observation method informed and was re-formed by Mingadhuga Mingayung connective and similarities approach, which is represented by a simple switch of the words. Participant-observer for Kathleen DeWalt and Billie DeWalt (2002) permits a researcher (Western) to learn about the
culture of the people they are studying (other) from observations in the natural setting. In this study, the researcher (myself) is from the ‘othered’ culture being researched and the observation is of this culture interacting with the people not of this culture. This switching of the terms to observer-participant indicates that the focus is equally placed on the observed interactions with the entities of Country and the human participants; it is inclusive of the holistic yarning that needed to be observed. As Tuhiwai Smith (2012) has argued, ‘Indigenous participant observation’ helps Indigenous people to find our own questions and answers in research to identify solutions to the issues Indigenous peoples’ face. The use of an observer-participant provides this research project with a methodology that can be understood in academia but importantly this is my understanding through my community to solve a problem of including non-Aboriginal people to access Yuin Country to form their own relational knowledge site with Country.

Introducing Respect Law that informed the methodology

As well as the guidance provided by Elders and academics, the other tool that is always very present for me is the Ancients and Elders’ Bundi (traditional weapon). I must maintain an eye on the relationships with all the participants, including the persistence of colonial ways of knowing. I had to sustain the required separation to protect Country, and in the same breath, contribute to the connection that exists for the survival of Yuin knowledge. I must look for similarities and connections while keeping certain knowledge very separate, otherwise the Ancients or Elders’ Bundi may well separate one of the interconnecting knowledge holders within my body, my skull. The Bundi is an analogy for the discipline of Respect Law, as the Bundi becomes a part of my body when I internalise the responsibility the Bundi represents.

Placing my whole body into the Methodology for Healing

My skull protects an organ that can be damaged by a Bundi; however, there is also a spiritual protection. To maintain a strong spirit, the physical, mental and spiritual realms must stay connected to all of the other bodies that are a part of who I am: Country. To take care of self and Country within this research the methodology requires to be saturated in spirit. To include spirit within the methodological relationship the Indigenous method of yarning with Country was required. This is not all that different from yarning with people. If done properly, Country should already
be involved. Individuals need to know how the yarning circle works (oneness) and be very open that they know very little.

Wilson (2008) in his book, *Research as Ceremony*, explores the phrase *discourse pattern*, which for me is a good description on one aspect of how yarning functions. Through a conversation Wilson (2008) had with a friend called Peter, he explains that a discourse pattern happens when, “…you add a hook on to the previous speaker. And though you may disagree, you are not disagreeable. So its never confrontational and you add on and you may give a tiny twist to it” (p. 93). The twist in creating the methodology and yarning as a method to obtain data is all in the context of a discourse pattern that includes Country’s entities. The non-confrontational approach is one safety mechanism that enhances the capacity of the participants’ stories and conversation to be shared in the yarning session. Another benefit of a safe place is if a yarning environment is free from stress and filled with respect, then there is more chance of an openness of mind to be aware of the stories being shared by Country during the yarning session. Through including my personal experiences of yarning that has a discourse pattern and process, I was then able to locate and explain the dynamic relationships that were occurring in the methodology.

The participants and myself had to be able to feel safe, not just for self but also for Country. The relationships between the participants, the participants and myself as the researcher, plus Country and the human participants had to be strong and safe for all to be able to share and explain what we were all thinking and feeling within our own personal relationships with Country, each other and the research. Safety is only one small element to the healing I am raising within this section and the research. A major point for including a ‘healing’ component was to create a space that was more likely to build and maintain respectful reciprocal relationships in the research. Healing is within the spiritual domain of how we are all connected and what needs to be separated to be able to think about and feel how respectful knowledge relationships can occur in research practice and more broadly, in academia. The thinking with feeling that happened in this dissertation is in relationship to my body and spirit. This is a relationship that cannot be separated: respect has to remain ever-present. The Bundi (personal, family, community and spiritual regulation and accountability) that was held over me, as well as the one I am holding, was entrenched with respect,
responsibility, reciprocation, and discipline. When I reacted to the tensions and rewards received during this journey I had to hold Respect Law. This important practice is explained in the remainder of this chapter.

How does Spirit fit into this story of a methodology of relationship?

Respect, relationships, reciprocation, responsibility, react(ive)ing and discipline, as well as, sharing, caring and patience, are a number of important spiritual behaviours that are linked to the development of the research driven by relationship for this dissertation. To be able to hold the stories of Yuin Country, the methods that were utilised had to be held and continually recharged by instilling spiritual behaviours for the range of relationship required in research to heal. Healing with/of Aboriginal methods can be achieved through the recognition of Aboriginal methods as being real and valid for Aboriginal people and can have a role and relationship with Western methods in academia. Ray (2012), a Red Rock First Nation woman, through her convergence methodology shared her healing story of engaging in an examination of methodology through traditional knowledge in academia. She describes how, “I am able to contextualize the article in a way that is consistent with the Anishnaabe tradition of storytelling and the Anishnaabe understanding that process is as important as product” (p. 86). The intent of Ray’s (2012) article was to examine how different interpretations of Indigenous methodologies can limit and or contribute to traditional knowledge capabilities to enhance decolonisation and Indigenous cultural revitalisation within academia. Ray (2012) had to find an Indigenous methodology that worked for her in being respectful to all entities involved, including traditional knowledge at that time and place of doing her thesis.

The development of my Yuin methodology for the analysis had to help me find that point where it ‘felt right’; that is the point where I came to the conclusion that this is not just my thinking in an intellectual or in an intellectualising manner that eschews feeling. Through a tradition from my Ancients, the way I did this research had to feel right in the relationships I have with Yuin Country for my own healing to happen. The healing of the research relationship is intrinsically linked to my own healing of resistance (I must look for connections ~ separation without damaging spirit) Aboriginal knowledge. The research product had to be accountable to the Ancients and Elders of Yuin Country as well as Western structures. The development,
implementation, actioning and writing of the methodology in relationship had to be respectful of/with Country and in relationship to the scholarship of Indigenous scholars (Ray 2012; Martin 2008; Wilson 2008; Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 2012). This in turn led to the question: how did I get and implement my thoughts, especially as they occurred from numerous relational interactions between my mind, body and spirit with Country and academia?

Birrell (2006) states that entering “any relationship, involves response, dialogue, reciprocity, perhaps even intimacy” (p. 5). This whole dissertation is done in relationship with intimacy, as closeness is a requirement to be able to learn in a respect manner. A relationship with Country as in any relationship entails particular themes including trust, sharing, love, feelings, conflict, commitment, and so on. The following poem from Bill Neidjie’s (1989) ‘Story About Feeling’ demonstrates the dynamic intricacy that is not just within the human realm of relationships but is also with all that is from/of Country:

That tree now, feeling…
e blow
sit quiet, you speaking…
that tree now e speak…
that wind e blow…
e can listen.
…We think.
Story we think about, yes.
Tree…yes.
That story e listen.
Story…you’n’me same.
Grass im listen.
You’n’me same…anykind.
Bird e listen…anykind, eagle.
E sit down.
E want to speak eagle eh?
Im listen. You listen…eagle.
Because e put im through your feeling.
But for us eagle…
all same.
Listen carefully, careful
and this spirit e come in your feeling
and you will feel it…anyone that.
I feel it…my body same as you.
I telling you this because the land for us,
ever change round, never change.
Places for us, earth for us,
star, moon, tree, animal,
no-matter what sort of a animal, bird or snake…
all that animal same like us. Our friend that.
This story e can listen careful
and how you want to feel on your feeling.
This story e coming through your body,
ego right down foot and head, fingernail and blood…
through the heart.
And e can feel it because e’ll come right through.
And when you sleep you might dream something.
Now I telling story I can listen this.
You listen that wind e come more.
Tree e start moving round and feeling
(p. 18-19 cited in Farrell, 2013, p. 5).

Bill Neidjie is a Kakadu Elder and holder of traditional knowledge. His, ‘Story About Feeling’, has such depth in its meaning that the reader can learn in a range of directions and purposes. The cleverness of the old people such as Uncle Bill Neidjie never ceases to amaze, as it all comes from their relationships with their Country. Uncle Bill Neidjie’s story is very intimate and clearly shows a very deep and heartfelt relationship with his Country. The spiritual connectedness is communication through the ever-present and intense feeling and relationship Uncle has with Country and vice versa. The writing shows how an individual can ‘feel on your feelings’ as the Entity’s story is felt because it is you. One important aspect from the ‘Story About Feelings’ story that needs to be reinforced within this chapter is the imperative to humanise
Country. Not with the intent to make Country human but to humanise in the sense to help people understand and relate to the teachings of relatedness that occurs with Country. Feelings and spirit are just as important as the intellect and should work as one function when becoming a mature adult and researcher in relationship with Country. To humanise this explanation of yarning with Country, sometimes you and a friend try to catch up and have a good old-fashioned yarn, however, you both keep missing each other physically or by various forms of communication. When you finally ‘catch up’, it is the ‘right time’; all the experiences that were required before the conversation happened and the conversation that is meant to occur falls into the right space and place. Country communicates in a similar way; this is also very inclusive of particular human events (humans come from Country as well). This includes those moments when I read a methodology research article in a particular moment by me, or received a teaching/prompt/suggestion from my supervisors.

The methodology of relationship for my dissertation was inclusive of non-human elements that would contribute at the right time to assist in my thinking and writing. For example, as I was writing this particular section a specific Aboriginal academic’s work on methodology came to mind, so I walked to the library to get their book. A Red-bellied black snake was there at the door of the library; this ‘fella’ for me culturally is a message fella. I have been taught if this fella goes across the path you are on, then you need to turn around and go back or change the direction of your intent. So I did, this person’s work was not to be a part of this section: simple. Other steps including stories, teachings and spiritual emails would occur for all the things to make sense to provide another piece in the methodological approach and implementation. The story about the Red-bellied black snake, as Country became the representation and explanation of this small section of the methodology.

Country is spiritual and consists of spiritual beings, animals, humans, rocks - everything; Country is known, felt and sung by all these entities that are of Country (Wright, Suchet-Pearson, Lloyd, Burarrwanga & Burarrwanga 2009). As the researcher I ‘looked’ for the feeling(s) and what was felt that occurred within me as I made observations to ‘read’ the data. As Wilson (2008) states, “It is a voice from our ancestors that tell us when it is right and when it is not. Indigenous research is a life changing ceremony” (p. 61). Ceremony celebrates and reinvigorates the spirit, which
is healing. Thereby the methodology for this project is viewed and steeped in relationships, it is living and is ceremony. Any judgement to be made is on the individual participant’s story (not judging the individual) with Country; I related the data and its analysis to my own relationship in spirit and my own steps into/onto the Dreaming, via Gulaga and Biamanga.

**Reading the data is Observing, Listening, Seeing and Feeling Country talk without Voice through yarning: Relationship with Country**

**Participants**

As outlined in Chapter One, twenty preservice teachers and six academics participated in the *Mingadhuga Mingayung* cultural experience and the research project aligned with it. The research project focused upon examining the participants’ initial journey into a respectful relationship with Yuin Country in order to embed Aboriginal perspectives when teaching in Western structures while on Yuin Country. I was an observer-participant who was assisted in all aspects of the project including the cultural experience by the non-human members from Yuin Country. These living entities made themselves available through the researcher’s observations and personal relationship with Yuin Country. Uncle Max Dulamunmun Harrison and other Elders instilled this process within me over time, by what could be called in a Western way ‘Cultural educators’. The non-human entities were not being researched but were part of the research system via three observational processes. Firstly, to respectfully research the instigation of a relationship between the preservice teachers and academics with Yuin Country I had to observe the interactions between the non-human entities on Gulaga and Biamanga. Furthermore in an Indigenous method called yarning (Walker et al. 2014; Bessarab & Ng’anda 2010), I also observed any contributions or interventions made by the non-human entities during the yarning session with myself and with the participants. The final observations involved being aware of yarning (communication) between the non-human entities and myself as the researcher while I was feeling, understanding, thinking, analysing, interpreting the data and writing the thesis chapters. Spirit had to be incorporated and respectfully placed in the research and methodology.
How the messages from Country in Respect Law and the Participants were felt in spirit

The relationship between respect, spirit and healing brings the discussion to spiritual inclusiveness and its companion, Aboriginal law. David Mowaljarlai (quoted in Mulcock 2007) during an Australian Federal court on a Native Title claim, stated in relation to non-Aboriginal Australians identity: “The Law for this land is recorded in the land. We can teach you that law. That way you won’t be strangers in your birth country” (p. 76). This spiritual inclusiveness of Country for non-Aboriginal people reasoned by Elders such as Mowaljarlai (1995) and Harrison (Harrison, M.D. & McConchie 2009) is a healing process for Aboriginal people and in turn non-Aboriginal people to show respect to the spirit(s) of this continent.

Respect Law contributed to the development of the methodological approach and was a major contributor to ‘how’ the analysis of data involved Indigenous spiritual knowing or spiritual emails through Visions, Ceremonies, and Dreams (Archibald 2008; Kovach 2010; 2006; Battiste 2000). In addition birds, plants, trees, animals whose stories were known to me and/or unknown, would turn up and visit at a particular time when I was feeling, thinking and writing. Their story would be shared by actions (dance or a particular song) and/or silence to assist in the reflection, interpretation, analysis and questioning. Birrell (2006) discusses how the notion of a reciprocal human-to-land dialogue is possible when working in an Aboriginal framework. This framework is a simple form of respect - listening and/or seeing the entities of Country talk with and without voice to move in response through appropriate behaviour: law. For example, when a bird made itself known the particular bird’s story would be put into relationship with the specific point or story I was working upon at that time in regards to the research. Entities like birds would communicate and were contributors to the research.

The enactment of a Yuin Country methodology within my dissertation is how I honoured my Respect Law. As Archibald (2008) states Indigenous methodologies are:

Showing respect through cultural protocol, appreciating the significance of and reverence for spirituality, honouring teacher and learner responsibilities
and practicing a cyclical type of reciprocity are important lessons documented … for those interested in First Nation/Indigenous methodologies (p. 5).

To honour my Ancients and my Elders I had to respect and include spirit in the research through a healing process, which is an aspect of the methodology that assists the participants and me to form and deepen the relationship of self as Country and each other. As George Sefa Dei (2013) argues, “the understanding of embodiment in Indigenous research therefore should touch on healing. Put in another way, for the colonised and oppressed, Indigenous research can and must be a healing process” (p. 31). Yuin Country as teacher and healer is the space and place that sent the messages, teaching and understandings through feelings in regards to the cultural experience, research, writing of the research, incorporating the Western knowledge system and processes into this spiritual framework of Yuin connectedness.

This spiritual framework was an ongoing learning relationship that essentially instigated a healing between the relationships I have with Yuin Country, responsive resistance Aboriginal knowledge (Grieves 2009) and Western knowledge. This encompassed the entities that were involved and introduced themselves throughout the whole research project, including the participants. The methodology in relationship and the analysis like the rest of the dissertation has its own life. I could not push (just using my intellect) what was going to happen. I had to wait and ‘see’ what happened by means of yarning with Country. Country assisted me to interpret these communicated story movements, such as spiritual messages and what I observed from Country when analysing and writing the research. The communication I received as an observer-participant from Country transpired at different times. For example, during and after guiding the academics and preservice teachers’ formal and informal aspects of the cultural experience and in the research process. The formal aspects included the observation of the participants in the Mingadhuga Mingayung cultural experience, including the debriefing yarning session; the yarning within the elective subject (preservice teachers); and within the yarning sessions. However, because of university structures and time limitations, access to the academic staff could not occur in the same way as the preservice teachers in the elective subject. Instead, a number of informal yarning sessions took place in the staff lunchroom and
their offices to observe their learning journey. The conclusion chapter (Chapter Seven) of this thesis will discuss in more detail the areas of concern that impacted on engaging more effectively in a Yuin knowledge site while immersed in the Western work knowledge site. For example, issues such as time, not knowing, and university structures and mechanics are examined.

The relationship between the data analysis, interpretation and feeling with a method called yarning

Informed by my relationships with Country, I utilised a similar approach to Martin’s (2008) ‘re-visit’ and ‘re-connect’ approach to the data in the research to ‘re-position’ Wilson’s (2008) discourse pattern to explain and implement the Yuin yarning analysis method for this dissertation. The re-positioning was to assist the re-attachment of the Yuin Ancients’ legacy of connectedness, through unpacking the participants’ interconnecting conversation in stories from yarning. Thereby the analysis of the participants’ journey took the form of: (i) a weave of my felt interpretations; (ii) spiritual messages; and (iii) Western approaches to the participants’ journey, shared in yarning and then transcribed into words. The following four sections that conclude this methodology chapter are organised to demonstrate the flow and context of how the data analysis occurred. The first section Placing yarning into the research context describes how yarning was developed and utilised. The explanation of the data collection and analysis have been written in two separate segments: section two, Yarning with the academics: gaining an insight and collecting data; and section three, Preservice teachers and yarning: insight and data. These two sections were separated to help the reader understand the similar but different purposes of the research with the academics compared to that with the preservice teachers. The final section, titled Methodology as story and healing contextualises my role as Country, researcher and observer-participant.

Placing yarning into this research project’s context

‘Cross-cultural yarning’ for Walker et al. (2014), working from a community-based health perspective: “involves communication and interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous people and requires specific attention to protocol and cultural respect” (p. 1223). The method of cross-cultural yarning best explains how yarning
was at first introduced to the academics and preservice teachers who had not experienced yarning before. My intent over a relatively short time period was to support the participants to acquire a lived experience to obtain an initial level of understanding on Yuin yarning. Yarning in a Yuin tradition is behaving in/with Yuin protocols of Country sharing teachings/stories through the Yuin teaching and learning principles of watching, listening and seeing (Harrison, M.D. & McConchie 2009) Yuin Country. For a Yuin storying conversation to successfully develop (that is seen, heard and felt between all entities, that are, and became involved in the yarning space), respectful relationships had to form, for this learning to occur and data to be collected. I was aware I would have to, at first slowly, teach the participants to understand Yuin yarning from a cross-cultural perspective. For example, during the first meetings to introduce the research, I presented and continually used storying to stimulate stories to be shared in conversation within an informal group setting. The development in understanding and conversational skills (narrative sharing) of participating in yarning was important to help locate the research project in a safe space and place in academia for Yuin Country, me and the Aboriginal community members involved like Uncle Max.

In a similar way, the movement of convergence (Ray 2012) of informal group work and cross-cultural yarning, moved towards a Yuin yarning that was informed by a Yuin Respect Law framework to provide a safe space for the academics and preservice teachers to share stories of lived experiences. Yarning thus enhanced the capacity to produce data within a respectful negotiated space of Yuin and Western knowledge with Country taking centre stage. Fredericks and her colleagues (2011) describe yarning as being able to be used “to embed cultural security within the research process, therefore enabling participation of and by Indigenous people. Moreover, yarning allows for honesty and openness to unfold through the relationships that are developed and renewed as the yarn progresses” (p. 13). In this research project it was I, an Aboriginal researcher, who was utilising yarning as a research tool for non-Aboriginal participants. Thereby I had to make the yarning space safe and secure site for the preservice teachers and academics. At the same time, the yarning space, place and human participants had to be slowly prepared, through experiencing cross-cultural yarning and the Mingadhuga Mingayung approach for Yuin Country to be part of the conversation. Respectful behaviour was essential for
the spiritual elements of Yuin yarning to be introduced to the preservice teachers and academics. Respectful behaviour of taking care of Country is Respect Law and was given great emphasis to help the preservice teachers and academics to learn from Yuin Country on a spiritual level: Yuin yarning had to be shared and practised over time.

*Yarning with the academics: gaining an insight and collecting data*

The yarning in a small informal group that occurred prior to the academics’ experience of *Mingadhuga Mingayung* was important to reveal the reasons for their involvement in the experience and in the research. This yarning also provided insights into their previous experiences and understandings of Aboriginal people and culture. The data collected produced a snapshot of how, or if, the Western binary was influencing their understanding of Aboriginal people and culture. By this means a reference point was obtained to observe the academics’ movement in learning, knowing and behaving from the Yuin cultural experience. The academics’ pre-experience stories then played a significant role in guiding the post-experience yarning questions. The questions in this instance were more aligned with a Yuin yarning approach rather than the cross-cultural form (Walker et al. 2014) of the pre-experience yarning.

In addition to the above data set, as mentioned above, data was collected via yarning in the debriefing sessions that occurred after the visits to Gulaga and Biamanga. The same question was asked after each visit: ‘Could you please reflect on the day by sharing the thing(s) that really stood out for you?’ What I wanted to take from the question was: (i) the role of Country in the academics’ learning journey; (ii) how it related to me, as the researcher; and (iii) my reflections on these understandings with Country as teacher and knowledge holder. Additionally, it was crucial to ask how aspects of the academics’ own knowledge system and understanding of Aboriginal people and culture influenced the learning that occurred from the experience. These questions were asked to help analyse how a Yuin educational process and system can evolve from Country as knowledge holder and teacher with Western knowledge holders in developing and implementing Aboriginal perspectives in teacher education.
After the academics visited both sacred mountains, Gulaga and Biamanga, and their respective debriefing yarning sessions, the academics participated in a post-yarning session. The post-yarning session occurred approximately two months after the cultural experience. The reason for the two-month period before conducting the post-yarning was to provide an opportunity for the possibility of the knowledge relationship with Country to become apparent and make some sort of sense, or not, for the participant. The post-experience yarning was guided by the research questions, as well as by the academics’ responses from the pre-experience yarning. What I was looking for was any shift in the academics’ thoughts, and more importantly, any feelings that were attached to their current understandings to Aboriginal people, culture, Country, self, knowing, learning and implementing Aboriginal perspectives personally and professionally. Utilising the Yuin teaching and learning principle of looking, listening, seeing and understanding through feeling (Harrison, M. D. & McConchie 2009) as a methodology, I then watched to ‘see’ any behavioural actions for that indicated the academics’ movement across knowledge sites.

Preservice teachers and yarning: insight and data

The preservice teachers were asked the same question in the pre-experience and post-experience yarning sessions: ‘What does the term Country mean to you?’ The preservice teachers also participated in a debriefing yarning after the visit to Gulaga, using the same questions that were asked of the academics. I wanted to observe the preservice teachers’ learning journey, and especially if and how they formed a respectful reciprocal relationship with Yuin Country. I also sought to understand how Yuin Country might have taught the preservice teachers. In other words, I was interested in how spirit was present in the preservice teachers’ stories in relationship to understanding and learning an Aboriginal pedagogical skill of Country as teacher. Exploring their experience and related stories formed the basis for investigating these questions.

Methodology as Story and Healing

From my observation of the story building that is a part of any yarning session and from my reading of the written transcriptions, I looked, listened, saw (Harrison M.D. & McConchie 2009) and understood Country’s stories and teachings at work within the preservice teachers and academics. This may well be best described for this
research as a ‘Yuin Country relational methodology’, which demonstrates how I identified relational connections ~ separation to Country through (my)self from the varying human and non-human stories. My own story and relationship with Country is very much a part of the analysis. Country’s stories that were shared are also representative of the intersecting space between the participants’ stories from Country and how I could locate the connections ~ separations as I hold the same storied space. The story had to be felt through the intersections/overlapping spaces between the mind, heart, body and spirit, as I could not be judgemental. Being judgemental can damage spirit but I could make judgement in the research towards my own healing and behaviour in relationship with my analysis and interpretation of the participants’ stories.

The process of a Yuin Country guided methodology in relationship as self with others through a connected mind, heart, body and spirit was inclusive of the participants’ Western knowledge sites. The academics and preservice teachers shared stories that were inclusive of their Western knowledge system and process and their first steps into holding their own relational knowledge site with Yuin Country. The academics and preservice teachers’ ‘experienced stories’ were shared and utilised in the research as data, the analysis of which I respectfully added my own ‘tiny cultural twist’ (Wilson 2008), through what I had learnt through my own story. At particular points in the reading/feeling of the participants’ stories I would question my own interpretation through Yuin Country’s guiding hand. I would not question the participants but my own interpretations to re-check that I had not changed their story. The spiritual and bodily felt messages were inclusive of my human thinking by my questioning of self in order to maintain relationships that communicate in spirit, feeling and in voice.

The participants’ stories in this process become a number of interrelating stories that were teachings for me as a learner with Country as teacher and healer. I ‘re-searched’, as Martin (2003) describes it, within myself through feelings and thought to see how Country and spirit were at work within the participants. Within this ‘re-search’ I had to identify any colonial judgements I held towards my own reculturalisation in relationship with the participants and academia. This incorporated recognising any closing of the learning gap from where the non-Aboriginal participant started and how
they were situated in moving towards a new site of knowledge (learning from Country). In the end, I was responsible for respectfully critiquing or questioning my own interpretations of the participants, human and non-human data. Simply, *Mingadhuga Mingayung* informed me through its own text of the land how to analyse the data. At the same time, the responsibility rests with me in all the relationships involved for research to contribute to healing.

*Additional methodology sections in Chapters 4, 5 and 6*

This chapter has provided an overall picture of the methodological approach for this thesis by compilation. Since the thesis is presented by compilation, discussion of methodology is also included in each of the published chapters (Chapters Four, Five and Six). Chapter Four, *Mingadhuga Mingayung*, includes discussion of the relational methodology used in this research. Chapter Five, *Preservice Teachers Learning with Country*, includes discussion of methodology in the following sections: Researching an Aboriginal Education Elective; The pre- and post- subject group yarning discussions; Storytelling: Preservice teachers’ Story; Analysing the data. Chapter Six, *Meeting Country and Self to Initiate an Embodiment of Knowledge* includes the four sections: The Cultural Experience; Researching an Experience with Country; Pre- and Post-Experience Yarning; and Debriefing Sessions.
Chapter Four: Mingadhuga Mingayung

Abstract

The cultural invasion of Yuin Country in Australia not only colonised the Yuin peoples and Yuin Country itself, but also contributed to non-Aboriginal people’s continual colonised journey of disconnecting self from Mother Earth. Cultural awareness is a process driven by Western theories informed by the colonial dualism that functions on separation and differences. Tripartation means assisting in a decolonisation and more importantly a reculturalisation process to place Yuin Country and aligning stories back into focus for all peoples attached to Yuin Country. Tripartation challenges Western dualities to create a philosophical space, place and reality in Aboriginal dualities for non-Aboriginal peoples to find similarities and connections through stories in order to build respectful relationships with Aboriginal peoples, Yuin Country, and importantly, the self. Mingadhuga Mingayung (My Mother Your Mother) focus is on identifying similarities through stories to guide non-Aboriginal peoples in Yuin ways of knowing, learning and behaving with Country.
**Introduction**

*My voice is just as important as any. Whether you listen or not is your priority not mine.*

Gulaga gives us our stories of Creation (Harrison, M.D. & McConchie, 2009, p. 19).

The purpose of this article is to introduce and present a Yuin² (Aboriginal Nation) living body of knowledge pedagogy that provides experiences for non-Aboriginal people in Yuin ways of knowing, learning and behaving. The Yuin Ancients and Ancestors have provided (sung) this innate approach, which is called *Mingadhuga Mingayung* (My Mother Your Mother). Uncle Max Dulamumunun Harrison, Yuin Elder and lawman, who holds these stories of Country, has given me permission as a cultural man and academic to share my teachings in connecting people to Country. The particular Yuin stories that inform this reinstatement of Yuin knowing, learning and behaving reveal ancient ways to build a respectful relationship with Country. Imperatively, *Mingadhuga Mingayung* plays a role from Indigenising decolonisation to a reculturalisation process of a colonised Country. The reculturalisation process was born (and has always existed) from Gulaga (a significant mountain on the far south coast of New South Wales) through the Elders’ knowledge. The Elders have maintained the integrity and purpose of the mountain by passing on the stories that have remained the same since its creation (Creation Dreaming). Gulaga, (and her sister mountain Biamanga), *Mingadhuga Mingayung* hosts and teaches non-Aboriginal people Yuin stories to know how to learn from the source of Yuin knowledge: Yuin Country. Central to this approach is how Gulaga’s ‘silent’ voice and powerful energy guide the individual’s experience to examine the self so that connections can occur in respectful relationship with Country.

Respectful relationships are at the heart of *Mingadhuga Mingayung*, which is the encompassing name of the approach presented in this article. Cultural awareness is

² Yuin Country “Extends from the Snowy River in the South to the escarpment of Wollongong, our northern boundary, and then out to the Southern Tablelands. Our Country follows the coast down and into Victoria” (M. D. Harrison and McConchie, 2009, p. 15)
not the focus of the article and will not be described in depth. The focus is on *Mingadhuga Mingayung* and not on a response to notions of cultural awareness that originate from the coloniser. This article will articulate the Yuin cultural process that decolonises the Western dualistic environment in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples endure today. The *Mingadhuga Mingayung* approach sings in Country to help non-Aboriginal people hear Gulaga and Biamanga silent voice in order to reduce Western theory’s colonial obstructive influence on Yuin relationships. The sweeping away by song of the colonial web of complexity and the difference barrier provides a space for the living estuary of Country as *Mingadhuga Mingayung* to function in the heart and spirit of non-Aboriginal people. *Mingadhuga Mingayung* deriving from Country provides stories, not Western colonising theory, to identify similarities for connections to form between non-Aboriginal people and Yuin Country. The *Mingadhuga Mingayung* approach highlights tripartation, a spiritual passageway between dualistic terms, by decreasing the influence of colonisation in action: Western dualistic thinking of difference. *Mingadhuga Mingayung* contributes to and continues the protection and taking care of Country, Mother Earth, Father Sky, Grandmother Moon and Grandfather Sun, by Yuin people, whereby we can guide non-Aboriginal people to understand and respect our ways of knowing, learning and behaving. *Mingadhuga Mingayung* creates an opportunity for non-Aboriginal people to see Country and take responsibility for their own actions in the relationship with Mother Earth.

**A closer consideration of the Western dualism and My Story**

“At the beginning, before Daruma, the Great Spirit, created Tunku and Ngardi, there was only oneness” (Umbarra video, 1996, cited in Rose, James, & Watson, 2003, p. 41). Yuin knowing is instilled in oneness, where everything is connected. The Western dualism placed on Yuin Country by the coloniser separates being into a hierarchical opposition, resulting in a Westernised manifestation of culture that creates a way of being in the world premised on separation. This dualism has the effect of corolling the patterns of connections in Yuin culture into a hierarchy of male-dominated order. Western dualism is colonisation of the spirit in action through separation, as it places Country, in which I am, as subservient but connected to Western intellectualised culture. The Western dualism replaces Country with nature in
a negative and subjugated sphere. The Western cultural worldview that cannot see or hear Country in oneness of spirit estranges the relationship with the self as Country. The following quote from Plumwood (2002a), is used to assist the reader in unpacking the consequences and the cultural blindness of the dominant Western dualism through an examination of the relationship between the human self, nature and Country as self. “Human/nature dualism ... is a system of ideas that takes a radically separated reason to be the essential characteristic of humans and situates human life outside and above an inferiorised and manipulable nature” (p. 4).

The dualistic binary system placed on Yuin Country is a ‘legacy’ from the ‘Western Enlightenment and progression’ that imposes unequal and disconnecting relations. This foreign dualism has successfully and unsuccessfully attempted, and still attempts, to disrupt the relationship between Umbarra the Black Duck (Yuin Nation ‘totem’) and its people, generating deception and disconnections in relationships. Western notions of dualism place culture/nature in a binary relationship to manoeuvre Mother Earth (Country) as subordinate to Western male culture, logic and reasoning. This imperialist/industrial creation of being ‘man’ separate from nature as a ‘cultural reality’ is explored by Emmanuel Levinas (2006) in relation to the Western progression away from self:

Culture can, first, be interpreted—and this is the privileged dimension of the Greco-Roman West (and its possibility of universalization) — as an intention to remove the otherness of Nature, which, alien and previous, surprises and strikes the immediate identity that is the Same of the human self (p. 155).

The removal and replacement of Country by nature is a problem inherent in the foreign dualism. The hierarchical dualistic binaries of unequal relationships position and privilege Western males through the detachment of their inherent connections in male/female, culture/nature, reason/emotion, Sun/Moon and European/Aboriginal relations. These male relations of power organise what counts as knowledge to specify what is of value in culture to mistreat, and what to honour. From an ecofeminist position, Plumwood (2002) states: “The colonising task is to make the land accommodate to us rather than we to it, leading to the rejection of
communicative and negotiated ecological relationships of mutual adaptation in favour of one-way relationships of self-imposition” (p.18). Plumwood’s quote, provides a stepping-stone to examine the cultural invasion of Yuin Country that suppressed Yuin knowing, learning and behaving. This cultural ‘invasionist’ reality for Yuin people was the imposed implementation of the Western dualistic thinking and disconnecting action of being and behaviour. The Western dualistic thinking places our Yuin culture as oppositional and ‘othered’, and consequently manipulated Yuin relationships into a competing cultural authority to the ‘dominant’ invading culture. This provided the false justification of implanting a foreign self-fulfilling culture with a perpetual purpose of cultural removal and replacement of the Yuin cultural relationship to oneness. While this has been a dominant influence, as Yuin culture still exists, how cultural invasion is understood and its effects have to be questioned.

Paulo Freire (2000), writing on cultural invasion, provides an opening for discussing the Western cultural semantics of language in understanding the experiences of invasion to expand upon dualistic realities/unrealities. Freire (2000) states:

Cultural invasion is on the one hand an instrument of domination, and on the other, the result of domination. Thus, cultural action of a dominating character (like other forms of antidialogical action), in addition to being deliberate and planned, is in another sense simply a product of oppressive reality (p. 154).

Although the cultural invasion of Yuin Country occurred it did not remove the reality of oneness in the spirit world. However, the Yuin people’s understanding of the spiritual world has been informed (and may continue to be) by the colonial duality and subsequently corrupted by the English language. The invasion is an oppressive reality in the human realm, and in the spiritual world as well, as the invaders removed Aboriginal people from Country by treating us like a ‘selfish miner’s’ concept of Country. However, although some Yuin people were oppressed by this white reality,

\[3\] This analogy emphasises that Country is deeply spiritual and includes all entities that make up Country. No entity is devoid of spirit and therefore everything is living including what miners take from the ground. It is like taking out your own liver when you remove iron ore.
it does not mean that the Yuin reality of our Yuin dualism of ‘two in oneness’ was totally suppressed.

If the reality (of invasion) occurred only in memory, then the oppressed can connect or reconnect to self. This accentuates the Yuin cultural mindset to maintain a non-oppressed worldview. The disconnecting pain caused by oppression can deepen ‘belonging in responsibility’. The ‘being oppressed, but not’ provides the opportunity for taking care of self (which also means the responsibility of taking care of Country in the pre- and post-invasion reality). English language with the spirit of Country can be intentionally incorporated in Mingadhuga Mingayung to reculturate non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people as self into Country to be human. The Yuin reality of culture can exist without the spoken/written (English) language as the real communication of Yuin culture is done in silence. In Mingadhuga Mingayung, the colonial cultural invasion that includes the English language reality is reduced by the sharing of stories in our cultural framework. Country/Yuin culture does not need English to exist; it can ‘read’ memory, emotion and the behaviour of the body and spirit. Western dualism, based solely on the human interaction of intellect, in communication via spoken and written language and depending on a hierarchical power relationship, is oppressive and blocks spiritual exchanges.

Significantly, through the above approach it is possible for the oppressed/oppressor reality to be taken back to the self in spirit, thereby placing the human self back into Country by recognising Country as self. This dance with the song of Country stomps out the corruption in spirit. Stepping out of the duality of oppressor/oppressed into a Country-centred reality would mean that the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal reality of invasion that does not exist, but does, is to be forgiven; for healing self. This issue of the oppressor is taken up by Freire (2000), who points out the experience of the oppressor and oppressed:

To renounce invasion would mean ending their dual status as dominated and dominators. It would mean abandoning all the myths which nourish invasion, and starting to incarnate dialogical action. For this very reason, it would mean to cease being over or inside (as foreigners) in order to be with (as comrades). And so the fear of freedom takes hold of these men. During
this traumatic process, they naturally tend to rationalize their fear with a series of evasions (p. 156).

The above quotation is used not to renounce invasion but to take note of its reality in the day-to-day pitfalls and fears of the oppressor and oppressed establishing Yuin relationships. Renunciation and fear may fit in Freire’s duality, but by placing Country as the centrepiece of the reality, the fear would be a fear of looking and being self. If looking at self and being is freedom, then a question can be posed: why rationalise self when you can heal with all participants as self-existing as Country? This is a key point in Mingadhuga Mingayung. Here, the duality reality means that not everyone is ready to heal and enjoy the discomforts that have replaced the reality of being one with Country. To simplify and present this deep knowledge, it can be explained that Yuin people wait by providing stories to share, so that people can make their own decision to find self to reculturalise (rehuman) with Country. This patient and time-attentive approach is taken as the English language in policy is controlled by imperialist law. Mingadhuga Mingayung invites organisations/institutions, where Western cultural awareness exists in policy, and individual people to pull down what can be conceptualised as ‘policy fences’ on Country and work with us to bring the stories back to the surface with parallel stories of healing and Country; this reorients the emphasis towards spirit and not ‘language’.

Mingadhuga Mingayung contributes to the healing of the colonial dualism placed on all peoples and other life forms that have been othered (e.g. birds, rocks, knowledge, Lore, Law and knowing) by male-dominated dualistic thought that exists on and in Yuin Country. ‘Country as Yuin’ and the human as Country are removed and masqueraded in colonising discourses that cannot conceptualise anything beyond Western dualistic terms. Since colonisation, we as Aboriginal people/Country have been examined in theories of difference and separation in academia. A chapter of my story is to share what I am currently ‘seeing’ as understanding Yuin culture when culture is sung and explored in academia.

**Tripartation**

As a starting point to a different approach and process that recognises Yuin ways of
knowing, learning and behaving through a Yuin ‘there are always two’ in connection, rather than the dualism of Western thinking, I am proposing a notion of tripartation. Tripartation offers non-Aboriginal people a place and space for spirit to be revealed within the duality through Yuin stories, so that the self can connect to the stories of Country.

The purpose of tripartation is to reduce the influence of the slash (/) in the Western duality. This is not to dismantle, but rather to bring about a greater focus on the Aboriginal duality of oneness and not separation. While I use tripartation, an ‘English language’ term, to describe an Aboriginal reinstatement viewpoint of duality in between the Western duality and the Yuin ‘there are always two’, it is necessary to note its limitations. The term tripartation does not create three distinct characters to the duality, e.g. woman/Country/man. Country consists of Mother Earth, who gives birth to the human woman and man, with the invisible umbilical cord still remaining to connect them back to her and to each other. Tripartation does not totally describe Yuin meaning(s) and action(s), but it is a word to initiate people’s thinking around its purpose. I have selected the Western word tripartition because it means threefold, and I have adapted the term to demonstrate Country as part of the Aboriginal self and vice versa. This places non-Aboriginal people into our worldview that they too come from Country originally, another place in the world, as all life is born by Mother Earth that is Country.

The Western interpretation of their dualism attempted to remove Country on all levels of being and this included a de-emphasis of the spiritual embodiment of Country. In seeking to avoid such serious omissions, tripartation recognises the slash in the Western dualism but matches and reduces the slash’s power. The paradox is that because tripartation opposes the slash their relationship exists in a duality. Connection, however, can be achieved as the slash is reflected in the two dualisms that exist with its own dualism of slash and tripartation. The third fold is the place of conjunction when the two dualisms parallel and reflect each other with the spirit of Country as its core. The tripartation and slash reflection is at first used to try and explain the spiritual storying concept of Country instead of the focus being totally on intellectual theory, connected to the colonial dualism. Mingadhuga Mingayung places Country as story to demonstrate the slash’s separating influence, while at the same time inviting
Country is most notably absent in current Western cultural awareness practice. This is because although Country may be a part of the cultural awareness training, it does not inform the process. Ngara-Minga: 4

My voice is just as important as any, whether you listen or not is your priority not mine.

Listening and responding to Country is being respectful as Country provides us with everything we need, including knowledge. The Yuin reciprocal responsibility is to take care of Country with ‘our’ knowing. Western cultural awareness does recognise Country on a physical level, but Country as teacher remains limited because of the restriction maintained by Western dualistic theory, policies and commoditised economic influence in which Aboriginal people are allowed to function. Remembering that Country is self and self is Country, Christine Black (2011) provides an example of how Country is restricted on two levels; first by non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people working in the Western system, even though they demonstrate a general awareness of our achievements in society; and secondly, because the ways in which Aboriginal achievements are recognised in Western systems restrict recognition of what is important to (maintaining) Country.

They never say the best and brightest lawyers are the senior law people of the Aboriginal tradition. Nor do they recognize their healers as the brightest in the medical field. The ideal role models for our youth are sportspeople, not Aboriginal people who care for the land and are expert hunters or gatherers with an abundance of ecological knowledge (Black, 2011, p. 352).

Responding to this point, tripartation can be understood as a term that has been created to give recognition to and share the gift from Country: spirit. At the same time, it can point out the continual corrupting nature of Western dualism that masks spirit

4 Ngara-Minga: listening, to really hear Mother.
as Country: tripartation removal. This is because the human intellect has the capacity to disguise spiritual connectedness on all levels of the mind, body and spirit. Against such effects, tripartation in the context of Yuin ways of learning is to place the spirit of Country back into dualistic thinking, with the threefold element forever present.

**Singing up a Story of Pedagogy to Hear Country and Similarities with our Eyes**

In Yuin ways of knowing, learning and behaving we must listen to Minga (Mother) speaking to us without voice so that we can see her story through the wisdom of the Elders. The *Mingadhuga Mingayung* approach is one way in which the legacies of our Ancients are held to maintain culture. Storying is the ‘legacy pedagogy’ that is passed on to the next generations to be ‘held’. As Uncle Max Harrison (personal communication, 2008) describes, ‘I must give it [the stories] away to hold it [the stories]’. The teaching of the correct stories from Country is the responsibility of the holders of the story. Importantly, the beholders to the story have an obligation in the learning process as well, as respect is shown in many varying (culture-specific) forms. The silence while on Country, while listening and viewing the story, provides the depth in meaning, placing the responsibility on the viewers of the story to feel the story. Archibald (2001) discusses an Aboriginal pedagogy as ‘Storywork2’ through her experience with her Canadian First Nations cultural teacher:

> Simon told many of his life experience stories using this method, which is pedagogy. I called this pedagogy Storywork2 because the engagement of story, storyteller, and listener created a synergy for making meaning through the story and making one work to obtain meaning and understanding (p. 1).

Aboriginal ways of learning are sustained by the ‘legacy pedagogy’ that coincides and exists within the stories, and pedagogies such as ‘Storywork2’. The legacy pedagogy, when placed in a written form in academia, only has the potential to take place in the mind of the reader to provide an intellectual interpretive picture. This is where the crux of learning lies or does not lie, for *Mingadhuga Mingayung* is about connecting, respecting and taking care of Country within the whole ‘pedagogy’ of two bodies.
One ‘body’ is the human, the other ‘body’ is the Mother, which means we are one in the same. The connecting scripts in the body of the story are there to see whether the pedagogy is in ‘transcription’. The viewer of the story transcribes with Country the meaning they need at that moment in ‘time’ to help in their own self-healing of connecting to Country and themselves.

The ‘transcription’ to reculturalisation within and outside the self, alongside ‘decolonisation’, is one of the essential aims of the Mingadhuga Mingayung stories. The reinstatement of ‘legacy pedagogy’ in the enhancement of Aboriginal approaches is absolutely necessary to enact tripartation. Transcription and legacy pedagogy are buried deeply and infused throughout the body of Country, and bought to the surface by the stories that are held by the pedagogical story that is the Aboriginal circular platform of connectedness. The bonding agent of ‘belonging in behaviour’ is, through the legacy pedagogy, triggered by Elders of lore through Country’s stories.

Porr and Bell (2012) emphasise the attachment the Ngarinyin have to ‘nature’ by presenting a story from Bell’s partnership with the Elder David Mowaljarlai:

"... the sun is coming up, with that glow that comes straight away in the morning. The colour comes towards me and the day is waiting. You have a feeling in your heart that you’re going to feed your body this day, get more knowledge. You go out now, see animals moving, a tree, a river. You are looking at nature and giving it your full attention ... Your vision has opened you and you start learning now. When you touch them, all things talk to you, give you their Story .... (Mowaljarlai & Malnic, 1993, p. 53, quoted in Porr & Bell, 2012, p. 167)."

In the above quotation, Porr and Bell (2012) demonstrate how Mowaljarlai reveals Ngarinyin ontology, the means by which their epistemology is developed: “He listens to the day, attributes nature with the ability to communicate, and claims living relationship with all elements and processes within his habitat” (Porr & Bell, 2012, p. 168).

Many Aboriginal people live in both ‘worlds’, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal; living
in the tension caused by being in the present and being in the non-Aboriginal context of progressing forwards. Non-Aboriginal people are invited to live vice versa, to live in the now with Country, which is a purpose of Mingadhua Mingayung. Legacy pedagogy applies to every individual as each individual comes from a Country somewhere in the world. The world is full of connecting cultural and human stories that build connections and belonging to Country. The connections derive from where your Ancestors are from, to where you live today and in the future. Country is then pedagogy that takes the form of various non-dialectic stimuli and is deeply spiritual.

Many non-Aboriginal people’s identities are linked to the Country now known as Australia; however, the Western dualism connects them to enjoying the view of ‘Australia’, not seeing Country as placing them into identity. In Yuin ways of knowing, learning and behaving, you are placed by Country into the networks of reciprocal relationships. Birrell (2006), after years of learning from Yuin Country, states that having come “From a place of disembeddedness and disembodiment, my journey has moved into embeddedness and embodiment” (p. 286). Learning to ‘see and feel’ Yuin Country through Country’s stories, Birrell, by working with Aboriginal Elders, disrupted the colonial dualism. This connects to the point made by Uncle Max, that “to get people to learn and to understand is to look at the similarities, and not the differences. All the similarities are there in all the cultural Stories - it is global, there are similarities globally” (Uncle Max Harrison, quoted in Birrell, 2006, p. 111, and personal communication, 2011). In this way, the binary concept that holds polarity together can be decolonised by adding the third and life-giving essence of Spirit. As spirit exists in Country, is Country, we have to listen and see how this can ‘transpire’ in the human world.

The polarity of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples is connected or relational if you examine and listen to Mother Earth. People may experience learning from Country differently, but the knowledge is from the same ‘womb’. For example, a small stem has polarity; the end that is closer to the ground will form the base and take root, while at the other end, it will shoot. Both ends are as important as each other to maintain life itself and everything else as the stem is ‘inspirited’ into oneness. Shifting the focus on to similarities, with difference being examined through a relational discourse, will enhance the reculturalisation of the Yuin dualism. This will
contribute to the decolonisation of the Western dualisms nailed on Yuin Country. Enhancing the planting of ‘progress into the reconnection’ of Country will limit the corruption of the segmentation force of difference, to help us see tripartation.

The Legacy Pedagogy and Tripartation Relationship Strands of Mind, Body and Spirit in One

The following description of the legacy pedagogy correlates with the identity of tripartation and the story of paralleling together. In the account below, a number of scientific metaphors in relation to living cells are used to demonstrate the holistic story of legacy pedagogy synonymous with Mingadhuga Mingayung. This explanation of the Mingadhuga Mingayung tripartation script via a three-stranded helix will assist in solidifying how points of cultural intersection can accrete into relatedness with each other. Equally, the application of the Yuin cultural context in understanding the ‘weaving’ of the three strands into the helix in legacy pedagogy is another fundamental feature of this explanation.

The sharing of our lineage of legacies is the first strand, represented by what I call the mitochondrial aspect of the ‘Minga’ helix. The stories and pedagogy of the Ancients provide the energy of the Mingadhuga Mingayung approach. Mitochondria have a travelling folding circular makeup, as well as the stories and pedagogies that produce a ‘usable’ energy for the human ‘cell’. Furthermore, taking care of Country, teaching and belonging in behaviour through narrative all coagulate together to formulate the first strand; this is a very personal matter for my Ancestors and me. Aboriginal people find it difficult to remove the emotional and spiritual elements in human research or storying, as Lee Maracle shares: “It takes a lot of work to delete the emotional and passionate self from Story, to de-humanize Story into ‘theory’. So we don’t do it. We humanize theory by fusing humanity’s need for common direction-theory-with Story” (quoted in Pulpan & Rumbolt, 2008, p. 214).

The second strand (ribosome) is the narrative of connections, the ribosome strand that assembles Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stories. The second strand contains binding sites, so connecting sections to stories can aggregate. As Somers states, “Storytelling or narratives are a non-linear phenomenon, and can be seen as “networks of patterned
relationships connected and configured over time and space” (Somers, 1999, quoted in Lloyd, Suchet-Pearson, Wright, & Burarrwanga, 2010, p. 712). The viewer/listener connects to the stories in their own way, delving into their own story of correlation, in relationship to the story being told. The connecting narratives create a function to build a structure of connections/binding sites to the Mother.

This strand also holds the soma or is the body that contains the ribosomes that acts to transverse and translate stories at the connection sites of attachment. The narrative approach holds and locates Ancestors in the centre of the process, with the Ancients being integral in attempting to generate, express and interpret meaning in a cross-cultural context. Identifying conjunction points for meaning to occur is through revealing stories that all people hold within their being. The stories are within the body, “Our memories are held in our hearts” (Harrison 2012, personal communication) and not in our mind. It is the similarities within the story identified within each person’s heart that attach to the points of relatedness, not necessarily the intellectual memory. Celia Oyler’s (2001) review of Sewall’s (1998) work on narrative describes how “the power of Story is to join people in space, time, identity, and role” (p. 79). It is important to note that a holistic examination is required with the term ‘joining’, to include all the entities that make up and are Country (rain, rocks, rivers, ridges and so on).

The third line to the helix is the non-Aboriginal strand including colonisation and importantly its acceptance from an Aboriginal standpoint, as it all contributes to the holism and oneness approach. Colonisation has happened, is happening and is part of the story. The third strand has a role in a biological fission, where it can replicate a story of Country within their own spirit body to build non-Aboriginal people’s capacity to have a respectful relationship with Country. The key action is within the Western body, not just the intellect, accepting the continuous replicated Yuin stories from a Mother into their own cell of understanding; accepting the side-by-side circular elements of similarities rather than maintaining the focus on the colonised story of difference. The three strands interweave along the storyline to hold each strand together in conjoining facets of connection so that it can all come together. Each strand safeguards the others to place (Country), in the enactment of the replication in the legacies of the Ancestors. The Ancestors’ legacies of this Country
and the ‘others’” Countries, through people’s own stories of embodiment and experiences, contribute to the three-stranded helix.

The third strand is instilled with the healing of spirit, acceptance and forgiveness, and it also involves Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. As Uncle Max states, “it’s a pretty big call to forgive ... Forgiveness is for your healing. It’s your self-healing, it’s got nothing to do with the person that has probably done wrong” (Harrison & McConchie, 2009, p. 151). Forgiveness has a major role in human survival and the survival of the places where we live. ‘I want to keep surviving so that I can embrace a lot of our culture and a lot of our knowledge’ (Harrison & McConchie, 2009, p. 156).

The acceptance of knowing in forgiveness from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people opens the spiritual door for the connecting cultural traits that exist. This strand enhances the cultural connections to come to the fore and replicate a ‘place’ with the Mother through the stories of where you stand. This strand, interweaving with the other strands, crafts accepting footholds so that ancestral bridges can be constructed and crossed. The legacy pedagogy is then allowed to ‘kick in’ through other processes that coincide with and in the stories. The affirmation of the non-dialectal learning is bought to the surface with a dialectical influence through the sharing of the learning to each other through creative structures and yarns.

The essence of time in building the relationship is substantial; this is because the relationship may not form in a person’s lifetime in human form. This has to be accepted just as the Yuin stories must be accepted; contributing to the search for conjunctions in stories. Congruently, the placement of the Yuin cultural Aboriginal voice into a position of value will inspire indirectly or directly a reculturalisation of knowing. This demands a non-Aboriginal spiritual reshifting back to their Ancients in connection to ours in order to balance the imposed colonial chronological stories wrapped over Country. This requires all people to look at the self when their Ancestors lived with the land in reliance on, not rebelliousness to their own Mother. This process accentuates the valuing of Yuin stories. As Craig Somerville, Kirra Somerville, and Frances Wyld (2010) state, “in using narrative we can move beyond simply telling stories of hardship we can move into a space where Indigenous knowledges are valued” (p. 100). By using a continued privileging of our Yuin voices as both communication and strength, we find a niche that can be shared by others who
know how to be in our space.

Not everybody is prepared or ready to walk on Country to watch, listen and see the stories laid out. Importantly, the underlying currents of spirit from Yuin stories are flowing and at times spilling out on to the ‘economic flood plains’. This is paramount to plant seeds of ‘belonging behaviour’ with the Mother to move, immerse and ‘cleanse’ mindsets of cultural chasms to enable connections. The challenges to the enablement are anger, mistrust, ego, greed, religion and power, all of which are very hard surfaces to infiltrate for healing and acceptance to take place. Therefore, patience is how we encourage people to the cleansing ceremony and the initiating step into awareness and understanding of tripartation. Patience is a place where the mindset is prepared for spiritual adjustment to allow for conjunction points to take root in the body. From patience, the listeners and tellers of the stories find stories that parallel and amalgamate. These stories are then shared and cared for to inform respectful relationships in partnerships. This can produce emotional pinpoints of connectivity in subjective experiences, and these, when formed, can encourage the examination of similarities in cultural stories. *Mingadhuga Mingayung* stimulates responsibilities of tripartation in respectful relationship within the human body and spirit to Country, and Country to itself (human) through a story. This is the completion of a circular journey of a story, started and continued by Country, that goes all the way around with ‘others’ to finish (another starting point) with a connection of oneness to the same story so it is held by Country.

**Mingadhuga Mingayung**

Seeing Country teaches people how to hear with their eyes and to be ‘regenerative learners’. Seeing the ‘now’ is important because we can learn to ‘know’ what has happened, what is happening in the living present and what will occur. While the Western dualistic framework tends to separate, for Yuin people the past, present and future are all the same thing. As Kwaymullina (2005) states, “This Country is a living Story... In the learning borne of Country is the light that nourishes the world; and if Country and the world is to be helped now, it is this light that must shine the way home” (quoted in Grieves, 2009, p. 31). Grandfather Sun provides the light for the nourishment of Yuin Country to show people how to heal the Western ‘progressive’
thought that has disrupted our sight. ‘Decolonising’ and reculturalising Western ‘progressive thought’ (human/male centred) through listening to Mother Earth has the potential to liberate people from colonial intrusions on Aboriginal knowledge, ways of knowing and learning. As Battiste (2002) argues:

Knowledge teaches people how to be responsible for their own lives, develops their sense of relationships to others, and helps them model competent and respectful behaviour. Traditions, ceremonies, and daily observations are all integral parts of the learning process. They are spirit-connecting processes that enable gifts, visions, and spirits to emerge in each person (p. 14–15).

*Mingadhuga Mingayung* is how I hold my understandings of the teachings from Country in regard to sharing culture and heritage (with permission from Uncle Max). *Mingadhuga Mingayung* is saturated by the Ancients’ legacy of Yuin Country that respects the Ancients. This has informed Yuin ways of learning over thousands of years: watching, listening and seeing. *Mingadhuga Mingayung* guides non-Aboriginal people’s understanding of the Yuin Ancients’ teachings through Country that is at the core of existence in oneness.

It is important not to separate the Ancients from the *Mingadhuga Mingayung* approach, pedagogy, process, outcome(s) and the individuals involved, as they are all connected to Country *Mingadhuga Mingayung* is the story, place and space where the Yuin Elders and story holders knowingly share the gifts of Gulaga (*Mingadhuga Mingayung*: one in the same). Imperatively, the particular part of Country in which the teachings takes place is the ‘source’ of the story/knowledge and is the principal teacher. Country is a communicative current that can transmit Yuin ways of knowing and learning to non-Aboriginal people who have an open mind (space). The participants engaged in Yuin knowing, learning and behaving processes are guided by Elders of Country to enhance the possibility of feeling and seeing the stories and spirit of Yuin Country. A purpose of the stories is to initiate a reciprocal respectful relationship in taking care of Country, including the spirit of Country into what we do in our daily lives in the capacity of who we are. The approach is not about ‘making’ non-Aboriginal people Aboriginal; it is a process of providing a guiding platform so
that a respectful (which must include reciprocity) relationship with Country occurs in tripartation. It is imperative to note that tripartation is not a duality of difference but a flow of connectivity. A function of tripartation for non-Aboriginal people is to find connections, like any relationship, through their own entwined journey in what Country requires in a respectful and spiritual reciprocal relationship.

Country will share particular stories with unseen and seen energies to activate sight and learning, triggering within the non-Aboriginal person reciprocated stories of connection for learning to occur in respectful relationship. This relationship finds paralleling similarities from one another’s stories in relationship with Country being Mother Earth, Father Sky, Grandmother Moon and Grandfather Sun. There are many similarities in how cultures view these principal family members, and this is how we initiate, reveal and show tripartation. You learn from your mother, father, grandmother and grandfather about what is important. For this reason, while on Yuin Country (home), and after learning stories on and about Yuin Country (as in any relationship), you value and respect Yuin Country, not another Country’s (home) perspective.

To engage with/in Mingadhuga Mingayung is the choice of non-Aboriginal people and the start of respectful relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. These respectful relationships are fostered by seeking and being invited by Elders to respect Country and being/becoming a community member in the family of Country. Significantly, it is not constituted by an organisation meeting Western policy requirements. Mingadhuga Mingayung is non-Aboriginal people being taught by Country to understand and behave through the weave of their own stories that they hold within themselves to connect to Country and, in turn, to self. Mingadhuga Mingayung replaces the Western duality slash (to parallel) to demonstrate knowing Country as self and self as Country; then respect, responsibilities, reciprocity and relationships will develop if Country is at the core of decisions made in respectful relationships. Aboriginal cultural knowing, learning and behaving in our way of ‘there are always two in existence’ act in parallel to find conjunction points (the third connecting fold of tripartation) to reduce the damaging influence of the colonial dualisms that have been forced upon Yuin Country.
Conclusion

The colonisation of Country is the colonisation of self, therefore reculturalisation and decolonisation is a process for everyone, and thus everyone can participate. The necessary relationships have to be with non-Aboriginal people, as non-Aboriginal people/organisations/institutions are instrumental in the maintenance of the Western duality. Tripartation provides a place and space for spirit to shine within the duality through Yuin stories, so self can connect to the stories of Country. The challenges and tensions of tripartation are shifting the emphasis and absolute reliance on Western theory, so that stories of Country can sit alongside and parallel with each other to help in the protection of the Mother. The Western cultural observation lens portrays each ‘other’ as different; this must be refocused to a lens of similarities, with difference maintaining a relationship of learning in connection with the Mother.

How we as Aboriginal people voice our culture is how we show respect to the Mother that provides our voice. From my Aboriginal standpoint, enhancing the capacity for Mother Earth’s own voice to be heard by Australian organisations/institutions goes beyond Western cultural awareness. It is individuals forming respectful relationships with the Country and its people. If non-Aboriginal people start thinking about what a relationship with Country ‘looks’ like, Mingadhuga Mingayung will guide their sight to listen to Mother’s voice. The most important initial step for Country (us) is non-Aboriginal people moving outside the Western dualistic mindset with an open mind to form a relationship with Country and Aboriginal people as Country. These steps into an unknown space of knowing create an opportunity for the foundation of a ‘counterpoise’ (two-way approach to ‘closing the gap’) approach to identify a ‘meeting place’ (a place for meetings and meeting place itself) away from the human focus over time. Mingadhuga Mingayung, from my position, is, in its simplest form: a ‘Country’ locus where Aboriginal people provide opportunities for non-Aboriginal people to experience and develop their own relationship with Country, thereby creating a three-way relationship with Country connecting the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal human others together within itself.
Chapter Five: Preservice Teachers’ Learning with Yuin Country

Abstract

The ownership of Aboriginal knowledge and the Aboriginal perspective presented in school curriculum is always with Country. A number of preservice teachers were taken to a sacred story, ‘Gulaga a living spiritual Mountain’, to participate in an elective subject to engage in respectful reciprocal relationship with Country. The spirituality of Country is unknown to many preservice teachers, consequently the concept of Country as teacher in a respectful reciprocal relationship was unfamiliar. Engaging in Aboriginal ways of knowing, learning and behaving provides an opportunity for preservice teachers to initiate a relationship with Country to respectfully implement Aboriginal perspectives in their own teaching. This article not only examines how preservice teachers developed a relationship with Country, but also importantly demonstrates how a relationship between Country, researcher, all the participants and the research can inform respectful behaviour in reculturalising Aboriginal perspectives.
A respectful and localised Aboriginal approach to teaching and research

Yuin Country provides an original story to welcome preservice teachers in their learning of a respectful reciprocal relationship with Country. In 2012, a number of Early Years and Primary preservice teachers from the University of Wollongong (UOW) were taken to this story, Gulaga. Gulaga is a living spiritual Mountain that offered a Yuin teaching legacy (gift) through an Aboriginal lecturer working with community members to produce a unique Aboriginal education elective subject, ‘Engaging Koori Kids and their Families’. Gulaga is our Creation Story that holds many of the totems that connect us all. Gulaga is my Mother that provides me with a cultural recharge every time I visit whether, physically, mentally or spiritually. This article will occasionally shift in voice (writing) to help the reader see the personal relatedness, not just to culture but also to the writing in academia to maintain the voice of researcher and Country. The elective subject was designed to engage the preservice teachers in a localised Aboriginal way of knowing, learning and behaving. The Yuin localised approach went beyond the Western colonial educational policy structures imposed on mandatory Aboriginal Education core subjects that are now part of the majority of preservice teacher education programs in NSW. This article explores spiritual connections when preservice teachers are exposed to Yuin ways of knowing, learning and behaving. The term spiritual for the context of this article is not intended in a religious manner. Spirituality from my current Yuin position is an appreciation of everything that is inherent of Country, a connecting energy that provides oneness of being. Therefore, to diminish spiritual damage, the article will focus on the building of spiritual connections between Country and preservice teachers. This differs from an approach and paper concentrating on the preservice teachers that resisted forming spiritual connections or who interpreted Country in terms of colonised aesthetic notions of the beauty of the South Coast of NSW.

Aboriginal approaches to research should be story (spiritual) based and not founded solely on Western theoretical positions (McKnight 2015; Black 2011). Tuhiwai Smith (2012) advocates for important elements of Indigenous research that connect with, and differ from, Western research agendas. She argues the connection is the ‘good’ created for society by Indigenous and Western research agendas. The difference is the
use of specific terminology in Indigenous research, such as healing, decolonisation, spiritual and recovery (Tuhiwai Smith 2012). The research focus in this article is therefore subjective and interconnected because Country, the Aboriginal researcher, all participants, the entirety of the research and the elective subject are relational. Wright, Lloyd, Suchet-Pesrson, Burarrwanga, Tofa and Bawaka Country (2012) describe their research as co-becoming with Bawaka Country as “knowledge generated with humans and nonhumans at, through and with Bawaka. Bawaka is in our stories, and our stories are in Bawaka” (p. 53). Research as story from my localised Aboriginal position derives from Yuin Country, as this is where Aboriginal knowledge production takes place in a oneness of knowing and learning. The holistic Aboriginal approach or oneness relationship to the research, the elective subject and the writing of this article is dynamic: ‘it’ has its own life. Country decentres the human authorship privilege of overseer, creator, controller, implementer and owner to provide opportunities to reimagine and co-create how we think about and practice knowledge (Bawaka Country et al. 2013). The important understanding to be instilled in a respectful reciprocal relationship with Country as teacher and writer with teachers and readers is that the localised Aboriginal Country maintains ownership of the knowledge, approach and process.

The localisation of Aboriginal knowledge and doing is paramount to de-problematise preservice teachers’ interaction with Aboriginal perspectives. The preservice teachers in this study did not learn to teach Aboriginal culture but unearthed their own initial interconnecting spiritual story with Country. Thereby, the preservice teachers re-imagined, felt and produced a spiritual understanding and perspective that demonstrated their relationship with a localised Aboriginal experience with Country as teacher. Many preservice teachers and practising teachers’ understandings of an Aboriginal perspective in relationship with Country are very limited; they cannot see or hear Country. Harrison, N. (2012) states, “there is a sense of frustration among many teachers, given their self-confessed ignorance of Aboriginal people and cultures, over how they could teach Aboriginal perspectives outside the Imaginary figures created for them” (p. 6). Harrison argues that teachers create their own image of what they want Aboriginal people to be, and this is manipulated by the ‘Imaginary figures’ created by the media and Western historical romantic influences. Teachers are caught in Western dualistic thinking of the ‘other’ (non-Aboriginal/Aboriginal) that focuses
on difference. Thereby, the Western strategy to remove the cultural difference in Western education system is the process of assimilation, to create what is a corrupt concept of ‘sameness’. The Yuin ‘there is always two’ in existence examines similarities and connectedness (McKnight 2015) as everything is in oneness. From a Yuin storying standpoint, shared through the Yuin Ancients legacies, everything is born from the Mother (Minga). Everything is therefore connected by birth through varying relationships. The Mingadhuga Mingayung (My Mother Your Mother) approach (McKnight 2015) introduced the preservice teachers to an interrelating relationship, Country as Mother who holds knowledge of interacting relationships. This oneness approach also informs this article, the research and elective subject to find cultural connections through storying. This article emphasises the well-known importance of schools having strong partnerships with Aboriginal people. However, it will extend this partnership to include the ‘other’ extended family members and communities from Country to show how Country can be seen as a teacher in classrooms.

The prominent concept explored in the research and in this article is how a relationship with Country can occur in the same way as a relationship with another person. As Bawaka Country et al. (2013) explore from a Country (Story) and natural resource management theoretical approach:

Humans care for Country as part of Country, not as a separate from it. Acknowledging Bawaka Country as author is part of our responsibility as Country, is part of our caring for Country and caring for ourselves. In caring for Country, humans care for themselves; in caring for humans, Country cares for itself (p. 186).

Country cannot be seen in the same light as ‘the environment’, in which humans place their own meaning of place in labelling the landscape. Country is a living fusion of living entities, including Mother Earth, and like any human she has roles and

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5 McKnight, A. D. (2015). Mingadhuga Mingayung: Respecting Country through Mother Mountain’s stories to share her cultural voice in Western academic structures. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 47*(3), 276–290. See Chapter 4
responsibilities, so that people must ask of a particular Country/place, ‘who are you’? For many people this can be challenging, so removed as it is from their previous engagement with the land, its entities and their Western ways of learning. Thereby, self in this article is the human examining the umbilical cord of connection (McKnight 2015) that connects self (human) to Country (non-human) and Country to self. Bawaka Country et al. (2013) recognise this concept within an Indigenous ontology of ‘co-becoming’, “this is a deeper ontological commitment, to really, really take seriously our existence as part of the world” (p. 188), as we are of and are Country.

From a mandatory Aboriginal Education subject to an elective subject

In 2005, the NSW Minister for Education and Training finally, after many decades of lobbying (Mooney, Hals & Craven 2003), made the decision to mandate Aboriginal Education in all NSW Teacher Education Institutions. This was in response to the many National reports and reviews (Craven, Halse, Marsh, Mooney & Wilson-Miller, 2005; Mellor & Corrigan 2004; McRae et al. 2000; Hughes 1999) that pointed to the need to support preservice teachers in addressing educational disadvantage for Aboriginal students in Australian schools. As Kay Price and Paul Hughes (2009) states in an Australian Federal government paper:

Pre-service teachers have the right to experience a sound education that will equip them to be successful teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (p. v).

The NSW Institute of Teachers’ Mandatory Requirements incorporated this policy shift into requirements for the accreditation of university programs of teacher education (NSWITE 2007). The NSW Institute of Teacher Education (2007) indicates the key elements to be covered within the mandated Aboriginal Education subject:

Teachers need to understand Aboriginal history and its significance for the diversity of Aboriginal cultures and perspectives. Teachers need to demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the specific learning needs of
Indigenous students in rural and urban settings. They need to understand what constitutes racism and anti-racism strategies, policies and legislation and have an awareness of the key stakeholders in Aboriginal education. Teachers need to understand the impact of culture, cultural identity and diversity in schooling, specific culture and language learning needs of Aboriginal students and appropriate teaching strategies (p. 2).

As a result of the NSWITE requirements most universities in NSW included mandatory Aboriginal Education in various subject formats in their primary and secondary teacher education programs. At the UOW, Faculty of Education, a mandatory core subject was developed and instituted in 2009. A central theme throughout the mandatory Aboriginal Education subject was a localised Aboriginal approach where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people work together to shift Western education’s organisational culture. As “each clan and community of Aboriginal people has developed their own special ways of being, knowing, doing things and saying things that are unique to their people and communities” (NSW DET & AECG, 2004, p. 202), it was important that the preservice teachers understood and engaged in the local Aboriginal system to help enhance the future for all students. The majority of the UOW campuses in NSW are situated on Yuin Country that “[e]xtends from the Snowy River in the South to the escarpment of Wollongong, our northern boundary, and then out to the Southern Tablelands” (Harrison, M.D. & McConchie, 2009, p. 15). Yuin Country therefore informs the localised approach for the mandatory Aboriginal Education subject, the elective subject and the research for this article.

Mandatory Aboriginal Education subjects provide a good theoretical venue and introduction into Aboriginal educational academic discourse. However, if the educational benefits derived from Aboriginal Education mandatory subjects are to enrich and be embedded in preservice teachers’ understandings, additional Aboriginal elective subjects are required to enhance opportunities for localised cultural interactions. A constraint of the mandatory core subject at the UOW, and likely for most similar subjects in teacher education programs in Australia, is the large number of enrolments (300 approximately each year). This substantially restricts the concrete personalised experience with Aboriginal community/ies needed to incorporate holistic Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum. The ‘skill set’ for preservice teachers in
relation to Aboriginal education and perspectives needs to be initiated through the whole “process, values, protocols, systems” (Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013, p. 3) of engaging with the Aboriginal Country’s cultural families and communities. If we were to incorporate such an approach into the mandatory subject, the respect protocols that are required and the physical numbers of preservice teachers would place further stress on Aboriginal members from the community who are already overworked in supporting and challenging Western educational institutions and practices. I would argue that a number of processes, protocols and funding procedures need to be implemented to counteract these restrictions, but this is not the purpose of the article.

In 2010 the ‘Engaging Koori Kids and their Families’ elective subject grew out of the 2009 implementation of the University of Wollongong’s mandatory Aboriginal Education core subject. The elective subject was designed to extend the preservice teachers’ knowledge and understandings of Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning to build skills for teaching in and working with Aboriginal children and young people. This was achieved through a partnership with Yuin Country, Elders and the Faculty of Education’s Aboriginal staff members. Due to the more intimate nature of the elective subject, the capacity to apply more intensive Aboriginal pedagogical practice in partnership with the local communities to enhance preservice teachers’ ‘skill sets’ became more achievable.

Reinstating Yuin Country as knowledge holder through storying

‘Engaging Koori Kids and their Families’ ran over second semester in the final year of an Early Years and Primary teacher education program. It included visits to: Gulaga; an Aboriginal Mission; and a local primary school. The field trip provided an opportunity for preservice teachers to meet, engage and learn with Yuin Country. Yuin people’s family and primary carers Mother Earth, Father Sky, Grandmother Moon and Grandfather Sun were introduced and taught within the experience. These communities birthed and raised by the Yuin primary carers had the leading roles in the preservice teachers’ teaching. The communities included human, tree, bird and many other communities of Country that revealed themselves. The principal teacher and major director of the whole elective subject and research was Gulaga, Mother
(Minga) Mountain through a *Mingadhuga Mingayung* (My Mother Your Mother) approach (McKnight 2015).

The preservice teachers that participated in the elective subject experienced first-hand a Yuin Way of knowing, learning and behaving. Gulaga is a culturally significant Mountain and Dreaming for Yuin people on the far South Coast of NSW. Gulaga ‘holds’ the gift of story and with the help of an Elder guided the preservice teachers to understand the three ancient Yuin principles of learning: “Watching, Listening and Seeing” (M.D. Harrison & McConchie, 2009, p. 59). The purpose of the subject was to initiate learning from Country to enhance preservice teachers’ skills, knowledge and understanding in order to place Country central in the process of implementing a holistic Aboriginal perspective.

The preservice teachers were taught to observe and experience Country’s silent Stories of knowing, learning, and behaving. Country was teaching/taught the preservice teachers without voice so they could be ‘learners’, then, in turn, teachers of their own learning journey in the context of Yuin ways of knowing, learning and behaving. The preservice teachers engaged in a relationship of learning with Country to know self in this relationship of becoming a community member of Country.

In 2012, the elective ‘Engaging Koori Kids and their Families’ had 25 enrolments with 8 Early Years and 17 Primary final year preservice teachers. Twenty (7 Early Years and 13 Primary) out of the 25 preservice teachers enrolled in the subject agreed to participate in the study. This cohort included 16 women and 4 men. Permission was granted by the Elders to take the preservice teachers to a number of relevant ‘educational sites’ and to participate in cultural ceremonies. During a 2-day field trip, the preservice teachers visited a school that was recommended by an Elder that worked closely with her and other local Aboriginal community members. The preservice teachers were then taken to an Aboriginal mission and introduced to the Aunties: Elders (representing Mother Earth and Grandmother Moon) who shared their stories of education, culture and importance of respectful community/school partnerships. In addition, the female Elders triggered the emotional aspect of the learning connected to Country. The Aunties introduced the local ‘Community and Country’ literally as in ‘place’, people and spiritually as in the ‘broader’ community
as well, for example, the Mothers of Aboriginal children, the River, the Mountain and the Mission itself.

Aboriginal Men and Fathers who were selected by the Elders to represent Father Sky, prepared the preservice teachers for two public ceremonies and Gulaga. One of the ceremonies was introducing the preservice teachers to Grandfather Sun so they have the potential to see the Stories. The preservice teachers met Gulaga, Mother Mountain and experienced her Stories, families, communities and protocols. The stories were explained by a Grandfather and Yuin Elder Uncle Max Harrison on Gulaga, who further impressed the energy from the stories into/to the preservice teachers, who were open to the teachings. The preservice teachers’ experience was further enhanced and consolidated by exploring the teachings from Country through reflection and extended activities with Country intended to inform classroom practice. Activities back at the university were designed to encourage the preservice teachers’ self-examination. These included the production and presentation of their own stories (gifts) constructed from the experiences via their interpretations of Aboriginal literacies: song, dance, art and storytelling.

Researching an Aboriginal Education elective

A research study was designed around this elective subject, with the explicit aim to investigate the preservice teachers’ learning journey in Aboriginal ways of knowing, learning and behaving. I, as an Aboriginal man, have been immersed in this way of learning and engaged in a ‘reading’ of the data, as I would have ‘read’ the teachings from Country; seeing or reading Country talk without voice (Harrison, M.D. & McConchie 2009). Instead of reading the teachings straight from Country, I observed how Country was working within the preservice teachers’ stories and yarnings. Metaphorically, I examined the trees that were being reflected in the water of a creek, looking at all the connections. The research used a qualitative approach based upon a Yuin Mingadhuga Mingayung storying (McKnight 2015) paradigm that could not be separate from the elective subject or additional methods. UOW Human Research Ethics Committee approval was granted for the research. To protect the consenting participants, their names have been changed to maintain anonymity.
A yarning (Bessarab & Ng’andu 2010) method was also utilised in the elective subject to help the yarning and storying process to be understood and develop as a teaching skill. Developing an understanding of yarning and storying helped the preservice teachers to produce deep and rich data to verify what was happening to their everyday lives in relation to learning from Country. To achieve this, the Aboriginal researcher, together with a paid research assistant who had experienced a cultural visit to Gulaga, conducted pre- and post-elective group yarning discussions and the Aboriginal researcher examined the stories (Tuhiwai Smith 1999) that each preservice teacher told of his or her connection to Country. The preservice teachers’ stories were shared in a group situation before conducting the post elective subject group yarning discussion. A Western thematic analysis was also employed to assist in identifying themes in the data and Mingadhuga Mingayung helped to bring the data into relatedness, with Country as the knowledge holder.

I, as the Aboriginal lecturer and researcher, acted as an observer-participant to guide the learning experience and to observe the preservice teachers’ behaviour in relationship with Country and themselves. As a researcher, I used the preservice teachers’ response to the pre- and post-elective subject group discussion with their stories to see a number of truths within their relationship with Country. As Kwaymullina and Kwaymullina (2010) state, “every story is true, within its own space. It is the physical and metaphysical context of country that shapes all meaning” (p. 202). My own cultural relationship with Country allowed me to explore my connections and similarities to the preservice teachers’ growing relationship with Country. This relationship helped me to identify the nature of the preservice teachers’ understanding, knowledge, and pedagogical skills in relatedness to Country.

**The pre- and post-subject group yarning discussions**

A Yuin Yarning method was employed to maintain Country’s integrity as a cultural practice. It was used to assist in identifying the knowledge that the preservice teachers gained from their experience in the context of the Mingadhuga Mingayung approach. Bessarab and Ng’an’du (2010, cited in Geia, Hayes & Usher 2013) explain ‘yarning’ as an informal and relaxed discussion creating a shared journey through a relationship. As Bessarab and Ng’an’du (2010) state:
One of the challenges for qualitative researchers when listening to stories of lived experience is that the teller decides what parts of their story to tell and which parts to leave out, the researchers’ role is to draw out the parts they are interested in which may not be told and which relate to the research topic (p. 38-39).

To try and overcome this challenge it was important to connect the extension of the story question with Country. This was usually achieved by telling a story in response to a story. This approach can trigger more information to be shared. The pre- and post-group yarning discussions provided the nexus and Aboriginal locus for the research. The yarning method in the elective subject and research continued to move the research dynamic towards Aboriginal reculturalisation of knowledge and research. At the same time it provided data about preservice teachers’ understanding in their shared relationship journey with Country for analysis.

I conducted the interviews with the assistance of a female (Sister⁶) research assistant who, as well as having experience Gulaga, had experienced yarning circles. The yarning approach allowed the research assistant to share her own experience of Gulaga to enhance an open two-way cultural sharing environment during the discussions. The key question asked in the pre- and post-yarning sessions was: “What does the term Country mean to you?” This began a discussion process, which took time to develop as yarning is about settling into each other’s spirit. For example, in the pre-subject interview, the preservice teachers did not really know each other and seemed to find it more difficult to connect on such a deep level so that yarning was limited. As Peter Block (2009) describes: “our isolation occurs because Western culture, our individualistic narrative, the inward attention of our institutions and our professions, and the messages from our media all fragment us” (p. 2). In the post-subject interviews, I observed a more unified group that were more comfortable with each other to share what they felt. Preservice teachers commented after the field trip that they felt like they now belonged to a little class community (McKnight, 6).

⁶ Sister in this context means a non-Aboriginal woman who understands that spirit is not black nor white, it is one in the same.
Observation notes). This was also evident in the length of the preservice teachers’ responses and the greater depth in expressive language to describe what they had learnt.

*Storytelling: Preservice teachers’ Story*

One of the assessment tasks for the elective subject was the construction of a story about the preservice teachers’ experiences and understandings of forming a connection with Country. The story could be presented as either an artwork, written story, poem, song or dance. This task was pivotal to the research as it provided a snapshot of what occurred in the preservice teachers’ learning journey as they thought through what it meant to teach an Aboriginal perspective drawing on Aboriginal pedagogical approaches.

*Analysing the data*

My Aboriginal understanding of Gulaga’s storying allowed me to identify the ways Gulaga’s stories worked as teacher in the preservice teachers’ use of language in their yarnings and storytelling (McKnight 2015). A thematic analysis was also used to work with the ‘Yuinised’ methods to show the patterns of language similarities or themes within the preservice teachers’ stories and yarning discussion responses.

*The preservice teachers’ learning journey*

The analysis of the preservice teachers’ storying identified three key points. Firstly, the analysis of the data identified a clear shift in the preservice teachers’ use of language in their knowing and appreciation of Yuin Country. Second, the analysis demonstrated how Country was active through the sharing dynamic to produce intertwining cyclical relationships. The third key point focused on the shift from telling a story, to the teaching skill of respectfully sharing a gift of knowledge in relationship with Country.

*Recognising and appreciating Country*

The preservice teachers’ answers, in the pre-elective subject focus group discussion, to the initial question, “What does the term Country mean to you?” indicated that the UOW core Aboriginal Education subject completed the previous year had influenced
their responses. The preservice teachers’ wording in the following quotes reflects an interpretation of my teaching about Country as connection and relationship to the land.

Connection that you have with a place. (Sharon)

When I think about it. I think about surrounding areas, the nature and surrounding, that is my first thought that came to mind. (Meg)

A place of significance and your connections with it and what you make of it. (Kylie)

Two other preservice teachers signposted a spiritual element to Country that encompasses everything, with the use of the terms ‘guess’ and ‘think’ indicating a tentative understanding. An individualised response was also represented by the use of the words, ‘I’ and ‘you’.

I guess there is like heaps of different ways you can go, you can look at it in terms of the score, in terms of like spiritual. So in the spiritual sense I guess it would mean, you feel that you belong. (Fred)

I always think of it being everywhere. It is everywhere not a specific place or area necessarily. (Pat)

Country is described objectively via a taught definition and the participants’ language suggests their understanding does not include an emotional or personal connection. This analysis, however, points to apparent deficiencies when there is another possible interpretation. In conversation with me following the pre-subject discussion, the research assistant observed, the preservice teachers seemed very open to learning more and appeared not to want to be disrespectful in their answers. This behaviour from an Aboriginal standpoint demonstrates the respectful behaviour required so that gifts of emotional learning can be shared in a two way process. The above answers to the initial question suggest a well-intentioned intellectual and un-emotive viewpoint. In addition, none of the comments included any language to indicate their own relationship with Country. From my observations of the first yarning interview, the
responses appeared to be a more formal and a natural nervousness to being interviewed. The answers were brief, restrained and individualised statements of their own understanding, not a shared conversation that grows from yarning. The newness of the group to each other was also likely to have been a factor in restricting yarning; understandably they ‘stayed’ within their own safe and known Western understanding of an interview and how the system works in separation or deficiencies.

The post-subject discussion responses to the question about the meaning of Country provided evidence of the preservice teachers’ journey in the context of the Mingadhuwa Mingayung story. Their talk was more descriptive and inclusive of Country, rather than defining Country. The sharing of a gift of knowledge from Country shifted the analysis as well to find connections and the preservice teachers gifts of sharing emotional learning. At this stage, the preservice teachers were well rehearsed in how yarning operated and seemed much more relaxed and open. The quotes below reflect this shift in their relationship with Country in relation to self. The language utilised was more personal, inclusive, and emotional.

Everybody has a different connection, I think we saw through our [xxx] session they [others’ responses] were all very very different. We were connected to the land for different reasons. (Clair)

Listening for its messages and the way it talks to you and communicates with you, it can be really subtle, it can be a smack in your face but it tells stories to help you understand what is happening or help you calm down or refocus, it is all about looking after and listening to it. It energises me as much as I energise it. (Meg)

The preservice teachers were more definite in their language and ‘we’ replaced ‘I’ in a number of the responses. The gift from Country and the gift of responding back to Country are significant, as John McKnight and Peter Block (2010) state, “as we share gifts, all kinds of new connections and relationships are created” (p. 123). The language in response to the gift from Country seemed to be more about relationships and connections. The last comment indicated recognition that the relationship goes even further, with Country being a communicator and healer with the spiritual
element being reinforced with the term ‘energies’. Furthermore, the use of the term ‘we’ indicates a sense of togetherness between the participating group and the ‘we’ as in Country and Self. This sense of ‘we’ was evident from the individual stories, yarning discussion and observations by the researchers that the group had also established strong connections with each other. I also observed a sense of warmness in the preservice teachers’ voices and body language when talking about Country that was not there in the pre-elective interviews.

The following statement clearly demonstrates another dimension to the preservice teachers’ relationship with Country as that of teacher.

I think it is something that teaches us, we learn a lot from Country, it has a lot of lessons it holds and imparts onto us. (Gabby, emphasis added)

Furthermore, the importance of ‘listening’ for Country as teacher, and being in a relationship for this to occur was recognised. For example, as Mel explained,

It is always changing, always different stories and if you are in tune or even open, your eyes can see it, it is clear as day. (Mel)

Hidden within the above comments is Country’s voice and how it was sharing knowledge within the individuals through their own expressions of meaning with terms such as ‘in tune’. As Bawaka Country et al. (2013) point out this is a process, which involves “sharing understood in a relational and more-than-human way” (p. 186). The terminology used by the preservice teachers in the post-elective yarning interviews indicates that some of the preservice teachers had started to understand how Country utilises varying unseen and seen energies to communicate. In these interviews, yarning occurred more extensively, and the sharing of knowledge and understanding of their relationships with the Mother was strengthened through each other’s story.

While this recognition of Country and shifts in relationship are beginning steps to Yuin ways of learning, nonetheless I argue the post-elective yarning discussion comments convincingly demonstrate the preservice teacher’s positive and emotional
engagement with Country. Their comments clearly confirm that the preservice teachers listened to the Elders, the Aboriginal lecturer, and ‘community members’ with an open mind to the ancient pedagogy in action of watching, listening and seeing.

Sharing connections to Country

The analysis of the preservice teachers’ stories reinforced the influence *Mingadhuga Mingayung* had on their understanding of a respectful relationship. The atmosphere of the story presentations was ‘electric’ as the preservice teachers shared and listened to each other’s stories. The laughter, the applauding and the positive appreciation displayed in the room demonstrated how the group had connected through Country’s teachings. At the same time, the sharing of their stories was a reciprocation of the teachings through storytelling as they creatively expressed their connective/ed relationship with Country. Storytelling through Yuin Country stories is an important pedagogy that personalises learning and respect. In the quote below, this is described by Dhängal in the context of Yulŋu Country (2008):

> I’d teach students to really know about themselves, who they are, to see things which are good about that’s within themselves, to know who each person really is, and what they can achieve from the teachings from the Yolŋu perspective… (quoted in Guyula et al., 2010, p. 74).

While the preservice teachers were learning about Country, they were at the same time initiating an examination of self as part of Country, through their reflective stories. The term ‘connection’ was prominent throughout the preservice teachers’ explanations of their story with Yuin Country and in their post-subject interview.

> I didn’t realise I had a special connection to a place. (Sharon post-elective subject interview)

> I found that my connection to Country by opening up to the fact that Country was trying to connect to me, that I realised that it works both ways. (Greg post-elective subject interview)
The preservice teachers recognised a connection through Country’s teachings, with self, through a particular landscape, as a surprising fact. Sharon’s use of the term ‘realised’ suggests two significant findings: first, that the relationship had already been initiated by Country and she was the one not knowing; second, that her relationship with Country was real and tangible. Comments made during the preservice teachers’ story presentations reinforced the importance of observing the connections with the community members as real, for example, birds as a purposeful teaching and learning method.

So when I am out bush I now acknowledge birds and see encounters with them, situations to be interpreted not just coincidences. (Fred)

It is through the subject that I started to look at Country and not only look at the physical side but look at my feelings and what it meant to me. (Mel)

These comments further emphasise the preservice teachers’ accomplishment in understanding the teachings from and learning with Country are not just on a physical level, it is emotional as well. The preservice teachers observed Country talking to them, but just as important the preservice teachers recognised that Country observes them as they communicate with Country. The sharing of the stories as a gift emphasised the reality of the experience, simultaneously establishing the pedagogy of observation to embed a relationship with Country and with each other.

*Teaching through Story and Spirit*

The majority of the preservice teachers’ chose to present their story via an artwork with a descriptive oral story. The other choices included two songs and a narrative. In the preservice teachers’ stories, there were a number of similarities that indicated deeper connections with the Yuin stories from *Mingadhuga Mingayung*. For example, the stories identified mutual community teachers, such as trees or birds that impacted on their learning journey. During the individual story presentations, a number of the preservice teachers identified with the trees on Gulaga and, in turn, their stories connected the trees to their day-to-day lives. The trees were revealed to be very significant:
When I climbed the Mountain I seemed to get an obsession with trees.

(Pam)

While Greg wrote a song about his relationship with the trees formed from his experience:

…Who am I to dig at you, without permission?
How they do I’ll never understand,
Cause your a tree and I’m a fan,
Your a tree and I’m a man.
I breathe out,
You take in.
I breathe in what you’ve given… (Greg)

The sharing of the stories taught the whole group how Greg and Pam felt about the reciprocal relationship that exists with the trees. The declaration of the relationship or writing a song indicated the importance of the tree that reciprocates the relationship, just as people do with each other. Importantly, Greg displayed the skills of respect, caring, and sharing of a story that must be shown to their teacher, the tree/trees. The respect is reciprocated as a teaching skill and part of the non-Aboriginal contribution to the Aboriginal perspective. The sharing through the mind and the embodiment of the tree demonstrated to the group the spiritual connection. The respectful relationship is not a separation because “I breathe out, You take in. I breathe in what you’ve given” (Greg). The song shows the bond of importance as it uncovered an emotional element in which songs can only do. For example, it placed a spiritual element to the scientific relationship of the human and the tree exchanging gases for each other’s survival. Greg can then use this story in song as a teaching skill from Country about the tree into the classroom, by providing respect to Country (including Aboriginal people) as custodians of the pedagogy and knowledge. Just as a preservice teacher should behave respectfully while working with Aboriginal people, as a community member, the tree should also be respected as a holder of knowledge from Country.
To further illustrate the respect skill of teaching with Country, Fred’s story shows another strong community connection with clear teachings from Budjarn (birds). Fred expressed his learning experience through a written story on the Black Cockatoo.

Upon returning to the safety of his home the man reflects on what just happened. It occurred to him that the Black Cockatoo was a guiding force, a powerful animal that guided him home. What amazed him is that they disappeared when he tried to capture them. He realised that in trying so hard to capture and remember the experience itself he is not really experiencing anything at all. By opening up to the connection that Country was trying to make with him, Country helped him.

This story points to how Fred recognised the spiritual connectedness in relationship, by not trying to control the situation through a ‘photo’ (capture) to implant his own ‘different’ Story. The Story was already being told if open-mindedness was accepted by the human participant. The subtle shift away from dualistic thinking challenged but changed the experience for Fred, who has the potential now to utilise this approach in his teaching within the classroom. As this discussion demonstrates, the preservice teachers who participated in this subject can model what they have learnt through their story to describe self in relation to Country through the family and community members’ knowledge. The pedagogical journey is now in the hands, hearts and minds of the preservice teachers in connection with Country through a reciprocal respectful relationship.

**Discussion and Conclusion: Teaching with a connected heart**

This article has described an Aboriginal elective subject for preservice teachers that goes beyond the mandatory Aboriginal Education course requirements. The subject, ‘Engaging Koori Kids and Their Families’, expanded the preservice students’ intellectual insight to a more relational and emotive understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning. The main intention of the elective subject was for the preservice teachers to experience a respectful relationship in order to learn from Country. The avenue into Country was with Mother Mountain, Gulaga. Gulaga was the central entity that informed the elective subject, the research approach
Mingadhuga Mingayung (McKnight 2015), this article’s findings and future research explorations. The elective demonstrated how teachers could implement and contribute to a holistic localised Aboriginal perspective originating from Country. This will enhance their capacity to be successful and skilful educators in Aboriginal Education. From a Yulŋu position teaching with Country, Yinya a Yulŋu teacher states it is “different to the education you get in the classrooms because the classrooms don’t talk to you” (cited in Guyula et al., 2010, p. 71). The aim is that preservice teachers take their story learnt from Country from outside the classroom into the classroom. Each preservice teacher then has the skills to work with a range of Aboriginal community members to take their school students outside the classroom to see the relatedness of Country. As Kwaymullina and Kwaymullina (2010) state: “Nothing exists in isolation. All life and everything is alive in an Aboriginal worldview - exists in relationship to everything else” (p. 196). Preservice teachers placing themselves in a respectful relationship by sharing their experience of relationship with Country is crucial to the living relationship within Western education. The preservice teachers were able to tell a personal story to contribute to the demands of a holistic Aboriginal perspective that is not just about content (Yunkaporta & McGinty 2009). More importantly, they were able to share the relationship that is central in the process, protocols, and approach to teaching Aboriginal perspectives to learn about self. Respect and working with the Aboriginal communities are the key elements of the relationship that ‘permits’ the preservice teachers to invoke the Aboriginal way of knowing and learning with Country.

The inceptive relationship within the subject through the Mingadhuga Mingayung approach (McKnight 2015) has the potential to disrupt cultural barriers of communication and understanding. The research described in this paper has demonstrated how preservice teachers expressed and welcomed the ancient time-honoured skill from Country and engaged in respectful reciprocal relationships to communicate with Country. Furthermore, the research emphasises the imperative of centring Aboriginal Country in the Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal tripartation (McKnight 2015) to enhance effective Aboriginal community, school and teacher partnerships.

The matter of gender needs to be considered in more detail in this story as it is a way to deepen the understanding of Country and community partnerships. Country, like
people is gendered and how gender is observed today, is crucial in the reculturalisation of people with Country. While the question of understanding how gender was colonised is important to investigate, this was not a focus of the study. As such it is not explored in detail in this article, but rather some key considerations are briefly explained to help the reader contextualise how gender can potentially be reculturalised.

The Mountain, Gulaga is female as she birthed the first Yuin people; this does not mean the Mountain is a woman’s Mountain only. The story Gulaga holds is the Yuin Creation Story that involves both females and males. The colonised corruption of gendered understandings is how Country has been colonised further on a gendered level. As a male, I am also female as I come from the Mother; just as a woman is born of the Mother she is also male in her creation. The part of the experience that is influenced by gendered energy is how the storyteller relates his or her own story to the teachings on and off the Mountain. As a male, my gender would have played a significant role in the experience and how the elective subject was taught. In this way, the individual story teller’s influence can be understood as having consequences for the overall preservice teachers’ experience. Importantly, despite these influences of the storyteller, the important outcome is that the core concept of Country as teacher remains intact as the Mother is always put first: reculturalisation.

If reculturalisation is going to occur, preservice teachers must be provided with the opportunity to initiate Aboriginal-based relationships of knowing and learning early in their career. As the NSW Department of Education and Training and Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated (2004) report states, “Aboriginal parents and community members strongly stated that they want their children to be successful in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds and contribute positively to both” (p. 68). Changing preservice teachers ways of thinking about Aboriginal perspectives can lead to more meaningful cultural engagement of learning with ‘all’ of the local community(ies) members of Country in the school context. A change to a Country-centred approach will take a long time, but eventually it will help to simplify the Aboriginal educational context for all stakeholders.
The elective subject allowed Aboriginal stakeholders to reculturalise the educational landscape. At the same time it gave preservice teachers the opportunity to initiate an examination of self in relation to decolonising the colonial ‘othering’ of separation that complicates Western teaching practice for Aboriginal students. Preservice teachers becoming aware of Aboriginal ways of knowing, learning, and behaving can therefore have the opportunity to create a central space in the Western education system for Country to contribute in the education of all students. Learning how to care for Country from a oneness position is taking care of yourself. Feeling this on a deep level and continuously experiencing Country as teacher is a great skill to learn. Consequently, the closing of the educational gap is not only in one direction towards non-Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning; it is shared.
Chapter Six: Meeting Country and self to initiate an embodiment of knowledge


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Abstract

Social justice is often the primary framework that directs academics to embed Aboriginal perspectives into teacher education programs. The effectiveness and limitations of social justice as a catalyst and change agent was examined when six School of Education academics from an Australian regional university were introduced to Yuin Country as knowledge holder. This paper argues that social justice in Australian education systems can contribute to the colonial control of knowledge production. At the same time, however, social justice may provide a means for non-Aboriginal people to experience Aboriginal ways of knowing and thereby to diversify their thinking. A cultural experience with Yuin Country played a central role in connecting and separating social justice to provide a balance in relatedness, disrupting the colonial emphasis of Western binary thinking that only separates. The academics shared their ideas and feelings in relation to Aboriginal people and culture before, during and after the cultural experience *Mingadhuga Mingayung* (McKnight 2015) of two significant Yuin Mountains on the far south coast of NSW. The research described in this paper explored the academics’ journey with Country to investigate the role of social justice thinking to unveil and or conceal Aboriginal perspectives as Country.
They are just hearing the story – isn’t that what you call theory? – they are not learning the true body of knowledge (Gotha cited in Christie, 2010, p. 11).

**Introduction**

The embedding of Aboriginal perspectives or ‘Aboriginal histories and cultures’, is one of the three Cross Curriculum Priorities to be emphasised in Australian schools, according to the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priority provides opportunities for all learners to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the world’s oldest continuous living cultures. This knowledge and understanding will enrich their ability to participate positively in the ongoing development of Australia (ACARA 2013).

As indicated by this quote, embedding an Aboriginal perspective in the school curriculum remains focused on knowledge and understanding, rather than utilising Aboriginal educational systems and approaches. At the same time, Australian academic discourse on Aboriginal knowing and learning has moved beyond knowledge, understanding and Aboriginal content to a focus on the importance of Aboriginal pedagogies and processes (Moreton-Robinson, Singh, Kolopenuk, Robinson & Walter 2012). However, the shift from discourse to enhanced practice in tertiary institutions and schools appears to present a considerable challenge. As Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013) argue, to achieve this successfully requires an extended engagement with Aboriginal systems and processes to obtain relevant pedagogical skills, and understandings of the living protocols. Although there is a growing literature in which the engagement with Aboriginal perspectives within tertiary institutions is being explored (Lampert, Burnett, Martin & McCrea 2014; McLaughlin 2013; Williamson & Dalal 2007; Dudgeon & Fielder 2006), the embedding of Country, as knowledge system and process, is limited. Country is often placed in the background or misplaced because of the ways colonial knowledge systems and
processes undervalue Country’s relationship with Aboriginal knowledge. If respect for Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning is to permeate teacher education and teaching in schools, the pedagogy of respectful reciprocal relationships with Country needs to be a priority (McKnight 2015). Instead, the first impulse to embed Aboriginal perspectives in university programs seems to be driven by a social justice imperative.

From a social justice perspective, what is generally regarded as important is addressing “structural disadvantages” that act “to impede the progression of students at school” (Beresford, Partington & Gower, 2012, p. 124). While a social justice approach can identify structural blockages, it needs to be asked whether social justice thinking can address the entrenched structural disadvantage that defines the power relationship that ‘others’ Aboriginal peoples. Juliana McLaughlin and Susan Whatman (2011) suggest that to move beyond social justice discourses and practices, the incorporation of “Indigenous knowledge, decolonising methodologies, and research ethics and protocols that guide research and scholarship within academia” (p. 3) is necessary. This paper reports on research that explored how it might be possible to move beyond a social justice approach and explicitly connect with Yuin Country as teacher.

The key focus of this paper, then, is to examine the possibilities afforded by a program, conducted with non-Aboriginal academics, which presents Yuin knowledge as Country in partnership with Western social justice principles. My initial starting point was the assumption that social justice is blinkered by the reliance of its own knowledge system (Western) to resolve challenging cross-cultural issues. However, in doing so, I recognise the danger of creating similar blind spots, by just relying on what Greives (2009) names responsive Aboriginal knowledge, which can be just as divisive (Nakata 2013).

This paper will demonstrate how Yuin Country via Mingadharga Mingayung (McKnight 2015) can connect with academics’ known world of theory (worldview) to prompt them to reflect on their epistemological understandings in ways that provide opportunities for disrupting colonial thinking. As quoted in the above epigraph, Gotha (cited in Christie 2010) states when a story is shared within a classroom “They are not
learning the true body of knowledge” (p. 11). To start the journey of learning the whole story or body of knowledge, the learning has to occur with and on Country so the knowledge can be observed, felt and understood on a spiritual level of connectedness. By contrast, the classroom closes itself off from the non-human teachers that are required for access to the true body of knowledge. *Mingadhuga Mingayung* (McKnight 2015) has been chosen as a term to describe how the Yuin text of the land can be seen so it can be felt on a deep personal level. *Mingadhuga Mingayung* is an understanding from Country as an observed text. *Mingadhuga Mingayung* originates from Biamanga (Place of learning) and Gulaga (Mother Mountain: Yuin creation story), which Uncle Max Harrison (2009) as a Senior Yuin Lawman holds. It was through Gulaga, Biamanga and Uncle Max Harrison’s permission that my understanding as an Aboriginal man of this experience of Yuin Country, came into being. Further, it is this experience that planted the seeds for this research to come into being in academia. As I tell the story of this experience, I am at the same time trying to be very conscious of the benefits and pitfalls of working within an insider frame (Tuihiwai Smith 2012).

**Meeting Country within the turbulence**

The problem of this paper and research occurred in my own body, as I worked within a Western system to challenge a system (Western) and to re-introduce an ancient system of this Country (Yuin), in a respectful manner. The research reported in this paper was designed to examine the capacity of the dynamic experience of *Mingadhuga Mingayung* (McKnight 2015), within a contingent relationship with social justice to shift non-Aboriginal academics’ predeterminations on Aboriginal people and culture in ways that would assist them to see Country as knowledge holder. In an attempt to achieve this, I worked with an Early Years team in a School of Education at an Australian university to design an experience to decolonise/reculturalise the implementation of Aboriginal perspectives within their program, which would meet their philosophy of Aboriginal education. At our first meetings to discuss the possibilities of such a program their philosophy seemed primarily informed by social justice principles to align with the Early Years Learning Framework. For example, in a yarning session held prior to going on Country and
experiencing Mingadhuga Mingayung, one of the six academics in the program, explained her reasons for participating as follows:

If you genuinely have a belief in social justice and understanding and allowing people to be who they are then I think that is a really good you know, ground work. (Kylie, pre- Mingadhuga Mingayung yarning session)

The use of ‘allowing’ in this quote is significant, and indicative of the colonial aspect of social justice. It signifies a power relationship in which a member of the dominant culture can provide permission, retaining a separation of the ‘other’ as less than. This is a permission that is still active throughout the discourse surrounding the interactive associations of social justice, decolonisation and ‘cultural competency’. A consequence of a social justice mindset is that it can create a pattern of thinking that closes down the need to learn more about, or engage in another culture’s way of knowing, learning and behaving. A person can fulfill their own or their institution’s social justice thinking through demonstrating an understanding of cultural attributes through institutional prerequisites (for example, a two hour indoor workshop on reconciliation). The actual knowledge system and process of the culture is ignored and left rendered as the marginalised other. Nor at the very least is there any acknowledgement of the existence of this pivotal knowledge system and process; and by consequence, the limitations of any indoor learning that does not recognised Aboriginal knowledge systems and processes. Furthermore the individual is not engaged in a thoughtful process of holding a lifelong learning relationship with Country. It is possible, however, for social justice discourses and practices to engage differently with Aboriginal knowledge(s) and peoples. To do so, non-Aboriginal people need to be aware of the paternalistic nature of social justice thinking to assist in the process of being open to another source of knowledge.

The challenge is to reduce colonial social justice thinking for decolonising theorisation to occur, while at the same time maintaining social justice principles which assist the individual to became aware of the ways that social justice continually re-establishes colonising knowledge systems and processes. As Tuhiwai Smith (2012) states, “decolonisation must offer a language of possibility, a way out of colonisation”
In a Yuin cultural context, Country through the text of the land is the language of possibility to step out of colonisation ways of thinking and doing.

**Dipping the Toe into the Water: Storying approach alongside Theory**

Country is space and place of the present in which the future is in the now as we become our past. (Reflection on the meaning of Country, McKnight, March 2015)

Country is the space and place where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can learn with Country in relationship to everything that is of Country. If an individual has an open mind to see all the living unseen and seen teachers of Country - trees, mountains, water, animals, birds, people, rocks, humidity and all the entities that make up Country - Country provides the stories and the knowledge. Country also provides the space to learn, reflect, challenge, cry, laugh, oppose and agree, while experiencing an ancient story of connection. In the context of the cultural experience described in this paper, Mingadhuga Mingayung provided the stories, place and space through the text of the land. Mingadhuga Mingayung derives from Gulaga, who is as stable as a Mountain, holding the stories the same way since creation, which is right/write there in front of the individual. As Uncle Max Harrison (2009) says, “There is plenty in that library up there, it is the text of the land” (Harrison, M.D. & McConchie, 2009, p. 39).

People who visit Country engage with Country’s teachings by means of their own epistemological understandings. How these understandings connect with Country is related to what Bhabha (2004) describes as the ‘third space’. Bhabha’s (2004) third space for Dudgeon and Fielder (2006) “represents a radical hybrid space-unstable, changing, tenuous, neither here nor there” (p. 401). Gulaga shares the text of the land in order to be/as a stabilising agent, for the individual to create their own third space of embodied stories by incorporating their own stories with Country’s. Meanwhile, Biamanga, the sister Mountain of Gulaga and significant site, is a place of learning,
journeying and healing that tests the shared third space because of the colonial
destruction on this site.\footnote{On Biamanga a significant cultural tor was blasted and is a very visible site of destruction that places people
directly within the devastation caused by colonisation.}

An intention of the storying/theoretical approach of *Mingadhuga Mingayung* was to
create, utilise and stabilise the academics’ own third space. Country’s relationship
with the individual is the third space where Country can test their own understandings
and relationship to colonial actions and knowledge. The academics looked for and
explored similarities in this relationship that focuses on what is felt. The embodied
stories encouraged the academics to identify matching/paralleling stories through a
spiritual umbilical cord of connection (McKnight 2015) to reduce Western binary
thinking. The non-Aboriginal academics engagement in the Yuin cultural experience
with Country helped them to birth a new site and “be a subject occupying multiple
sites in culture and history continue to know themselves” (Jacobs, 2002, p. 350). The
subject is the body of knowing self not just in relation to self, but also in relation to
Country. By knowing their own history in relationship to Country, self and
colonisation, the academics were assisted in the process of moving into the present to
know a respectful reciprocal relationship with Country.

The teachings from the text of the land are at first felt when working in relatedness
with the mind, body and spirit. Country has always existed even after colonisation and
does not need to be reconstructed. People/visitors to Country on the other hand need
to decolonise/reculturalise the logical mind that removes spirit and feelings. Dudgeon
and Fielder (2006) argue that, for Aboriginal culture to be re-valued, the lifeblood of
Aboriginal culture has to be injected into the colonial system to assist decolonisation.

The embodied stories of and in Country are the essence of Aboriginal life and are a
truth, the retelling of the stories keeps them and us alive, to give thanks to the
Ancients in these stories that were witnessed by our Ancestors. A collaborative
partnership between academics, Aboriginal people and Country is imperative to
embed Aboriginal perspectives. However over time, the respectful reciprocal
relationship with Country will in itself help the academics to open their mind (McKnight 2015), body and spirit to a different and connected view in sharing embodied stories not perspectives.

The Cultural Experience

The academics were taken on two field trips to Gulaga and Biamanga, two significant Yuin cultural sites on the far South Coast of NSW. Gulaga is Mother Mountain who holds the Yuin Creation Story and Biamanga is a place of teaching. Elder, Uncle Max Harrison and members of his family (including the researcher) guided the academics through the sites. The guides were led by the text of the land to convey the story of the mountain(s) for the academics to experience. The intention was to place the academics into an Aboriginal education system to experience an interconnecting physical, mental and spiritual approach to learning. For these six non-Aboriginal academics this was uncharted space, which required a personal and educational relationship with Gulaga and Biamanga. The experience of learning with non-human being as teachers can develop the skills necessary to be aware of and appreciate self as Country and Country as self (McKnight 2015) to form a new site of knowledge production.

Researching an Experience with Country

Two Early Years academics were joined by four other non-Aboriginal academics from a School of Education in a regional university to participate in the cultural experience. A study was constructed around their involvement by collecting data through recording pre- and post-experience ‘cross-cultural yarning’ sessions (Walker, Fredericks, Mills & Anderson 2014) and debriefing/yarning sessions immediately following the cultural experience. An application to the university ethics committee was successful with pseudonyms given to protect the participating academics. As the Aboriginal researcher, I also obtained permission from my Elder and cultural teacher.

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8 The actual experience cannot be shared in the context of this paper, as the experience of the non-Aboriginal peoples is the focus of the research. For an indication of the actual experience please read Harrison, M. D. & McConchie, P. (2009). My people's Dreaming: an Aboriginal elder speaks on life, land, spirit and forgiveness. Warriewood, N.S.W., Finch Publishing.
Uncle Max Harrison. The academics were prepared for the cultural experience by yarning about what ‘respect’ necessitates, in the context of behaviour while within the sites. All six academics agreed to have their conversations included in the research project.

Cross-cultural yarning is an Aboriginal method that involves profound and respectful communicative interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Walker et al. 2014). In relation to research, Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010) describe yarning as a process whereby:

both the researcher and participant journey together visiting places and topics of interest relevant to the research study. Yarning is a process that requires the researcher to develop and build a relationship that is accountable to Indigenous people participating in the research (p. 38).

In this study, yarning was utilised as a method to reveal the relationship between the academics and Yuin Country. Importantly, it provided sensitive (personal) data on the academics’ understandings, knowledge and feelings on Aboriginal people and culture. After the visit to Country, the debriefing yarning sessions provided a snapshot of emotions felt during the actual experience on Country to contextualise the post-experience yarning.

Through yarning, a reciprocal relationship was able to evolve between Country, researcher and participants to respectfully care for and share their embodied stories of connection. As a researcher, I observed Country’s teachings through the academics’ yarning from the pre-experiences, de-briefings and post-experiences as stories to see the reflection of and relationship with Country within me as the researcher (McKnight 2016). I identified connectivity, that is, points of understanding through Country’s, the academics’ and my own story: my truth on how my learning and knowing was enhanced through these interactions. According to Kwaymullina and Kwaymullina

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Country shapes all meaning to be true when the story is within its own space. My own cultural relationship with Country prepared me to explore my connections, similarities and differences to the academics’ growing relationship with Country. The use of a Western analytical approach towards the yarning extended the capacity of the research to find similarities within the differences. This relationship helped me to identify the nature of the academics’ understanding, knowledge and behaviour in relatedness to Country and social justice thinking.

Pre- and Post-experience yarning

The pre-experience yarning used both Yuin and non-Aboriginal discussion/interview rules and protocols to formulate a cross-cultural yarning (Walker et al. 2014; McKnight 2016). Arguably, many cultures are familiar with varying forms of storytelling to enhance an equitable relationship arrangement. I chose to model storytelling as a way of prompting the participants to answer questions through story. The following questions guided the process: ‘What do you know about Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture?’; ‘If you had to teach Aboriginal perspectives how would you go about it?’

The post-yarning session shifted more towards a Yuin mode of yarning, a mode that the academics experienced throughout the research and cultural experience. The post-experience yarning questions evolved from the yarning itself to keep the academics’ stories flowing and to maintain the intent of the research. The post-experience yarning started with reference to the pre-experience Yarning: ‘In our first yarn, we talked about our memories, memories of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture. What I would like for us to start yarning about is your present memories on Aboriginal people culture. Has there been a shift?’ Thereafter the questions evolved from the academics’ stories or responses. The following questions evolved from this process: ‘On that, how is your relationship going with Country?’; ‘How is everyone dealing with coming from a non-Aboriginal epistemology then engaging in this other way of knowing?’; ‘We started talking about self in different ways so how do you think self and Country are connected?; ‘How much do you think this (experience) has prepared you for implementing Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum?’
Debriefing Sessions

A debriefing session was held on the night the academics walked the sacred mountain Gulaga. The debriefing session for Biamanga was held a week after the visit, due to time constraints for staff to get back to family and work the next day. The debriefing was a yarning circle where the academics shared their stories of the experience. The debriefing question was: ‘Could you please reflect on the day by sharing the things that really stood out for you?’ Two of the Aboriginal guides were intentionally placed at the start of the circle so they could model how the debriefing session worked with story.

The First Step into a New Relationship: Analysis and discussion

Stepping into a new relationship in regards to knowing, learning and behaving is a space that goes beyond intention; the individual is invited to be open to feelings and a willingness to share. This section explores previous influences described by the academics’ on their awareness and understanding of Aboriginal people and culture. Particular attention is given to social justice, especially how it influenced the academics thinking before meeting Country and how this impacted their experience of Country. The academics’ personal and pedagogical relationship with Yuin Country is represented in their shared stories to identify any shifts from, what McKnight (2015) describes as ‘legacy pedagogy’, that is a pedagogy that is emotive, connective, spiritual and heals through Yuin Country’s stories. While many of the factors influencing the shifts in the academics’ perspectives go beyond this paper, what was indicated in their stories was a shared recognition that there is a different way of knowing, learning and behaving in relation to Aboriginal knowledge and people, in which they can engage.

Pre-experience yarning: What do we know?

The pre-experience cross-cultural yarning established the basis for two significant findings: the academics’ own story of relationship with Aboriginal people and that they experienced Country as a living pedagogical entity; and how the academics yarning revealed the influence of social justice thinking on knowing, learning and behaving with Country. Following an Aboriginal traditional process of introduction the pre-experience cross-cultural yarning was begun with questions about place and
self; the final question asked the academics about ‘their business’. ‘What brought
them to the project and what did they wanted to achieve?’

I think I have a very strong sense of fairness and social justice but I always
feel like in relation to Aboriginal people that my understanding isn’t as
deep as it could be or should be. (Kylie10)

I suppose I would like to increase my awareness and my ability to
comfortably and confidently express the Aboriginal culture and so on and
so forth in a respectful way in my position. (Liz)

In these comments, Kylie and Liz reveal how a human centred social justice model
underpinned their thinking, and their desire to have an understanding and awareness
of Aboriginal knowledge, people and culture. On one hand the comments seem to
refer to an internal state, that is, they want inward gratification, as in wanting to learn
more because of feelings relating to social justice as overcoming disadvantage. On the
other hand, their comments also indicate that they are still very outward (separate) in
their thinking, because it is about the other, not self. The inward but outward thinking
can be interpreted as forward thinking, in the progressive nature of Western thinking.
Plumwood (2002) states, “progress is the progressive overcoming or control of this
‘barbarian’ non-human or semi-human sphere by the rational sphere of European
culture and ‘modernity’” (p. 9). Progressive thinking devalues Country as a present
entity, with social justice implying that Aboriginal people are disadvantaged solely
because of the human relationships. The social justice mind is focused on future
inwards/internal feelings to influence outward actions or influences as a professional.
Kylie and Liz want to ‘help’ the disadvantaged others in a place known as a work
environment because of the past (inward) and present (separation).

The need to know more or increase awareness about the separate ‘other’ is strongly
present in these comments while the concept of wanting to connect with Country
remains hidden/elided. Connecting is different to knowing and understanding, as
these two terms maintain the detachment of Western culture in relationship from the

10 All participants names are pseudonyms as required by the university ethics committee.
‘other’ culture. However, from my observations the academics’ intent was to go beyond this point, but at this stage they did not have the language nor conceptual tools to express this meaning; at this stage; it was more like an unknown space somewhere in between the academics’ social justice framework and Aboriginal knowledge systems. This in-between space provided a starting point to introduce reflexivity with the aim of moving into examining self as Country, to provide an opportunity to unpack connectivity. Marcelle Townsend-Cross (2011) argues “reflexivity is crucial to address the ideological blind spots that may be associated with being a member of the privileged majority” (p. 103). The academics drawing on the knowledge system available to them at this point needed to speak of and share the gift of not knowing or knowing about Aboriginal people and culture. This enabled the researcher to locate an individualised position within a communal ritualised framework (yarning) to find a commencement point of relating to Country.

In contrast to Kylie and Liz’s comments, Rachel’s statement from the collective story is similar, but contains a small but important contrast.

I would like to know more about the history, and the lives of Indigenous people in this area and I would like to know what they want for themselves for the future (Rachel).

The potential for change from a social justice perspective to connection or pattern ‘thinking’ (Mowaljarlai cited in Grieves 2009) was clearer in Rachel’s inward and inward thinking statement. Rachel still desired awareness, however, she importantly indicated a willingness to remove herself from the privileged social justice position. Rachel’s assertion of ‘to know what they want for themselves for the future’ is crucial for the connection of self in the in-between space to occur with Country. To go beyond social justice thinking, the colonial ownership of the in-between space and the uncritical adoption of social justice itself has to be let go. Not needing to know for the inward, outward social justice self, the individual can start to know self with Country therefore to understand that people are in charge of their own connective story, healing and lives.
Overall the academics’ comments in the pre-experience yarning provided confirmation that social justice is an important model to bring non-Aboriginal people to a space where Aboriginal processes, systems and respect can be introduced to shift the colonial influenced social justice mindset. The context of Country as teacher and pedagogy to inform the skillset to read the text of the land is not evident within the yarning, which was somewhat expected. Importantly their preparedness to acknowledge that they were at the very beginning of knowing opened a pathway to engage in learning through Aboriginal ways of knowing and behaving.

*Pre-experience yarning: Testing the reflexive Self*

‘What do you know about Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture?’ This question in the pre-experience cross-cultural yarning provided a platform to examine the academics’ memories and constructions of Aboriginal peoples and cultures before engaging in the *Mingadhuga Mingayung* approach. The following quotes demonstrate how social justice thinking allows for recognition of marginalisation, but are limited in proposing a relationship with Country that would promote an understanding of Aboriginal perspectives.

I initially use the word frustrated, I agree with that, I have a frustration with that in my life I had such limited exposure to Aboriginal people. (Jack)

I think that my education in relation to Aboriginal people has been I guess somewhat tokenistic. (Kylie)

Jack and Kylie’s acknowledgement of their tokenistic understandings of overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage points to their frustration at the limits of their understanding. However, there is no clear indication of looking at self or reflexivity. Harry’s following story snippet provides an example of a subtle change from thoughtlessness, to recognition, to something felt within him-self.

For me it goes very deeply because I hate tokenism and growing up in a small-colonised Country neighbouring Australia, I grew up a racist, without realising I was and … As kids we didn’t even realise it was racism. (Harry pre-experience)
The positive aspect of the social justice model was clearly at work in Harry’s story and importantly Harry, from my observations, was very self-reflexive. Taking ownership of self as being racist opened an avenue for change and demonstrated a great possibility for Harry to initiate another step for examining self from a Yuin framework. The important issue here is that social justice (I hate tokenism) did establish an opportunity for Harry to identify the historical, political, social and racial context that contributed to his stepping out of the known racism cycle. Shifting the academics’ stories subtly is crucial but a deeper movement is required into the ‘unknown’ Aboriginal framework to remove the notion of the ‘other’ in the stories being shared. Not knowing the subtleties of another framework presents a blockage to moving beyond social justice thinking.

*Pre-experience yarning: Testing self within Aboriginal perspectives*

The yarning moved to examine the academics’ understanding and positioning on any previous teaching of Aboriginal perspectives. This was prompted by questions such as: ‘What is an Aboriginal perspective?; and how would you teach an Aboriginal perspective?’ In response Kylie and Sarah said:

> It is a dilemma in a way but it is also about you know how we move into cross-cultural living and that’s what we are really trying to achieve is being able to relate across cultures in a sensitive way from both sides and with a genuineness, so it is with a genuine cross-cultural relationship that we develop. (Sarah)

> We do inject an Aboriginal perspective into classes from time to time without thinking about it just by the questions we raise or the resources we draw on or the experiences we draw on. (Kylie)

The academics identified the dilemmas and tensions of working in a space and place that was relatively unknown to them. The statement of ‘without thinking’ is important to consider, as I would judge Kylie to have been successful in teaching from the perspective of the dominant Western educational policy on Aboriginal peoples. The ‘no thinking’ suggests no consideration of how self is situated in the curriculum-
Aboriginal perspective relationship. The resources that are utilised are separate from the academics’ lived experience. The ‘no thinking’ indicates that the academic cannot put the resource content into a context of meaningful engagement and feelings in relation to what is being taught. When feeling is incorporated into teaching a subject or topic with Country’s influence, the knowledge is contextualised to impart relevance and meaning to the learning experience. As Neil Harrison and Maxine Greenfield (2011) suggest, “quality teaching of Aboriginal perspectives is contingent upon the teacher’s conceptualization of Aboriginal knowledge as that which is always grounded in place and only meaningful in the context in which it is produced” (p. 66) At this point in their experience, social justice thinking has allowed the six academics to present a disconnected resource that has created general inclusivity but that has maintained separation. At the same time, social justice thinking led Sarah to recognise her dilemma in wanting to relate across cultures but not knowing how. Knowing that something is unknown or a dilemma is a function of the connecting third space that can lead to learning how to step out of a knowledge system to work alongside another respectfully.

*Post-experience yarning: Memories of Learning*

The experience of Country assisted the academics in the post-experience yarning to reflect back on what they did not know about themselves. Primarily this was about their disconnection from Country and its system and process of knowledge creation. The following statement is one example of how Country started to work within the body of Liz after the cultural experience.

I think I had some knowledge and an appreciation from a political perspective of what had happened with invasion with settlement. Some connection with what had taken place before because of other things that I have done. It’s really for me now, it’s under the skin, it is only just there but it’s under the skin. I think by that I mean I have got a new frame of reference.

Liz’s ‘new frame of reference’ was a crucial indication of her developing relationship with Country as she started to feel another knowledge system. The Yuin knowledge system is more than just thinking, it is feeling the unseen energies that Country holds.
This feeling helped Liz to move circularly through and out of her own knowledge system to continue the two-way learning process. Liz’s comment ‘it’s under my skin’ resonates with the ways Basso (1996 cited in Morris 2002) describes stories as change agents, a good starting point to show connections.

Tales … have a way of almost literally getting under your skin: ‘That story is working on you now. You keep thinking about it. That story is changing you now, making you want to live right. That story is making you want to replace yourself’ (p. 197).

The stories from Yuin Country got under Liz’s skin, which had an effect on her feelings around knowing another framework of learning, an important effect reported by Basso’s story on the Apache male.

The academics often coined the term ‘difficult to explain’ to describe the feeling that happens when the academics did not have, at the time, the linguistic capacity to describe the action happening within the body as it works its way into translation in the mind: the difficult to explain feeling ‘under the skin’. The term “replacing yourself” is an important concept for determining the ‘success’ of the experience and the academics’ initiative/willingness to examine self with Country. Replacing yourself cannot be taken literally as it is a long movement over time in which feelings play a significant role. As Martin (2007) states:

Each lifehood stage is an evolvement, a transformation of the previous stage (e.g. childhood evolves from babyhood and conception). It is the dying out of one lifehood stage in order to be birthed into the next. These transformations are not just physical and biological, but also spiritual, emotional, social, cultural and intellectual (p. 18).

In the context of this exploration, feelings are the signposts to assist the academics in adulthood to start learning and knowing in another site of knowledge to replace looking at the other. An important question for this research, then, is whether the academics could initiate a continuing re-placing of self between two sites of knowing
to develop a sagacity of self in order for self to embed Aboriginal perspectives respectfully. As Jack succinctly stated,

I guess I have always had the respect but it has been a respect out of just in general, now it is a bit more personal.

Jack and the other academics demonstrated an indirect intent and willingness to proliferate connective sites within their knowledge framework through examining self on a personal level of respect.

Debriefing and Post-experience yarning: Moving from Social Justice to Relationship with Country

The experience of the two cultural sites activated an initial shift in the academics from social justice thinking to examining self in affiliation to the text of the land to form a reciprocal relationship with Country. Sandra Styres, Celia Haig-Brown and Melissa Blimkie (2013), utilising Frye Jean Graveline’s (1998) work, argue from a Canadian position, “a pedagogy of Land starts from the notion of Land as first teacher and as an embodiment of self-in-relation” (Graveline, 1998 quoted in Styres et al., 2013, p. 40). Every entity from the land has a story that is in relationship with everything else from the land including humans. Understanding this relationship of self to Country will happen within its own pace for each individual. Akin to any formation of a relationship, the introduction has to take place in the appropriate context of the situation, in this case, through the Mingadhuga Mingayung approach. Hill and Mills (2013) describe their own observations as non-Aboriginal academic learning from Country: “place rather than time emerged as the crucial element in developing our understanding of Indigenous cultural competence” (p. 70). The story as place will work within the whole body including the mind and spirit. Having an open mind (McKnight 2015) can work with Country, if logical thinking is kept in tune with the body and spirit, to reveal a meaning for that time within the individual. The essence is time, the story and the individual working on all levels, physical, mind and spirit in oneness. Thereby providing time for feelings, knowing that the learning will make sense when it is ready to occur in its own time, when feelings work their/there way into the mind as meaning.
The debriefing interviews and post-yarning were set up to determine and give some time, for the movement of this relationship of self to Country. The intent was to determine a process and system for the academics to extend their individualised story, initiated in the pre-experience yarn, as a practical perspective to be implemented in the curriculum. In response to the question about their post-experience memories of Aboriginal people and culture, the academics talked about a shift within themselves,

So for me that’s what, it was very much a political base view of where we are. It’s still there but what now has happened to me is it’s become more of a personal engagement with Aboriginal, just looking at land and looking at opening my eyes a little bit more to, I’m seeing things I didn’t see before. (Harry, post-experience)

So it’s like having a new lease on things, one that I didn’t have before. (Liz post-experience)

To help the reader put these comments into context the following comments from the debriefing session on Gulaga can give an insight into what happened within the academics.

I was totally absorbed and taken over I guess, it was nearly an out of body experience, words can’t sort of explain. (Kylie debriefing, Gulaga)

What I saw on the track today, which amazed me, just lots of life everywhere. (Sarah debriefing, Gulaga)

I spend my life looking at goals, doing a doctorate you spend your life looking at deadlines and feeling guilty that you are not reaching them instead of actually stopping and enjoying the wonderful things that are happening in front of you. (Harry debriefing, Gulaga)

The academics were given the time, space, place and silence to see what was in front of them, a relationship that has always been there but not totally visible because the foreign story of colonisation blocks the text of the land. As Hill and Mills (2013)
found with their journey on Country, “Reversing colonial history, if only for a nanosecond, this time it was the non-Indigenous who were dislocated and relocated” (p. 72). The nanosecond of reversal indicates that the colonial mind can step into an Aboriginal location to learn. The relocation of Yuin stories into the being of the academics that comes from Country, while on Country, generated something within the academics that could not be totally explained at this stage of their journey. Country’s stories continued to be with the academics after leaving the two mountain locations.

I don’t know how to describe it, it’s growing and it’s deeper than it was before. I am more aware perhaps of things that I wouldn’t be aware and often quite little things, more respectful. That’s what I would say, more than anything else, more respect. (Liz post-experience)

I don’t know, it’s hard to describe. But it’s something that I’m doing myself that I’m just, it’s become more, it’s just part of me now, the way I look around. It’s very hard to describe. (Harry post-experience)

The ‘doing things myself’ is an important indication of how the ‘legacy pedagogy’ (McKnight 2015) of examining self with Country was at work. The different ways of seeing (Harry) or of being aware (Liz), at this stage of the experience and research, points to a shift in examining self not the ‘other’. It doesn’t really matter that the academics could not explain the change in language, but feeling the change in respect is very relevant to building a relationship with Country as teacher.

At the same time during this discussion, Sarah bravely and respectfully stated that she couldn’t understand the spiritual gift that was provided to her, “Logically and in my world it doesn’t make sense” (post-experience). The logical mind took over to block the feeling and spirit for the embodiment of the story or gift to be received. This is evidence of McLaughlin’s (2013) ‘default-position’, a reverting back into the dominant cultural positioning. The spiritual gift and aligning feelings that goes with the cultural experience was a significant challenge to Sarah’s worldview, however Sarah also stated that she is “not going to ignore the gift even though feeling uncomfortable” (post-experience). The important issue here again is feelings; Sarah
was still aware of her feelings, thereby open to having a relationship with another site (Country) to produce knowledge. Sarah’s story reinforces the challenge of examining feelings in the logical Western world of academia, as this ‘spiritual learning’ needs to happen in its own time.

The following account from Harry and Rachel summed up the general ‘feel’ of the yarning around the Yuin experience, that they were only at the start of the journey to utilising Aboriginal ways of knowing to implement Aboriginal perspectives,

… we’re putting our toe into the water here. (Harry post-experience)

I think the journey that I have been on has been just a start, a start to open my mind to think in ways that has developed further respect than just awareness. (Rachel post-experience)

The academics were taking the first step into engaging in the legacy pedagogy (McKnight 2015) by sharing their story of relationship with Country and Aboriginal people as their own perspective in teaching Aboriginal perspectives. A challenge for academics and academia is to make space for this relationship to develop both personally and professionally.

Producing a story of relationship as Pedagogy in Aboriginal Education

The analysis of the yarning created an opportunity to show how the academics could think and feel about Aboriginal culture especially in regards to the concept of a relationship with Country as the producer of story (McKnight 2015). In addition the yarning sessions also indicated how the initial relationship with Country relieved some of the stresses that the academics held about respect of and responsibilities to teaching within the realm of Aboriginal perspectives. As Liz states,

For me, it’s deep, that deep feeling that I know I have regained that connection. I have come back from wherever I have been, somewhat hard to describe but it’s just that inner feeling of even comfort. (post-experience)
This excerpt suggests that Liz has recognised the spiritual feeling that, arguably all people felt for Mother Earth during the centuries of human life. Erica-Irene Daes’ (2007) exploration of colonisation around the world suggests Westerners have been oppressed and oppressed consciously for centuries about the experience of spiritual independence. Country can help self, feel self again, through a reculturalisation of reconnecting to Mother Earth. Furthermore for Liz, feeling comfortable or safe was very important as it reduced the uncertainty that often occurs in implementing Aboriginal perspectives. In Frank Deer’s (2013) research, teacher candidates’ concerns about including Canadian Aboriginal perspectives in school was characterised by “fear of failure, discomfort with the subject matter, guilt, and not being Indigenous” (p. 204). The academics’ story with Country opened up space and place to share their feelings and thoughts in relationship with Aboriginal people and Country.

Importantly, the comfortable feelings will stay intact if they can maintain respect for Country as the producer of these stories, thereby reducing the prerogative of Western knowledge ownership over Country. The simple statement by Harry, ‘where I am at’ (post-experience yarn), indicates his relationship with Country as knowledge holder, which can lessen the tension that restricts meaningful Aboriginal educational experiences for all students. Harry can only share what he knows of his own experience with Country at this stage of his learning journey in respect and reciprocation. Just as Hill and Mills’ (2013) adventure learning experience at Menindee recognised it as “only the start of what is anticipated will be an ongoing, mutual learning journey between the University and Indigenous communities” (p. 68). The relationship with Country has to be an ongoing, as it is with Aboriginal people and, with the academics in this study, otherwise the Yuin system and process will continue to be ignored.

**The Conclusion is just the start**

This study of six non-Aboriginal academics that participated in an experience with Yuin Country produced important evidence and discussion to broaden the directions of the discourse on non-Aboriginal people teaching and implementing Aboriginal perspectives. The simultaneous operation of, and substantial departures beyond social
justice thinking are paramount to recognising and emphasising Country as a dynamic educational entity. In the context of this study, Western social justice thinking encouraged the academics to recognise the disadvantaged ‘other’ and how they were positioned and positioned themselves in this top-down framework. For academics to find connectivity with Country, what is required is a reduction in social justice principles that emphasise inward self-gratification. Thereby creating space to place an emphasis on the pedagogy of feeling/experiencing Country as a site of knowledge production.

To achieve this doesn’t necessarily require a state of contestation, conflict, or denial. Rather, a quite different way can be introduced, that is to be an observer, then examine your own behaviour in the particular relationship(s). The academic’s own identification of tokenistic or racist behaviour in this research demonstrated the inward action of the Western body in the outward social justice structures of maintaining control. Social justice can be said to play an important role before and after the cultural experience; however, when stepping onto Country social justice should remain seated in the academic’s knowledge site. This shift in relationship with Country can build another usable site for knowledge production, if the individual does not colonise the experience by separating out the logical mind from emotions.

The *Mingadhuga Mingayung* experience placed the academics into a learning situation where reliance on the logical mind would disrupt learning. Thereby the examination of social justice principles that lead the academics to participate in the experience was important. On reflection an important aspect that was missing within the investigation was to ask why the academics had not sought such an experience outside their work structures. This would have expanded and intensified the exploration of social justice in the post-experience yarning. As has been argued so far, the learning has to be personally felt with Country, not just seen as a component completed during and for work. If the cultural experience remains in the context of a work requirement then the colonising effects of social justice models are likely to continue (Ben-Ari & Strier 2010). The outcomes of this research have demonstrated how Country assisted the academics to examine self in relation to Country as they moved outside the known political and historical domain to meet Country for the first time, through their observed feelings.
The reduction of social justice thinking occurred within the in-between space created by the academic with Country. Country re-focused the academics’ inspection of the Aboriginal ‘other’ onto an observed examination of self. The place of learning, Biamanga, triggered this teaching within Harry,

Well it is yourself, you have got to start with respecting who you are, … it strikes me that is a sensible place to start. (debriefing, Biamanga)

The respect of self in relationship with Country leads to connecting with the ‘other’ through finding similarities, a clear shift from social justice thinking. If respect is shown to the other who embodies Country’s stories then the identifying similarities becomes easier to feel and know. Birrell (2006) explains embodiment to Country as a “response to the place … predicated on my body as active player, as conduit of teachings, as site of reciprocity with place, as sensate tool of mediation between place and self” (p. 294). Gulaga and Biamanga placed unseen energies upon the academics’ body in which the academics had difficulties in trying to explain but could feel.

*The process of embedding the embodiment of story into self and the curriculum*

Country assisted the researcher through the identification of self within the legacy pedagogy (McKnight 2015) to explain how the storied relationship worked with the academics. The academics took their first step towards a new site of knowledge production to re-examine their professional role to embed curriculum for Aboriginal perspectives. In time, the reintroduction of Country as a system and process that holds knowledge, the term ‘Aboriginal perspective’ itself will have to be re-contextualised into this relationship of knowledge dissemination. The embedding of Country in institutions such as universities will not only reinforce an Aboriginal standpoint, it will change how Aboriginal perspectives are embedded. Taking this point further, Aboriginal perspectives as a term will have to be examined if it is to become equal not subordinate, as it is when framed within social justice thinking. Country helps the academic, if an open mind is present, to examine themselves in the in-between spaces. This will assist in examining the relationship with Country especially their position as an academic that holds power and authority in knowledge production and usage.
This paper has argued that for Aboriginal perspectives to be embedded in university curriculum academics are required to work with relevant Aboriginal knowledge holders. In this relationship, Country is introduced through ceremony to assist the academics to form a new site of knowledge within themselves as self. The process is to find points of connectivity to parallel or work alongside their own knowledge production sites. If the aspects of social justice that are utilised separate thinking/feeling then the connectivity points will continue to be hidden in the colonial cloak of invisibility.

When academics are willing to learn Aboriginal ways of knowing, learning and behaving with support from Aboriginal people they can start to disrupt their own colonial mindset. The group dynamic of the experience and yarning is similar to McLaughlin’s (2013) collaborative learning partnerships, that “not only lessens the depth of resistance to one lone educator’s professional practice, but also demonstrates a pedagogical relationship built on trust and respect for diverse knowledge systems” (p. 13). The difference, however, from this approach is that the support must eventually rely less on human control to one based more on a relationship with Country. The human (Aboriginal-Country) support element will always be present especially if the academics, when under pressure from their own knowledge system, slip into the safety of what McLaughlin (2013) calls the “default position” (p. 13) of colonial thinking. However the individual can only disrupt their own colonial mindset with Country, with Aboriginal people as the cultural backstops. Social justice thinking was an important term in this research, and was carefully examined in order to reduce paternalistic behaviour when engaging in an interweaving system from Country that connects. At the same time, however, the research also sought to recognise that social justice has a role to initiate the dislodgement or interruption of colonial influence on the Yuin cultural experience. The experience with the Mingadhuga Mingayung approach is promising to create space in a university setting to continue this work. Time ‘with’ and access to Country will be required in order for Country to reveal the system to the academics’ own third space (Bhabha 2004) of relatedness. Country with Aboriginal people will guide this process; however, other guides from Country such as trees, humidity, animals, birds, wind, and other entities that reveal themselves in
time will have more emphasis than the human. The respect for the human guides should always remain but it is Country that should be central not humans.
Chapter Seven: A Step to Place Country Central

Chapter Seven is organised into two parts, an overview and conclusion. First in the overview, I have contextualised the study and described how I positioned myself to be as respectful as I could within all the knowledge relationships that were established. Second, the conclusion provides a voice for each pathway that was taken during the thesis. In particular the conclusion clarifies how the pathways are connected, sets out my arguments, and contribution to knowledge, and discusses how I have tackled the research question and problematic with Yuin Country.
Overview

The conclusion chapter for my thesis is not a short and concise ending. Rather, what it sets out to provide is a clear picture of my starting point(s) of a straightforward ~ intricate pathway to build strong knowledge relationships between Yuin Country, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in academia. Songlines are significant pathways that have to be sung. This thesis is how I have sung up Yuin Country in academia with Uncle Max, Country, six School of Education academics and twenty non-Aboriginal preservice teachers. This study was created to explore the possibility of how the UOW teacher education academics and preservice teachers could form a respectful reciprocal relationship with Yuin Country.

The relationship was fostered in order to assist the academics and preservice teachers identify a living framework to respectfully implement and embed Yuin perspectives and their own perspective (story) into their curriculum. A cultural experience, *Mingadhuga Mingayung* was specifically designed to introduce personal, cultural and educational similarities. This was done to find a way to support the academics and preservice teachers to form an epistemological/ontological/pedagogical knowledge relationship with Yuin Country. However, this could only be done if the participants were respectful, demonstrated responsibility and actively reciprocated with Country (including Aboriginal people, animals, birds and all entities) when placed into academia and their personal life. The study examined ‘yarning data’ that was shared in the yarning sessions from a ‘methodology of relationship’. Relationships, not needing to know, time, fear of getting things wrong, stories and learning through feelings in connection with thinking were the major concepts that arose from the analysis of the academics and preservice teacher yarning and stories. These concepts and related processes helped the study to identify points of conjunction through similarities ~ difference, between Yuin Country and Western knowledge sites.

The cultural experience *Mingadhuga Mingayung* provided an/the initial knowledge site (Gulaga, Creation Dreaming; and Biamanga, place of learning) for points of connection to be identified within the participants: similarities becoming known or remaining unknown in the mind. After the visits to Country various methodological approaches and tasks provided the platform for the participants to share their stories,
feelings and thoughts with me, as an observer-participant researcher. This allowed me to explore the research questions and problem from my Yuin knowledge site by utilising tripartation (Chapter Four). Tripartation is a spiritual umbilical cord that can connect binaries within a philosophy of similarities that is inclusive of, and at the same time, can separate mental and physical differences. Thus, through the thesis, I have shared what I have learnt in relationship with Country, the participants, myself, and the study, because they are all connected.

The tripartation of connection ~ separations with other dualities discussed throughout this study were implemented within my Western knowledge journey, known as a thesis, with Yuin Country. While investigating these similarities ~ differences, colonial barriers or residues were identified, discussed and synthesised, when the participants were introduced to a meeting place and or a place to meet with Yuin Country. I theorised/storied this meeting place of intersecting movements of knowledge (Arcs) as the participants ‘new’ knowledge site of relationship with Country. The academics and preservice teachers could choose to function in the new knowledge site (resistant) by finding similarities from the own Western knowledge site and their observations of Country, guided by Aboriginal knowledge custodians.

The Mingadhuga Mingayung experience in tripartation provided a means by which the academics and preservice teachers could form a resistant knowledge site to initiate self-healing of their own resistance (colonial) knowledge. The study demonstrates that three interconnecting knowledge sites can exist, Western, Country and the participants’ new knowledge site within themselves that is in relationship with/to Country (resistant). However, what also exists within this new knowledge site is the possibility for a participant to move into other various knowledge sites, such as resistance (similar form of Aboriginal resistance knowledge) and colonial appropriation. What was important, in this relationship of three knowledge sites was the need to introduce a formal support system for non-Aboriginal people to be able to respectfully separate and include their own Western knowledge (see Figure 16: my representation of my/this knowledge space). For this to happen in an appropriate manner, Country had to be comprehended as the middle ground and owner of knowledge in the relationship for the ‘new’ knowledge site in connection ~ separation.
to be balanced and stabilised by Country. A benefit and limitation of this approach is the responsibility is left with the individual.

![My three-way knowledge system](image)

Figure 16 My three-way knowledge system

Note: The Orange body of the Lyrebird on the left is my Aboriginal knowledge site; the black body of the Lyrebird is my Western. The place where the two necks of the Lyrebirds intersect is my third knowledge site, which is connected ~ separated to my Aboriginal ~ Western knowledge sites.

After the research was completed for the academics and when the preservice teachers finished the elective subject the participants were left open (vulnerable) to the overarching persuasive Western institutional processes and system. McLaughlin (2013) recognises this as a default position (see discussion in Chapter Six). The *Mingadhuga Mingayung* experience for this study had an eliciting capacity, but no formal capabilities for an ongoing Yuin structural support system or two-way negotiated support system for the participants. However, a support system is required to continually guide or remind the participants after completing the research or Aboriginal subject(s). The support system can contribute to the growth and respectful maintenance of the ‘new’ site to reduce the possibility of the participants separating Country from the relationship with Western knowledge. With no formalised process for the preservice teachers in schools, or any structured practice in place for the university academics, the continued expansion of their relationship and new knowledge site with Country was restricted. There is a Yuin support system in existence that guides Aboriginal people engaged in this Country-centred learning system. An adaptation of this support system (*reminder bird*) will be discussed later in this chapter to counter the problem of the ‘default position’ (McLaughlin 2013).
As mentioned above, one of my conclusions from the research is that the research project itself is a starting point: the participants have only finished ‘Kindergarten’ in their new knowledge relationship. While only finishing an equivalent level to Kindergarten, this approach and participants in the Mingadharga Mingayung or any similar cultural experience need further support and specified research to assist Country to establish itself as a central entity (knowledge holder, owner and teacher) in academia. Without further research I currently do not know if the Mingadharga Mingayung cultural experience is still making an impact on the participants. Nor do I know what is happening with their new knowledge from Country when they are living daily in Western knowledge structures without support: this is one area that I would like to, with permission, continue to research.

During this study I have come to the realisation that I am only partway along my journey in guiding non-Aboriginal people to respectfully and reciprocally form a relationship with Country (identity of connection) to implement and embed Aboriginal perspectives. Future investigation in this discourse surrounding Country as teacher and knowledge holder is required; an in-depth exploration of how the participants counterbalance the dominance of Western systems and processes would be beneficial. This is an important aspect to explore, as the means to maintain the participants’ strong connection to the new and developing relationship with Country as a knowledge site remains, unknown. By doing further research, I can extend this study’s capacity to identify, include and outline additional steps that will be required to cement the participants’ new respectful reciprocal relationship with Yuin Country.

**Storying as a method of learning and knowing [and of research]**

The Mingadharga Mingayung cultural experience provided the opportunity to connect Western knowledge with Yuin Country as a knowledge site through a philosophy of similarities. This philosophy identified a way for me to respectfully challenge Western structures to re-think (feel) knowledge relationships. The approach I took was to explore and reduce the influence of the Western binary of separation by introducing and applying the Yuin binary concept (Chapter Four) to revisit and place Yuin Country into a respectful reciprocal relationship within academia. The study’s philosophical approach and methodology of relationship has played a role in the growing discourse of Country being re-recognised as a significant stakeholder of
Aboriginal knowledge. For me, placing Country central in educational systems and processes is the ‘middle ground’ (Nakata 2013), between Western and Aboriginal knowledge. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples’ working with/through Country can find a methodological intersection (~) between story (Country) ~ theory (Western). This methodological intersection(s) can be a space and place for contestation but more importantly an ability to heal relationships in academia and people. This healing process of limiting colonial influence through Country’s stories can help provide a metaphorical and real approach to guide academics’ behaviours and knowledge relationships that separate and at the same time connect concepts from the varying knowledge sites. The varying knowledge sites that I am talking about in this study have been formed from the interactions between Aboriginal and Western knowledge since 1770, which are a part of me in relatedness: I cannot tell someone else’s story.

Walking back to the Mother: not always an easy journey but a lot of learning can take place

Two female preservice teachers responded to a question on the concept of Country as teacher (Post-experience yarning).

The trees tells (sic) stories and every little breath or movement and like you know it teaches you so much, the animals have different meanings, the winds, even the colours of the skies, the different colours of the trees, like you could look at a tree one day and about two months later it will be different, its bark has changed and you are like whoa. (Mel)

Okay. So there is lots of lessons I guess you can learn from Country. Being open to that is really important I think and being open to that in context for us is important to understand that. Obviously we didn’t originally think of it. (Sharon)

In these two quotes Mel and Sharon provide an example of how non-Aboriginal preservice teachers can display honesty in recognising that this type of thinking was formulated from observing a tree; it was not from their Western knowledge site. These comments are an example of Respect Law. Mel’s respectful comment
demonstrated behaviour of indirect integrity by stating where the knowledge came from, ‘the trees tell stories’ and ‘it teaches you so much’. Importantly, Sharon indicated that she, and the other preservice teachers in the yarning sessions, did not previously know of this Yuin way of knowing, learning, moving and behaving. This interwoven (predominantly Indigenous) epistemological, ontological and pedagogical approach to enacting knowledge is also slowly being recognised (implemented) in Western scientific knowledge. Quantum physics is one such branch of scientific knowledge, known to observe and discuss atoms and photons (related to energy from Country). From Karen Barad’s (2007) observations on quantum physics she presents an onto-epistemology as:

The entangled practices of knowing and being are material practices. The world is not merely an idea that exists in the human mind. To the contrary, “mind” is a specific material configuration of the world, not necessarily coincident with a brain (p. 379).

From my understanding of Yuin knowledge approaches, pedagogy is intertwined with epistemology and ontology in the oneness of knowing and being in artful practice. Both Sharon and Mel signified a respectful behaviour (spiritual) of an open mind resulting from an experience and engagement in a new (old) knowledge site (Yuin), to reconfigure a world. The reconfiguration of the participants’ viewpoint of the Western term ‘country’ to ‘Country’ (Aboriginal English term) as a knowledge site and teacher can be represented (materialised) through a synergetic knowledge movement(s) named in this thesis as an Arc. The ‘how’ cannot be a uniformed approach, as each Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal person will have their own relationship and knowledge movement with Country and Western knowledge.

The relationship of Aboriginal people with Western knowledge has generally been very poor, provoking a lot of anger, mistrust and resistance/resistance. The long-lasting legacy of distrust engendered from educational discrimination and racism created a negative association and disconnection with Western schooling (Krakouer 2015), academic institutions and academics (Smith 2000). This was not just the physical, mental and emotional hurt but also caused damage (intergenerational) to the spirit of individuals and Country(ies). Spiritual disconnectedness occurred and
continues to occur because of colonisations separating nature and the power structures embedded in Western knowledge systems (general): power that is removed from the Mother (Earth) to the human. Forgiveness of the colonial damage generates a space for decolonisation, tripartation and, in turn, reculturalisation to take place.

For spirit that was and is being damaged by disrespect and the abominable behaviour shown to and visited upon Aboriginal people and Country(ies) from 1788, forgiveness can intercede on a spiritual level. Forgiveness can lead to the healing of personal interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (the participants) to create an appropriate interconnecting knowledge (resistant) relationship with Country. As Harrison M.D. and McConchie (2009) shares, “It’s a pretty big call to forgive…Forgiveness is for healing. It’s for self-healing, its got nothing to do with the person that has probably done wrong” (p. 151). This statement raises two important questions. Firstly, what would it take for Aboriginal people to form a relationship with Western knowledge? The second question, what would it take for non-Aboriginal people to form a knowledge relationship with Country? In answer to the first question, forgiveness was one of many things that helped me to reduce the hurt and mistrust I had with Western knowledge. Through forgiveness and knowing I was on a healing journey, I could engage deeply into my Yuin knowledge system and my relationship with Western knowledge. The second question is the question addressed in this thesis. The Mingadhuga Mingayung cultural experience introduced the preservice teachers and academics to Yuin Country as knowledge holder, owner and teacher. In doing so, an opportunity was provided to contribute to the healing of spiritual disconnectedness caused by colonisation.

While the first and second questions are interwoven, my journey as a Yuin man and researcher throughout this dissertation answers the first. The second is primarily answered by what happened when the academics and preservice teachers experienced Mingadhuga Mingayung. Throughout the study I have shown how Western knowledge had to be respectfully included and excluded. This was done to achieve a balanced or stabilised approach that sat comfortably with me as a custodian of Country. During the course of the study I continually examined and re-examined my personal inventory on how I sat, held, moved and behaved within and in-between the knowledge sites that I was and am. The above questions and dilemma, which is not a
dilemma, is to ‘learn’ what respectful relationships with knowledge sites means from my experiences in both knowledge sites. The reason for this was to encourage the identification of what can be connected and what needs to be separated amid the sites; this led to the question for the dissertation. Can we as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people find connections to each other’s epistemology, ontological and pedagogical place/space to aid each other to know, learn, move and respectfully behave in each other’s knowledge site?

To achieve this, the study invited the participants to visit Gulaga, a significant Aboriginal site on Yuin Country. The academics also visited Biamanga, while the preservice teachers experienced teachings from Country on the UOW campus. The experiences were designed to provide an opportunity for the academics and preservice teachers to know and learn from Country. Meanwhile, I experienced the ‘reverse’ by engaging deeply in a Western knowledge process known as a dissertation with my cultural knowledge guiding me during this Western research rite of passage.

Walking (researching) then drawing (writing) the pathways with Yuin Country, as a knowledge system accompanied by people that have not been introduced properly to Country is a dynamic way to start unveiling the problematisations of the thesis question. The first problematic was the puzzling predicament that I found within myself when I had to write the chapters of this dissertation. Each chapter I had to identify and organise a writing technique to respectfully and clearly give meaning to feelings that are not always easy to translate into academic language. For instance, how to write something that I usually draw? The second interwoven problematic was the actual analysis of the data; the writing technique had to find a straightforward way to explain and disrupt the continued colonial creation of the Aboriginal issue as a complexity of difference. The two questions that always arose were: firstly, how do I write each section of the thesis in a way to inform the reader that may have no, or little understanding of Yuin epistemology, ontology and pedagogies? The interrelated second question was how do I write this in an academic format? The writing had to find a position to meet the standards of an academic dissertation. In the meantime, I was using the thesis to introduce and maintain a Yuin tradition of indirect and knowledge sharing that may at first be observed as obscure or cryptic by non-Aboriginal people.
The term cryptic is utilised to provide a ‘line of sight’ (seeing Country talk without voice) in explaining a Yuin observational approach to learning (or Yuin pedagogical approach). This living legacy pedagogy (Chapter Four) of feeling is instrumental in understanding the teaching from Yuin Country (which is not cryptic: feeling is a language that is connected to other forms of communication and cultures). My role was to decipher and explain what was shown to me by Country throughout the study via Western language. The thesis and analysis is one big drawing: knowing and being in artful practice.

*My current balanced position*

My analysis had to make judgements, not be judgemental, to protect and challenge both Aboriginal and Western knowledge systems and processes. This was a deceptively simple ~ complex task when I started to explore the varying nearby, within and outside knowledge trajectories (Arcs) and knowledge sites. One particular purpose of this exploration was to diminish the common notion that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge relationships are always complex. The term simple (simplicity) is utilised as the teachings from Country were straightforwardly (simply) placed in front of me: a very important aspect of my cultural education system. The complexity is sharing something that doesn’t have to be known in the context of a Western system that always has to have an intellectual understanding and logical explanation.

The writing techniques had to unpack (including deciphering academic language), keep safe and explain the ‘simplicity’ of Yuin knowledge in the dynamic knowledge movements when two diverse knowledge systems with potential similarities, interact. The cultural teachings from Uncle Max, Gulaga and Biamanga really helped me resolve or reduce the two (concluding) problematisations. Throughout the remainder of this chapter a number of these teachings from the Mountains will be shared and unpacked to a degree that is culturally appropriate. The aspects of the teachings I am sharing will help clarify how they led the cultural experience, research, and the analysis, as well as, how I wrote this thesis and dealt with other difficulties faced throughout the study.
In addressing the problematic issues, which are all part of the dissertation’s journey, including the tensions and constraints experienced throughout the research, I always involved Country. Within, Chapters Two and Four, I examined the Western and Yuin notions of dualities to interpret how the Yuin duality can assist in answering the thesis question. The Yuin teaching of “there are always two” (Uncle Max, personal communication 2008) a teaching from Country was a central and centring theme. This theme and teaching was continuously reinforced and extended through an interrelating teaching on Gulaga, called Middle Rock. Middle Rock helped me to formulate a philosophy of similarities and relate the Yuin duality to Western knowledge approaches. These two teachings have developed into an interwoven concept that demonstrates my understanding of their meaning and how the research question was addressed. Middle Rock will be explored in greater detail throughout my argument in the first pathway of the study.
Figure 17 Pathway (Present, Stayz Pty Ltd 2000)

**Conclusion: Pathways**
A path with Yuin Country through a thesis: Presenting my arguments as pathways

This section of the conclusion will explain the ‘six intertwining pathways’ I took to achieve the purpose of the research. It is an opening to imagine not just mentally, but physically and spiritually the reasoning and potentiality of the research and how this type of knowledge relationship can contribute to taking care of Country. The conclusion, for me, is just as good a place as any, to place stories and informed ideas on a spiritual, physical and mental level to negotiate and build Country’s relationship with a Western knowledge site. In this conclusion chapter, the concept of six pathways provide the means to explore how I currently see and imagine what is required to enhance the possibility of more balanced knowledge relationships in academia.

The following discussion clarifies how I engaged and understood the challenges, tensions, constraints, findings and successes of the research analysis and the writing problematic of this thesis. The six interweaving pathways of thinking, which are in turn aligned with feelings, are articulated as a way of demonstrating how Yuin Country was sung into this work. The first pathway makes the case for the writing technique, which continuously grew throughout the study to explain the research story ~ theory, methodology and analysis. The second claim is my contribution to knowledge: I outline a framework to sing Country into academia through a methodological Storyline/Songline. To achieve this I opened up the third space discourse (Nakata 2007, 2007a; Dudgeon & Fielder 2006; Bhabha 2004) to be inclusive (decolonise/reculturalise) of traditional Yuin knowledge in an ever-moving knowledge(s) relationship. The identification of similarities and damaging differences within this knowledge space (self) relationship between Country and non-Aboriginal people is my second contribution to knowledge. When non-Aboriginal preservice teachers and academics, understand, engage in and behave through Respect Law they can continually locate and relocate themselves (move around) with Country in reciprocation. The purpose of this Country centred relationship is to identify similarities within their own Western knowledge to connect with, and separate differences that may cause damage.
The third contribution to knowledge is how the tensions and constraints of the research presented possible avenues to address university structures and mechanics to be inclusive of Yuin Country. My third pathway, which is linked to my third contribution to knowledge, deepens the discussion on ways to lessen or reduce the ‘limitations, tensions and constraints’ that affect the building of respectful reciprocal relationship within academic structures and Country. From these knowledge contributions the fourth and fifth pathways argue for a shift in thinking and feeling (Harrison M.D. & McConchie 2009; Ungunmerr M-R. 2003; Mowaljarlai 1995; Neidjie 1989) around self as Country ~ Country as self. The Bundi concept/metaphor as my fourth argument is (l)earning how to take on responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings, actions and behaviour with Country. This type of thinking with feeling is relevant for the protection of Yuin knowledge and its spiritual, emotional and intellectual property. Within the same context of self as Country and vice versa my fifth argument is to implement a specific support structure (reminder bird) to assist non-Aboriginal academics to remain and maintain their personal/professional pedagogical relationship with Yuin Country. Finally, my sixth argument is around how power is positioned in the relationship between Country and Western knowledge.

**First pathway: Arguing for a writing technique that connected ~ separated my Aboriginal and Western knowledge sites**

Firstly, I have to share that the writing technique included an enormous amount of re-writing, like any thesis. However my ‘re-writing’ for this dissertation was compounded by the translation that took place from the spiritual level to the intellectualised thesis. The constant re-writing was important because I gave myself the task to find a technique to merge ~ separate two ways of knowing, learning, moving and behaving. The interpretation of Country’s teachings and ‘spiritual emails’ (Uncle Max Harrison, personal communication) into a suitable academic format took a lot of time and patience. As I have mentioned beforehand on a number of occasion, I have been taught to give culture away to keep it. One strategy that helped me within this tensioned context, involved knowing the thesis was a living entity, in which the writing represented a drawing of Country that is alive with spirit. I found myself sharing (in the thesis) my relationship between the two knowledge systems through my own ‘Knowledge (third) space’ as Country that I held/hold. I decided to try and
move beyond Bhabha’s (2004) third space by implementing ~ separating its colonial actions and at the same time decolonising the third space through placing Country central (reculturalising).

With the guidance from Country I added my own personal-twist (Wilson 2008) or interpretation onto this third space so I could ‘see’ it as my own space with Country moving through/as it in its own right. This space had to be in relationship with me, I had to hold custodianship of this space; it had to be Country’s space. For me, any academic choosing to work in this third space has to make it her or his own space, not Bhabha’s (2004) or Nakata’s (2007) or whoever examines this space. Each individual can recognise what has been written beforehand, but be guided by Country to have their own relationship in connection ~ separation to this space. Thereby taking on their own responsibility to work respectfully for all the relationships and entities that are involved, especially Country. Overall my aim was to maintain the integrity of the two knowledge sites: identifying and shifting any elements of my resistance knowledge site to be balance by my resistant knowledge site. Overall, I wanted to contribute to the reduction of colonial practice and residues that still exist in/from Western knowledge and colonial mimicry (Bhabha 2004).

My Writing Journey

In starting the sharing of my story on how I wrote this dissertation, on a number of occasions, a sentence or a paragraph made perfect sense to me in the context to my cultural education. What I was aiming to do was to put my Yuin cultural education communicative approach in an equivalent (some form of middle point) context of/to academic language. However, in many situations, I may have taken this step ‘too far’ (over-emphasised the approach) as it was very difficult for me and the supervisors to find a point that academia may well find suitable within a dissertation: one small shift at a time, Anthony. This is also very much in relationship to me as I was learning and trialling how to do this. Thereby, the main tension for my supervisors was the concern about how it may be interpreted within a thesis. However, I must admit this tension, sometimes was a simple case of me poorly explaining or transcribing my feeling/thoughts from Country into a phrase that could be inclusive of my cultural writing style with academic language. Overall though, when I wrote from this baseline entrenched in a Yuin epistemological, ontological and pedagogical approach
the translation into academic language also included a language that I use outside of academia, took time, support and energy.

The use of layperson’s language and terms really helped me to share this story or walk towards an academic manner of writing. The designation ‘lay’ is a circuitous idea to guide the reader into how the translation from spiritual language materialised. Writing in lay understandings helped to weave in the very fine work and analysis that was required to demonstrate the layered, textured, intricate and detailed spiritual communication taking place. For example, while writing this section of the conclusion, a very old non-Aboriginal man visited me in a Dream. In the Dream Uncle Max told this old man that I, will just lay it out for them, and all the other very old non-Aboriginal people that were present in the Dream gathered around me near a swimming pool. The non-Aboriginal old people had only ever known their own Western way of knowing, learning and behaving, which was represented by the swimming pool (from many re-occurring Dreams that I have had during writing this dissertation). The language of ‘lay it out’ could have multiple meanings. I had to ‘figure’ this out, for what it meant for me, in the present moment.

Birds lay eggs, a rug can be laid out, and a person can be laid out by word or a bundi, or inaction. From my observations of Country, Country (often only viewed as Nature) has always laid out what we, as humans need. When you know the text of the land, food, gifts, tools and knowledge can be seen through an open and respectful mind. I had to communicate in a respectful manner, arguing within a Western power structure called academia for what Country has laid out right in front of us. This is why and how I am explaining my writing technique that I have used for this whole dissertation. As you have just read, I wrote this mainly in simplistic and stylistic language. The technique is just like how Country speaks without voice; it is put very subtly by being laid right out in front of the person to see for themselves; what is right their/there. To extend upon this lay (it out) technique I included a mixture of metaphors; played with the English language; written cryptically with guidance, and in some cases, limited explanations; engaged Western philosophies; and academic language to share what I have learnt.
The technique of the communication used to inform what I call an embedded story with Country, grounding the knowledge shared via this dissertation, involved a lot of frustration at varying times. The frustration came when I was blocked by the dissertation’s boundaries, or I could not explain what I felt from my Yuin understandings. I, at times, criticised myself as being ‘unintelligent’ and held anger towards academia’s lack of flexibility or connectedness: this is when I went to Middle Rock and Country. Middle Rock assisted me to remove my anger and/or helped me to interpret the meanings that I could feel or let me know to keep them as feelings: to stay unknown. Other times I would talk to like-minded people or read other Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics’ work to inform the language required. For example, on some occasions in a moment of frustration with my writing, I would read a section of Yunkaporta’s (2009) or Birrell’s (2006) PhD dissertations. I accessed Tyson Yunkaporta and/or Carol Birrell’s dissertation because they both worked as/with Country, Dreams and varying techniques to explore and explain their thesis questions. This was not for content or a quote, but guidance in writing with/about Country in academic structures. However, my main guidance came from teachings from the Ancients, Gulaga and Uncle, hence I will need to explain my earlier introduction and statement on/of Middle Rock, a teaching from Gulaga.

Middle Rock: I am there somewhere when working between two knowledge sites

From my experience of taking the participants to Gulaga, I came to see how individuals when they opened their mind to her stories, demonstrated in various ways how they still possessed a spiritual umbilical cord to Mother Earth. This umbilical cord (~), is and can be reinvigorated in-between the duality of non-Aboriginal ~ Aboriginal knowledge sites. The umbilical cord represents a middle ground (Country); a passport and passageway to move across from non-Aboriginal people’s Western knowledge site to Country and back; plus, a binding force for dualities to not only connect but also disconnect. These three conceptual aspects are one and the same and characterise how I see my contribution to the decolonisation and reculturalisation of academia’s discourse on the third space.

Bhabha’s (2004) in-between third space for me is an examination of the separating slash between the dualities. Replacing the slash with an umbilical cord that was
developed from the teachings on Gulaga such as the Middle Rock\textsuperscript{11} assisted the participants’ movement into and across the concept/knowledge gap. Each gap or space is not empty but has a story that is unknown. Each individual had to make their own choice to work in, through and learn with the knowledge from a new (old-Yuin) knowledge site and unpack their own version (movable: through continuous learning) of a third space. The middle ground (Country) or rock or umbilical cord concept is the traditional knowledge that stabilises ‘new’ mimicked (Lyrebird: Chapter 2) or hybrid (barramundi [Birrell 2006]: Chapter 2) knowledge from Country.

This umbilical cord is more than a metaphor; it is a spiritual reality that can find points of conjunction between two bodies. In the case and course of this study, it can explain the writing technique I used for this dissertation. As I have been told, births are not comfortable as there are often a number of tensions, constraints and pain. Most snake eggs that come from a Mother are left in the protection of a Mother, Mother Earth. The baby snake is left to find its own way out of a body (an egg) onto the body of Mother Earth and trust in that knowledge system to care for it in whatever form that it may take. The tensions and constraints in this birth of a writing technique are connected to how I felt about the birth and growth of this work. When I came to feeling, thinking and writing the dissertation, especially when I engaged in all of the tensions and constraints I would go to Middle Rock, a Rock that sits between ‘Nature’ and the Spirit world.

\textsuperscript{11} The explanation of Middle Rock is in the next paragraph, this is intentional to provide an example or model of the writing techniques that I have utilised in this thesis to get the reader thinking with ‘deceptively’ simple writing.
The above statement ‘I would go to Middle Rock’, is again not only metaphoric but real. Middle Rock, is a place between love and hate, hot and cold: a place that is a teaching on Gulaga. This teaching is a place and space that can be re-visited mentally and spiritually if you can’t get there physically. During the study, I had to remain very positive to reduce the chance of myself contributing to or creating any barriers and/or incorrect separations, which may have disrupted or limited the learning opportunities from this experience for the participants and the readers. Middle Rock provided the space and place to be conducive to ‘see’ avenues of opportunities when the tensions, constraints and pain arose in what is often called a cultural interface (Nakata 2007) when working across two knowledge sites. The cultural interface (Nakata 2007) did exist and at the same time, didn’t. Middle Rock helped me on many occasions to find a suitable place between a particular tension, constraint or frustration when engaged in an intersection or overlap of knowledge trying to find connections.

From the implementation of the cultural experience, to the research, and the writing of this dissertation, the Middle Rock teaching from Country assisted me to not only see a contested space (Nakata 2007), but also a space for acceptance. This is an acceptance of the borders and boundaries of thinking, feeling and writing in this space of academia. However this acceptance occurs while knowing very well that borders and boundaries can change when Country moves: learning arises or resistance is
experienced. The usage of language is very important as this can effect/affect the whole feel of the learning journey, from the description/interpretation of the participants and Country’s stories, to how the tensions and constraints are seen and disrupted ~ synchronised.

Foremost Middle Rock helped me to ‘just get on with’ the foray into the unfamiliarities of engaging in a thesis that for me is balanced by my cultural teachings. Birds and animals don’t contest, they live in a oneness, they share, care, and hold their Law as Bawaka Country et al. (2013) write, “…Bawaka Country cares for itself. Certainly, part of this care is care for humans that exist as part of Country, but much of it is care for non-human beings” (p. 192). A female spider may lay 1000 eggs, knowingly aware that sharing will occur to support the birds and reptiles that keep their numbers in a pattern of oneness that cares. The middle ground is discipline, a place to share, care and know what respect means within Law: Country holds all of this. If Country holds this, what do we hold as humans when we see self as Country and vice versa: a Bundi?

The Bundi concept has been interwoven throughout the thesis and will be illuminated further when I present my fourth concluding argument. Thus, in reference to the Bundi as a Yuin cultural educational (or cryptic) clue, many teachings in my cultural education are often presented in this indirect and relatively unknown format of communication. As mentioned a number of times throughout the dissertation, Uncle Max would always remind us ‘we have to give culture away to keep it’ (Personal communication 2008-2016).

Yuin learning or pedagogy within the writing technique

Henceforth, when writing this thesis I always reminded myself to go to Middle Rock as well as keeping in mind the following points: ‘giving it away to keep it’; the cryptic (unknown) nature (for non-Aboriginal people) of my teachings and respect. The reason for this is to encourage readers to think and feel, not just be told. To ‘give it (culture) away’, I am not going to always tell the reader exactly what ‘it’ is, because it is their learning journey within reading a dissertation. To be able to receive a more in-depth understanding of the story, the reader in a relationship with Aboriginal people would have to start their own relationship with Country: create their own
knowledge space and story. This dissertation is my story: ‘it’ cannot be someone else’s as it is my relationship with the knowledge holder. In trying to overcome this challenge, I asked yet another question, how do I explain things that don’t have to be explained and or can’t be totally known by us humans (Bawaka Country et al. 2013). I still know very little, with some of the things that I do know, I only know them as feelings, not in a logical language. This *I do not know* is an important concept that will be explored later on in this chapter.

The expectation for a dissertation is for the writing to be explicit in the dissemination of knowledge. To find some form of decolonised/reculturalised ‘middle ground’ (Nakata 2013) between an explicit and an unspoken knowledge system that could not always be in the middle was intriguing, puzzling and at times painful, but I have learnt a lot in the process. In some sections of the thesis I had to directly divulge, other sections maintain a *cryptic* nature. Throughout the writing process I found numerous points or middle grounds (tripartations) that did not always occur in the middle of the two knowledge systems. More often than not, Country as an entity helped me to find and was the middle ground, the one thing that connects us all. This manner of thinking was at first informed by feelings that in some cases took a lot of time to be communicated and logically understood. On many occasions a number of non-human entities conversed with me to assist in the writing and analysis of the data. In trying to explain this to people who haven’t experienced Yuin Country, or a Country as teacher and researcher was very arduous and difficult, but in the end very satisfying.

I would now like to quickly revisit the above discussion (page 216) in regards to my relationship with my supervisors to extend the explanation of the writing technique for this dissertation. Only one of my supervisors had been taken to Gulaga and taught how to read the text of the land (this occurred on two occasions). Meanwhile, the other supervisor has not been on the Mountains (Gulaga and Biamanga) but I will take her there when the PhD work is completed. Thereby we, Country, me, and my supervisors, had a balanced relationship to clarify issues within the context of the research problematic and my writing technique. Consequently, with one of my supervisors having an understanding of the l(earning) system from Country, we could bounce concepts, thoughts and feelings off each other, with me knowing she knew the
On the other hand the other supervisor, who I could still discuss the same issues, had the very important role to keep me grounded within the borders and boundaries of academic writing. A statement that I often found throughout my drafts was, ‘Anthony I do not understand this’, or ‘too cryptic’, which now I am very thankful: Middle Rock.

My relationship with academic writing that influence my writing technique

What I found and sometimes unintentionally came across during this experience of research and writing was a number of connection points with non-Indigenous academics to help me find a writing technique that worked for this dissertation. One such connection was with the writing technique(s) Western philosophers utilise. In the attempts to find a balanced viewpoint through Country to explain a number of concepts the research was showing me, I found that ‘how’ philosophers explored abstract and theoretical questions was beneficial for my writing technique. Philosophical approaches were inclusive of how I wanted to maintain some cryptic and indirect language to explore and explain key concepts. The philosophical approach informed the explanations of similarities, the Yuin duality and some of the analysis. These concepts were often layered within metaphors and stories told simply to explain the simplistic complexity of the work within my intersecting knowledge site. The ‘playing’ with lay language also assisted to explore or philosophise a meaning to terms such as there/their, learn/earn and word/wor(l)d. For example their/there, is placing ‘their’ (not placed) as placed (away from human ownership), plus reversing ownership to the place (Country) as their: putting the, I as in me, into the place (possible new term: theIre). By placing Country to/in both these terms, their/there, then for ‘there’, you can add are to the in, at or that, to place or position. This philosophical approach in connection with my cultural ways of knowing, learning, moving and behaving is a particular centrepiece to how the dissertation was written. I actively looked for connections ~ separations in the many interconnecting dualities to explain or analyse data, a concept or a story.

This study represents my first attempt to unravelling the multiple layers of confusion and clarity in a knowledge relationship that moved and moves in many directions. Essential for this thesis, Western knowledge contains colonial knowledge that is
connected ~ separated to itself, just as it is connected ~ separated to Aboriginal 
resistant ~ resistance knowledge that is connected ~ separated to traditional 
Aboriginal knowledge and Western knowledge. There is no exact middle point or 
middle ground because there are numerous knowledge relationships that exist as/in 
relatedness to Country. However, what I can philosophise is that there are many 
places along the umbilical cord between the navel of Gulaga and the Western tradition 
of the omphalos (Greek word for navel of the earth) that can be a mobile middle point 
for the many learning moments in/with time. This middle ground of/in knowledge 
with Country is a space and place where people will shift/move within the umbilical 
cord of connective knowledge over time. This can occur when each person as a space, 
place and entity in connection to teachings such as Middle Rock can place Country 
central in knowledge production. I may not have written a significant amount, but 
there is a deepness of meaning layered within the writing.

**Second pathway: Arguing my contribution to knowledge**

I have classified my contribution to knowledge as being within one of the six 
arguments used to investigate my thesis question. The reason for this arrangement is 
because it was the breath from my mouth when I sang Country into academia. As I 
have stated, the dissertation and Gulaga are living entities and therefore also breathe. 
You cannot choke on the breath out, thus when you speak or write academically you 
are putting something out into academia; this is who you are, encompassing the 
responsibility you hold in taking care of Country as a custodian.

My overarching contribution to knowledge is my story approach in the form of a 
written PhD dissertation, where knowledge has been informed, balanced and 
stabilised by Country in relationship with Western academic knowledge. Country 
owns my story with me as the custodian. This dissertation contributes to a small 
component of an overall Indigenous story, which has been occurring in academia 
since the first Indigenous academics were allowed into this particular Western 
knowledge system. This work has made a contribution to what other Indigenous 
academics and people have done to be inclusive of Country in academia.
The first contribution to knowledge is a philosophy of similarities (Chapter Four) that was/is inspired by Gulaga and Uncle Max. The Yuin duality of ‘there is always two’ (Chapter Four) is central in the philosophy of similarities, which is guided/driven by tripartation: an umbilical cord that can connect ~ separate Country and Western knowledge to enhance Country’s standing and role in academia. The second contribution to knowledge (Chapters Three, and the methodology sections in Chapters Five and Six) is a framework to connect academics working with Country to form a methodology Storyline/Songline within academia. The third (Chapter Seven) contribution is how the research has provided a means to find connections in Western university structures and processes to be respectful, equitable and inclusive of Yuin Country as a knowledge system (Chapter Two). In this thesis I claim three contributions to knowledge. Connected to this overarching contribution, I claim that the connectedness of these contributions as a factor that can really cause a difference in how Aboriginal knowledge is seen and functions in academia

_Gulaga and Biamanga Story: A Philosophy of Similarities_

In my first argument, I discussed a writing technique that connected ~ separated my Aboriginal and Western knowledge sites. This contribution through a philosophy of similarities (second contribution) was summarised for the reader in order to explain how I designed my writing technique. Throughout the study and my writing I have continually argued and demonstrated how every aspect is connected and interwoven. While presenting the importance of similarities and connections, to protect knowledge in the same instance, certain knowledge must be separated: for example, secret sacred Aboriginal knowledge. Furthermore as I determined in Chapter Six, particular concepts such as social justice assist the non-Aboriginal academics to seek and engage in Yuin knowledge. However, the Western social justice principle of wanting to ‘save the other’ must also take a ‘step back’ into the participants’ Western knowledge site when engaging in the learning space/place of Country: connection ~ separation of social justice.

In the context of the _Mingadhuga Mingayung_ cultural experience, when on Country, social justice for a period of time had to be separated or temporarily compartmentalised within the participants’ Western knowledge site. This leaving behind or brief disengagement from social justice principles while participating in the
Yuin teaching and learning system reduced the Othering of Yuin people, stories and Country. The participants were placed into a Yuin education system that examines self and how self is connected to other entities. Yuin Country, as an entity, produces and holds knowledge to continue the pattern of interconnecting movement in learning, knowing, behaving and practice to maintain life and death. The Western intent and meaning behind social justice is one such example of how the connection ~ separation duality can function in order for Country to reveal knowledge through embedding the stories shared within, and then by the participants.

A number of embodied stories from Yuin Country were placed into a relationship with Western theory. This took the form of my ‘new stabilised’ story ~ theory (resistant knowledge) as I learnt about the Western tradition of a thesis. The storying ~ theory approach of this study was connected by an umbilical cord to show how knowledge production is from Country not humans. Our human stories are connected to Country and can assist non-Aboriginal academics and teachers to go/grow beyond theory. Story cannot be separated from Country, because story(ies) are from and with Yuin Country, however stories from Country can be withheld if the prospect of damage is observed through inappropriate Western knowledge behaviour. Furthermore, secret sacred traditional knowledge is kept very separate. This is not new in Aboriginal knowledge systems, and with this type of thinking around embedding and implementing Aboriginal perspectives, what cannot and can be shared potentially assists non-Aboriginal people see and feel Country to tell their story of connection ~ separation. The philosophy of similarities I designed for academia and implemented in this study is how I, within myself, was able to complete this thesis. Thus, making a contribution to knowledge through my story within a thesis by finding points of connection by acknowledging Western theory in relationship with Yuin storying.

The contribution I have made to Western academic knowledge in this study is not new in my Aboriginal knowledge site. To be respectful in this context the contribution was launched, grounded and owned by Country, which was interpreted through me learning about self and the participants in relationship with Country and Western knowledge. In terms of the impact of my work, the contribution it makes in academia is when points of connection to other peoples’ story ~ theory are found to
establish a Storyline/Songline of connectedness. The word Songline\footnote{Uncle Max Harrison (2009) shares “The Songline are such an important part of our mental and spiritual structure. They are lines of energy that run between places, animals and people. We know at times where the Songlines are and we like to follow them for energy, not only because we can send a message to other neighbouring tribes but so we can keep in touch with animal and bird life” (p. 33).} is used to represent how our Ancients are still alive and at work: as Country. Our Ancients can and are assisting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the context of today within academia. These old Songlines still exist and need to exist in a Country led mimicry and hybridity of academic structures. Non-Aboriginal people can mimic like a Lyrebird from the knowledge of Country in a respectful manner if the right behaviour has been demonstrated and established over time.

Second Contribution to knowledge: Country informing my approach to research

When an Indigenous academic shares their personal connection to Country’s intellectual, emotional and spiritual property in the form of a story, journal article, book, thesis, theory or methodology, their interwoven biography with their own Country’s knowledge can be easily rendered invisible (Martin 2008). Thereby to the best of my ability I referenced Indigenous academics’ ~ Country’s methodologies with respect for their intellectual, emotional and spiritual property of the actual person and their Country. As discussed in Chapters Three, Five and Six in Yuin Respect Law, their writings while on Yuin Country in the context of this dissertation had to be placed in relationship with Gulaga/Biamanga and Yuin Country and vice versa. In so doing their/there work can be respectfully utilised through my negotiations with Country. This was done so I could attach Aboriginal academic approaches, with and by, re-attaching Yuin processes into the specific relationship within Western structures at the University of Wollongong: (re)establishing a methodology Storyline/Songline. Attachment is used in the context of an Indigenous research structure to denote how their/there are entities such as Aboriginal Songlines that criss-cross Australia: same song, different verse. A number of Songlines travel internationally. This work on Storylines/Songlines and methodology could be the focus of further research. For example, with the participation of Aboriginal and Indigenous academics across Australia and the world a methodological Storyline/Songline could be connected to exist in the oneness framework of the
Ancient Songlines. Researching this form of re-attachment could assist in garnering an understanding that reinforces the existence of Aboriginal protocols towards entities such as Songlines from Country that cannot be seen, but still exist.

The introduction to, and negotiations between, academic knowledge (Aboriginal and Indigenous academics’ methodological Storylines/Songlines) and Yuin Country (Gulaga and Biamanga) assisted in the positioning of Yuin methods in a Western format of a dissertation. A crucial point that is required to be mentioned (again) is that the connection ~ separation approach has an embedded protection mechanism. If colonial ambiguities of denial creep into the processes of finding points of connective attachment re-negotiations, re-positioning and a complete removal can happen: responsibility of the human custodians. This side-by-side positioning, re-positioning, attachment, re-attachment and separation through a Yuin Country based pedagogical communication and negotiations pathway helped to develop and inform my storying ~ theoretical framework for the methodology of relationships.

As stated in the Chapter Three, ‘Methodology’ and in the above paragraph, each Aboriginal or Indigenous academic by following their own Country’s Respect Law (equivalent) when creating a methodology in relationship with Country can contribute to singing up a academic Storyline/Songline. If Country with/as a resistant knowledge site is driving the Storyline/Songline then a destabilising hybrid (resistance) form of new knowledge movement is reduced due to the stabilising influence by each individual’s Country’s traditional knowledge. Incorporating a respect filled methodological Storyline/Songline in academia can represent how our Ancients moved across the ‘landscape, water and sky’, in the context of today by traditional knowledge moving with new forms of technologies: a weaving into books, journal articles and dissertations. This can represent how we as academics when working in Western knowledge structures, can re-introduce the connections and similarities that have always existed instead of being separated by Western structures.

Separation has always been required in Aboriginal knowledge systems to protect the owner, Country, but colonisation has colonised this concept as well. For me every time a Country connected methodology is connected/utilised respectfully in this academic Storyline/Songline that already exists, the Songline is re-energised: I have
only pointed out the Songline in my thesis. To stay in touch with Songlines is how we can connect knowledge systems, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, by sharing how our Yuin and other Aboriginal Countries’ knowledge systems and processes have always existed. There is a possibility for non-Aboriginal academics to contribute to these methodological Storylines/Songlines when they have formed a knowledge site (relationship) with Country that has an Aboriginal support system (see below: argument three). The Bundi (see below: argument four) concept/metaphor is connected to the support system to instil the concept of responsibility and ethics to (l)earn the right to hold their own Bundi (argument four). This synthesis which goes past intellectual property to be inclusive of the body and spiritual property in oneness when examining Indigenous knowledge as movements is how my contribution to the story ~ theory and methodology is held within myself and acknowledged by my Elders.

**Introduction to the third contribution to knowledge**

The above argument leads to the third contribution to knowledge, which is discussed in full within my third (directly below) concluding argument. In summary I introduce and suggest a framework of how Western academic structures can shift to become inclusive and respectful of Yuin Country and the custodians of knowledge, Aboriginal Elders and community members. Once more, I looked for points of connection to enhance not only the human relationships but also the educational structural systems and processes to be more respectful, reciprocal and ethical. The question that was shown to me by the research was how can the UOW and a Yuin knowledge system find and move towards an equitable relationship to enhance conciliation with the people through/with Country?

**Arguing for a third pathway in academia: How the limitation, constraints and tensions helped me to see within university structures**

The third argument will expand upon a number of tensions and constraints that were experienced from the research with the concept of time as a predominant overarching theme. The following section will clarify the reasoning behind my findings on how certain UOW structures and understanding of time effected the process ~ outcome of
developing a knowledge relationship with Country. The first tension is the need not to know so that you can be able to know. The second constraint and tension to be examined is the number of time related matters that delineates Western structural mechanics, which can circumvent access to Yuin Country. The third aspect to be articulated is the notion of fear (doing the wrong thing: a human self imposed feeling) in relation to forming a relationship to implement and embed Aboriginal knowledge or perspectives. The fourth tension refers to taking care of (including protection) and demonstrating respect of our Elders and community members who are knowledge custodians within university structures. Finally I will present how Yuin Country contributed to the tensions and constraints of the cultural experience and research.

**Seeing that you do not need to know**

A finding from the study of not needing to know was a pronounced metaphysical manifestation, enticement and tension. The thinking of needing to know was a significant tension throughout the study when the participants, including my supervisors, were stepping towards instigating a knowing in another knowledge site. When the participants realised that they didn’t need to know (the tension was released), the learning process became more conducive. In this invitation of not knowing, is knowing that the more you learn about another knowledge site, like Yuin Country or culture, the realisation of how little is known, was crucial. There is so much to know, but all that is to be known is respect and I don’t need to know.

Respect for Yuin Country, respect of energy (feelings) from Country, respect for Elders, respect for people, respect for non-human living entities, respect of knowledge, respect of research, respect of respect, respect of their own knowledge site and respect of self was what had to be known. This dissertation was filled with these moments of realisation of how little was known by me as a researcher, my supervisors, the academics and preservice teachers. The below quotes are from three academics that participated in the research and demonstrate this concept in their learning journey.

*I don’t know actually what it did but I’m just more aware, I’m a little bit more aware of different ways of looking at what’s going on around me. So for me it’s becoming a case of now, just sort of letting it continue to trickle*
along and just sort of continue to keep my eyes open really, I don’t know that’s the way. (post interview Harry)

It’s like, I don’t know it’s like the blood flowing. It’s not unpleasant at all, it’s a pleasant feeling but it’s actually, there’s a sensation there, I don’t know whether it could ever be measured by an instrument but there is a real sensation there and I don’t know how else to explain it. (post interview Liz)

...knowing that I don’t know at all but knowing that there’s so much to find out (post interview Rachel)

Explaining this, not knowing, and the feelings attached to this research was tricky while analysing the data for the dissertation. For me the not knowing, the inability of the participants to always clearly explain through the intellect, was illustrative in how it felt for the academics and preservice teachers to experience a new (old) knowledge system for the first time. This demonstrated a ‘normal’ (accepted) Aboriginal response and consequence as the interpretation from spirit to the mind does and can take time. What was therefore shown to me, was Country had been at work, providing the sensations for the mind, body and spirit to experience learning through an entity that is not human.

**Constraints and tensions in relation to time and university structures**

What I accomplished during this study was a translation through myself as someone who has been taught to read the text of the land. What I did not know was the success that may occur, the tensions and constraints (frustrations: human feeling), similar to anybody starting and doing their first major research project. I also had to accept that I did not know how Country was going to guide this study. All I had to remember (know) was the following: I do not need to know; respect; and it will happen in its own time. A Doctoral project does have time limitations and a process of needing to know and demonstrate everything, creating a difficult tension and constraint: how do I balance time when this research work is its own living entity. The next question for myself in relation to the tension and constraints was; how did I deal with the tensions and constraint. I have already acknowledged and briefly explained some of the
teachings from ‘Middle Rock’. The Middle Rock teaching, not only helped me to examine the tension and constraints, it took me on a journey to extend my current (ever-moving) understanding of the old ways (Yuin Country knowledge site) today, throughout the study. Thinking and feeling in the old ways (Yuin Country) helped me to feel, think and mimic Country to portray Aboriginal ways of knowing, learning, behaving and artful practice in academia and the actual thesis.

This balancing of ‘old’ Yuin ways with institutional requirements that need to be connected when required, but can’t be strictly bounded by Western borders, such as time was frustrating. For example Elizabeth Jackson-Barrett, Anne Price, Norman Stomski and Bruce Walker (2015) argue; “research timelines placed upon Indigenous communities by Western institutions such as universities are not responsive to community protocols. Research timeframes are generally implemented to meet funding rather than cultural requirements, thereby creating a gap in understanding between the parties” (p. 41). I had to wait on many occasions for Country to be ready to share knowledge and/or me to be ready for Country. This is one reason why there is so much information in the concluding chapter. In response to the ‘time gap’ tension and constraint that occurred for me in a Western dissertation I had to find a balance between patience and forcing the communication process with Country. I had to trust in the Country centred approach and trust in the old fellas (Ancients) that I would be guided within the ‘timeframe’. I would often get a whack from a Bundi if I pushed the time element of being impatient: trying (forcing) to meet a deadline. An example of a whack from a Bundi would be, all of the day-to-day things of life would hit me all at once, limiting or stopping my writing or ‘thinking’ time. When I observed this reminder call I would ‘pull back’ into being patient, and say ‘ok old fella’s got the message’ and things would calm down. Usually not long after demonstrating patience I would get a message from Country to help me on a particular point, paragraph or chapter. For me, it is important to share this even though people might think ‘I live on another planet’, all I would say to myself is that ‘I belong to this planet’. Therefore, ‘giving it away to keep it’ may well help both knowledge systems to come to a negotiated understanding and relevant flexibility of working with, in and around time, in all of its formations and influences.
Respect and time are inseparable in the whole discussion on the respectful reciprocal relationship between knowledge sites that is being sought by this dissertation. To rephrase Uncle Errol West (2000), time is not of the essence, *time is the essence*. Being aware of this knowledge ‘time gap’ did not always help resolve the tensioned feeling I had in attempting to be respectful to both understandings of time. I was not totally happy with the timeframe I ended up working within, however I learnt how to accept what materialised. The issue around time is one area where I currently do not have a clear answer and I am not sure on how to research this in the future: I do not need to know, time may well show me if need be. At this stage it is a future research project. What has happened is I have contributed to the discussion around the differences surrounding time and identifying the need for various pathways for this issue to be negotiated in a collaborative manner.

*Time provisions of including Aboriginal subjects within teacher education programs*

Another tension and constraint in regards to time, was the time allocated to the fourth year teacher education elective subject, ‘Engaging Koori Kids and their Families’. The current demands on teacher education programs to meet the broad ranging political, social and policy requirements in preparing preservice teachers provided a structural constraint. During the time of this study, the UOW Faculty of Education changed the Primary fourth year Professional Experience (PEX) internship from occurring outside of the teaching session to within the 13-week teaching block. All UOW teacher education fourth year primary spring subjects were required to relinquish substantive time in a 13-week semester. This meant ‘EYEK402: Engaging with Koori Kids’ and Their Families’ was reduced to seven, three-hour seminars. The elective subject started, after the preservice teachers participated in their final PEX internship in the first six weeks of the spring session. This was a trying and competing constraint but Middle Rock also showed me this is what I was given. Consequently this frustration has provided me with a vehicle and ‘soapbox’ to contribute to the debate of insufficient time being allocated to preservice teachers’ opportunities to engage within Aboriginal sites of knowledge. Significant time and access to Aboriginal teacher education programs is required for preservices teachers to build a substantial and respect filled relational and pedagogical skill set to work with Aboriginal students.
The now UOW School of Education continues to provide a third year (spring session) Mandatory Aboriginal Education subject for preservice teachers. In addition to the Mandatory subject the preservice teachers have an opportunity to choose to participate in two elective subjects in the Fourth year of the program, one in the autumn session, the other in spring. From a view of knowledge site equity, there is arguably a disparity between this allocation and the chance of success for Aboriginal students in relation to their education in schools. The current time allocations for Aboriginal education in preservice teacher education are insufficient for significant change to occur for the present generation of Aboriginal school students. For example, Aboriginal students in Australia have a Year 12 attainment rate of 58.5 compared to non-Aboriginal Australian students with an attainment rate of 86.5 (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience 2015). For preservice teachers to have a greater chance to increase their ability and skills in meeting the needs of Aboriginal students, further allocation of time, resources, appropriate structural mechanics, and a range of relevant Aboriginal subjects are required.

What I am suggesting is a sequential arrangement of current aligning (points of connection) mainstream subjects be blended with current Aboriginal education subjects to create space for new Aboriginal focused subjects. These new subjects will need to be strategically negotiated and organised with other subjects to help overcome an already overcrowded curriculum. The negotiations need to be designed to find a nexus with university teaching structures to allow the preservice teachers an opportunity to engage in learning from Country or as Bell (1998) states, “Living subjectively in the moment, outside any concept of measured time and space, means that they do not focus [only] on the development of those [Western] intellectual skills necessary for theoretical applications” (p. 170). The theoretical applications are not to be dismissed, but to be included into a number of two-way knowledge (theme/content/pedagogy) subjects. These two-way subjects could be interwoven strategically into one larger (encompassing) Aboriginal subject (Country as Teacher) that goes over the four years (allowance for time to live subjectively) of the teacher education program: this is one sizeable and challenging future research project.

In regards to further thinking around an attempt for the ‘Country as Teacher’ ongoing subject to have more of an opportunity for time to be seen as the essence (West 2000),
Country has to be placed central. If a teacher education program is to develop a meaningful understanding of Country as knowledge holder, with preservice teachers learning the relevant skills of respect, patience and tolerance (Harrison, M.D. & McConchie 2009) of a Country centred approach, a flowing step-by-step structured ~ flexible educational strategy is essential. The term flexible is deceiving because the learning is structured through “cycles and patterns of nature” (Country) in a “spiralling continuum of moments” (Bell, 1998, p. 170). A balanced approach could see Country sharing knowledge, within a relatively unmeasured use of time, for people to learn from Country. In the end, it is what the preservice teachers have learnt, is what they have needed to learn, in this time period that can last a lifetime after learning the Country-based system within a university education degree. This step-by-step coming together of a three-way knowledge system or cycles (see Figure 16) will take time, for time to be seen in an appropriate Country based understanding of time.

The findings from my dissertation project complement Moreton-Robinson (2012), Price (2012) and Labone, Cavanagh and Long’s (2014) work that highlight an inadequate Aboriginal preservice teacher training across Australian universities. Moreton-Robinson (2012) reporting on Australian universities’ preparation of preservice teachers for educating Aboriginal students, presents evidence that there is a lack of training to assist preservice teachers in developing the skills to work and engage respectfully in Aboriginal pedagogical approaches. In the tradition of Aboriginal people (successfully) demanding a mandatory Aboriginal education subject in teacher education (Mooney et al. 2003), we (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people) need to continually push the boundaries for equity. Equity for this argument is meant in the same sense that knowledge can move (Chapter Two), due to what has been shared, learnt and respected within the relationship between the knowledge sites involved. In the view of a continuum or umbilical cord between the knowledge sites in the current state of play, the balance (middle ground) of knowledge equity and power status is very much skewed towards the Western knowledge site. Learning how to learn in a different knowledge site, which is the very same knowledge site that the university sits on/in, will take more than subjects that focuses on success in Western schooling. One of many solutions that are required lie with what this study has presented in this dissertation.
This study, through the *Mingadhuga Mingayung* experience and approach, has shown that the participating preservice teachers have made a step towards a deep relationship with Country. *Mingadhuga Mingayung* provided the first steps of learning, understanding and engaging in an interwoven epistemological, ontological and pedagogical approach. Thus increasing the potential to enhance knowing, moving and behaving with the artful skills in/to delivering Yuin pedagogies for learning in, a Country knowledge site in schools. In the current UOW School of Educations structures, this first step of this journey happens in the third last semester of their four-year teaching degree. In a respectful relationship there is always a realisation that both entities (knowledge systems) have to put more time and effort into the relationship for it to work: more Aboriginal community members and academics are required to provide subjects that support both knowledge sites finding connection point for knowledge conciliation. Meanwhile, academia, in a respectful relationship with Aboriginal people will have to identify a way for this to happen. For this conciliation to occur, respect is always required on all levels. Time is a major factor and focus for reconciliation between Western responses to Aboriginal knowledge and education process. There are a number of Aboriginal people including myself, willing to respectfully support universities to re-think (feel) about their approaches, methods and structures towards their responsibility in a knowledge relationship. In respect, thank you my Country, Gulaga, Biamanga, Uncle Max Dulamunmun Harrison, the participants, the authors of the articles and books used in this dissertation, academia, for this opportunity and, all the individuals, families and communities that have guided me on this journey.

*The constraint and fear of getting it wrong*

The fear of getting ‘it’ (forming a respectful reciprocal relationship) ‘wrong’ was a significant tension within the academics and preservice teachers, which I will claim, led to a troublesome restraint in forming a relationship with Country in order to implement and embed Aboriginal perspectives. Nothing will change in implementing Aboriginal perspectives if fear dominates: Western resistance. The tension in any relationship exists around accepting that relationships don’t always go smoothly or perfectly when there is a need to change the power relationship. Knowing this, and knowing that the key to learning and showing respect, *is how you respond* to change, getting something wrong, and or getting a ‘growling’ (in trouble) from an Elder or
Aboriginal community member. We need academics and preservice teachers to step outside their knowledge system, or colonial resistance, and ‘have a go’, with the university mechanics providing time and support to form relationships. I still get ‘growled at’ when working across knowledge sites, by Elders and community members. Personally I would be more worried if I didn’t get ‘growled’. Simply put, getting ‘growled’ means the relationship is strong. We need teachers not to be fearful of a strong relationship, as there are plenty of hugs as well: always remember, learn what respect might mean for Country, Aboriginal people, then look for similarities.

*How can Aboriginal Elders and peoples be respected as knowledge holders: keeping Aboriginal knowledge safe when shared in university structures?*

Academics and university staff whom control and run university structures and processes should always ask: am I being respectful to Country and its people? Lynette Riley, Deirdre Howard-Wagner, Janet Mooney and Cat Kutay (2013) write on exploring the importance of community engagement when implementing Aboriginal knowledge. They argue:

> Often academia may wish to widen access and skills enhancement, and stimulate non-Indigenous student’s interests, but more as a contribution to their own discipline and subject areas, and with the value being more on theory rather than practice; what this can lead to is an undervaluing or misinterpretation of the intrinsic value provided by Indigenous people’s engagement, cultural knowledge transmitted, and provision of skills for the student’s future profession (p. 255).

The undervaluing of Aboriginal peoples’ relationship with Country, and in turn Country’s role in this relationship, leads to the poor status of Country in Australia as a recognised knowledge site and owner of knowledge. The taken for granted expectation is for Aboriginal people to move towards the Western knowledge site. Therefore, nominally the Western knowledge site is the starting point. We need to start where our relationship is currently placed. This is the first place to find conjunction points for connections that may well lead to relatedness and movement within/towards the middle ground of Country.
Universities Australia (2011) *National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competencies in Australian Universities* points out that many Universities are engaging Elders and community people into university structures. For example:

Griffith University Indigenous Elders provide leadership and direction in university policy development, community engagement, research, cultural protocols and support student activities. They contribute to continuing strategic partnerships and collaborative arrangements with external stakeholders (Universities Australia, 2011, p. 132).

Other Australian universities provide *Elders in Residence* programs to support Aboriginal students and the wider university. These for me are good starting points, however to enhance Aboriginal and Western knowledge relationships, a long-term two-way negotiated strategy of collaboration is required. This collaboration may help the knowledge systems find negotiable spaces within the dynamic knowledge space of overlapping structural entities. Many structures in academia are already put in place to protect power, knowledge, station, access and so on, to reinvigorate the system and protect Western knowledge and processes. For example, reports are required, record keeping on citations, publications, dissemination and funding. Instead of our Elders and community members being treated as impartial or non-aligned guests when they are invited to share knowledge and wisdom; they should be placed into the system fittingly as professors or highly respected knowledge holders.

At the forefront, Aboriginal knowledge should be valued in the academic structures and processes that are inclusive of our structures and protocols: ownership given to the Aboriginal Country and custodianship to the Elder or community member. An automatic respect process should materialise when Elders or community members provide knowledge in academic situations. For example, the knowledge has to be placed in a very similar context, capacity, recognition, structures and processes that are provided to a professor. Any form of dissemination of knowledge, via the Elders themselves, Aboriginal community members, an academic in a collaborative relationship, or the within the various multimodal activities utilised in academia requires an equivalent two-way knowledge acknowledgement. To take this argument
a step further, from an Indigenous egalitarian position, recognition and operating mechanics of both the University’s and the local Country’s cultural protocols and ethical guidelines are essential. In my own words, Indigenous people and Country’s knowledge is still being appropriated and it is our right as custodians to protect our Country’s knowledge, status and intellectual property (Janke & Iacovino 2012; Battiste & Henderson 2000).

Importantly as stated above, Aboriginal knowledge holders (Country and Aboriginal people) are to be treated like a highly regarded academic guest that holds important knowledge. Intellectual, emotional and spiritual property remains with the custodianship of the Elder or community member. Within negotiated university structures, Country remains/becomes the owner of the knowledge with the Elders holding (maintaining traditional knowledge dissemination protocols) the control to ‘give it away’ with a Bundi (see below in argument four) in one hand and a reminder bird (see below in argument Five) in the other. Country will need to be introduced to the university system as a living entity, teacher, knowledge holder and owner of intellectual property (IP). The academic system like any system is not perfect but as I stated earlier (we have to work within the nominal dominant knowledge site as a starting point), this is where our current relationship sits. Henceforth, I must push the borders and boundaries of academia and at the same time insist Western knowledge maintains its vigilance to check autocratic tendencies (Bhabha 2004) to balance and ground the present movements of the knowledge relationship. Thereby Elders and community members should be paid and placed as automatic custodians of the knowledge and holders (custodians) of intellectual property.

The academics working with Aboriginal people of traditional knowledge should be placed as learners, with the Country, an Elder(s) and or Aboriginal academic(s) and/or community member(s), through a formalised agreement. The Elder becomes the supervisor, in a similar sense and format to a Higher Degree Research (HDR) student. When an academic as learner disseminates knowledge from this formalised relationship, as in any academic process, the whole academic structure of referencing and accreditation can be transferred and utilised towards the Elder in a similar ~ different context when a HDR student utilises their supervisors’ knowledge and IP. Recognition of the Aboriginal community members’ knowledge is placed
appropriately into the article, thesis, and so on with Country having ownership and the community members being the custodial holders. Academic accreditation could be in a form of a equitable monetary acknowledgment or a step in recognition to achieving a degree, for example, in knowledge sharing that leads to an academic position: two way learning journey in reciprocation. These are just suggestions, the main point is there should be a formal negotiation that identifies Country as the combining power source. The relationship between knowledge sites has to move beyond Indigenous cultural competencies to a relationship of flexible ~ stabilised equity. This equitable and inclusive formalised relationship requires a capacity to move in relation to how any dynamic relationship moves to maintain respect, reciprocation, sharing and caring: we can move beyond the current dominant human-made structures and processes (borders and boundaries).

Not Knowing: Country’s contributions to the tensions and constraints

Where relationships head or lead to over time is a considerable unknown that doesn’t need to be known. All I am trying to argue here is that Country needs to be in these aforementioned arguments and placed central in the relationships being developed. Country cannot be excluded in the negotiated relationship because Country is the primary knowledge holder of Aboriginal knowledge, in a relationship where Aboriginal people posses the knowledge as custodians to help protect Country. Yes, I am intentionally repeating this maxim to place Country central.

Within this study Yuin Country also contributed to the placement of tensions, barriers and constraints to examine and demand respect. Country tested all of the research participants; this included me as guide, learner, teacher, researcher, writer and participant. For example, access to the sacred site of Gulaga can be placed into the same context as humans; like in any relationship Gulaga may want her own space without people on her, at certain moments in time. This could be communicated/demonstrated through trees on the track or due to the actual weather itself, heavy rain or a feeling shared by Country. To extend this concept further, Gulaga had to be asked for permission to visit her, which included an Elder and then Gulaga herself. Gulaga could not be separated from the negotiation and communicates on varying levels, physical, mental or spiritual; Gulaga had to be ready for the visitors, the research and me (whether to walk on or communicate with). This
was the same for Biamanga. A shift in thinking is required for this conception/perception to take place to build a knowledge relationship with Yuin Country within university mechanics and structures.

Accordingly, how does Yuin Country help in the examination of Western mechanics, in affiliation with time, to enhance the professional development in cultural awareness to identify, implement and embed Aboriginal perspectives? This research gave time to starting a relationship for the creation of the participants’ first stories in relationship with Yuin Country to be shared as their perspective on an Aboriginal experience. The reciprocation is how Aboriginal policies and statements of intent within university structures are to be given priority. I do not know where Yuin Country may lead us (UOW) if such a prioritisation was negotiated in a respectful reciprocal relationship, but what a journey it could be.

**Pathway number four, arguing for an academic Bundi: intellectual, emotional and spiritual property**

*This privileged knowledge within the thesis was given with consent from a knowledge holder.*

This section is only going to be very short, just as the actual impact (being hit by a Bundi) of a Bundi is short but the after-effects can be long lasting. The Bundi as a preventative metaphor (and reality) towards bad behaviour is also long lasting and an important awareness to maintain good behaviour.

No human owns knowledge from Country, Country does. Elders and community members are the custodians to hold, protect, care for and share. If knowledge is appropriated then spirit is corrupted. Colonial disruptions continue and the Bundi looms large. Living with a spiritual and intellectual conscious is all to do with self and all that are you, that Bundi which is you, will rot until you take care of it, yourself.

*Explaining the Bundi and or the hand that holds it?*

Yuin traditional knowledge within a new relationship with Western knowledge can only be held inside the individual’s mind, body and spirit. The spiritual body of Yuin
Country has its own intellectual property, by which if we choose to be ourselves as Country; meaning, we are the embodiment of this spiritual property beyond the intellect. If we, and I use ‘we’ purposely to include Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, appropriate or misuse the knowledge of Yuin Country then we are only harming ourselves on a spiritual level. People must hold their own part in the responsibility to make the many connections, which form the larger part of the story being Country. To protect Country and to protect ourselves we don’t need to know all and claim all. Only Country knows all; it is we humans who can get lost or corrupted in ‘all of this ownership’ by benefiting mainly humans in a knowledge system that is labelled Western. The Bundi represents self-protecting-self (home: Country) but what I have learnt during this time period of doing a dissertation, is that we as a collective known as humanity are a long way from self and home.

Aboriginal people in this pedagogical approach (Legacy) with and as Country (home), if disciplined within ourselves, can obtain support from Elders of knowledge when learning with Country. Academics and preservice teachers also require a support system to learn from the knowledge holder: Country. However the learning, as discussed above, is strictly immersed with behaviour, learning about and being with the living metaphor of the Bundi. The responsibility towards yourself, Country and other people is an interwoven process and relationship with the teachings from Country. A reminder system is needed for Country’s knowledge and the aligning responsibilities including reciprocation by universities, to support non-Aboriginal people engaging in this relational approach to implement and embed Aboriginal perspectives. This support system can assist the participants to become their own Bundi, over a significant amount of time. This may well be seen as a gap or a controversial section in this research project, however all relationships need trust, and trust is often broken. A question I would ask, is it wrong to initiate and seek self-discipline within adults that are engaged in academia, or teaching Aboriginal students while living on Yuin Country?

**Pathway Number Five: Arguing For The Reminder Bird**

*To see this bird and or hear this bird is a reminder that you have a relationship and responsibility to learn with and take care of Country*
A reminder bird is coupled with the Bundi, but is more of a peck or a pat on the back, than a thud. A reminder bird can wheel the Bundi, if required: think of a magpie swooping to protecting its young. Each bird has a story. The reminder role is not designed to be an enforcer (only if someone loses their own Bundi) as it is always up to the individual to make the choice. The role is like when a bird comes and visits you, the memory of the story or responsibility has to be recognised and enacted by the person that witnessed the arrival of the bird. In Chapter Six, I raised a situation, which McLaughlin (2013) calls a ‘default position’. This takes place when non-Aboriginal people revert back under the dominant culture’s ‘spell’. Spell may be a strong term, however non-Aboriginal people can easily get caught up, called back and stuck in their-own knowledge system that dominates the Australian educational, political and societal landscapes.

An Aboriginal support person that is aware of their own middle ground (Country/Tripartation/Umbilical cord) and colonial movement between and within Country and Western knowledge systems can be the reminder bird for non-Aboriginal people learning with/from Country. To explain this concept I will again place myself into the storyline. As an observer-participant within the research, I observed that I instinctively went into a supportive role with subtle reminders when I was witness to, or sensing participants struggling or grappling with dedicating time to engage in their relationship with Country. I was a guide in the learning process but also a circuit breaker to remind the participants that they can move out of and back to triangle thinking (Mowaljarlai 1995): their Western knowledge site. The reasoning behind my argument of what may appears to be a new concept being introduced, reminder bird, is in response to counteracting McLaughlin’s (2013) ‘default position’.

During the research, at first I took on the reminder bird role very unconsciously. I automatically went into this Yuin support role, as I do with people I am guiding outside academia to learn with and as Country. This reminder bird role in a university setting has the potential to respectfully remind participants through informal and formal yarning with direct and indirect messages to be perceived and recognised by the academic or preservice teacher. Throughout the research I observed the preservice teachers and academics engaging in the busyness of the Western world and when we
bumped into each other, on or off campus, it was like I was the reminder of their learning journey with Country. I was not officially a (re)minder or mentor but what I was observing, spoke to the informal role I played to remind the participants of staying engaged with their new knowledge site. This triggered my thinking around the university having a qualified Aboriginal academic, Elder, or community selected cultural person to be that reminder bird and mentor. This needs to be considered when participants are working across and in differing knowledge sites and spaces to build a relationship with Country to implement and embed Aboriginal perspectives. I will quickly step into the politics of the matter; the person in the reminder bird role has to be qualified in Country’s educational system. Qualified is referred to someone who has the skill set of knowing the text of Country and people to respectfully assist non-Aboriginal people to engage in a relationship with Country: to be part of the ‘community’ of oneness.

The reminder bird role is steeped in how the old people (present and past Elders plus our Ancients) reminded me about my responsibility. The old people continue to play this role in their own subtle (and not so subtle- Bundi thud) way when I could not see Country’s teachings or became lost in academia or resistance knowledge. I had to see it for myself through the subtle messages from my reminder birds. If people cannot observe this for themselves then the reminder bird has another role to play. If need be, the reminder bird can be like a ‘little thorn in the side’, to possibly activated a recent or old memory from the cultural experience(s) or on a much deeper level: their own (Ancients) genealogical memory. The Lyrebird Bird in Chapter Two is also representative of a cryptic message on genealogical memory, as the Lyrebirds progeny re-call the songs of their Ancestors without hearing the sound/song (Uncle Max Harrison, Personal teaching 2010). The triggering of memory is to remind the academic/preservice teacher of the responsibilities of initiating and holding a new (resistant) knowledge relationship with a very old knowledge site that is in oneness with/as Country. This also relates back to the message contained within the prologue of the dissertation. People can walk away with/from self and Country knowing that it is disrespectful: it is all too easy to be caught within the knowledge site that non-Aboriginal people know and live every day.
The *reminder bird* role can be negotiated through similar roles already embedded in Western structures, for example, a mentor or a supervisor. Anyone can get lost working across knowledge sites as demonstrated by the poor Aboriginal students retention rates at Australian universities. Pechenkina and Anderson’s (2011) research on the statistical data from forty Australian Universities from 2004 to 2009 on Indigenous commencement and completions rates reported to the former Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) states: “Based on this data analysis, there appears to be a disparity between Indigenous enrolment and completions numbers” (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011, p. 9). It is important to be reminded that we all can be turned back around and walk back into the relationship of another knowledge site after the relationship has been introduced: if you want to.

As suggested in the above section their/there is a Yuin support system in existence to help Aboriginal learners engage with Country as knowledge holder. Currently at UOW there is no Yuin and UOW negotiated structural support system in place to assist the capacity to continually engage participants in their new knowledge site with/as Country. For non-Aboriginal academics and preservice teachers willing to hold two (three) knowledge sites, a system of communication and mentoring needs to find a space and place within university structures. For these collaborative negotiations and interactions to occur, I will repeat, qualified Aboriginal Elders, and/or academics, and or community people are required within universities. Further research on non-Aboriginal people participating in our knowledge system is required to fine-tune how Country can work within a Western university institution(s). This reminder and/or support system is not only desirable but a necessity for the participants from a Western system that does not see (as of yet) and provide structures to include and value Yuin Country as a knowledge system on an equitable standing.

* A call for change through choice

My suggestion that contributes to the discourse surrounding the interactive *knowledge space* (for example, Bawaka Country et al. 2013; Yunkaporta 2009; Martin 2008; Nakata 2007, 2007a; Birrell 2006) can become a reality. However, in our current knowledge relationship, the choice I am provided with is to argue for, and push the borders and boundaries to place Country central in academia. Ultimately the power
remains within the Western knowledge site that is dominated by human policy. It is the prerogative of, in idiomatic English, ‘the powers that be’ within the university structures. I am clearly stating that currently knowledge decisions are skewed towards the Western mainstream knowledge system and structures. Yuin or Aboriginal knowledge is often compartmentalised into ‘Reconciliation’ and or ‘Social Justice’ to implement ‘Aboriginal perspectives’ within academia. Aboriginal lives are not a perspective to be placed outside of Western knowledge or contained within Western knowledge structures of what Aboriginal knowledge should be.

Universities have an opportunity to provide a platform within and perhaps beyond current policy guidelines in partnership with Aboriginal communities to demonstrate that Australia has it own numerous localised Aboriginal knowledge sites. As my study demonstrates, Yuin Country can provide an opportunity to move in relationship with the foreign, but known Western knowledge, to disrupt Aboriginal perspectives as being ‘othered’. For example, my life is not a perspective. ‘Aboriginal perspectives’ has remained ‘othered’ because humans hold power over people and Country. Western knowledge structures, including their own mimicry and hybridity (Chapter Two) have created an opportunity to have a partnership with Country from Aboriginal people advocating through resistant and resistance Aboriginal knowledge. Western knowledge in academia through its staff now (still) has a choice because the gift and support systems have always been available to be shared: the power of respectful reciprocal relationship of being in oneness (Umbarra video 1996 cited in Rose et al. 2003)/relatedness (Martin 2008)/relationality (Wilson 2009) with Country.

**The sixth pathway: An argument on future research and the role of power in knowledge relationship**

In the above discussion on the tensions and constraint I have suggested a number of proposed directions for future research. An investigation of university structures can assist the institution (UOW) to examine its own culture. In particular identifying Western ‘taken for granted’ cultural, political or societal practices towards Aboriginal inclusivity/exclusion. Knowledge is power, with Country holding knowledge, then power belongs underneath us, not in non-Aboriginal peoples’ minds and hands. An example of this human power can be related to the purpose/question behind non-
Aboriginal people seeking employment in regards to land management. Cape York Elders and Community Leaders (2013) from an Aboriginal fire management perspective argue:

People that don’t know Country, that have an outside approach in terms of management have a totally different way with the land, those people just come and go, they are not connected to the land it’s a job for them. There’s a big difference to a job and belonging to something, you got to go to the original people from that area to learn about fire or whatever that traditional management is (p. 61).

Having employment within a university and meeting its requirements to keep your job in regards to universities’ Aboriginal polices is totally different to being connected to where that job takes place. Humans, within university structures and policies, hold power, not the actual place (Country) that is powerful and full of knowledge. This study provides an opportunity for non-Aboriginal academics and preservice teachers to know Yuin Country, not just do their job. This approach to knowing Country is about belonging/connecting to/with Aboriginal people for a relationship with knowledge and importantly Country. Mowaljarlai in Bell (1998) shares how this gift of connection/belonging for non-Aboriginal people has been blocked by many fears held by non-Aboriginal people: for example, a politicians’ fear of losing the power of making decisions over Aboriginal people; academics locking up the evidence of our gift within the institution; and disseminating this knowledge, using academic language and protocols to obscure the gift of belong/connecting to Country (Bell 1998). Thus, maintaining human power and therefore ownership.

This research has demonstrated that non-Aboriginal academics and preservice teachers could hold a Yuin knowledge site and personal relationship with Yuin Country in order to have a respectful reciprocal professional knowledge relationship. The preservice teachers and academics were able to share their present stories of relationships with Country within the context of Country being the holder of knowledge. This research has also established that non-Aboriginal people, while learning from Yuin Country, have the capacity to be aware of their own self in relationship to their Western knowledge system. Furthermore the research offered a
viable framework on how Country can stabilise mimicry, hybridity and the corruption of Aboriginal traditional knowledge. However, a number of questions arose to demonstrate the gaps of the study. For example how can Western knowledge also contribute to stabilising concepts such as mimicry and hybridity?

After reviewing the study, a number of other gaps were identified to place Yuin Country central with university structures. This project didn’t have the capacity to explore the overall nature of the participants’ involvement and commitment to learning with Country. An interesting question for future research might ask, ‘why are non-Aboriginal academics and preservice teachers interested in Aboriginal cultural awareness?’ Such questions could explore the purpose of the participant’s involvement. For instance, is it to meet part of their work/job description/requirements, whether or not prompted by mandatory requirements? The question should seek to prompt an exploration of whether the participants have a deep want or need to learn about how they relate/identify/belong with the Aboriginal Country. On the other hand, such questioning might reveal the academic or preservice teacher is more interested in furthering his or her career (power over not with).

What has been significantly identified from my reflections upon this study was the research didn’t have the capacity to examine the participants’ daily engagement and obligations to their Western knowledge structures and imperatives in relevance to their new knowledge site with Country. This would be useful and worthy of a further investigation because it may help identify the tensions and constraints felt by the participants when developing a respectful reciprocal relationship with Country. Lastly the capacity of the study was not inclusive to an exploration on how to form a relationship to embed and utilise Yuin Country and the Bundi concept into the UOW’s ethical guidelines. The field of Indigenous research is one area in academia where the Bundi concept is gathering momentum, but not in teachings everyday practice of knowledge sharing. Overall these future investigations of respectfully counterbalancing the dominance of the Western education system, should focus upon the possible stabilising role Country can play in finding two-way knowledge connections ~ separation with people working in university structures.
How does Power sit within this relationship?

A small but effectual aspect of this research was the identification of the influence colonial mimicry and hybridity is enacting power in current Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge sharing relationships. All people to some extent are aware of Country or what is often termed as ‘Nature’s power’. A major epistemological and ontological shift would be required for Western knowledge to see the power of Country beyond the concept of ‘Mother Nature’ as either angry or happy. To have any shift in power that can be inclusive of Aboriginal people, the relationships humans have with power today needs to shift back towards the knowledge site that holds immense power: Country. Humans in the sense of ownership may well need to relinquish power, instead of holding power over Aboriginal peoples: this is the crux and difficult part for a true knowledge relationship to happen. The word true is used to reinforce the Country’s own Law for respectful reciprocal Aboriginal ~ non-Aboriginal relationships. Western knowledge’s own hybrid and mimicked form of power that entrenches colonisation as a living entity, with dead laws (Rose 2004) needs to be reduced. Yuin Country provided a possible avenue for the academics and preservice teachers to achieve a disruption of human power being unruly and unequitable. Country as traditional knowledge within the context of providing knowledge today in academia and schools is a framework for power to be placed in a form that can be fittingly used by humans: holders/custodians, not owners. My speculation about the direction of research on this power relationship is only at the stage I am in (k)now. I was given an opportunity to write this dissertation through Country’s guidance, and by looking at self when analysis the research data, the power was with Country, I was only intelligent enough to interpret. This would be similar to all the future research projects. The utmost question for me throughout this dissertation was, how could I in this role take care of Country?

This study identified that knowledge and the power relationship that currently exists in Aboriginal and Western knowledge should be owned by Country. This recommended shift in the station of power and its proprietorship may well enhance the capacity of Country(ies) to be an authority for us humans to maintain life. Therefore, overtime Country can progressively become our primary contributor to appropriate knowledge relationships in Western education structures and systems,
related knowledge movements (resistant) and knowledge production in academia and schools.

Closing thoughts: Where Am I, At?

One day walking on Country a scribbly gum really grabbed my attention, so I stood their/there with that tree until I too became a tree. The strength of this tree to be able to just stand their/there in its own presences, connected by their family and the surrounding community was simply amazing. Visualise standing there for over two hundred years. Can you imagine the power, strength, patience, tolerance and the respect needed to host, hold, share and care for all those that visited, moved in, passed by, stole, and gave, to this life of standing right there/their in the now/know. I mustn’t forget the shade, tools, weapons, medicines, healings, and many other gifts that this tree provides for self, families and the community it belongs to. One member of the community is the humans/people who had been in relationship with this tree and its Ancestors since we humans were created after the tree. This respect, tolerance and patience is required of us/ourselves, as well as our white brother and sisters that are only children in this particular relationship with the tree in Australia. A question should be asked, do we see our white brothers and sisters as colour or do we see them as trees that hold colour to demonstrate the healing that they hold? Each tree/human, its family has there/their own colour of healing to present if humans can see the great gifts a tree can offer: what knowledge and strength do these old and young fellas hold.

How the Research impacted on my Learning journey with Country

Birrell (2006) quoting Uncle Max Harrison on how he shares cultural experiences for our white brothers and sisters:

We walk the land, start feeling it out; look at different areas, what to keep away from; where people can just go and sit and meditate, and sit and get in contact with all the Old Fellas; try and teach them how to get, to receive those spiritual emails; try to let people start to learn to look at the land talking to them, and listening to the land talking to them (p. 377).
This study was/is an avenue for me to continue the legacy of trying to share the gift of knowing like a tree: an identity of connection to belong, not a ‘white’ appropriation of Indigeneity. What was determined at the end of the data collection and analysis was each academic and preservice teacher had a relationship with Yuin Country. From this knowledge relationship stories were able to be to shared with their families, friends and in their teaching in Western educational institutions. The participants were provided a pathway to mature their understanding and skill of accessing Country’s knowledge database: if they choose and/or if Country chooses. The participants had established an initial relationship. What became prominent in the post-experience yarning session was the absolute need for further steps to support their personal and professional journey of engaging in a Country centred system and process of knowing, learning, behaviour and artful practice (skill set). As Rachel a participating academic stated:

That is something that I have certainly spoken with the students here at university is that everybody has a story to tell, everybody has different levels of understanding, awareness, acceptance, acknowledgement, but it’s about telling your own story and I think for me that has been most significant that I feel comfortable telling my own story. And in saying that too is that understanding that my story won’t end, my story is developing with my connections with people, place, Country and I find that by sharing my story, I am also growing in that way as well. So and yes in saying that I feel that there is just so much more to learn, so much more guidance, so much more support, so much more sharing, so much more yarning, to help me in that growth of my story as well. That’s been the big thing. (Rachel, post-experience yarning)

A continuing support system, the reminder bird, inclusive of new and related (existing) research is required to help participants to continue their story, relationship and learning with Country. Respect Law for me is essential if non-Aboriginal people choose to engage in teaching and research on/with Aboriginal people, communities and Country. Respect Law from Country can also enhance research guidelines in academia. Presently in Australia, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (2012) and the National Health and Medical Research Council
(2010) have produced Indigenous research guidelines and protocols that are continually re-set to create and maintain a respectful research environment. The purpose and behavioural practice of what, why and how a non-Aboriginal academic engage in research is a border that has to be kept very well patrolled. This guardianship is to minimise and stop inappropriate research and related concerns such as data sovereignty that can and is still damaging Aboriginal people and Country today (Kukutai & Taylor 2016; Simonds & Christopher 2013; Cochran et al. 2008). Academics forming their own reciprocal relationships with Country, the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal academics is one avenue to lessen colonial damage through the practice of research. In turn for me, the most important aspect to assist the progression of appropriate research and teaching practice is to place Country and Aboriginal academics in a binding relationship with non-Aboriginal academics and preservice teachers in Respect Law. This can assist a healing process between both knowledge sites and people by enhancing all of our ethical (Bundi) understanding and behaviour in relationship with Country and self.

Even with my intent to engage non-Aboriginal people in a Yuin approach to knowing, learning, behaving and practice, Country shifted my view, language and pedagogical approach in alignment with Country as teacher, to observer and ‘see’ the participants’ spirit. Within this context I still named the participants as non-Aboriginal because this is how I started the research project, however I cannot label their spirit. I have shifted to seeing people as trees (family/community) as a number of introduced tree species hold colour for healing (~) as well as competing; spirit is becoming clearer. The varying colours in trees and plants inform people when a fruit or leaf is ready to either heal or harm humans if ingested (Harrison, M. D & McConchie 2009). From my teachings with/from Country, Elders, my colleagues (in particular a reviewer for my second published article, Chapter Five) and the participants themselves, I was further challenged within myself on how I ‘see’ the participants through my use of academic language.

The preservice teachers and academics are a part of my (tree) community: a community of learners with Country with me holding a responsibility of being a guide, Bundi, *reminder bird* and teacher. Trees hold so much for us to learn and therefore so do people, no matter what Country their Ancestors come from. The responsibility also
lies with each individual, as it is their choice to continue this relationship and how to behave when given a gift as an adult. Hence, in relevance to the next step in my thinking around guiding the academics and preservice teachers to implement and embed Aboriginal perspectives, I wait to look, listen and see what Country shows me in this academic space. I do not know a complete answer but I can share my story as it evolves.

Starting at the end, ending at the start

The problem is, and rightfully so, the participants and myself as the researcher had to find our own stabilised solution (resistant knowledge sites and Arcs) in connection ~ separation with Yuin Country, colonial products and residues, resistance Aboriginal knowledge and Western knowledge. My problem, which is not a problem, is that I cannot give a solution. What I can do is share my story so far, on how I am trying to connect and separate myself through acceptance ~ resistance to take care of Yuin Country. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) argues the Western research is obsessed with problematising the Indigenous and non-Indigenous issue and how Western knowledge must be decolonised. I agree with Tuhiwai Smith (1999), but also Nakata (2013) when he suggests that there will be negative consequences to Indigenous knowledge production if anti-colonial knowledge mimics its own resistance.

Finding a moveable and mendable middle range that is contested but not, is a way knowledge relationships or relatedness, can continually find connection points to reduce colonial offshoots and residues. In a way we need the knowledge that colonisation comes from in partnership with Indigenous knowledge to heal its (colonial) own poison: only Western knowledge can heal itself. As I, can only heal myself through/with relationships. What I have been able to do is examine the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal sites of knowledge known to me that are all connected ~ separated to help me heal and to explain ~ not explain the research findings: a small step to assist academia to be more respectful and open to Country’s language through my story. The discussion of my relationship between knowledge sites in relationship with the participants showed a story of how knowledge currently fits and sits within me. A successful aim of the Mingadhuga Mingayung experience and of this research study was the identification of philosophical and practical ways to reduce or even separate, when required, the damaging aspects of Western knowledge and resistance.
Aboriginal knowledge. At the same time the research found a number of connective points for spirit to enter this process of each participant building their-own knowledge relationship with Yuin Country.

All school students, teacher education preservice teachers and academics should have an opportunity to be introduced and form a relationship to the entity that has been termed in Aboriginal English, as Country. Thereby the spirit of each individual can have an opportunity to connect to the spirit of the Country they are living and working with/on. Ireland (2009) who presents herself as a non-status Anishinabe – Métis scholar states, “I use ‘reclaim the learning spirit’ … in spite of 500 years of colonisation, the learning spirit needs not ‘reclaiming’ but, merely, the place and space for expression” (p. 5). If educational institutions cannot see the value in the learning spirit of students in connection to Country then a complete separation has occurred between mind, body and spirit: colonisation is still in practice. Every student has gifts, talents and a spirit. Western education systems have an opportunity to work with Aboriginal people on an equitable standing of knowledge systems to enact or grow spirit for a holistic educational approach of the individual student that attends Western schools. The gift of taking care of Country is tensioned, as students/children/youth are the future generations that will have the role to take care of Country that is still underneath colonial influence.

All I am asking for is reciprocation. Aboriginal people are encouraged to learn in a Western knowledge site: schools and universities. What this research study provides is a negotiable framework for teacher education and university structures to encourage non-Aboriginal people to engage in our Yuin knowledge system. Aboriginal academics engaging in research through a Country driven methodology can contribute to an academic Storyline/Songline. The researcher that is entrenched in relationships with the participants, communities and Country can use research, not to separate knowledge and power away from the relationship into academia, but transfer it to Country and all the entities that live with Country: singing up the Songline. Learning how to ‘sing Country up’ in academia via a philosophy of similarities ~ differences can help develop non-Aboriginal peoples’ own understandings of relational responsibility with Country. The learning journey can help resolve the problem of non-Aboriginal academics and teachers being able to work with Aboriginal people to
form a relationship with Country. This ontology of being with epistemology and pedagogy leads to the insertion of tripartation between Aboriginal ~ non-Aboriginal people. Thereby, an individualised knowledge relationship can initiate a journey of finding similarities with Country holding knowledge and power. This opportunity for a reconnection with Country provides a prospect for all people to take care of Country through our own and numerous interwoven respectful reciprocal relationships. What may this well mean for academics and preservice teachers in teacher education? Well, for me, I must hold my own Lore/Law. Whereas, for the academics and preservice teachers, after they are introduced to our primary carer and knowledge provider, they have to make their own choice. It is up to each academic and preservice teacher to engage in, and contribute to, a respectful reciprocal knowledge relationship with Country.
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References for images

Figure 6

Figure 17