



**The Secret Life of An Aborigine  
Memoirs of Shane Coghill, Goenpul Man  
Quandamooka Stories as Heritage**

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submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of  
Master of Philosophy

to the School of Humanities,  
Arts, Education and Law Group

December, 2010

## **Statement of Originality**

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. It is my knowledge and belief that this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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Shane Coghill, 2011

## **Acknowledgements**

The majority of the research for this thesis would never have begun let alone be completed without the invaluable help of the old people who gave me the intestinal fortitude to carry on when the going got tough. I acknowledge the contributions they have made during my life, and continue to make. I mention them by name throughout this thesis.

Special people I wish to thank individually are: Glenda Nalder, Jonathan Richards, Denise Coghill, Steven Coghill, Brian Coghill, Russell Coghill, Liisa Coghill, Michael & Dee Fitzgerald, Chris Hubbert, Christine Andrews, Annie Ross, Aunty Thelma Campbell, Uncle Cliff Campbell, John Campbell, Uncle Keith Borey, Elizabeth Davies, Elizabeth Nunn, Janice Mitchell, Lee Butterworth, Jill Jones, Kerry Schodel, Tracey Michel-Innocend, Paul Turnbull, Rune (Stephen Rooney), Lyndon Murphy, Dale Kerwin, Rebecca Ward, Briony, Susan Forde, Lee and Sheryl Thompson, Natalie Parish, Conrad Macrocarnis, Michael Meadows, Brad Pimm, Graham Cox, and Mick Petter.

Organisations: Yuggera (Thompson Family) Traditional Owner Association, Mookin Bibonmari, Goenpul (Dandrabin) Traditional Owner Association, Wangerriburra Tradition Owner Association, Ngugi Traditional Owner Association, Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordination Committee.

## **Abstract:**

Stories told to us by our family members, and stories that we tell inside and beyond our families not only become 'our heritage', but are integral to our sense of self. As 'Aborigines' (Indigenous, or First Nation peoples) our stories also become a form of resistance to the taking on of identities based on stories told *about* us by writers (historians, anthropologists, journalists) from cultures other than our own. The argument of this thesis is that strategies of colonisation – oppression, domination, and genocide – that were and still are perpetrated against Aborigines result in the living out of 'secret' lives. This is how we have survived and how our ancient culture has endured. My thesis encompasses the secret life of a Goenpul man in modern Queensland. It is based on my experiences of living and interacting in two worlds - one brutally harsh and public and the other secret and loving.

The way that I tell stories in this thesis is in 'memoir' form, which is related to the autobiographic genre of the Western literary tradition. Unlike the autobiography, the memoir does not seek to encompass the lifespan of its author, nor does it seek to communicate his or her personality. The memoir is a form of writing often used by people in public life, but these are mostly considered to be self-serving, and do not stand as record until thoroughly critiqued by an 'expert' from the field of political and/or social science. Some see the memoir as a 'mongrel' form (Hampel, interviewed by Wexler, 1996) somewhere half way between fact and fiction.

Whereas the autobiographical genre (provided that it is accompanied by or embedded within an appropriately researched social, cultural and historical context) is gaining acceptance within the Western academy as a legitimate research methodology known as 'auto-ethnography' (Sparkes, 2002), this is not the case with the 'memoir' form that I have chosen as my 'methodology'. So as to gain acceptance for the results of my study, my stories are accompanied by selected contextual explanations about phenomena that have been written by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars in the Western academic tradition. I also refer to writings *about* Aborigines in journalistic or other generic styles that have been 'authorised' by their inclusion as evidence in scholarly works by experts.

In defense of my chosen story-telling style, I argue that the memoir is an appropriate approach because my Master's study is not just about what happened, but also about *why I remember what happened*.

### **Warning**

This thesis includes references to Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people and Elders to have passed on. It contains content that some readers may find distressing and/or disturbing. It includes racist and coarse language. If anyone finds my writing offensive or disrespectful this is not its intention.

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**MEMOIRS (1) The forming years**

*FAMILY*

Granny Janey Sunflower  
Nanny & Grampy Moreton  
Exemption  
Uncle Archie Newfong  
Uncle Jimmy Newfong  
Aunty Louisa Jones  
Mum and Dad  
Benjamin Moody Coghill  
Another level of Aboriginality  
Mabel Jane Moreton  
Other Elders

*CRABBING*

*UNCLE JIMMY*

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*1964; NINE YEARS OF AGE*

*INALA*

Paper, Tele

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*AUNTY BERYL*

*BOBBY McLEOD*

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## **FOREWORD:**

*Our people belong to the islands  
For eons we have lived with the sea  
The dolphins we hail as our Ancestors  
Sometimes I hear them calling to me*

*When I am all alone and wondering  
And things start getting me down  
I remember my life with the seashores  
And the magic that is there to be found*

*The long days spent hunting and gathering  
The nights safe from the cold and the wet  
All huddled close listening to stories  
These memories I can never forget*

*Today I live in a city  
A new set of wrongs and rights  
I could never understand what racism meant  
Until I encountered the whites*

*They forced our people to assimilate  
They hated the color of my skin  
The whites mocked and humiliated me  
Oh where is my Dreaming again*

*Our people believe in equality  
No hate, no racism, no color  
We opened our lands to the white-man*

## **Who is Shane Coghill?**

My European name is Shane Coghill. I am a Goenpul man from Quandamooka. Circumstances forced me to hide my Goenpul identity and name from all of my European friends for most of my life. I grew up in the school of hard knocks at Inala, and it goes without saying that I am no Saint; I have lived hard and played hard for most of my life.

I am the fifth oldest child of eleven - three girls and eight boys. One older brother and a younger sister died when I was a young child and I never got to know the people that they might have been. The death of my brother directly affected the way that I was to be raised by our old people; this becomes evident throughout my thesis.

I got a very basic formal education attending Wynnum North State School to grade two. Then I commenced grade three at Dunwich State School until we moved to Inala. In Inala I went to the Serviceton South State School. Here I went right through to complete primary school and to eventually attend Inala State High School. I was asked unceremoniously to leave this school in grade ten for fighting with a teacher.

I played Rugby League for a couple of local Inala teams and was given life suspension for having a fight with a referee at the age of fifteen. I was eventually incarcerated in a 'school of harder knocks' - several Youth Detention Centres - for several months. After experiencing an element of freedom, some of which I lived on the streets of Inala, I joined and rode in a Motorcycle Gang, *The Saracens*.

I could never understand why just about every white person that I met did not like me. I had to find out why, and that is one of the main reasons why I had to eventually get a further education.

Somewhere in the middle of all of this I got married and had one beautiful daughter. I now realise that having grown up in Inala with me as a father was as much a burden as a help to our daughter.

Some of the racist attitudes of people, especially if they were 'some-time' friends, has haunted me most of my life – like a 'friend' who told my future wife (when we first started going out together) that 'it's all right to sleep with him (blacks) but you don't want to marry one; no other white man will want you after that'. These were the racist attitudes of the times that, when continuously experienced are on board as hatred directed at me personally, so that I never really had much of a chance of happiness.

To get 'an education' I'd thought that I would have to go back to grade one and start all over again. Eventually I went back into formal education at the Kangaroo Point T.A.F.E. College when I was thirty years of age. I re-learned how to read and write by doing a senior entry access course. I was told that it was equivalent to a Junior Pass. On completion of this course I was accepted into the Associate Diploma of Applied Science (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Welfare) program. After completing the Associate Diploma I then enrolled to go to university. It was through tertiary education that I learned the horrible truths of why the Europeans and others hated me. Some of the reasons for this hate are what I have chosen to partially explain here. Though to research and thoroughly analyse what hatred and racism is and to be able to explain it would require another research project.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*Firstly I must pay my respects to the Traditional Owners of this land and all of the Traditional Owners who have gone before.*

In the foreword to this dissertation, I explained that university study had opened my eyes to the bigger picture. It clarified for me that the racism and hatred I experienced, and could not understand (as I emerged from an idyllic childhood being nurtured by my extended family) was not something that I brought upon myself personally, but was/is the process of colonisation as it is experienced by the colonised.

The aim of this dissertation is to place my life experiences within a socio-historical and philosophical context for my readers (family, friends and academics). I am aware that the academic reader's expectations are that I follow the conventions of the academy. These conventions demand that I demonstrate that I have studied what others have written about Aboriginal people and relations between the colonisers and the colonised in our short shared history in this country; that I have used, and can justify, a research method that is recognised by the Academy; and that I can communicate what I have discovered using a logical structure that carries a rational argument for any claims that I make.

Given these expectations, and those of my family and friends, my task in this chapter is to explain my purpose and what I hope to achieve (my aims); and to address the methodological and other issues that my study raises for the Academy. It is also expected that I introduce here the literature that I studied, and explain how it informed me as I craft an argument for the position I am taking in the chapters that follow. This dissertation aims to 'authorise' my 'truth' within the Western tradition of scholarship.

## **1.1 Aims**

The aim of this dissertation is to ‘set the records straight’ about the Goenpul. To address its two readerships – the children of the Goenpul and the Western Academy - I will use two writing conventions: narrative and academic. By reflecting on the intimate experiences of being Goenpul and the issues that have directly affected our people’s basic human rights, I open many other areas for investigation, thought and discussion. The academic convention is employed to meet the requirements of the Academy, that is, to demonstrate that I have studied the broader historical and social context of my life experiences.

## **1.2 Memoirs - structure and purpose**

My memoirs – a collection of life stories appended to this dissertation – stand as testimony to the far-reaching violence of a racist colonial regime – of which reconciliation, native title, land rights, and ‘interventions’ are contemporary examples - that continue genocidal relations of the contemporary colonial state (Short, 2010). Following the Western Academic ‘order’, these personal stories ‘sit behind’ the dissertation proper, which must provide evidence of scholarship undertaken in the Western tradition. However the reader can choose the order that interests them.

When I reflect on why the events I have recounted in my memoirs stuck in my memory, and why these stories, apart from the many stories that I could tell, are the chosen ones for this project, I consider that it is because they represented transitional stages in my life:

- *the ‘forming’ years*, where I gained knowledge by learning in the traditional Goenpul way, on country;

- *the 'un-learning' years*, spent in the classrooms of various schools;
- *the 're-forming' years* – when I was excluded from mainstream schooling and incarcerated in the youth detention centres;
- *the 'activist' years* – my introduction to the land rights struggle;
- *the 'welfaring' years* – my reconnection to mainstream learning (the TAFE Indigenous Welfare Course);
- *the 'betrayals'* – the demise of good intentions and good works;
- *the 'Academic' years* – the study of archaeology and anthropology, and the clash of knowledge systems – the abandoned Honours Year and on-country work with an academic colleague - Dr Annie Ross of the University of Queensland, and finally,
- *the reflecting years* - this Master of Philosophy study at Griffith University – where my priority has been conciliation before reconciliation, and transformation through the process of 'reconstructing' Goenpul subjectivity.

Throughout I refer to the source of our traditional knowledge and practices by using the term *Goenpul*, (*Time Immemorial*) to indicate that our concept of time as distinct from, and in opposition to, the Western notion of time as linear, numerically sequential, and chronologically governed.

My primary consideration in approaching this writing task was to produce a work for successive generations of the Goenpul to read. I have also written it for our alienated Grandmothers and Grandfathers who were forced to take their children and live away from their Traditional Home-range Estate, never really comprehending why we were treated so shamefully by the supposedly civilised invaders (Evans, 1999: Manne, 2003). I use the term 'Traditional Home-range Estate' to refer to an area delineated by a set of location points within which the Goenpul hunt, gather, and undertake our custodial duties.

These stories need to be told because it is important for the children of the Goenpul, and our extended Goenpul family to know and understand that whilst the sad history of the Australian nation-building mentality was being 'forged', there were forced atrocities happening all over the country (Reynolds, 1990; Evans 1999; Manne, 2003). While Australia and the allies fought Nazi Germany in the Second World War, Australia still confined Aborigines in their own self styled 'concentration camps' until 1975 (Reynolds, 1990; Evans, 1999). Our old people were able to stand strong and proud and give us the honour, integrity and sheer guts to 'stand up and be proud for who you are and what you believe in, and the strength of character to **have a go** at the time when this was needed' (Goenpul, *Time Immemorial*). At any time our old people could have 'thrown in the towel' and given up, and no one would have blamed them. But they never gave up hope (for us) and led by example all of the way.

As explained above, in undertaking this task I have not sought to privilege the academic reader. It is now widely accepted by the Academy that the act of recording history is a political one, following the work of the French Philosopher, Michel Foucault (1972). Foucault, who was interested in how knowledge becomes power, argued convincingly that history is a propaganda tool that is used to ensure political dominance. The writing and re-writing of histories become the means by which the victor suppresses a defeated adversary's version of historical events in favour of their own.

But history can also be a tool that can be used by the survivors of horrific invasions, and now it is time for our story to be told. When one of our people got tired and stumbled, the next one stepped up and took their place, always knowing that our spirit is grounded in the family of the creation spirit Quandamooka. I

remember my older brother saying when he was asked where we came from, he replied 'Where men are men and boys grow up to be men' (*Goenpul, Time Immemorial*). That saying has stayed with me all of my life.

I speak about the individual tutorials given to me, and what I believe an Elder is, although throughout this whole exercise, I am consciously aware that what I am saying is these old people speaking through me. Furthermore, I cannot dishonour or disrespect the memory of these great and wonderful people by writing anything false. As already mentioned, this is my story and I hope that, for the individual who reads it, it may help them gain the strength and confidence to tell their own story.

Acknowledged friends, mates, brothers, sisters, adopted brothers and sisters have asked me how I cope with this inappropriate world that has been not only imposed onto our people but everyone else as well. I simply reply that it is my job (possibly in life) and simply explain the facts to whoever wants to listen. As I progress and write my way through these memoirs, I hope that people can see how the old people, our Elders, trained us to cope.

With all of the current issues facing Indigenous Australians in the post-modern era, and the ways that we are expected to cope, I've often wondered is there any hope (Martin, 2001). Along with these thoughts of hopelessness came the inevitable whole scale desperation reflected in Indigenous peoples' significantly higher rate of incarceration relative to other groups in contemporary Australian society. Incarcerated in youth detention centres myself, I personally know that you are nothing, and possibly the only people that care if you live or die is your extended family unit. Places of incarceration were created for this exact demoralising process. I look at our people as 'political prisoners' (Short, 2010). The tag 'antisocial' justifies this treatment of the disadvantaged: out of sight out of mind.

### **1.3 Thesis argument**

I am going to state my standpoint that I adopt as my thesis quite explicitly here. We, the Goenpul of Stradbroke Island, have proved beyond the shadow of doubt that we have belonged to this place from the beginning of time. Our evidence of connection, produced through the formal processes demanded by the Western legal system, justified to the 'thieves' (and here I am naming the activity that is otherwise passively termed 'dispossession') that we belong to this country. Our idea of belonging to country is an inversion of their (the British colonisers') rule that a piece of a land 'belongs' either to the 'Crown', or to an individual under 'Crown Law'.

My thesis is that incorporating knowledges held and shared Goenpul way and contextualising my experiences as a Goenpul man living within the dominant culture and society within academia, I can displace the privileged position of the so-called objective 'expert' **on** our culture. To do this I have studied what has been written by those who have gone before, who are the 'experts' within that system. The paradox that I face is that I experience 'the expert' as the tool of oppression, theft, and genocide.

My argument is that 'the expert' is a construct that has facilitated the imposition of the European legal system in deciding ownership of land and other rights of individuals or government under that system. For example, under the *Native Title Act No. 110 of 1993 (as amended 2006)* the existence of traditional knowledge and practice is 'proof of connection' to country that is required to allow us to maintain our cultural practices on country by being 'authorised' to do so by government. The 'authorisation' process under this Act requires evidence to be

provided or validated by 'experts' (or individuals professing to be 'experts') whose frameworks of accountability, I propose, operate in a sycophantic, academic vacuum of investigation, and rarely if ever functional outside of this specific paradigm (cf Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines, *Guide to Compiling Connection Reports for Native Title Claims in Queensland, 2003*, Section 2.3, p 2 'Peer Reviews and Expert Opinion'):

The Queensland Government maintains the right to send a connection report in whole or in part to an independent peer review or for expert opinion and/or review. The Applicants' representatives will be advised when the State intends to seek a peer review of a connection report.

It has been up to Aboriginal scholars to do the work of explaining back to the (Western) Academy how its methodologies remain trapped in historical racism, and as such, continue the project of 'cultural' genocide, which, as Short (2010) points out, has come to be recognised for what it is - a key method of genocide. In the words of Aboriginal scholar, Lester-Irabinna Rigney (1997):

*Fundamental to the worldwide racist movement is the construction of "race" via the scientific theories of polygenism and social Darwinism. Racist scientific theories dominated Australian history, supporting the belief in races. Certain groups with allegedly permanent biological differences were placed in a hierarchy of inferiority and superiority (Rigney, 1997, p. 112).*

*The historical construction of racism most frequently mentioned falls into three broad categories: the rapid growth of imperialism including the search for wealth and profits in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the spiritual drive to promote the visions of God, and the quest for power, mastery, and collective glory (Rigney, 1997, p. 111).*

The many issues that Aboriginal Australians have been forced to face since European invasion one way or another have been shaped, managed, interpreted, modified and influenced by the version of events that prevails in the European Academy.

My people, the Goenpul of the Quandamooka are an integral and intimate part of the Queensland and Australian history. I was instructed by my old people to get the 'white-fella' education and bring it back to help our people. It's important for me to state up-front that helping our people by taking on a university-based study brings into conflict two incompatible knowledge systems (or epistemologies). Although we are some of the Traditional Owners from here, there rarely - if ever - have been any negotiated agreements about what we wanted told about ourselves, or, in other words, how we, as a culture and society that pre-dated the very recent arrival of the Europeans, are 'represented' (or 'mis-represented) in and by the Academies of learning responsible for accrediting the attainment of educational qualifications in contemporary society.

In 'setting the record straight' I explain to the Academy my concepts of Elders (knowledge holders) from the ways that I was taught by our old people. Then by its own aesthetics, this is compared to the role of the 'expert' as a constructed form of authority that seeks to de-legitimate and override that of the traditional knowledge holders.

The Goenpul, as the knowledge holders, see as our responsibility the task of correcting mis-information in 'institutions' of learning. An example that directly affects the Goenpul is the use of the transcripts of Winterbottom (1959) to identify tribes 'belonging' to, or 'coming from' particular geographical locations. The reliability of Winterbotham's notes from his interview of Gaiarbau (Grandfather Mackenzie) was opened to doubt in the introduction to *Queensland Ethnohistorical Transcripts* by the Editor, Ethnohistorian Gerry Langevad, who warns that the accuracy of the information was 'up to the researcher to decide', as, while

*every effort is made to adhere closely to the original documents and more importantly, to the original meanings of those documents. Editing is restricted*

*to punctuation, where it is clear that this does not change the meaning, and to rearrangement where this is necessary to avoid repetition or to group related topics (rearrangement was extensive in Gaiarbau Story). It must be remembered that (as an uninitiated man) much of the hidden life of his people was hidden from him ... Winterbotham was fully aware of the restrictions this (European contact) placed on the information Gaiarbau could relate. (Langevad, 1982, editorial notes.)*

Norman Tindale, an entomologist employed as an ethnologist (Mulvaney, 1980), writing in the introduction to Langevad's text, enthused that although 'much of what Gaiarbau tells cannot be verified ... it has the ring of truth about it.' The question remains, 'Whose truth?'

The results of my study, presented here in the form of an Academic dissertation, will (hopefully) convincingly demonstrate that, since the earliest days of the reports to the 'Home' (British) Office by the Crown's 'Protectors of Aborigines' (Meston, 1895), Australian government policy, legislation and dealings with Aboriginal people have been formulated from unreliable evidence. By referring to a body of literature 'on' the Aborigines of Moreton Bay and surrounds in parallel with my 'insider' experience as a Goenpul, Quandamooka man, I open to question the nature of the 'evidence' and the way it is used in studies that inform decisions that directly affect the wellbeing of the Goenpul of the Quandamooka.

Economic disadvantage and emotional and physical stress result for Traditional Owners and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are responsible for sustaining connections to country and protecting cultural heritage. Tensions exist between Indigenous cultural maintenance and mainstream economic outcomes that impact negatively on the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians by destroying what is of most value in their lives (Dockery, 2009).

Indigenous researchers agree that at the heart of this structural disadvantage is an over-reliance upon research by non-Indigenous anthropologists, librarians,

historians and archaeologists and an endemic culture of ineffective meetings, instead of reliance upon knowledge sharing processes and 'decision-making facilitation by those Indigenous peoples whose needs, rights and interests are involved' (Bauman & Williams, 2004:6). Research by Indigenous researchers 'from the inside' with lived experience of these frustrations is required. Protocols on who should be heard and why and to what level are vital questions that can only be answered at the local and family level of a community.

Those who have published 'about' our people have more often than not based their work on 'evidence' obtained via the easiest means to suit themselves. Inevitably, by resorting to the most expedient means, research projects, and those undertaking them, fall into a pattern of exploitation whereby the knowledge seeker, armed with his/her newly elicited information, presents as the 'expert' in the subject, without any thought of reciprocity or responsibility to the people from whom they have appropriated their new store of intellectual capital. The misappropriation of intellectual property is not a phenomenon isolated to the Goenpul, as Aboriginal Lawyer, Terri Janke (1998) has noted in her advocacy for legislation to protect the intellectual, cultural and customary rights of Indigenous Australians.

By contrast, the evidence that supports my claims to authority in cultural and spiritual matters in this dissertation is a lived experience. The knowledge that I hold about being Goenpul was obtained from first hand life experiences. It was *earned and then given* to me by our old people through a process of utmost respect. In the coming chapters, I follow the protocols of my family group and draw on my own insider (emic) knowledge - emic being a term coined by Pike, in 1954, and subsequently adopted by ethnologists (Pike, 1992 n.p.) - about our intimate lives. Knowledge gained through lived experience replaces the use of 'evidence' provided

by external 'experts' used in legal processes to authorise and facilitate decisions that directly affect the livelihood and wellbeing of the Goenpul.

The intellectual labour involved the contributions of Indigenous Australians to the corpus of literature and other 'Western' cultural forms – musical compositions, songs, film, fine art, new media – as colonised peoples - whilst maintaining our cultural integrity has not been appreciated. On the other hand, academics in 'scientific' disciplines – historians, anthropologists, archaeologists - have not achieved this because of the structural and systemic barriers to the introduction of non-Eurocentric epistemologies, which would dismantle the foundations of the Academy as an institution.

Institutionalised racism is a tool of colonisation that parallels, but is more subtle than, cultural genocide. By bringing into the institution this collection of memoirs about my secret life as Goenpul man in modern Queensland, living and interacting in two worlds - one brutally harsh and public and the other secret and loving - I aim to demonstrate that the European history of Australia is partial and contingent because the 'authorised' versions produced by the dominant culture are undeniably self-invested. My aim is to offer the reader insights into the Indigenous experience of European colonisation in Australia. This dissertation is the first, to my knowledge, written by a Goenpul Stradbroke Island man. Stradbroke Island is located on the eastern edge of Moreton Bay (Quandamooka), in Southeast Queensland.

To place my memoirs within a socio-historical context, I follow a line to the present day from time of the mass killings - termed 'dispersals' (Richards, 2008:1) – that were the means by which the invaders (Europeans) sought to gain clear and unobstructed access to the best lands and resources. Richards (2008:206) stopped

short of saying that the Queensland Government was 'directing or condoning killings' because his evidence did not conclusively prove this. He suggested that this would not have been the case if different language had been used to describe events. In my stories I use accurate language to describe events, and this is a risky thing to do in an academic dissertation.

Aside from the obvious reduction in population, and ongoing reports that certain individuals were 'the last of their tribe' (Welsby, 1965), the actual number of Aboriginal people who were slaughtered in the Australian Nation-building exercise has not been calculated because 'few records were kept' and 'details of the killings were gradually forgotten' (Richards, 2008:1). In Richards' assessment, most of the killings took place at the frontier, without direction from any centralised form of control (2008:206). Payne's review of the facts and evidence of the Myall Creek massacre (published as *The Infamous Myall Creek Massacre of 1838*) implicated property owners (squatters) in the incitement of their station hands and the fuelling of their participation in violent killing with alcohol, and for no reason other than to get rid of the Aborigines (1965:2). Payne's review of records found that in the early years of colonisation 'when murders were committed in civil life ... in almost all cases the bodies of the victims had been cut up to conceal the crime'. 'When remains were found the men of the area (Slaughterhouse Creek) were gathered and argument advanced that the "blacks" had done it' and 'in any case everyone was in favour of getting rid of the blacks altogether these days, and NOW was the time to make a start' (Payne, 1965:2). 'A party of horsemen were gathered. It took time, but when ready, they systematically drove every aboriginal they could muster into the bed of a watercourse beneath a sheer mountainside and commenced the first deliberate slaughter of blacks' (Payne, 1965:3)

Payne did not have to restrict or censor his language in this self-published work. He examined the facts which proved that slaughters were premeditated, and then deliberately covered up and mis-reported in a subsequent local newspaper report in an attempt to *change* history (not merely 'forgotten' over time as Richards, 2008, suggests). Payne's findings, based in fact, confirm Foucault's (1972) assertion that in the hands of the oppressor, history becomes a tool of propaganda designed to ensure their political dominance.

Indigenous research and scholarship shows that once the Aborigines were reduced into submissive numbers, to extinguish Aboriginal culture once and for all, the colonial authorities, on the recommendation of their 'Protector of Aborigines' created an instrument of their law - *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897* - to breed our people out of existence (FAIRA, 1979). Under this Act, 'every person who is

- a) an aboriginal inhabitant of Queensland; or
- b) a half-caste who, at the commencement of this Act, is living with an aboriginal as wife, husband or child; or
- c) a half-caste who, otherwise than a wife, husband or child habitually lives or associates with aboriginals

shall be deemed to be an aboriginal within the meaning of the Act' (FAIRA, 1979, p.23). The real meaning of the Act for us was that, if our people wanted to avoid having every aspect of their lives controlled by the government, then all aspects of our identity as Aboriginal people would have to be conducted in secret.

Once this project of cultural and physical genocide - segregation and assimilation or imprisonment, enslavement and annihilation - was made 'lawful' by an Act of colonial parliament, the invaders began marginalising 'troublemakers' (our

freedom-fighters) by removing them from their communities, and stealing the children away from their extended family. Children were forcibly detained 'for their own protection, under the Act' in what today would be viewed as specialised concentration camps, but then were endowed with 'mission' or 'reserve' status.

Research by Indigenous librarians lays out the facts:

Prior to the introduction of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897*, a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mission stations had been established by religious organisations in Queensland and small amounts of land throughout the State had been gazetted as reserves for the use of Aboriginal people. With the passing of the 1897 Act, all Aboriginal reserves became subject to the Act. For a number of these reserves Superintendents were appointed to carry out the provisions of the Act. Missionaries in charge of Aboriginal settlements also became Superintendents under the 1897 Act. The majority of Aboriginal reserves in Queensland were never "managed" reserves, that is no Superintendent was appointed. Unmanaged reserves were usually controlled by the local protector of Aborigines. (SLQ, List of Missions and Reserves in Queensland, n.d.).

Driven by the power of their newfound wealth, the imperialists embarked on a process of isolation whereby 'the church' was propagandised as 'bringing religion to the heathens and pagans,' of the world, or as Rigney (1997, p.111) put it, 'the spiritual drive to promote the visions of God, and the quest for power, mastery, and collective glory'.

Christianity was just another sword used to great effect in the destruction of our spiritual, cultural and traditional way of life. The isolation was done to keep the children away from anyone who knew the Ancient ways. Eventually, selectively farming out various individuals as slave labour, to ultimately have the Aborigine bred out of existence:

Aboriginal people have paid with their own wages for the oppression and incarceration they have suffered both on and off the Aboriginal reserves, in their workplaces in conditions not much better than slavery, and have only poverty to show for years of indentured labour (Langton, 2002, n.p.).

When I use the term 'trinkets and beads', I am talking about the decree of The British Home Secretary in regard to Aboriginals 'under The Act' that:

when a man wants the services of Aboriginals the protector will explain to them the agreement under which they are going to work. There will not be a single word in it attempting to interfere with the rate of wages ... I would prefer that whatever is agreed to be paid is bona fide in whatever form may be the most suitable for the Aboriginal. Sometimes it may be clothing, sometimes food (quoted in FAIRA, 1979).

Some survivors of these direct attempts of genocide were left behind to maintain and care for the Ancient Spirit Lore/Law/law.

This dissertation is written by one of the great grand children of one of the survivors of this brutal frontier violence of Queensland history. It is a first hand account of the survival strategies employed by the Goenpul of Moreton Bay. These are my experiences of the elongated struggles that I heard our old people talk about and how the old people mentally prepared me to participate in this struggle when it became my turn.

I was told some of the stories about our Ancestral Heroes and how they were able to keep our cultural way of life alive. The purpose of this dissertation is to document the historical accounts of these heroic times for the future generations of our Goenpul. Included in this documentation are my own recollections about some of the people who I knew as my heroes and how their deeds touched the lives of some and many others

I want to show how our cultural way of life has survived against every obstacle that was put in the way to destroy the continuity of our people's existence (Short, 2010). Not only is the evidence provided in this dissertation significant to our

extended family, but also it highlights our interactions that continued with other Traditional Owner groups throughout this country within a same secret paradigm.

#### **1.4 Methodological issues – ‘memoir’ as method**

In the Western Academy it is customary to explain what method was used to conduct research, and to justify the method as a reliable one to reach some conclusion.

As I have justified in the previous section, our old people’s recollections were, and continue to be, misused as ‘research’ by historians, anthropologists and ethnologists, and this remains an accepted practice in the Western Academy. On the other hand, reports about the same sorts of things told directly by the ‘recollector’ of the events himself or herself, based on oral family history, and unmediated by the Academic, are not accepted. To me this is a huge issue for the Academy and a force that drives this Master’s project.

Few attempts have been made to use the memoir form in scholarly works. Scholars using the autobiographical genre have been successful in gaining acceptance by embedding their narratives in a well-researched socio-cultural and/or historical context. This approach has come to be called ‘auto-ethnography’. Scholars from minority groups whose projects are concerned with social justice for the oppressed have worked hard to gain acceptance of the auto-ethnographic method. I am aware that Afro-American and Aboriginal Australian women are among the writers who are using this method, but I have not reviewed their work. That is another project. As a Goenpul Quandamooka man, my purpose, as I said, is to set a particular record straight from the Goenpul epistemological and ontological perspective.

When researching what this method was, I noted that Sparkes (2002), an academic supervisor, reacted defensively to criticism of a well-written dissertation by a student who used auto-ethnography as ‘self-indulgent’, by arguing that the work

...included many characteristics of *heartful autoethnography*: the use of systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall; the inclusion of the researcher’s vulnerable selves, emotions, body, and spirit; the production of evocative stories that create the effect of reality; the celebration of concrete experience and intimate detail; the examination of how human experience is endowed with meaning; a concern with moral, ethical, and political consequences; an encouragement of compassion and empathy; a focus on helping us know how to live and cope; the featuring of multiple voices and the repositioning of readers and “subjects” as coparticipants in dialogue seeks a fusion between social science and literature in which, as Gregory Bateson says, “you are partly blown by the winds of reality and partly an artist creating a composite out of the inner and outer events”; and connects the practices of social science with the living of life (Sparkes, 2002:209)

While I am not claiming that my method is ‘auto-ethnography’ I can see that my ‘memoir’ form, and my one-sided, conversations with the Eurocentric literature I have reviewed, arguably share many of the characteristics or features of this now accepted method, as described and argued for above. In an interview, Hampel argued that the memoir, a sub-form of the autobiographic genre, was a “mongrel form” because it has no formal conventions – ‘“conventions’ are for works of the imagination, and memoir is “nonfiction” which is the same word we use for the newspaper’ (Wexler, 1996). The idea of a ‘mongrel’ form was appealing to my sensibility. The validity of memoirs as works of *non-fiction* is questioned because of the issue of reliability, but it is commonly agreed that memoirs are hardly ever written without reference to some factual material (Wexler, 1996). This study has provided me with the opportunity to study in detail anthropological and historical documents that I had been collecting for years, as well as to do new research into

government reports that substantiated and validated my memories of those times and places. So my approach seems to reverse the accepted process of the ethnologists.

Another issue to be considered by the Academic reader is that the Goenpul epistemology and ontology does not 'translate' into a form that complies with the Western academic convention of philosophic argument. In terms of a dialogic imperative, I propose that the memoir form – the stories that I tell – are dialogic in that they 'speak back' to the Academy, whose singular stories have been accepted as 'the truth'.

I have not seen the personal experiences that I speak about in my dissertation published anywhere. And I have hardly mentioned them in any more than in some passing reference to a scientific comparative.

There are some publications about the Aborigines from the Moreton Region and Stradbroke Island by Salter 1983, Keats 1966, Ganter 1997, Moore 1993, Cooke-Bramley, Durbridge and Shields 1999 and several others in The Royal Society of Queensland 1975; There is also a book written by Fischer 1997, though none go into the intimate details of Goenpul life; or how the layering on of the ancient knowledge kept aspects of our symbiotic culture alive. Nor do they speak about the interpersonal touch of how these, our sciences, connect our physical presence to the spirit world. It never has been recorded so it does not exist (Ross, et. al. 2011). Even in Steel's *Aboriginal Pathways* he mentions the Goenpul but mistakenly identifies our geographic location (Steele, 1983), although Steele did record many words of the Goenpul language for which I am grateful (Steele, 1983).

Sources that I have used to justify my project as research are listed in the next section.

## **1.5 Justification of sources and literature referred to in this dissertation**

Aborigines from the Moreton Region and Stradbroke Island have been objectified in a variety of written forms, including ‘protector’ reports (Meston, 1909), diaries (Birch, 1873), newspaper columns and manuscripts (Welsby, *The Brisbane Courier*, various editions, 1900s; Campbell-Petrie, 1904) and in academic treatises (Ponosov, 1963-4, Keats 1966; Neal & Stock, 1986), and in Proceedings of the Royal Society (Welsby, 1907, 1965; Durbridge, 1975). Some well-referenced works that may be expected to be sources for my project do not appear here because of the unethical conduct of the researcher, and the inaccuracies in the information that has been recorded. To reference these works would be to perpetuate untruths. More recently these historical documents have been ‘mined’ for items of interest by local historians (Ludlow, 1992; Moore 1993, Cooke-Bramley, Durbridge & Shields 1999). There is also an oral history of Myora Mission told by our Elders to descendant Bernice Fischer, published in 1997.

None of these works go into the intimate details of Goenpul life; or how the layering on of the Ancient knowledge kept aspects of our symbiotic culture alive. Nor do they speak about the interpersonal touch of how these, our sciences, connect our physical presence to the spirit world. It never has been recorded so it does not exist (Ross, et. al. 2011). Even in Steel’s *Aboriginal Pathways* he mentions the Goenpul but mistakenly identifies our geographic location (Steele, 1983), although Steele did record many words of the Goenpul language for which I am grateful (Steele, 1983).

In terms of the broader range of literature that has informed my study, I have

always had an interest in what has been written about other First Nation Peoples, and about ancient cultures, and during my study, I was drawn to works on mythology. Many of these texts are included in the bibliography, but not referenced in the dissertation (Bentley, 1996; Cleary & Petrie, 1997; Driver, 1997; Grant, 1990, Lorenz, 1996). It was only when writing this dissertation that I realised that there were common themes in the myths explored in these texts and my own stories – i.e., issues of trust and betrayal. Another Philosophy student ‘looking to stories, myths, and one's own life’ arrived at the view that ‘myth characterizes conditions such as betrayal, passion, love, and hate as transformational, changing, and acting with agency’ (Dennis, 2011, p 6). This insight is an important one for arriving at a conclusion about what all of this means.

The desire to uncover and reveal secret knowledges that are concerned with myth and magic in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures has been an obsession with many ethnologists and anthropologists. Meston (1895), Welsby, (collected works, 1965) Winterbotham (1959) and McNight (2005) are among those seeking to comprehend and explain how sorcery, healing, and other magical powers of our clever men are obtained and used for evil and for good.

As for myself, I have waited for most of my life and have accumulated enough of the relevant evidence before consciously analysing and clarifying why our people were being treated in an appallingly shameful way by every level of government (Evans, 1999). Much of the literature that I studied purported to be based in ‘eyewitness’ accounts – for example of clashes between whites and blacks. But these were almost always written as recollections, rather than contemporary reports.

It was only then that I systematically sat down and took the time to tell our Goenpul side of this shameful part of the Australian past (Manne, 2003). Sometimes

the emotion still chokes me up, but I make myself remember what the old people were able to teach me, and how they were directly prevented from speaking out against the injustices. Some day someone might think about this story and somehow possibly understand that there was a comprehensive, socially structured system of governance, a way of life and a history here in our Quandamooka, tens of thousands of years (Neal & Stock, 1986) before anyone ever decided to discover us.

While there is a body of works by Indigenous scholars that engages critically with the western Academy (Dodson, 1994, Rigney, 1997, Nakata, 2004, Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, Moreton-Robinson, 2000), I am not aware of any other works like mine that deal with the notion of secrecy as essential to survival and growth. Readers may think that I am going to reveal secret/sacred knowledge to them. But what I am offering is a story about a secret life – a his-story – my life story – my lived experience - of secrecy. The power of Goenpul epistemology is that no one individual can access the entirety of secret and sacred knowledge. To the individual it is like an empty room with potential to be the source of omnipotent power. That is why the secret and sacred dimensions of knowledge is collectively held by the tribe. To reveal this knowledge is an act of betrayal that is punishable by death.

Betrayal is a recurring theme in my memoirs. I seem to remember most often those events where I was either betrayed or put myself in the way of betrayal. We are all vulnerable to self-deception when confronted with an awkward or inconvenient truth.

To place my memoirs within a socio-historical context, I follow a trajectory to the present day from time of the mass killings – conveniently termed ‘dispersals’ (Richards, 2008:1) – that were the means by which the invaders (Europeans) sought to gain clear and unobstructed access to the best lands and resources. Richards

(2008:206) stopped short of saying that the Queensland Government was ‘directing or condoning killings’ because his evidence did not conclusively prove this. He suggested that this would not have been the case if different language had been used to describe events. In my stories I use accurate language to describe events, and this is a risky thing to do in an academic dissertation. But I also insert references to literature on topics contained in my memoirs.

Aside from the obvious reduction in population, what we were always hearing from the historians was that certain individuals were ‘the last of their tribe’. Meston (1905) was constantly saying this about the Quandamooka tribes, because this is what the Colonial office wanted to hear. Welsby writing in the 1902s (collected works, 1965), consistently asserted this in denial of the fact that we were there then, and are still here today.

The inconvenient truth is that the actual number of Aboriginal people who were slaughtered in the Australian Nation building exercise has not been calculated because ‘few records were kept’ and ‘details of the killings were gradually forgotten’ (Richards, 2008:1). In Richards’ assessment, most of the killings took place on at the frontier, without direction from any centralised form of control (2008, p 206).

An individual, Mr. Len Payne, had this to say about deception when interviewed in June 1994 by Patrick and Desley Collins while they were researching for their book *Goodbye Bussamarai: the Mandandanji Land War, Southern Queensland, 1842-1852* (2002). They had been relying on the research undertaken by Roger Milliss who dedicated his publication *Waterloo Creek* (1992) to Mr. Payne. After interviewing Mr. Payne, the Collins’s noted in the introduction to their transcript of that interview that “Professor Robert Reece in his *Aborigines and Colonists* (1974), and other historians have also drawn on Len’s research and writings, especially re

the infamous 1838 Myall Creek massacre near present day Bingara in northern New South Wales.” This is what Mr. Payne subsequently told them about the how the research by that eminent Professor was actually conducted, and how the researchers had excluded the ‘truth’ because it was not convenient for their purposes:

Len – “..... only when Milliss recently contacted me did he discover that the site had been duly recorded by the Heritage Commission, this despite that he has been occupied with the subject matter for over ten years. He has instead been foolishly working on nothing more than his own incredibly twisted recollection of this locality in his book, and as I've told you he missed appointment after appointment, so he never really got to Myall Creek and had Myall Creek explained to him meticulously, never at all. And yet he presented his book as though he'd been there. I would expect that my assessment of Mr. Milliss' performance in this respect, I would not expect that it would greatly surprise Miss [Dr] Isabel McBryde who is very well informed.”

Mr. Payne, who lived in Bingera, and had listened to elder family members re-telling events as they had been told to them, undertook his own review of the facts and evidence in the case of the Myall Creek Massacre of 1838 and published his findings after the local newspaper printed a ‘whitewashed’ version in 1965 (Payne, *The Infamous Myall Creek Massacre of 1838*). Payne’s family stories and research into the facts of the court cases (1965, p 2) implicated the forbears of local property owners in the incitement of their station hands and the fuelling their participation in violent killing with alcohol and for no reason other than to get rid of them. He argued that in the early years of colonisation ‘when murders were committed in civil life ... in almost all cases the bodies of the victims had been cut up to conceal the crime’. ‘When remains were found the men of the area (Slaughterhouse Creek) were gathered and argument advanced that the “blacks” had done it’ and ‘in any case everyone was in favour of getting rid of the blacks altogether these days, and NOW was the time to make a start’ (1965, p 2):

A party of horsemen were gathered. It took time, but when ready, they systematically drove every aboriginal they could muster into the bed of a watercourse beneath a sheer mountainside and commenced the first deliberate slaughter of blacks (Payne, 1965, p 3)

Payne did not have to restrict or censor his language in this self-published work. He examined the facts which proved that slaughters were premeditated, and then deliberately covered up and mis-reported in a subsequent local newspaper report in an attempt to change history (not merely 'forgotten' over time as Richards, 2008, suggests).

Indigenous research and scholarship shows that once the Crown was assured that the Aborigines had been reduced into submissive numbers, on the recommendation of their 'Protector of Aborigines', the colonial authorities created an instrument of (their) law - the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897* - to breed our people out of existence (FAIRA, 1979). Under this Act, 'every person who is

- (a) an aboriginal inhabitant of Queensland; or
- (b) a half-caste who, otherwise than as wife, husband or child; or
- (c) a half-caste who, otherwise than a wife, husband or child habitually lives or associates with Aboriginals

shall be deemed to be a Aboriginal within the meaning of the Act' (FAIRA, 1979, p.23). If a person did not want to have every aspect of their lives controlled by the government – that is, if a First Nation person wanted ordinary everyday freedom – then all aspects of their identity as Aboriginal people would have to be conducted in secret.

Once this project of cultural and physical genocide - segregation and assimilation or imprisonment, enslavement and annihilation - was made 'lawful' by an Act of colonial parliament, the invaders began marginalising 'troublemakers' (our

freedom fighters) by removing them from their communities, and stealing the children away from their extended family. Children were forcibly detained 'for their own protection, under the Act' in what today would be viewed as specialised concentration camps, but then were endowed with 'mission' or 'reserve' status.

Research by Indigenous librarians lays out the facts:

Prior to the introduction of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897*, a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mission stations had been established by religious organisations in Queensland and small amounts of land throughout the State had been gazetted as reserves for the use of Aboriginal people. With the passing of the 1897 Act, all Aboriginal reserves became subject to the Act. For a number of these reserves Superintendents were appointed to carry out the provisions of the Act. Missionaries in charge of Aboriginal settlements also became Superintendents under the 1897 Act. The majority of Aboriginal reserves in Queensland were never "managed" reserves, that is no Superintendent was appointed. Unmanaged reserves were usually controlled by the local protector of Aborigines. (SLQ, List of Missions and Reserves in Queensland, n.d.).

Isolation by the church was propagandised as 'bringing religion to the heathens and pagans,' of the world. This was just another sword used to great effect in the destruction of our spiritual, cultural and traditional way of life. The isolation was done to keep the children away from anyone who knew the Ancient ways. Eventually, selectively farming out various individuals as slave labour, to ultimately have the Aborigine bred out of existence:

Aboriginal people have paid with their own wages for the oppression and incarceration they have suffered both on and off the Aboriginal reserves, in their workplaces in conditions not much better than slavery, and have only poverty to show for years of indentured labour (Langton, 2002, n.p.).

When I use the term 'trinkets and beads', I am talking about the decree of The British Home Secretary in regard to Aboriginals 'under The Act' that:

(w)hen a man wants the services of Aboriginals the protector will explain to them the agreement under which they are going to work. There will not be a single word in it attempting to interfere with the rate of wages ... I would prefer that whatever is agreed to be paid is bona fide in whatever form may be the most suitable for the Aboriginal. Sometimes it may be clothing, sometimes food (quoted in FAIRA, 1979).

Some survivors of these direct attempts of genocide were left behind to maintain and care for the Ancient Spirit Lore/Law/law. I was told some of the stories about our Ancestral Heroes and how they were able to keep our cultural way of life alive. The purpose of this dissertation is to document the historical accounts of these heroic times for the future generations of our Goenpul. Included in this documentation are my own recollections about some of the people who I knew as my heroes and how their deeds touched the lives of some and many others

I want to show how our cultural way of life has survived against every obstacle that was put in the way to destroy the continuity of our people's existence (Short, 2010). Not only is the evidence provided in this dissertation significant to our extended family, but also it highlights our interactions that continued with other Traditional Owner groups throughout this country within a same secret paradigm.

## **1.6 Dissertation overview**

Firstly it is important to state here that my dissertation does not follow a linear path or conventional academic logical structure where discrete topics are introduced in a sequential manner. My approach follows a spiral pathway, where topics are introduced and re-introduced and woven into stories and explanations and are gradually expanded upon through reflection, as new realisations emerge. While at times this might appear repetitive, it is through revisiting experiences and reflecting on them that I interpret what their 'real' meaning is to me in the present; that I bring these experiences into consciousness. The difficulty is the necessity to

put thoughts into written form, rather than spoken in poetic language, song, dance and ritual, which are the conventions of our culture.

In Chapter Two: First realisations, I outline the Goenpul epistemology and ontology by telling the story of community life on North Stradbroke Island, and how we maintain our culture and heritage – how this is done with Elders training the young. These are what I call my forming years, and memoirs from these years can be found in the first section of *Appendix One – My Secret Life, Memoirs One, The forming years*.

In Chapter Three, My philosophical position, I further elaborate on the ‘first principles’ of our cultural ways of knowing, and emphasise our belief in the interconnectedness of all things, as well as the centrality of the Elder to social and cultural organisation, and the moral responsibilities attached to that role, including the passing on of stories.

In Chapter Four, Transition into white society and the downward spiral, I talk about my experiences of formal schooling are what I call my ‘unlearning’ or ‘unforming’ years. Stories from these years are collected together in *Memoirs Two, Appendix One*. I then go on to discuss my incarceration as a youth during what I call the ‘re-forming years’. Stories from these years are collected together in *Memoirs Three - the Reforming Years, Appendix One*.

Chapter Five, The turning point, is about my escape from the downward spiral. Related stories are collected together in *Memoirs Four – the Transitioning Years, Appendix One*. I tell the story of my tertiary education and transition to my obligatory responsibility to our people (See *Appendix One Memoirs Five – the Activist Years*.)

In the concluding Chapter (Six) I reflect on the contribution and outcomes of the study, comment on the transformative aspects of this Masters project, and

identify areas for future learning and research. Appendix One comprises my memoirs; Appendix Two acknowledges the people who have contributed to my learning journey, and Appendix three provides a brief professional resume.

## **CHAPTER TWO: My first realisations**

This chapter provides the context for my earliest memories of running around naked at our grandparents place at One Mile near Dunwich on North Stradbroke Island. Although our people have our own Creation stories for our land from time immemorial, the Western Academic tradition demands that I quote sources of information about our country recorded by and since the British invasion. As explained in the previous chapter, when I use the term *Time Immemorial* I am referring to our ancient knowledge sources. The memoirs that connect to this chapter are about community life on North Stradbroke Island, and how we maintain our culture and heritage – how this is done with Elders training the young. These are what I call my forming years, and memoirs from these years (*Memoirs 1*) can be found in the first section of *Appendix One – My Secret Life*.

### **2.1 The genesis of Stradbroke Island?**

This part of our country came into existence and received its English name in 1827 from Governor Darling, and proclaimed to the public on July 16<sup>th</sup> of that year, according to colonial historian, Henry Stuart Russell, author of *The Genesis of Queensland*, written in 1888:

His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to direct that the Island forming the southern boundary of the eastern channel into Moreton Bay shall be designated the "Isle of Stradbroke" in compliment to the Honourable J. H. Rous, commanding H. M. Ship ' Rainbow'—the first ship of war which entered Moreton Bay.

The point of land in the Isle of Stradbroke (which is intended as the site of a Public Establishment) [Quarantine] opposite to Peel's Island is named ' Dunwich' and the anchorage where the ' Rainbow' lay, ' Rainbow Reach.' The channel between the Isle of Stradbroke and Moreton Island is named ' Rous Channel' (Russell, 1888:56).

An often quoted source of information about ourselves, our country, and our culture is the self-proclaimed ‘scribbler’, medical doctor, recreational sailor and amateur historian, Thomas Welsby, who frequented our country in the 1920s. Welsby wrote endless newspaper columns about the Aboriginal tribes of Stradbroke and Moreton Islands. In *The Brisbane Courier*, of Saturday 22 July, 1933:19 Welsby tells how a breakthrough of the ocean at the Jumpinpin – a narrow isthmus on our island – was caused by the 1894 wreck of the ship *Cambus Wallace*, which carried dynamite, and by subsequent storms during the period 1895-8. After that date the names North and South Stradbroke Islands came into general use to refer to our country.

## **2.2 ‘Creation’ stories**

Through observation and persuasion, Welsby, and subsequent visiting historians, anthropologists and sociologists would attempt to satisfy curiosity about our ‘exotic’ culture by gleaning aspects of, interpreting, and elaborating fancifully upon, our stories about natural phenomenon – including the shifting sands and creation and disappearance of islands. Whereas Welsby’s purpose was to entertain everyday readers, the purpose of the ‘ologists’ was to create new knowledge from Ancient knowledges. This was done in ignorance of the higher purpose and deeper meaning of the ‘stories’ as secret knowledge and moral guidance passed on through generations of families with custodial responsibilities (*Goenpul Time Immemorial*).

## **2.3 Boundary keeping**

One Mile was where our extended family lived. It was the site of an Aboriginal mission (Fischer, 1997). One Mile was so named because it was at the one-mile boundary outside of the town of Dunwich – a well-known strategy used by

the colonisers to keep ‘black troublemakers’ out of townships. The mission (Myora) was established on a place we call Moongalba, initially by Passionist priests in 1843, in the place subsequently named the State of Queensland in 1859. The Passionists failed in their attempt and left the island shortly after.

A second, more successful (in their terms) attempt to establish a mission was undertaken by the Queensland Aboriginal Protection Association (QAPA) in 1892. By 1893 their real intentions were made clear, when this mission was declared an ‘industrial and reform school’ whose purpose was to contain and ‘educate’ our people for a life of servitude (Keats, 1966; Durbridge, 1994; Thorpe, 1950; Colliver and Woolston, 1975; Fischer, 1997).

Living at One Mile, I never had a care in the world. I had no idea that we were Aborigines. Our old people knew everyone there. If they weren’t related to us, they were acquaintances who knew us. We would be taught to refer to the various people of our world in one form of acknowledgement or another. If and when anyone else arrived (at, in our place, space) and we weren’t introduced to them, that simply meant that we were not to speak to them.

## **2.4 Secrecy and survival**

Many of the members of our family, people around my age and older, were still nervous and almost paranoid about openly practising any aspects of our culture (Evans, 1999). I can clearly remember being told by the Elders to keep most of what I was learning about our Goenpul life, hunting and gathering and such, completely secret (*Goenpul, Time Immemorial*). There was no reason given to me about why there was a need to keep it secret, and there was never any need to justify themselves to me: I learnt that following the instructions of the Elders was central to our survival (Bond, 2004). It is only later on in life I can clearly understand what the

further implications and ramifications might be, for I did not know then of the threat of loss of freedom and removal to reserves resulting from the practice of culture 'Under the Act' of 1897, and subsequent Acts created in the 'undeclared war' of the British against Aborigines:

(u)ndeclared war, if pursued cautiously, was largely unpublicised war, and conflict could be effected without regard to wars' conventions: the treatment of prisoners, the signing of treaties, the making of territorial settlements, indemnities and the like (FAIRA, 1979, p 9).

One day at Dunwich, on North Stradbroke Island during the mid 1980's, my younger brother said to a small group of us, 'Come on you mob, and I'll teach you how to go (out mud) crabbing' (refer to *Appendix One, Memoirs – CRABBING*). At 'home' the invitation to go out crabbing with our mob included the usual joking and fooling around. When we were alone by ourselves with other black-fellas we did not have to pretend to be white or to prove or justify ourselves to anybody how we interacted. I was in my mid-twenties at the time when my brother took us out crabbing. At this time we older Aboriginal people were still coming out of the horrific years of living under successive Aborigine 'Acts' dating between 1897 and 1970. These were implemented by all levels of government, intent on destroying our connection to country (FAIRA, 1979; Short, 2010). Any reason could be given for the removal of our people, especially traditional cultural activities, such as dancing or speaking language They made us criminals for practicing our culture as such, and our practices became offences used as a tool for removal under Queensland's colonising laws and regulations (Reid, 2006).

Western anthropologists and linguists have struggled without success for over a century to qualify and quantify the intellectual capacity and means of knowledge acquisition of Aboriginal peoples. Kearney & McElwain (1976) who reviewed the work of cognitive psychologists early in the last century observed in

their 'main psychological findings (1976:399) that most researchers had undertaken small studies with a single group, and that, with no attempt to replicate their findings in other contexts, 'uncertainties' remained. Further, quoting education theorist Jerome Bruner, they concluded that 'to make any elaborate summary or stocktaking of knowledge as it is known at this stage, is only of transitory relevance (for):

... those who study the acquisition of knowledge are surely aware to what extent its acquisition is governed by selective purpose and is thereby subject to bias. For all that, in any particular instance, knowledge transcends the uses to which it is put. What one has and how one gets it turn out to be quite different. And our educational philosophy had better consider both (Bruner, 1974:13, cited in Kearney & McElwain, 1976:397)

Furthermore, with regard to the prohibition of first language use by cultures under colonisation, as Kenneth Pike, an internationally renowned linguist and scholar who maintained a critical practice informed by an holistic world view for over 50 years, explained to his colleagues: '(a) person needs his language to help him know himself in relation to his physical, social, aesthetic, and philosophical environment (Pike, 2001, p 1).

Like the spoken word, gesture and movement also communicate symbolic meaning. I remember one whole family being forcibly removed from One Mile because someone had reported them for dancing (*Goenpul, Time Immemorial*). As Johnson succinctly states, 'Aboriginal people were swept up into reserves and missions where they were supervised as to every detail of their lives and there was a deliberate policy of undermining and destroying their spiritual and cultural beliefs' (Johnson, 1991).

Our Elders strictly instructed us about the need for appropriate behaviour in the presence of others. I will speak more on the mistake of questioning or

challenging the Elder's decision-making later in this discussion. In the early 1960's and the mid 1970's, when the various and specific individuals were taught the Ancient skills, each of us was sworn to secrecy and never allowed to tell anyone, even members of our own family, about this secret life as Aboriginal people (*Goenpul, Time Immemorial*).

The importance of the secrecy will be reiterated throughout this dissertation. A further justification for secrecy was the instance at school, when after we returned to Inala after our holidays, the teachers pumped me for information about different aspects of our holiday. They knew that we went over to the island for holidays. On this occasion, the school nurse took me into the sick room, told me to take all of my clothes off and proceeded to inspect my whole body. I think she made up some exotic name for a disease, I can't remember now, but even as a child I thought it was strange why people were suddenly interested in my well being. I realised now that it was likely that she had been instructed by the Headmaster to look for scarification marks, which would mean that we had been practicing aspects of our culture.

My brother Beaver and I had kept all of these people, times, places, and events secret even from each other for most of lives. Furthermore, unbeknown to me at that time, my sisters were trained in their women's business, although that is another story that someday they might want to tell.

All of us at the barge that day eventually laughed out so loud we believed that these old people could hear us in the next world where they dwelt. We agreed that those old people were very cunning. They had 'secreted' away pieces of information and knowledge in the various and appropriate 'receptacles' (us), to be available when we were 'free' to openly talk about and practice our culture once again.

It suddenly dawned on me that we were all participating in an extremely secret process. Our traditions, culture and heritage had gone 'underground' to survive. We had been playing our part in a **secret way of life** that was a direct part of the fight for our people's survival, the survival of spirituality, our ancient lands, waters, lore, traditions, culture, heritage and existence.

Beaver eventually explained to me that several other members of our extended family group had been taught the Ancient ways. Progressively with the help of some of the Elders, we were able to piece together the story of creation and what our roles were to be in this process. We had begun our enigmatic journey to reinscribe and reinvigorate meaning into some of our Ancient ways. Of course these weren't easy times, as most of the 'gammon' (pretend) Aboriginal people did not believe in the old ways. (I'll talk about this more in the conclusion).

The old people were able to analyse and comprehend that, for our people and culture to survive this new 'ice age' (the coming of European people), we had to adapt wholly to the oppressive conditions. Then, where and when possible, plant the secret and sacred seeds of freedom into the next generations. Our Elders consciously altered nearly all of the ways that they spoke and did things and even changed our language into European terminology and phrases. Speaking our lingo constituted the practice of culture, which, under the Act, meant our people could be forcefully removed from their homelands, and their children sent into the foster care system in their absence for neglect (Johnson, 1991). This is our 'underground' system of dissent and rebellion.

On one of the (oh so few) camping trips with Uncle Charlie Moreton, he explained that our Ancestors had heard of the white-man coming to our country (our Traditional Home-range Estate) a long time before they arrived. He said that he

was told that the white-man had consciously studied Aboriginal culture and they knew that the more scarification on a man's body meant that he was a leader. Those scars became the targets for the white-man's guns. It was only through talking with other Aboriginal men from other parts of Australia that reminded me of what I had been told about this treachery many years ago by our Uncle Charlie. Clearly knowledge acquired about Aboriginal society (research) was used to disadvantage and oppress us. Targeting the people with the most scarification who were the acknowledged leaders provided strategic advantage in conflict - leaderless troops meant easier victories (Roebuck, 1966; James, 1991). Therefore, in our contemporary existence any scarification that was meant for some of us was not allowed to be seen by mainstream society, as this constituted the practice of culture and of course, this was completely against the government policy (FAIRA, 1975; Evans, 1999). Any scarification now meant for the new warriors was to be inscribed into our psyche.

The credit for how we were able to prolong these survival strategies through until it was **our time** to reveal them is the direct result of our Elders' analysis and interpretation of the white-washing political agenda applied by successive governments around the world onto the indigenous races of people (Miller, 2008). As Foucault (1972) noted, knowledge is power, and history can be a tool of oppression or liberation. I talk more about this in my memoirs (Appendix One, *My Secret Life*).

### **CHAPTER THREE: My philosophical position**

The purpose of this chapter is to differentiate Indigenous and non-Indigenous epistemologies. To do this I elaborate further on the centrality of the role of Elder and the 'first principles' our cultural ways of knowing that I introduced in the previous chapter (My first realisations). Based on this significant role of the Elder, I state what I call my philosophy, which includes key criteria that defines the status of 'Elder'.

In times that are talked about in the West as 'The Ancient World', the Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote extensively on what he called 'Metaphysics' which today is understood as wondering about the world and our place in it, and arriving at an understanding of 'first principles'. To Aristotle, achieving this deep understanding was the attainment of wisdom, and the communication of these 'first principles' through mythology:

For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters, e.g. about the phenomena of the moon and those of the sun and of the stars, and about the genesis of the universe. And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant (whence even the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of Wisdom, for the myth is composed of wonders); therefore since they philosophized order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end. (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book I No. 2, n.p. trans. W.D. Ross).

An important recent work by Peter Nabokov (2002) titled *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History*, examines attitudes by Anthropologists to the place of myth in Ancient cultures, and notes that in modern times Ancient myths have been both discounted and accepted as linked to planetary events, depending on prevailing 'scientific' theories. However the emergence of an ecological world-view, recent comparisons of celestial events and associated stories of Ancient cultures,

and the acceptance of stories as evidence of connection to country in Western law, has impacted to challenge the notion that stories, myths, legends and histories are merely intellectual artefacts (Nabokov 2002). In Australian Aboriginal culture our oral traditions hold this deep understanding of the world, and this understanding is demonstrated practically. Our obligation to respect Mother Earth and all living things has been handed down through the generations since time immemorial, in the form of stories, which I now realize, was the theoretical perspective. Then, as I progressed and displayed behavior that suggested I might be ready to learn more, the practical lessons began (van den Berghe, 1979; Scheider Corey, et al 1992).

In the final sections of this chapter I continue to question both the methods used by Academy-trained 'experts' (the 'ologists') and their status as the 'authorised' as interpreters of our culture from what they have gleaned over the short period that counts as the history of Australia.

### **3.1 Storylines to country**

The 'storylines to country' language that I'd learnt in secret about our secret/sacred places and other places of significance didn't mean a great deal to me as a child. I remember thinking 'why are these old people teaching me this stuff, we live in a Eurocentric constructed world now and how am I going to ever use this stuff in the future'. In hindsight I can now see what these magical people were doing. I was being conditioned and shown how various elements of our symbiotic Ancient sciences are being created. Then recreated through time and space and how we as the human variable in this relationship are intrinsic to the proper and timely connection of each and every element in our Traditional Home-range Estates.

These lessons are inscribed in what is described as a process of utmost respect for the symbiotic relationship that connects our people to the beginning of time. Inevitably I have come to realise that just knowing a 'story' about something or knowing about non-Aborigine society does not make me understand the complexity of the storyline attached to it. Nor does it make me a non-Aborigine. There are specific socialising processes and social aspects, which in combination with the actual stories, clarifies a person's place, position or social standing in any one place, time and situation. In non-Aboriginal society these may be defined as class structures, but that is not applicable to our situation (is it?).

Similarly within the Indigenous issues/society, people are/were given stories as a direct part of our socialising interactions and interpersonal communications, just as we learned socialising skills at all of the educational edifices that we've attended. Sometimes our stories are embellished to stress a specific point, although the intended moral fabric of the content remains intact.

Site-specific language is what I learned from our old people. As an example, our sacred women's lake is known in English as 'Brown' Lake. When we are able to comprehend the further connotations of this sacredness, we are given the knowledge about our sacred name for this place. Comprehending the story for any specific place meant that we know how this place is meant to be looked after and managed (Coghill, in Ross & Coghill, 2001, p 78). As mentioned earlier, these things didn't mean a lot to me in those days but, as the old people told me, we will only ever understand things when it is our time to know them (*Goenpul, Time Immemorial*).

### **3.2 Inter-connectedness**

Our processes of connection to the world were designed sometime in our enigmatic past. Ultimately they provide for our elongated interconnectedness to each and every indigenous group of the world. Our marriage laws are a good example of this connectedness. We are only permitted to marry sixth cousin away (Goenpul, Time Immemorial). Our first cousins are our brothers and sisters; then six cousins away from that. Our Goenpul scientific explanation for how this works is completely another thesis.

When I am able to connect to each of the specific sites and genealogical connections by their storylines to the greater meaning, I will ultimately acquire an in depth understanding about the whole of our Quandamooka Traditional Home-range estate. The storylines and pathways of our homeland connected our Goenpul group to nearly all of the mainland Traditional Owner groups (Chatwin, 1988; Steele, 1983). Moreover when it is my time to know these stories, I will begin to connect these same storylines wider and wider to eventually connect them to the extensive Songlines and Trading Routes that cross and criss-cross the Australian continent (Chatwin, 1988).

### **3.3 The role of Elders**

Elders have not only shaped and influenced my life but also possibly the lives of everyone else of our extended family group and those around it. The enactment of wisdom, not the attainment of chronological age, is the true meaning of 'being' an Elder. I want the younger generations to clearly understand that there are a lot of people in the world who sometimes sadly are just old, and then there are people who are our Elders. Elders in their respected roles assert their authority. Assertion of authority in true Eldership is not through any type of stand-over tactic, but

through leading by example. Moreover, knowledge, understanding, honour, integrity, obligation, responsibility and respect do not just arrive with the onset of old age. These are some of the attributes that Elders inspire in us for our own aspirations.

An Elder is a person who has achieved their status through many years of responsibility and obligation to their specific extended family group and those others who have chosen to interact within the parameters of this same extended family group. They themselves have worked hard and never shirked their obligation or responsibility to the next generations. Being an Elder is not an ascribed position where merely being old is the prerequisite to enlightenment. The criterion of being an Elder is not in appearance but in action. In my personal philosophy an appropriate Elder is one who acts on what they say. As a couple of examples of this I will talk later about Elders who are not direct blood relatives of ours. These people are our Aunty Beryl Wharton and my Aboriginal brother Bobby Mcleod.

### **3.4 Family Elders**

The chronological accounting of my primary educators went something like this. Me, the spirit child, entered the womb at Quandamooka where I was dreamt into existence. The blood relatives described in this next passage were instrumental in my basic introduction into our ancient cultural way of life. Once the lessons had begun with - Granny Janey - at any time I was obligated to take instruction from those who taught me things, including when it was my turn to step into the role. [refer Appendix One, *Memoirs (I) The Forming Years: ELDERS* ]. Granny Janey is also mentioned in J.G. Steele where she is in attendance at a ceremony in the 1940's (Steele, 1983).

The Elders I speak about here are members of our specific extended family group. Some of our Elders and their families were forcibly removed to distant parts of the country. As well other extended family members packed up and left just to escape the oppressive regime that we who were left behind were forced to endure. We were not told about certain things for specific reasons. I did not know anything about these Elders. Even with my direct Elders I did not know about them until I was directed by our biological Mother to go with these people. I learned about each of the Elders, in turn, later on in life. Sometimes as an introductory explanation to the Elders we did know, we were told small funny stories about these people. These were told when they weren't around and this to some extent put a human meaning onto our young uncomplicated lives. I tell a short story about Uncle Jimmy in *Memoirs (One) The Forming Years*.

I want to speak about the Elders who trained me in turn. Inclusively I will explain how they, as our consciously acknowledged Elders, shaped, modified and influenced my life with their own personal characteristics, integrity, honor, attitude toward others and educational skills, mentioned earlier. Listed below as per their age, are the people that I call and acknowledge as **my** specific Elders. Only some of these Elders played an intrinsic part in my early years of understanding. The other Elder's significance became apparent later.

**Granny Janey Sunflower**, in 1958 introduced me to the Creation Spirit, Mother of Quandamooka in my initial ceremony. In the same ceremony I was introduced to the FIRE AIR, EARTH and WATER SPIRITS of QUANDAMOOKA. Granny Janey was the matriarch of our family group. When Granny Janey said something to the younger people, there was no avenue for discussion. Few, if any of

our immediate Uncles and Aunties ever disagreed with any of her instructions. I've heard people describe Granny Janey as a 'Magic Woman'.

**Uncle Jimmy Newfong** began inscribing meaning to my conscious thought processes and physical actions (conditioning); this was done by progressively setting me small achievable tasks. His 'exercises' were more of an ACCEPTANCE OF OBEDIENCE INSTRUCTION. He taught me the value of fire.

**Uncle Charlie Moreton** took this inscription to another level, highlighting some of the finer points of my cultural learning. I loved this old man, more than I'd realised it growing up.

**Uncle Leon Jones** enhanced the hunting and gathering skills given by Uncle Jimmy and Uncle Charlie; Uncle Leon was a man amongst men. I got to know him better when he moved to Inala and we sat around drinking booze, singing, joking and carrying on. (Some of our immediate maternal Aunties complimented and enhanced these skills by applying them to beach fishing and Goenpul social instruction. Many times whilst I was helping them with the fishing I often wondered who was actually doing the fishing.)

**Grampy (Alfred) Moreton** taught me how to use fire for the management of and looking after 'country.' Grampy was a no nonsense patriarch. Some of the stories that I have heard about Grampy would be hard for readers to understand.

### **3.5 Accountability and respect**

After the Elders the line of accountability went from the oldest children down to the youngest, according to age. There wasn't any formal hierarchical structure of accountability; it was clearly understood that the authority was determined by whoever had the accumulated collective knowledge of Indigenous Australian protocols and literally knew how to conduct themselves most appropriately as an Elder at every level of interaction, locally or other (Bond, 2004). They influenced, instructed and nurtured the ways that we conducted ourselves in the world. They led by example.

Included in our lessons, we are taught to be humble in all that we do and say. Be polite and courteous in everything you do and say. Do not be disrespectful to old people. Such was my life as an Aboriginal child in the 1960's.

Each of the primary care givers and other educators provided extra information at any given time and we were obliged to listen. This is because the extra information was already sanctioned by the Elders. Once permission was given for an activity, then all areas of instruction related to that activity followed. If any child showed specific interest in a particular area of understanding, they were sent to and 'matched up' with the appropriate Elder for further stories (tuition) on that topic. How we conducted ourselves when we were being given the stories (instructions) also played a significant part in the way that further information was disseminated. If we interrupted the Elder whilst they were telling their story (lesson), they would immediately stop and not tell that story anymore. No matter how much prompting we gave, they would not continue that story. I figured out for myself that the only way that I could get to hear the end of the stories (lesson) was to make

sure that I went to the Elder when I was alone. Then I'd listen very carefully making certain never to interrupt.

In the most simplistic way possible, we were taught how to behave and conduct ourselves. The old people led our family group by setting the 'example' that we must obey and follow. We are all held accountable by the actions that we have been taught by our Elders. If the specific individual did not exemplify the appropriate behavior given to them by their Elder, it brought embarrassment and shame on to the family group. The last thing that I wished to do in my early life was to present myself as being inappropriate and an embarrassment to the family.

These rules of accountability and respect applied equally to all of the other Aboriginal people who are our contemporaries. Other acceptable Aboriginal people that have connected with our extended Goenpul family group completely adhere to and pay their respect when we meet. They accept our Lore/law/Law on its face value and abide by it. This adherence to our Lore/law/Law is a part of the pan-Aboriginality referred to later in this chapter. Furthermore, many other Aboriginal peoples want to be acknowledged and accepted by a group whose Lore/law/Law adheres to and complies with positive moral values and beliefs as their own.

Incorporated into most of our cultural lessons, at varying times and at the most appropriate time for the educators, were the stories about the secret and sacred places and sites, ritual singings, pointing the bone, magic, magic people, love magic, ritual killings, ritual punishments, sky gods, Earth spirits, fire spirits, water spirits, air spirits, spirits and the bunyips (Steele, 1983). Uncle Jimmy explained to me about one specific ritual dispute – spear fights. I said that in a spear fight I would want a really big shield. He explained that the shields were only used to fend off spears; and proceeded to show me how to fend off a spear with the ever so small

shield in fights. He said that I had to watch the trajectory of the spear and fend it away and while I had my eyes fixed on the opponent I'd have to pick a spear up in my toes and load it onto the woomera. He added that as soon as blood was drawn on either combatant the fight ceased. He identified how and when these ceremonies would take place.

People who have learned the various passages of the Ancient wisdoms are then able to consciously be aware of their own level of spirituality. Then they are able to ultimately respect, acknowledge, access and interact in the spiritual plane or context that they have been 'trained' to understand and reach. Supernatural manifestations were a constant part of our teaching whether we liked them or not (Ross et. Al., 2011; Steele, 1983).

Ritually singing someone to death, pointing the bone, the bunyip, rain-making and mostly all of the other various levels of Goenpul understanding, have been seen to be just 'black fellow' pseudo-psychedelic mumbo jumbo (Dan George, 1974; Colliver and Woolston, 1975; Mountford, 1965). More specifically that is the easiest way for an 'expert' to interpret and attempt to understand a science that no-one else really wants to or can comprehend and explain (Ross, et al 2011; Mountford, 1965).

### **3.6 The Elders – our 'Unsung Heroes'**

Now I will talk about what constitutes an Elder in the Terms of Reference that I have been trained in to understand what actually makes an Elder; I do this to differentiate between what I deem to be 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' behavior. I will give a description of how our Elders have shaped and influenced my life through their own processes of respect, integrity, trust and honor; And show how being an Elder does not just arrive with the onset of old age (mentioned earlier). An Elder is a

person who has achieved their status through many, many hard years of accountability, obligation and responsibility (Bond, 2004).

When I was approximately eighteen or nineteen I was approached to get involved with some of the Aboriginal politic movements in and around the Brisbane region, but this involvement had only ever involved attending meetings and the such (Evans, 1999). I'd eventually stopped going to these meetings after having to walk home from the city out to Inala after most meetings. Because of its central location most of the political meetings in those days were conducted and convened in Brisbane. It was relatively easy for me to get into the city by bus and train, but after six o'clock trains stopped running out to my part of the world. So unless I got a lift back to Inala it was a long and lonely walk at night for black fellas.

My own personal agenda for attending these meetings was in trying to implement 'preventative programs' for young people, given the horrific experiences that I'd been unable to escape when I was incarcerated in youth detention centres (see *Memoirs Three: The Reforming Years – WESTBROOK*).

### *3.6.1 Aunty Beryl Wharton and Bobby McLeod.*

After the horror of being 'locked away' like some proverbial 'animal,' I actually wanted to do something; if I stopped one child from being exposed to experiences that I was forced to endure and face, that is one child who would not see the same horrors of non-Aborigine justice As mentioned previously I want to give a description of two different Elders who were acknowledged and respected by many people not just me. Let me also say that they are not related to me; they are Aunty Beryl Wharton and Bobby McLeod (see *Memoirs Five: The Activist Years*). In my story about Aunty Beryl Wharton I describe her actions when we attended an

Aboriginal Land Rights meeting at the Ramada Resort in 1992. There was a meeting that was convened by Queensland State government cronies to basically get a consensus of Aboriginal people in Queensland to get a very basic land rights package and to swindle our people out of our rightful heritage. We were sold out by some of the so-called Aboriginal 'leaders' who will and should remain nameless. The supposed negotiations, agreements and sign-off for the government's Land Rights Package were held in Cairns so that only the 'real' Aboriginal people from the northern remote areas on Cape York could attend. This made it basically impossible for people in the south to attend unless they were invited and had all of their fares paid for. Selected people from the south had been given token invitations, to make the process look fair and equitable, but most of them did not know about the intended meeting's agenda and or outcomes. So how could they make an informed decision?

After a lot of coming and going, that we never heard about, some sort of deal was brokered which identified that those people who had remained on their country north of Cairns were the only people who were entitled to get land rights. The rhetoric that the 'sell out' Aborigines employed to push the government position, was to do with the Aboriginal people in the southern areas not being 'real' Aboriginal people, therefore, that would justify us getting nothing. The people who pushed the government position had basically sold out the rest of the Aboriginal people in the state. There were other deals negotiated that many of the foot-sloggers weren't privileged to attend but I do know some of the people who went to these negotiations and it wasn't me.

When you are involved with Aboriginal politics you recall some of the decisive Aboriginal political events as a way to remember specific times or dates. At

the time, I was attending Kangaroo Point College, and aged about thirty-five or thirty-six and I was just starting to get involved again with 'Aboriginal Politics'

### **3.7 Two worlds**

In my memoirs I identify the two separate lives that I have lived. Each of these lives run parallel to the other and in some instances they overlap as I transfer and apply my conscious application of practical experience from one identity to the other. As the title implies, my Goenpul life was a secret to white society, but my dark-skinned little white-boy life was no secret to our people.

I have personally witnessed first hand the attempts at a progressive and systematic destruction of our people's religious, culture, heritage and traditions (Evans, 1999). Human rights abuses of Indigenous peoples are continuing all over the world and our rights are being compromised in favour of a dominant culture of a self-centred, self-interested, possessive and personalised materialism (Miller, 2008).

From my own experiences I can clearly see the differences of the two worlds that I have had to live in: one world completely coveting all things material at any cost - and the other world full of trust, loving and caring, therefore directly opposed to the other (Bond, 2004). It may have been the rigidity and strictness of a state education that I did not like, but the same could be said of the education that I'd acquired from the old people (Bond, 2004); the difference being that I was given the answers by the old people and never beaten for making mistakes. When I correct our young people today I explain that I am doing this because I love you, not out of spite. This is how I now understand what the old people were doing.

When the seasons were appropriate, I would be taken back into the epistemology of this Ancestral Traditional Home-range Estate usually at every available holiday season, to be not only remembered, introduced and reintroduced

to the spirits and spirit beings that reside in each and every site, but to recall the previous successive levels of my training as a young Goenpul Traditional Owner Knowledge Holder. The reintroduction into the spiritual realms of my world is also intended to learn and clarify what my obligatory responsibilities are to Quandamooka and the extended family group. These lessons in the Law/Lore/law are reiterated and reinforced by the Elders of the Goenpul at every available opportunity. The beauty of the respect Lore/law/Law, is that through an understanding of just the basics of it, you may be welcome(d) into another person's 'country'.

Growing up and living in the 'bush' around One Mile and being 'in touch' with the sensitivity of how to live with it, the bush creatures and the surrounding environs has attuned and accustomed my feelings and senses to what I describe as my connectedness - to my spirituality. These connections include a sense of being at one with the actual spirit of Quandamooka. Furthermore, the feelings and senses provide me with the actual skills needed for the acquiring whichever resources were required at various times, in accordance with seasonal cyclic availability. As one example of this seasonal availability, we weren't permitted to take crabs throughout the winter months.

There were never any reasons for calendars as indicators of seasonal change. Structured into our families' ontologies are people who have a direct obligatory responsibility for the ceremony of each seasonal cyclic change. In contrast to non-indigenous society, with a four season calendar, - our people identify (at least) eight. It has only been through talking with our Elders and other indigenous people that I been able to systematically understand this number of seasons. These, along with the full and complete comprehension of the dynamic ecological aspects of our

Traditional Home-range Estates, are how we are connected to the greater Moreton region.

The stories that the old people gave to us, not only highlighted the respect that some people displayed for our Elders, but also consciously identified how we as individuals were to behave and conduct ourselves in any given social situation or place (Bond, 2004); I think that this is what anthropologists described as the socio-political components of a supposedly 'civilised' society (van den Berghe, 1979). With the lessons that are given by the Elders - they are given by showing how it should be done, and this is what I describe as the practical 'work experience' (Geldard, 1989). For example, if how we needed to do any specific task, we would be told a story about one of the Ancestors and how they achieved a specialised outcome; this is what is described as the theory (Nabokov, 2002).

Throughout our education there are the interspersed references to the Creation Spirit Beings who met with and guided the Ancestors on their/our journey through life. Our lessons are given in this way, so that should we ever encounter some of these Creation Spirit Beings in our own contemporary journeys (through our creation) we will know how to conduct ourselves appropriately in their presence. Hopefully we will be directed along the right path (Levi-Strauss, 1966).

A great number of our stories have been nurtured through these thought processes and it has only been in later life that I have been able to tangibly and intangibly connect these stories to specific times, places and events. I describe it this way: the Elders implanted their messages into our conscious thought so that they would eventually become our reality (given birth from the spirit world to live in the physical world) when it was our time to understand those things mentioned earlier

(Nabokov, 2002). Such was the young lives of those who chose to walk this path (Hirschfelder, 1995).

My world was, in those days, a secret double life (Nabokov, 2002). All of the while we were being made consciously aware of our Aboriginality, not only through the constant racial taunts from non-Aboriginal people, but also by participating in an extended family pan Aboriginal obligations at every given opportunity (Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Tuhiwia Smith, 1999).

From my very first memories of life, I was introduced into the spiritual realms of our Goenpul Ancestral traditions, culture and heritage; I didn't know it then but as these things became my reality I eventually began to understand (*Stands in Timber*, 1972). Progressively, I was nurtured through the initial levels of my Goenpul ontological understanding of our law/Lore/Law (*Goenpul, Time Immemorial*).

Then I was very rudely thrust into a Eurocentric world of greed, violence, theft, lies, hatred, racism, marginalisation and ignorance (Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Evans, 1999; et. al.). At any time at the state-run primary school, if I spoke words of our language, I would be threatened, bullied, marginalised, caned and beaten mercilessly. Our people were consciously not allowed to participate in mainstream society (Evans, 1999; Fitzgerald, *Time Immemorial*). Many Aboriginal people will tell you how we were kept out of all things European (Fitzgerald, *Time Immemorial*).

As already indicated, an intimate part of my journey in knowing and understanding is primarily respect, then at various stages of my training I was progressively introduced to the spirits of our Ancestors through the recounting of traditional stories at specific sacred sites along the way. Thus in Australian Aboriginal culture, as in other First Nations societies, for example, the *Cheyenne* (*Stands in Timber*, 1972) where collective memories are passed down through story and

oratory. This was done one on one each time, by one of our Goenpul Elders in a way whereby a hierarchical social structure co-existed with egalitarianism (Fogelson, 1984). The spirits of our Ancestors have not only taught me important parts of the spirit Lore/law/Law for our Traditional Home-range Estate but have shown how this enigmatic Lore/law/Law can extend to a connectedness throughout the whole continent (McLeod, Time Immemorial). They have shown me the true meaning of what reciprocal obligatory responsibility to life and others actually means. They have taught me the difference between right and wrong, and to stand up for my rights against who-ever, no matter whatever or however powerful they might think that they are. They may be able to kill my physical presence but they can never destroy the spirit.

### **3.8 Historians work on accumulated and documented historical evidence**

Many anthropologists work from their own Eurocentric embellished understandings rather than sitting patiently and learning the religious, social, political, economic, cultural and interpersonal communications (Ross, et al 2011). The rhetoric used to justify not patiently waiting to be invited, is that there is never enough time and funding to do the appropriate thing. As well it is common knowledge amongst indigenous Australians that rather than get the appropriate information, and because of the academic timeframes and restraints (not indigenous restraints and timeframes) the majority of researched work is never finalised. Some anthropologists, like many of the sciences of the Arts and cultures that covert materia possessions, the want for glory is here and now, rather than be acknowledged and remembered for the good that they may have done (Ross and

Coghill, 1997). Kerwin refers to this as a type of 'cargo cult' in that they do not care what happens after they are gone (Pers. Comm. 2008).

### 3.8.1 *Accountability*

Our Goenpul processes of justification and accountability are acknowledged and understood by those who were trained in the Ancient ways. I was taught to have confidence in my capabilities and judgements, though the opposite is the case with Eurocentric pedagogies. In the current political climate of ignorance as a defence, there are those who morally choose to be corrupt; moreover, theirs is a conscious choice to be morally bankrupt and devoid of any human conscience. Their ends (supposedly) justify their means (Miller, 2008).

### 3.8.2 *The Elders, and how our stories talk of Creation and discovery*

Growing old gracefully and wisely is not an easy transition for anyone and included in our Goenpul journey of learning are sometimes simple examples of what it takes to be accountable.

### 3.8.3 *Genealogies*

In the family version of this dissertation, Appendices A and B (not provided in the Academic version) depict the Paternal and Maternal Parents lines of descent and emboldened are the author's acknowledged Grand Parents, Uncles and Aunties spoken of in this dissertation. For the 'outsider' Academic reader, I have explained in general terms the relationship to the author of the Elders and others associated with this study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Transition into white society and the downward spiral**

This chapter is a reflection upon what I call my ‘unlearning’ – that is, my introduction into white ways of knowing ‘about’ the world, beginning when I was around 9 years of age. This theme is continued with the family’s move from Lindum near Wynnum on the bayside to the new housing commission suburb of Inala near Ipswich, and the downward spiral following my expulsion from secondary school before I completed the junior certificate. Related stories can be found in *Appendix One – My Secret Life - Memoirs Two, The Unforming years*.

### **4.1 Assimilation?**

I started school at Dunwich Primary and had to travel by a free bus service to from the One Mile into Dunwich. These were carefree days filled with delight. I wasn’t aware then of course that during the 1960s a team of researchers from the University of Queensland led by J.A. Keats were doing the rounds of our homes to ascertain how ‘well’ the Stradbroke Aborigines were assimilating, using such indicators as whether our houses were clean, if there was food in the cupboards, whether the mothers could manage money and had budgets. They were also allowed into the classroom to conduct tests on us to find out if we could come close to the intelligence level of the white students, using tools developed by ‘experts’ [cf. reference to “Mental tests with delinquents and Australian Aboriginal children” (Porteus, 1917), in Keats et al, 1966]. These researchers also inquired into whether the black kids had any white friends in school – as if this was some kind of status symbol, when we were all just kids together who never ‘saw’ colour.

In the afternoons after school, I would spend my time wandering around the beaches until the sun went down until I couldn't see at night. Wandering along each of these beaches felt like a magical experience. Hanging around on the beaches after school brought me in contact with members of the local Lifesavers' Club (Moore, 1993), and I began training to become a junior Lifesaver, a nipper. But this idyllic life was soon to come to an end when the family moved to Lindum, and I went to school at Wynnum North State School for grade two.

#### **4.2 First encounters with racism**

It was at this eastern bay-side suburb where I received my initial introduction into non-Aboriginal society. Our direct neighbours were non-Aboriginal, as were most of the people in this area. Out the back of our yard was a cow paddock where people kept their milking cow. Unbeknown to me, members of our family had already done the hard yards on breaking down the racial barriers, and I don't recall being on the receiving end of racial taunts from the neighbours that we had at this place.

We still went on the usual holidays to One Mile, which, even as a young child, I loved with a passion. It has only been later on in life that I know and understand that this feeling is a major part of our spiritual connection to our home. As per usual, when we arrived, all protocols came to mind, and the first thing we did was acknowledge our respected Elders. I was instructed to do all of the things that I was trained to do to refresh and renew skills learned in previous lessons.

For me these early transitional years were basically a blur due to most of the unhappy memories of school and school experiences. I could only recall some of the more outstanding things from those times and most of them weren't good. As I indicated in the section on methodological issues, what is important (in arguing that

the memoir has a legitimate place in academic studies) is not so much *what* stays in the memory, but *why* a particular event is remembered. Lindum has an important place in my memoirs because this is where I first encountered racism, and where I first met Aunty Beryl Wharton's family.

I started school at Wynnum North State School. Here, on the very first day in my first encounter with other non-Aboriginal children, I was harassed, marginalised and bullied. It was traumatic to say the least. I think that my child's mind sort of had me in a type of survival mode throughout my state school education. When I told mum and dad about being called 'blackie' and 'nigger', dad's instructions were to stand up for myself whatever way I could and, if any of the teachers said anything or did anything, I was to immediately tell him (*Goenpul, Time Immemorial*). He (Dad) would then have a polite word with them. Until I started school, I had not realised that I was different or that our dad was white. It just wasn't an issue with any of our family. But it was for just about everyone else that I met.

It was due to Dad getting a transfer through his work, the Post Master General's Department (PMG) - Dad told us it meant 'Pigs, Monkeys and Goats,' - that we moved from Wynnum to Point Lookout and then to Inala. This was all in the early 1960s - talk about a culture shock. Apparently, Dad was assigned a job as linesman at the PMG depot at Yeronga. To find out where we were permitted to attend school, he went in ever increasing concentric circles to find a mainland school that would accept Aboriginal children. (This had never been a problem in Dunwich because the white fathers of Aboriginal children got involved in making sure that teachers appointed to both the mission and the public schools did their jobs.) An alternative school (to the mission school) was established in Dunwich initially for the children of the workers at the Benevolent Asylum, who had been receiving ad hoc

instruction from educated inmates. In 1904 [Letter, Medical Superintendent, Dunwich Benevolent Asylum to Dept. Public Instruction 16 March 1904, PRV8007/1/837, Qld. State Archives] a provisional school was established. When the mission school finally closed in 1941, children of Aboriginal families living at the One Mile were accepted into Dunwich State School.

After leaving Dunwich, the only place that we could get accommodation and a school that accepted Aboriginal children on the mainland was at the satellite suburb of Inala (Aird, 2001). Inala was a new suburb created to provide public housing in the early 1960s. Everyone joked that they were moving up in the world – from “mission blacks” to “housing commission blacks”.

Serviceton South State School was where I began grade three at Inala. The name was derived from returned soldiers and Service Town was shortened to Serviceton. It was close to the Wacol Army Barracks (Riley, 1988). The first few years at Inala were horrible. At the time there was no such thing as the Racial Discrimination Act (FAIRA, 1979; Evans, 1999) and it seemed as if white people were obligated to racially vilify anyone different than them. Some of the teachers made my life miserably uncomfortable just because I was different.

I was to learn many other brutal lessons in the harsh realities of life here. I had my first of many obligatory fights with the first person who called me ‘blackie’, then every other year after that with every new boy afterwards. I suppose I just learned to tolerate some of the name-calling. It got really lonely playing by yourself after a while. Just one example of this tolerance is how, when I’d go to play at my best friend’s place, I was not allowed into his yard if I needed a drink of water. I’d have to go up or down the road and find an empty house or sneak into someone’s yard. If I was hungry, my best mate would give me a bit of his sandwich or a bite of

his piece of fruit. His mother's speciality was home-made ginger beer and I learned to love the taste of this drink just from the odd mouthful that I got sneaked here and there.

If I was at home, at Stradbroke Island, I would have been able to feed myself and get all of the drinking water I wanted without having to sneak into anyone's yard. There was something very different in the way that things operated in both of the two worlds that I was now forced to participate and interact in (Kroeber, 1987). The one at One Mile was filled with love, trust and understanding and the other in Inala was filled with hatred, mistrust and ignorance. It was hard for me to understand why I was so hated in the Inala world (Evans, 1999).

I remember running home crying from primary school one particular day after some of the children were really mean calling me racist names. I wanted Mum to give me one good little name or a good whitey line to call them back when they racially taunted me. Mum just said, 'Son they just don't understand.' That was not what I wanted to hear, but such was the nature of our mother and what she was able to pass on from our old people as a part of the learning for the respect from our Elders.

Later on in Inala my older brother Steven (the boys of our immediate family nick-named Steven, 'Spud') said to me one day, 'We faced the racism head-on and never took a backward step.' He had a very calming way of reassuring me about things and some of the wisdom that he gave me at the more desperate times in my life helped carry me through (Martin, 2001). I can't speak for Spud but I personally know that he had it as hard - if not harder than me. As Boyce (2003) expressed it in his critique of historian Keith Windshuttle's weak claims in *The Fabrication of*

*Aboriginal History Volume One* (2002) for alternative causes of violence – the oppressive hatred aimed at the Australian Aborigine would have killed a lesser man.

By the time I had reached High School, although both of my older brothers and my oldest sister had paved the way for me, my experience was that the teachers' attitudes were what is commonly known as 'redneck'. So I can only imagine what my siblings must have faced with these people who were supposed to be in roles of authority.

### **4.3 'Unlearning'**

I suppose that I had it relatively easy compared to my older siblings. I don't think that many of these teachers were appropriately trained to deal with children let alone teach the children very well. I remember, in grade nine, one maths teacher ranting and raving about how dumb the other non-Aboriginal children were. He had to make it a point that I had wagged school (to go to work). Then, when I had eventually attended school, it was only at exam time and I topped the class in maths. It must have been traumatic for him that I was the only one to pass the exam. I couldn't help myself and spoke up and told the teacher that the other children were not dumb, it was just the way that they were taught under the state school system is what is confusing them. The teacher, Mr T, then said to me, 'Did I think that I could do a better job?' I replied that I thought I could and set out a simple arithmetic problem on the blackboard, explaining what I was doing with every step of the problem.

Thinking about it now I believe that most of the teachers were not that bad, but many lacked the basic interpersonal communication skills needed for such a stressful roles in society. As well the concept 'cultural awareness' had never even entered the politically correct society (Manne, 2003) of the modern era. I think that

it might have had something to do with their (the teachers') own (social class) upbringing. As I remember one primary school teacher, a Mr W saying, that he did not have to teach us (children) much, as we would only ever be garbage men or toilet men when we grew up.

I was inevitably expelled in grade ten for punching a teacher who was slapping my face in front of everyone at a school dance. I spiralled out of control. Life suspension from rugby league, nine months incarceration in youth centres; but I'm getting ahead of myself. I will return to this later.

#### **4.4 The downward spiral**

A strategy of systemic racism is expulsion so as to remove the problem out of the school and on to the streets. However the immediate feeling of the freedom of independence proved to be short lived. When some cops who were new to the district told me that Inala was the 'arsehole of the world'. This was after they had arrested me and were beating me up. I said: 'Yes, Inala may be the arsehole of the world, but you guys are passing through, so you know what that makes you.' What could they do? Beat me more. My story *WESTBROOK (Appendix One My Secret Life Memoirs 3 – the reforming years)* tells of my experience of institutionalisation and the 'reform' system, and how I worked my way through them. Recently, other inmates from the 1960s and 1970s (Fletcher, 2006, Stoke, 2010) have published stories about their brutal time in Westbrook.

Ironically, it was John (Tinker) Campbell, an Ancestor of Uncle Cliff Campbell – a true Elder of the Quandamooka, who was to play an important role in my life events - who migrated to Australia in 1834 and squatted on this land who named it 'Westbrook' after the place that he was born in 1808 in North America. Tales of his exploits have been well recorded by the same 'experts' on the Aborigines of the

Quandamooka. But Tinker recorded his own memoirs, and these, (like mine, hopefully, in some future time) stand as a greater 'truth' than the opinions of the 'experts' - like Thomas Welsby, whose stories taken from the Quandamooka people fill two volumes (Welsby, 1967).

As proposed in the literature that I referenced earlier on the auto-ethnographical method, Fletcher and Stokes referred to historical records to confirm their recollections. One such record is *The Report of the Inquiry into the Westbrook Farm Home for Boys* conducted by Stipendiary Magistrate, Mr. A.E. Schwarten, presented to Queensland Parliament on 27 September 1961. This report contains a review of the punishment book, which contains such racist expressions about Aborigines as "a poor type of darkie, black waster, an Aboriginal of poor quality, a typical nigger, a black mongrel". It includes evidence that Aborigines were subjected to far greater levels of corporal punishment, and more frequent beatings, for similar misdemeanours than those for white inmates.

This kind of racist treatment reinforced the many confusing lessons that I'd learned at high school - for instance, I am an Aboriginal, yet one of the subjects that we were made to learn was another language, either French or German. The majority of boys in our class (all non-Aboriginal) could hardly comprehend English. Yet all we ever heard about was what Aborigines couldn't do. I know for a fact that one of the children could not even read at the level of education that we were studying. I knew this because I had known him since grade three at primary school and I wasn't the brightest penny in the bunch and he'd cheat answers off me to pass exams.

After we left school I would accompany this person on job interviews and fill in his job application forms for him. I might add that he had an excellent memory for

detail, and as a part of any job that he secured, once they showed him how to do something, he would immediately understand what needed to be done. He once had a delivery job. He told me on the first day of work whoever it was drove him around to all of the customers on his route. He simply memorised every stop.

Inala was a world unto itself and many of the people who lived there knew and realised this quite early. As mentioned already, there was no other public transport than the private one that operated exclusively for the Inala area and they set their own rules and agenda for when their services operated (Riley, 1988).

For anyone to secure gainful employment out side of the Inala meant area that you had to have your own transport. I remember that Dad had to walk to work at Yeronga and home just about every day. The only major place of employment - for people with little or no education around Inala and the surrounding areas - was the meat-processing factory at Oxley. The name of this factory was J.C. Hutton's Limited. But the rumour was that there was some obscure government policy that didn't allow Aboriginal people to work in areas of handling meat. Apparently we were too dirty and so if Aboriginal people from Inala wanted employment we had to gain an education. I did eventually get a job there, but had money deducted from my wages (FAIRA, 1979) until I mentioned it to Dad. He went down and sorted it out.

Inala was a very closed community. There was very little to no public transport in or out of Inala. The only bus service that operated was privately owned and it only took you locally or as far as the train stations at Oxley and Darra. These train stations were several kilometres north of Inala on the Brisbane to Ipswich train-line.

In my transition to independence my only options for employment were restricted to the Hutton's Meat Works at nearby Oxley. The problem with this was

that Aborigines were not permitted to work in the meat industries. Someone told me that there was another dim-witted piece of legislation saying that we were too dirty to be involved in this line of work. I would grudgingly show up at the 'gate' of Hutton's Meat works every morning for the same outcome. It was only when they were absolutely short-handed that I got one of their dead-end jobs. When the meatworks eventually closed down one of the old fellows that we know from Inala, who had worked there for forty years said, 'If I had known that the job wasn't going to be permanent, I wouldn't have taken the job in the first place.' I worked at this meatworks on and off for years. It was all that I was basically trained to do. All up I worked in meat processing plants (as they became known, progressively) in Alice Springs (NT), Moree (NSW) Oxley (QLD) and Wacol (QLD). The meat processing industry is a whole other thesis.

But the one good thing about Inala was that very large part of the community loved their Rugby League (football) and we had many local stars. I played for Souths Inala from 11 years old to 16 years, when we won the U/14s grand final. I played for St Marks at the age of 20 – 21 and for Goodna at the ages of 20 – 25. In 1981 for the Centenary Tigers I was Strapper and Committee Member. That year we won a Minor Premiership & Grand Final, and in 1982 Inala Saints - Undefeated - Won the Grand Final. In 1983 Carole Park when I was Strapper support, we lost the Grand Final. In 1984 Inala Tigers – when I was Player/Coach/Strapper we lost the Semi Final. In 1985 when I was Assistant Coach/Strapper Inala Tigers lost the Grand Final. The Rugby League football, culture and life are another story.

With the benefit of hindsight, this chapter in my life is the story of our family's early years of surviving the government's 'assimilation' policies (Keats, et al, 1966; FAIRA, 1979; Evans, 1999).

## **CHAPTER FIVE: The turning point**

The memoirs relating to this chapter [Appendix One *My Secret Life*, Memoirs Four – The transitioning years: *ESCAPE FROM THE (LUNATIC) ASYLUM*] tell the story of the kinds of jobs that were open to black-fellas whose life experiences were before and of my own times. In the sections below I reflect (through retelling stories) on what ‘white-fella’ education contributed to my life’s journey, with the intention of highlighting for my (family) readers some of the coping strategies that I found useful. My intention is also to provide, for the Academic reader, some insights into strategies that they, as educators, can use to ‘equalise’ outcomes for our people. I also come to more realisations about what was underlying the profound sense of disillusionment at the knock-backs that I got, when, feeling the power of my new knowledge, I took on the ‘welfare’ role with great enthusiasm. In *Memoirs Four – the transitioning years* I tell the story, *AWAKENING* – which is about how my idealised version of community life did not match up with the reality of the day, about my entry into tertiary education, the people I met who were to play significant roles in my new life, and my transition to my obligatory responsibility to our people (*Memoirs Five – the Activist Years*.)

### **5.1 A yearning for knowledge**

That Aboriginal men were a major source of labour in the beef industry is noted in many historical works about remote and rural areas. However little has been written about our employment in the abattoirs, and this topic is worthy of a study on its own. The point I wish to make is that jobs were offered to black-fellas only when there was a shortage of white labour, and withdrawn as soon as the shortage had passed. Furthermore, that our conditions of work and pay were

inferior to those of the white-fellas is well documented. But at least by the 1970s the theft of wages owed was not as easily achieved. Ultimately, it was injury from abattoir work that put an end to physical labour as my means of economic survival, and that created the conditions for a turning point in my life

On and off I had fulfilled my cultural obligations all of my life and now the next generations had been included in the Ancient Circle (of Goenpul life) and the unbroken line that connects us to the beginning had been awoken again. Physically and spiritually the Goenpul began to stand up. A direct part of my formalised role was to go and get the white man's education and bring it back to assist our mob. The other young men, who had sat on the back veranda with me that night would stay at home and defend the 'country'. Together we might begin to address some of the upheavals in our community. Formal qualifications might help (white) people to listen (Bond, 2004)

I'd somehow always had this deep **yearning** for understanding most of my life. I did informal research in different ways just for my own knowledge. Some of the ways that I have done my informal studies and research was by looking at the different waterways and their contents over the years. To my way of thinking, I now just would have to formalise these processes somewhat. A natural curiosity I believed was within all of us, and we could learn much from close observation.

For example, there was this one thing about the waterways that as a child I'd always been really interested in - the 'penny-turtles'. Most of my mates had caught these turtles but were only ever able to keep them for one year, more or less. I never had the relevant equipment to accommodate for them. One of the arguments that I'd had with my friends was that the turtles are reptiles and need extra special attention to which they would just laugh me off. I then set out with the single-

minded purpose of proving to them that I was right. I got a 'penny turtle' from Kholo's Bridge and took it home where I'd set about observing it. Its first home was in a disused ice-cream container. I eventually had that turtle for more than twenty years. So you could say I eventually proved my point.

To return to the story - people caught these turtles, the majority of times they put them in a tropical fish tank with the rest of their aquarium and tropical aquatic paraphernalia. The turtles could live there but not for too long. The very heater that kept the fish mobile during the winter months was actually not only cooking the poor turtles but also stimulating them into a hyper-active state.

I allowed my turtle to hibernate over the winter months and as mentioned it lived for at least twenty years. I told all of the other 'experts' and they then did the same and all of their turtles lived. They made their aquariums into native habitats which then included some native fish from the greater Brisbane region (Ryan, 1995). Our turtle grew huge and eventually died because we made a suitable pool for it in an old bathtub outside. The tub with the turtle in was put out in the open and some berries from a Chinese Elm Tree fell into the tank. I think now that the turtle absorbed this exotic food source and was ultimately poisoned. This turtle story is a kind of parable for what was to happen in this phase of my life's journey.

## **5.2 Things happen for a reason:**

As mentioned I know that I'd always had this yearning to know things – this natural curiosity. But I did not think too much about getting a formal education after my adverse experience of it during my early schooling years. Looking back, if that early experience had been good, I possibly would have finished high school when I had the chance. But as I have been constantly reminded throughout my life, **things happen for a reason.** I quite possibly may not have had the patience or insight

into the oppressive circumstances of our people if I'd have gone through oblivious to the struggles of all other Aboriginal people in this country (Evans, 1999, Johnson, 1991). And, if I hadn't gone to Westbrook Boy's Home, I never would have met the young men from Cherbourg and learned about how our family group grew and experienced the mission life was completely different to how these young men grew up on 'their' mission. When I was there, the oldest boy from the Cherbourg mob, Greg D., told me that he liked it in Westbrook. He told me in Westbrook we had three meals a day, clean clothes and our own place to sleep. When I'd asked him about Cherbourg, he told me that he'd been hung up and whipped for riding the dairy horse. I told him that I didn't believe him so he pulled up the back of his shirt and showed me the scarified whip marks on his back. I thought that these things only happened with the slavery in America in those terrible times for black people (Barry, 1997); weren't we living in the (supposedly) civilised world of twentieth century Australia?

It was hard for me to shift my mindset towards my family responsibility role but something changed to help me along the way. I had injured myself working at one of the many itinerant jobs that I had been programmed to perform, in the meat working industry. This injury was a blessing in disguise as it forced me to consider another way of acquiring employment.

I was sitting in what we called the 'Jaw Break' bar at the Inala Hotel (as locals we gave our own names to the three different bars at the Inala Hotel). I was feeling sorry for myself, and having a little cry about the circumstances now encompassing me and engulfing my future when an old friend came over and sat down. He asked me what was wrong and I told him. To this he asked me had I ever thought about going back to school; which I had thought about many, many times.

The history books used in schools did not acknowledge that our country's statehood was founded at the expense of the Aboriginal people (Richards, 2008; Evans, 1999; FAIRA, 1979). Instead, as children and teenagers we experience a sanitised version of history that almost completely ignored the real 'tainted' history (Reynolds, 1980; Richards, 2008; Reid, 2006; FAIRA, 1979).

I had a limited understanding at that point about the politics that governed every facet of our indigenous lives (Reid, 2006; Evans, 1999). None of the mainstream children that I grew up with were consciously taught anything about the real Australian history at any level of their state school education. At our school we were taught that the explorers were attacked by hostile Aborigines and that they were sometimes killed. Then for the rest of the week at primary school, all of the other children would chase me around and hate me more than previously stated.

In my own limited knowledge of politics, though, I had a basic understanding that there were a few other Aboriginal people around here and there. It wasn't until I attended the anniversary of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, in Canberra in 1992 (I was thirty six years old by then), that I saw many other Aboriginal people. While I was there I saw people who even looked just like me and I learned that they had lived a similar existence to how our family did. I now saw the version of events that we learned in school as the history of our country as a form of 'brainwashing' and 'whitewashing'. But I'm getting ahead of myself here, so I'll follow on from what I began to say.

### **5.3 Return to formal education**

My old friend told me that Kangaroo Point College of TAFE had a Murri Unit and that I could learn to read and write again and possibly do some further education as well (if I was smart enough) - just to basically brush up on what I had

forgotten at the state school. Then I could learn how to read and write at an appropriate level to enter one of the many other course options that were being offered to Indigenous people of Australia at that particular point in time. I told him half-heartedly that I thought I was too dumb to attend college, hoping that he convince me otherwise. I don't recall what he said but he did convince me to just go in and see what they say, and I did.

After an initial evaluation, I did the senior access course and did OK. In this course, we were basically evaluated and screened as to what specific area or discipline our Aboriginal studies (politics) could be applied to. Both of my sisters before me led the way into education. They had become schoolteachers, so I thought that I might want to do the same. I had always had this basic inclination to teach and a way of trying to educate those around me (whether they liked it or not).

At college I'd started to learn the real history of Australia. I had consciously disciplined myself about showing weakness to non-Indigenous people when they taunted, ridiculed, humiliated and tormented me as a child. I made myself not cry, so that they could not see my pain or grief and I thought myself impervious to these emotions. This was until I learned that a part of the political agenda for our people involved the direct murder of our ancestors (Richards, 2008; Evans, 1999: et. al.). The early invaders murdered our babies, our children and our old people. When I'd found out what had happened at home - Stradbroke Island, I awoke many nights crying to myself. This continued agony and grief lasted for approximately two months. I promised myself (again), and the Spirits, that I would do everything humanly possible to right this injustice, no matter what it took or how long it took me.

I now know that this desire to understand came from the ways that the old people taught me. I now understand that for me it was the best way of learning that I'd ever had. Nearly all of the lessons that the old people gave to me then, I have rarely if ever, forgotten.

Again fate lent a hand in shaping my future choices. On the way home from a college student excursion to Carnarvon Gorge, after the first year of my formal studies, the four-wheel mini-bus driver rolled the bus that we were in. I incurred a whiplash injury and was incapacitated for approximately three years. After that three year period I then again attempted to resurrect my formal education in a TAFE institution.

#### **5.4 Welfaring – after the accident**

After the initial accident, Noel Finch, the Director of the Murri Unit attached to the Kangaroo Point TAFE College, assured me that when I had recovered sufficiently I would have a place at college. I applied for and was accepted into an Associate Diploma of Applied Science, the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Welfare course.

Thirty-three Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander students, the majority of which were mature age students, began this course. Five of us finished. Out of those five, I was one of the three students who graduated.

Even though it was an Indigenous specific curriculum at Kangaroo Point, there were massive inconsistencies in terms of the content, support and educational needs of mature age Indigenous people. Politically we referred to this as band-aid solutions.

As potential Welfare Workers we had to know most of the non-government agencies and government agencies that dealt with indigenous welfare issues. One of

our core subjects included visits to these agencies and as a part of the course curriculum we had to think of relevant and appropriate questions to ask these agencies. We had been briefed in the lectures of what it was that we needed to do on these visits. As well, all of the questions had to be our own. We were given no direction by the course lecturers other than the initial introduction. Participation was also a part of the assessment – I think that we were being encouraged to speak up. Sadly for some of the shy people in our group of potential welfare workers who could hardly speak with their own classmates, let alone ask direct questions of complete strangers, found it really hard going.

So during our lunch breaks some of us designed a series of the most asked questions: I think that there were about twenty. We gave these out to each member of our class. Once the basic primer questions were asked and out of the way, the rest of the chitchat questions followed. These questions and answers we were told were to become a (standard) part of our eventual 'tool kit' as formally trained welfare people. As well, we actually got to know some of the services offered to mainstream and indigenous welfare recipients and most of the statistics of how many recipients there were; my head was spinning as some of the information was just too much for me - but I had to know all of this.

A part of a coping strategy that I'd developed was that I set myself small achievable blocks of studies. This was to cajole and convince myself through each and every stage. Approximately halfway through one of these 'blocks' I convinced myself that I had gone too far to turn back. Many people have told me that I was pig-headed and I used this to drive myself to finish. I personally know that just about everyone of us doing these studies really struggled. As we were potential welfare workers, we used our own life experiences to counsel and support each other.

Aware of the ever-present pain of our people's wants and needs. we were unable to keep these things from each other. Most of the students who started this course wanted to finish it but there just wasn't the support in the system to address this psychological dimension of applied learning. It was a credit to those who stuck it out and finished.

## **5.5 Resilience**

One of the Torres Straits Islander women from our course gave me a piece of paper that she saw blowing along the street at Woolloongabba. She explained to me that as a naturally curious person she decided to pick it up. She called me Bhalla, and said that these words on the paper reminded her of me. The paper had the beginnings of a poem that someone had started to write. It said;

I'm a proud Aborigine  
An inheritance of my kin...

So I modified the words and wrote:

*I'm a proud Goenpul man  
An inheritance from our kin  
Though sometimes I questioned  
About the colour of my skin*

*I'm questioned on this  
By both blacks and by whites  
To me, our culture  
Explains all my rights*

*My nationality*

*I've embraced for so long*

*And the racism of some*

*Just makes me be strong*

*For if they wouldn't make judgements*

*On just what they see*

*Then maybe one day*

*They'd learn to see me*

My love of poetry was something that I'd learnt from Uncle Charlie. I'd write myself little ditties and then use them as incentives just to keep me going.

## **5.6 Some good comes of my bad experiences in life**

Another part of our training at TAFE, which was a direct part of our assessment, meant we had to do placements for practical work experience at some of those agencies. There were three of these work experience blocks that needed to be completed. The first two 'placements' were to be of four weeks and the last placement had to be of six weeks' duration.

For my first placement I chose the Resource Centre at Inala, which I knew to be an Aboriginal specific service. At the centre I got involved with the Youth Workers and helped set up some of their programs aimed at crime prevention and at risk children in the Inala area. These programs eventually wound down after a series of unfortunate accidents. Another factor in this winding down was that the government believed that there was no need for culturally appropriate preventive programs.

My next placement was with the Aboriginal Legal Service, or to be more specific, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QEA). I joined the Field Officers unit of the Legal Service. My first job was to do the dishes each morning on arrival at work and after the dishes were done I'd have to staff the front desk and take messages and inform anyone who came into the office of our roles and services. I'd hoped that eventually there would be some opportunities to do visits into the prisons.

One day at the front desk, an urgent message came through to the secretary for assistance at one of the prisons. There were none of the Field Officers there at the time as they were away visiting other prisons. The urgency was that there was going to be a riot by the Indigenous inmates. I don't think that there was any corporate decision made, but I was asked if I wanted to go in to the prison and assess the situation. Of course I replied in the affirmative. I was given a company car and sent off to the prison.

Everything in the prison was in what they called 'lock down'. I was admitted straight through into a secure area without having to go through any security check. The area that I was eventually to reach looked like a giant fish tank inside a bigger caged off area. I was shown into and secured in the 'fish tank'. Into this area the ring leader of the potential riot was brought for me to talk with. He asked me where the other Field Officers were and I explained that I was all that was left, but maybe I could help.

I introduced myself and asked what had happened. The man was not that much older than me. He said that a couple of red-neck (they were everywhere) guards had provoked him and his mate and that apparently he had belted one with his guitar and his mate cracked another guard with his didgeridoo. This had then

escalated into more inmates getting involved and death-threats were directed at this man and his mate. Of course I took notes and asked if it was alright if I showed these to the relevant people back at the Legal Service. He took the notebook out of my hand and ripped the page out of my book and ate it. I assured him that I would be back and left to put in place some sort of coping strategy to help this man and his mate.

My mind was racing. I went to the Aboriginal and Islander Community Health Service and explained what my problem was and asked if I could borrow one of their doctors. One of the young male doctors (non-Aboriginal), Jeremy I., volunteered to help and we set off to the prison. I explained to the doctor in detail what had happened and what the strategy was and he was only too willing to assist any way that he could.

On arrival at the prison both of us were given complete clearance and shown straight through. Inside the 'fish tank' the first prisoner was shown in again and we explained to him what we were going to do. The plan was that, we were going to check every part of his body here in the 'fish tank' out in the open so that all of the guards could see, and then if he mysteriously died that night, then we'd have a record of any of the injuries to compare against any new injuries. We went through the exact same procedure for his mate. When we had finished with our duties, the man came over to me again and shook my hand and said, 'Brother you just saved our lives. If there is any way that I can ever repay you, please do not hesitate to ask.' I left the prison that day feeling that maybe I had done a small part of my job.

### *5.6.1 Black humour*

The last placement that I applied for was with the Police Department. I did not hold out much hope for this placement but I went ahead and applied anyway. They replied that I could not get security clearance because of my criminal past. So I then applied to the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) with the same result. According to the guidelines for our placements, I could just spend the six weeks at college or apply to one of my previous placement appointments. The Legal Service was only too pleased to take me in again.

There was a slight difference this time when I went to work at the Legal Service. Apparently there was a pilot program being tried at Inala and because I was directly a part of this community, I was appointed to the job. I was told that if I didn't like the program, I could come back into town and resume duties within the head office. The program at Inala was a joint venture that looked at ways of making the various participant agencies more accessible by the wider public.

On the first day I was told to report to the Civic Centre at Inala. Here at my new post I found that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QEA), in partnership with the Police Department and the Criminal Justice Commission, were to set up what was then called a Shop-Front. I was to work with the Police Department and the Criminal Justice Commission at Inala, both of the placements that had originally turned me down.

The initial introductions were awkward as neither the police nor I had worked together for some sort of positive outcome. I still held my own personal reservations about the police. The young constable, Robin S. was a positive person to work with. The sergeant Ian J. had worked in New Guinea with local people and seemed to be quite open to new things. On the first day an old mate Bodge was doing some shopping and came over to sticky-beak and see what I was doing with

the police. Eventually I was asked to go with Robin and pick up some office equipment, so I asked Bodge to come along and lend a hand. A police paddy wagon was put at our disposal to pick up some of the larger items. When both Bodge and myself saw that we had to sit in the front of this vehicle we stopped and told Robin that we'd never been in the front of one of these paddy wagons and that we'd be more comfortable sitting in the back locked in the cage.

Whilst working at Inala with representatives of both of these agencies, I was able to let them know about my previous applications and point out how their strict security clearances basically disqualified most Indigenous people from being employed with them. I pointed out that it wasn't our fault that the racist policies employed by previous governments (Evans, 1999; Reid, 2009) had basically promoted the arrest and detention of indigenous Australians. To their credit these representatives took my concerns further within their agencies and I met with and spoke to other people higher up in their departments.

There were a few things that eventuated from the initial meetings. I was able to discuss some of the disadvantages and inequalities, so that a series of meetings were convened, and senior members of the Indigenous Community representatives at the time went into meetings with these agencies.

### *5.6.2 Transitioning*

It was exciting for me that significant positive outcomes arose through these placements. Both the Police Department and the Criminal Justice Commission created Indigenous specific positions within their organisational structures. I was encouraged by both organisations to apply for these positions.

At the Inala Shop-Front, I worked with a person from the CJC, a sergeant and a constable from the Queensland Police Service. Because the program was in the community where I lived, I was given a senior role in the operations of how we proceeded and progressed with community negotiations. So that people would notice me (a blackfella) working with the police, it was decided to put my desk at the very front of the shop. People that I knew would walk past and just stare at me. This was until one of my mates wandered by and saw me there and asked me what I was doing in there working with the police. I jokingly told my mate that I had been employed by the police to 'give up' (inform on) all of the crims that I knew in Inala. I said to my friend that the best way to do this was to work my way through the phone book, but there were so many crooks (in Inala) that I hadn't even got out of the A's yet. He looked at me and we had a good laugh. I eventually explained what I was doing and he went off wishing me 'good luck'.

In just a short amount of time there, I'd notice that not a lot of people came too close or even into the Shop-Front, let alone talk with any of us. I knew it was frustrating for all of the agencies concerned. The police sergeant would continuously ask me why many of the people in the community, outside of those working in the program, would not come in to the shop. I had to think about this situation for a while before answering the sergeant. I had got to understand just a little bit about 'police culture' from the sergeant in the limited time that I'd spent with him. So when he asked me why people wouldn't come in, I didn't have the heart to tell him that most of the people in Inala just did not like police.

I eventually explained the problem by asking him whether he had noticed that the bank in the civic centre of Inala was possibly the only bank in the world at the time that hadn't been robbed. He said that he had noticed it. Then I told him that

possibly the reason for this was that should a bank-robber pull a gun in the bank, he would quite likely be shot by one of the customers. This was my 'round-about' way of saying that many of the people of Inala were possibly inclined towards living on the wrong side of the tracks (mentioned earlier). He understood my 'drift' and asked how we might rectify the situation of getting more people to come in.

I thought about the problem for a while and then came up with a plan that I thought we might be able achieve some success with. The plan was to do with the preventative programs that I had been involved in through the Inala Resource Centre, my first placement. I told the sergeant and the constable and asked them what they thought about it.

First of all I sought permission to speak to one of the local High Schools. In the initial meeting I told the school authorities who I was and what work we were doing. Then, so as not to disrupt any of the classes or students, I asked the school for the ten worst students that they had. I figured that with the worst students, the school didn't have too much to lose.

I was directed to the school counsellor who gave me the names of the students. I knew that I was in for a good time when I was shown that some of these children had not even showed up on enrolment day, let alone attend any classes to play up in. I went around to their houses and got permission from their parents for them to participate in the program. On the police side of the program, Commissioner Newham came out to the Shop-Front to meet the black-fella who worked with police. It seemed as if I was an oddity for the police as well. I personally asked the Commissioner if, as a part of our program, we could take the children on the police launch docked at the water police headquarters underneath the Story

Bridge. I had learned about the new police launch in one of our visitations from college.

Commissioner Newham instructed the sergeant to write the relevant letter and fill in the appropriate paper-work, stating that it would be 'good public relations' to give the general public access to the water police boats. With the consent of the sergeant, I approached Woolworths in Inala and informed them of our program. The manager was only too helpful and donated out of his own pocket the relevant resources needed for a day's outing. We took the children out on the fifty-one foot police launch and cruised up and down the Brisbane River.

At the end of the program, six weeks later, eight out of the ten children went back to school. One of the strategies of inclusion that we'd discussed earlier was when the program's outings were finished for the day; the parents of the children came into the Police Shop-Front to pick them up. Sometimes we were a little late back from the programs and the parents of the children were offered the obligatory 'cuppa and bickie'. In the wait for the children some of the pleasantries involved discussions about what the Shop-Front was trying to achieve.

### 5.6.3 *Mentoring*

After the work experience with the Legal Service finished I think that I earned a little bit of respect inside and outside of some of the community organisations. The Aboriginal politics never abated. I consciously kept going back to the Legal Service as it was at our political 'coalface' and it led the way on most of the protestations about the government political agenda for indigenous Australians.

Another one of the subjects of our TAFE course involved the ability to counsel others, so as part of my commitment to most of our class, I personally sat

with those students who had limited knowledge in this area of expertise. If we did not meet and talk in one of the classrooms set aside for the Indigenous students, we walked along the Brisbane River that was directly next to the college. In these sessions I prompted the students and showed them how to basically ask questions about someone's problems. We were taught in the lectures to 'listen with our eyes', read a person's body language, and 'see with our ears' to comprehend a person's problems through the way that they spoke.

I developed several ways of training the classmates and if the potential counsellor didn't know what to do, then I'd start by asking them about one of their problems and got them to note how I posed the questions. These sessions lasted for a two-week period leading up to a taped session that we were eventually graded on. By the end of this part of studies, I think that I solved all of the problems that I ever had and then some.

Towards the end of these sessions I would make up hypothetical problems for the students to solve. In most cases it was hard for people to pretend so I'd just encourage them to solve one of their own problems, which served a couple of purposes. Included in the counselling 'regulations' and what was constantly drummed into our heads, was the need for confidentiality. So throughout the exercise when we'd solve a problem, they learned how to do it effectively, they'd write it down to save going over it again and to create their own codifications so that it was all kept confidential. To hone our skills in counselling, our 'welfare class' practiced our newly learnt skills on most of the other Indigenous students attending Kangaroo Point TAFE. These other (black) students represented an untapped wealth of problems for any budding counsellor.

## **5.7 Challenging systemic inequity**

I have to say that the financial support and any incentives to participate at this level of education were a pittance. I can't remember even knowing about any moral support offered in this system. My income as a full time student was one hundred and forty dollars a fortnight in 1990 did not leave much room for error. Many mature age and younger people in the course had come from remote communities and had to survive on even less than I was on; and they were hundreds of miles from home.

What I learned from this experience was that the term 'equity' was a gammon government feel-good catch-phrase. The Australian government would throw up this word every so often to make other countries think that Australia was a wonderful place for Aborigines to live. We were living in the twentieth century and the government had only just begun to consider access to tertiary education for our people.

I soon determined that there was more to this education thing than met the eye. Half way through my last year at TAFE, I decided to go for an interview at the University of Queensland to see if I could get in to a tertiary course. The students that were left at college after the majority dropped out, but more specifically Joycey (Joyce Cooper), told me 'go for it my brother'.

So I went into this assessment type of examination, to evaluate whether I could do the relevant work needed to do a degree at university level. I was told that I did not make it into the first accepted lot, but I would be the first one accepted into next year's intake in the first semester. I was so nervous that I cannot remember much about that assessment exercise.

This was exactly what I needed to spur me on to finish my TAFE Associate Diploma, to prove to myself that I could achieve and finish something of this education, if only just to alleviate my own fears. The old state school education scars still hurt.

### **5.8 Some home truths**

At college I was able to accumulate and learn a few more coping skills but the old lessons of trust continued to raise concerns with me. One of the non-Indigenous lecturers, Tony (I nick-named him Scoop) - taught us Welfare mob in social work issues. Scoop had a social work degree and his knowledge helped explain some of the very simple home-truths, especially about non-Indigenous perceptions about Aborigines. Whenever I questioned him about things I would continuously throw in 'curly' questions at him. This was to test his resolve and commitment to the 'Aboriginal' cause; these were some of my own specifically designed coping strategies questions for non-indigenous people working with blackfellas.

I'd ask him things about my own personal attitude, behaviour and the interpersonal communication skills that I had acquired as a resident of Dodge City (Inala). To his credit he'd tell me, quite openly and honestly that I displayed what was deemed in non-indigenous fellow professional talk 'anti-social behaviour'. I liked the fact that he was brutally frank about things that I'd ask him, as it clarified for me how most others in mainstream society must be viewing indigenous Australians and indigenous issues. His openness prompted me to press him even harder for answers on other such indigenous related subjects and again, to his credit he would give his (sometimes his own) open and honest answers. Openness and honesty are some of the traits that I personally admire in another individual.

The same could be said for even some of the rednecks - at least I knew where I stood with them on more than one occasion. I can't stand the impostors who will say and do just about anything to steal your ideas and undermine you; and believe me when I say that non-indigenous people don't have a monopoly on this process.

There was one point when I was recovering from the whiplash injury that I'd incurred during the excursion (before I started the Associate Diploma) when I had experienced an unusual feeling of mental incompetence. I tried to explain to this experience to Tony. He said that based on his Social Work training and professional experience, the authorities - had I sought assistance from them - would have locked me away (and possibly thrown away the key). This was another time that I was glad I didn't go to the authorities for help. Moreover, I was glad for Scoop's opinion. I have analysed this process, mentally researched and evaluated it, and reached the outcome that I thought would possibly have been a better result for me. I've filed that experience away into my mental tool kit. Sadly Tony passed away unexpectedly a couple of years later, but the honesty and openness that he gave me I will always appreciate. This is an important lesson for both the student and the teacher - for teachers, it is that the courage to be frank, honest and open ultimately deepens the learning experience for the student, if the student has the courage to ask for an honest opinion and then be open to acting on that opinion. When students feel culturally safe and valued, trust is built, and real learning results.

### **5.9 Connecting and sharing with Our Mob**

I remember one lady from the Torres Strait, Florence, the person mentioned earlier, when she came over to home (Stradbroke Island) for the first time. Florence

and I were standing on the upper deck of the barge looking towards Straddy and she started to cry and said: 'Bhalla (brother in Florence's language), your island reminds me so much of my home.' I think she told me it is Friday Island and I realised how isolated she must have felt not only from family and friends but also from the feelings of being safe at home.

Isolated hundreds of miles from home, with very little to no money, having to put all of your trust into people that you have only just met and got to know, it is no wonder that only five students ever finished the course at TAFE and that only three of us ever graduated (and apparently only three graduated the year before). This sends a clear message about the State and its system of 'equity', and rather than give up in despair, we must continue the struggle for our rights – but how do we do this with the imbalance of power against us?

A couple of other students from out of town who I'd met and made friends with at college were from Victoria. These people were Joyce (I've mentioned earlier), and her partner Bootes (Graham Cooper). Joyce did the welfare course with me and Bootes did the administration course. They believed that if they did both of the associate diplomas - welfare and administration - these would be the best to help serve their community. Bootes introduced me to the great Aboriginal singer and songwriter, Archie Roach, who is famous for one of his songs, *Took The Children Away*.

Bootes told me that he drank wine with Archie in Charcoal Lane. *Charcoal Lane* was another one of Archie's hit songs'. Through the meeting with Archie I got to meet another famous Aboriginal singer and songwriter, Ruby Hunter. I got to meet them both when Archie and Ruby visited Joyce and Bootes at their home in Inala.

A large part of the significance for me of meeting with other Indigenous people from other places is that, no matter where we came from, we can all tell the same story of murder, rape, theft, marginalisation, isolation and humiliation. My burning desire to comprehend why this was happening to our people only became clear once I'd gained access to a tertiary education. Even then it wasn't a clear picture and many of the issues to this day still confuse me. I had to know why.

Joycey and I became close friends at college and teamed up on a lot of our work. The funny thing about studying at this level of education through an indigenous unit attached to the college was that even amongst our own mob, there was this sort of funny competitive rhetoric that pushed us to compete against each other, moreover to be the 'best'. I can remember being taught not to be selfish as a child. Although I now understand that it is the empirical institutionalised concepts that drive educational endeavour. I don't really care that much about being the best I just *wanted to help our mob.*

### **5.10 Knowledge is power**

That 'knowledge is power' that can be used **against us or for us** was really hitting home. I couldn't help wondering what this competitiveness was all about. Some of the rhetoric espoused by the lecturers literally confirmed my suspicions when they'd say things like 'knowledge is power' which it is, to a certain degree, true. Yet I don't think that any of us welfare students were potential Rhodes Scholars, and most of us were just trying to get an education to go out and help our own mobs.

I could see 'with my ears', by the ways that we interacted with each other that very few of us had ever got more than a high school education. There was this

sad time for Bootes and Joyce, which I can't talk about here, but they had to go back to their home in Victoria for a funeral. They ended up staying longer, as we do when we get with our own mob, and they didn't come back for at least six weeks.

When they eventually did get back Joyce went into the hierarchy of the Murri Unit to see what her options were. They told her that it would be better if she dropped out, as persisting in the course would only disrupt the rest of us who were there. When I saw her she told me the options given to her and said that she was dropping out. Another one of the other darling lecturers told her that she wouldn't have made a very good welfare worker anyway.

On the weekend after the news was given to Joyce, I got all of my work that we had done in her absence and went around to her place. I stayed with the Coopers for the weekend. I told Joyce to get out all of her stuff. Then I said to her, 'Now write this', and with a little bit of coaxing she caught up the six weeks work that she had missed. She said to me, 'Brother, the ways that you explained this stuff to me, I now understand it,' whereas before it was just a blur.

I'm not sure, but when we graduated I think that Joyce came top of the class and out of the three of us that didn't mean much, but it did to me. Joyce, after she graduated went on to work as a counsellor at the prisons. I'm not sure which prison or prisons but to me she was what epitomises a self-made woman trying to help her mob no matter where they were. This was a good lesson for our mob not to fall into the trap of individualism and competition. We gain more as a People from following our own way of sharing knowledge and caring for our mob.

I determined then that when I eventually got to attend a university, I would psychology because of my training in welfare. There were several specific reasons for wanting to study in this discipline. In my fantasy of equity for all, I thought that I

might be able to change the thought processes of those people who hated Aborigines. I remember my young sister once saying 'Shane you can't save the world' and my reply was that I wouldn't die wondering. There were also the financial rewards for becoming a psychologist: I think at the time these professional people earned something like fifty thousand dollars a year which, at the time, I thought was good money for someone who had basically lived on the poverty line most of my life.

From the very first semester, university life frightened (the shit out of) me and after about four weeks I was looking for 'the door' (an exit strategy). I tried to convince myself that I had already achieved a college diploma, and I thought to myself, surely that was enough for one blackfella who had been expelled from high school. I had a yarn with myself - I had done pretty well at college and passed most subjects easily – so why should I give in and go away? In Maths B, I got ninety eight percent. The lecturer explained that I missed a simple addition sum and had I checked my work with a calculator, I'd have got one hundred percent. I asked him what a calculator was and that seemed to explain it all for him. I did get one hundred percent for our health exam and most other subjects were basically straight-forward - what do they call it, ah yes: common sense.

I eventually went and saw the student support attached to the Murri Unit at UQ. The student support person showed me every courtesy and help. Cheryl C. was this person. I eventually got to know Cheryl professionally and she knew where I had grown up and lived and what it was like to live and survive Dodge City.

Cheryl convinced me to drop a subject and concentrate on subjects that I had a good understanding of. So I took on the Aboriginal Studies Major subjects. The subjects were unique in that I felt that they were intimate feelings of inclusiveness. Many of the non-Aboriginal students that I got to know while studying this subject,

told me that they loved this feeling of inclusiveness and belonging. Even years after the formal education side of our interactions ceased I found that these new found friends continued their relationships with other Indigenous peoples.

Even though these interactions with other mobs helped, I still felt isolated and intimidated because many of the non-Aboriginal people at this new place seemed to be looking at me with their 'what are **you** doing here' stare. I've known and seen that stare all of my life: it is hard to forget but I forced myself to get used to it here. It pissed me off and so did most of their blank redneck expressions and inclinations. As mentioned another one of my coping strategies was to write poems. This is the one for UQ:

You may think I'm an animal

But I'm only a man

I love and I hate

Just as anyone can

I laugh when I'm happy

I cry if I'm sad

If you do not like me

Then too f--ken bad.

It goes without saying that my poem didn't solve a thing, but the younger ones told me it felt good to know that they had a mature-age man sitting right in there with them, in their own concepts of 'dreaming'. On our camps with the young men they get me to recite mostly all of my poems and it helps them to understand some of the inequalities.

Back at uni I found that I could get access to tutorial support, and didn't I ever need it. I think that my marks (Grade Point Average) were about three point something, although this did not mean very much to me at all at the time. Along with the Aboriginal Studies Major there were **parallel** subjects in Anthropology that, as I found out, I would eventually have to study to make up my major.

Studying the 'mainstream' discipline of anthropology meant that I was getting into a lot of arguments with many of the non-Indigenous, Aboriginal 'expert' anthropologists. It struck me that while they were studying Aborigines, they quite possibly actually thought that they were an Aborigine. They seemed to think that because they had a degree in studying Aborigines, and may have lived *near* Aborigines for a while, that made them more of an Aborigine than the urban Aborigine like myself.

My Aboriginal brother Mervyn who I've mentioned in my memoirs, and who was studying at UQ at the same time as me, asked me which subjects I was studying. I jokingly asked him if he wanted to study the same subjects and be like me, and he replied, 'No brother, the fellows who are teaching those subjects now don't like Aboriginal people anymore after fighting with you about Aboriginal issues, and I just wanted to make sure that I don't do those same ones.'

In one of the classes that I had attended for anthropology there was a young student who'd watch me when the 'experts' made one objectionable comment after another. She watched me to see what my reaction was. Natalie eventually came up and introduced herself to me and told me that she didn't like some of the 'experts' comments either, and had noticed that on the same things that she disagreed I did likewise. Nat had an Aboriginal friend who, she said, she had witnessed first hand really struggling through life with a 'complex' about her Aboriginality. At the time

Natalie had also studied and had a degree in psychology. It was a blessing for me the day Nat was sent to me, because as I came to learn, she is a kind, good-hearted person who had a passion for equality for all.

I applied for tutoring support and got Nat to show me what this university business was supposedly all about. It wasn't a surprise for Nat that I had no idea about the library. I showed her how I'd look for our set readings in the library. I'd usually catch the lift up and when I saw a floor with books on the shelves I'd get out and search for the book that I needed. Unbeknown to me, there are seven floors in the undergrad library at UQ and not surprisingly I never found the book that I was looking for. Nat would just laugh at me and this seemed to break the tension.

I think that in her caring way she could see into my pain and understand that as a mature age Aboriginal man, I was really struggling with all of the social awkwardness that our people have had to face. Sometimes I'd give up and just say that I was too dumb to be studying at university. But she never gave up on me and would say things like, 'Don't you dare say that. You are not dumb: you just think about things differently.' These reassuring words made me feel good about myself and it gave me that little bit extra strength to carry on.

Nat's partner (at the time) was a fellow she called PK. I think that she met him at high school and she told me he wanted to write movies. She said that he wanted to write a movie on the Native Police and in the opening scene he'd have this sound of horses galloping into view. The first time that I went around to their place PK wasn't home and Nat told me that she was scared of being alone with me. I asked her why, and she said that the stereotypical image of an Aboriginal man was that we were all drunks, drug addicts, rapists and we beat women. I thought to myself, 'Don't sugar-coat it for me Nat, tell me what ya really think!'

I started to think to myself, what is the image that the media are portraying to the world about Aboriginal people and I'm going to have to do something about it. I respected Nat's opinion and made sure that I didn't place myself in another awkward position where it might scare her. We both found that the straight forward way of dealing with many of the issues was possibly the best.

After we got to know each other, I remember that for one of Nat's archaeology subjects she needed to do a resin analysis on several stone artefacts. She wanted to get some sap from a grass-tree (*Xanthorrhoea*) and there were none around the uni. I told her that we had them over at home (Straddy) so we arranged for a trip over and went up into the bush to get some. Eventually we'd got several kilometres into the bush and I remember that I could not even hear one sound from either a car, truck, plane or boat. Being quite alone I turned to Nat and asked her if she was still scared of me. She looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'You should be scared of me for what we have done to you.' Then we just had a good laugh.

Later on in the course I asked Nat if she wanted to go into one on the counselling sessions at John Oxley Youth Detention Centre with me and she leapt at the opportunity. The whole process was almost completely foreign to Nat but the both of us went along just the same. Our first visit was with the social worker and this was just to get the basic introductions and see where it went after that. This was the time that I purposely wore my sleeveless tee-shirt that showed off my skull and cross-bones tattoo with the word Inala in a scroll underneath the skull.

Then some of the children who thought that they knew me, consciously acknowledged that they had seen me in Inala. My 'in' into their process was twofold – one, was that some of them knew me from Inala and two, I had also been incarcerated in a 'boy's home.' I had already asked Nat before-hand to just sit back

and observe while mentally taking notes. When the session was over Nat and I immediately went and had a coffee and began a debriefing session, which we adopted as our standard operational procedures. To Nat's credit she stuck it out with me and we continued to voluntarily counsel these young men for twelve months without any financial recompense. I talk more about this work and where it led in the next section, 'Challenges'.

In the time that Nat and I worked together I taught her most of what I was allowed to about our Goenpul culture. The strategy that I employed was simple. I told her to just forget everything that she had ever learned about Aboriginal culture from the anthropology 'experts', and let me explain how it really is. For the resin that she had to analyse on the stone artefacts, I explained what it really was and she immediately dropped the subject and began a graduate diploma in high school studies. When Nat eventually left uni, she became a high school teacher, amongst other things.

In one of the cross-cultural awareness lectures that I attended was another guest lecturer that I got to meet. He was Nat's new fellow, Conrad. Conrad was a medical student and when he graduated, I think it was a part of an agreement to become a doctor that they had to travel around to do his regional area commitment before he could settle into his own practice. I tell the story of my enduring friendship with Nat and Conrad in *Memoirs 5: The Activist Years* (Appendix One).

### **5.11 Challenges**

Previously I told stories about how life experience was valuable in performing well in professional placements during my TAFE studies. This occurred again in the Tertiary context when I was approached by one of the Social Work lecturers at QU who'd attended a guest lecture that I was a part of. He'd heard the part where I'd

explained to the students about being in a boy's home. He said that he was doing group-counselling sessions at John Oxley Youth Detention Centre and could not get the Indigenous children to 'open up' (talk) to him and asked if I could help. There was no pay (as per usual) as it was all volunteer work. I thought to myself, "*There never seems to be any pay when they want black fellas to clean up the fuck-ups created by the social workers!*" Further to that, I was flat out trying to help myself, let alone help anyone else, so I just went along if only just to listen in and possibly provide feedback to the lecturer. I was introduced to a group of about ten teenagers, which included about eight Indigenous children.

#### 5.11.1 'Up-town Black?'

Most of these children were quite astute and immediately associated me with the university. They believed that Aborigines studying there were either 'up town blacks' or 'coconuts' and were not at any time to be trusted. That is what I thought when I was in their same circumstances. Their behaviour towards me was very hostile and to some extent completely justified; they saw me as another uppity black trying to psychoanalyse them.

I think that a couple of them had vaguely recognised me or remembered seeing me around Inala somewhere. I just sat there and listened to the discussions for approximately an hour and left. Back at uni in the 'follow up' meeting with the social worker, I asked the obligatory questions about funding, commitment and other inquiries less relevant to him.

I can't remember the exact date but whilst at UQ I was asked to help with some counselling at the Legal Service. A young Aboriginal man had again died in police custody from extremely suspicious circumstances. There were witnesses to

these actions of the police, and the Legal Service took on a 'witness protection' program. The whole operation was what we thought secretive, though as I found out not secret enough.

By the time I came into the process the Field Officers had been burnt out and almost completely at their wits' end. I provided some mental support for them as they moved the witnesses from one 'safe house' to another. Each time we arrived at the safe house, almost immediately, there would be a telephone call telling whoever answered the phone that they knew where we were. The young men who were the Field Officers were almost blinded with terror and fear for their charges and I could tell by the way that they were speaking they needed help. Some of the help needed was by just being with them and talking them through things.

I eventually stayed with the Field Officers for several days and wrote a report for the Legal Service Board of Directors. I basically finished up by being moved sideways into another preventative program for at risk young people.

While on one of these preventative youth programs at home (Straddy), the obligatory annual brawl at the Point Lookout Hotel eventuated. Without fail, at the end of every football season, one team or another came over to Stradbroke Island for their end of season trip away. The majority of these football trips are some sort of 'rite of passage'. On many of these football trips, each of the players are almost obligated to get as drunk as possible and then be as obnoxious as humanly possible to everyone and anyone around them. Like reading from a movie script, without fail, the most inappropriate person from each of these teams would say something to one of the local Aboriginal guys and a fight would ensure. On this specific occasion, a couple of Aboriginal fellas got beaten up and went and got their mob and came back. In the fracas they nearly kicked some innocent bystander to death.

Detectives from the mainland came over and started to go through the Aboriginal community 'like a dose of salts' looking for the suspects. The Legal Service was contacted by members of the community. The community people had concerns that some innocent person might get hurt or shot by these rampaging detectives. I was immediately instructed by the Chief Executive Officer of the Legal Service to drop the program that I was on because it was 'my' community and I needed to sort out the problem.

A lawyer was sent over from the Legal Service to support me. One of the community members gave me their house to operate from. I went around and asked various people of the community, who I believed were influential, what they thought I should do. Unanimously they said that they were sick of this core group of 'drunks' bringing shame on our community and they wanted them out. I went to the police station and met with the detectives, asked them who they suspected, to which they gave me all of the names. I then went out and within the week delivered the culprits to them. It was just a matter of convincing them to give themselves up as the police had all of their names. I used the argument that the community people gave me; surrender before someone in the community got hurt or killed.

The whole exercise was a complete mental drain on me and I needed a few days to regain all of my strength. Apparently someone on the board of directors of the Legal Service wasn't too pleased with the way that I was only too willing to cooperate with the police and I was sacked. I have found out that in most (Aboriginal) organisations if someone on the board doesn't like you, your future employment with that organisation will be put on a one way slippery slope out the door. I'm sure that there are many other blackfellas who have experienced this 'push-pull' phenomenon. But it is rarely, if ever, even raised as an issue, let alone

dealt with in University courses. So this is an area for future research and work that I will raise in the conclusion to my dissertation.

#### *5.11.2 Lateral violence*

The political agenda over at home never stopped throughout the whole time that I was studying. I'd heard that one of our cousins was doing youth programs as well. We were operating in a similar if not the same type of programs so we decided to get our different agendas together. Together we held the same ideas and principles on what was needed to implement our strategies. We decided that the major issues facing our children on the Island were alcohol, drugs and cigarettes. I found out later that child molestation in our community was also an issue. We had the highest rate of child molestation in the State of Queensland in the small community of Dunwich. We decided that if we were able to focus our attention on providing a safe place away from the influences of these abuses and abusers then at least we had given them a chance and somewhere to start.

Mark Jones is my second cousin. His Grandmother, Aunty Lousia Jones, and our Grandmother Nanny Moreton were sisters. In our own time and using our own money, Mark Jones and I would take children on camps and give them just the basic introduction to their Aboriginality. In one of the programs that we ran, we asked the parents for ten dollars from each of their children so that we could purchase the basic food items needed for an approximate six-week camp. Some of the parents complained about the money so Mark and I discussed it and came to the conclusion that where in the world can anyone get a baby-sitter for six weeks and only charge ten dollars, and we told the parents so.

Mainly because of the success of the camp, we applied for government funding. We were told that we would have to run a series of workshops and to get a consensus of the key youth 'expert' representatives. From this we developed a strategy and put in a submission for our youth program. We incorporated our own community youth organisation and called *Djargum Umpi*. I couldn't believe the opposition that came from some of the community. I came to the shocking realisation that there were some 'men' in our community who were too invested in keeping things the way they were to suit their own evil intentions, promoting the idea to boys that they wouldn't become 'real men' until they had been in gaol.

Ultimately our innovative program drew the attention of the state government, who appropriated our program. It wasn't easy to accept this dispossession (or theft) and I went in to the government department (OATSIA, I think it was called then - there have been so many changes to this department I can't remember what it stands for anymore) to find out why. I was informed that as government had paid for all of the meetings and other process leading up to the program's submission, it was legally now theirs. But we could see that our program, recycled as the government's Mentoring Program, would have limited potential to achieve change in bureaucratic form.

During the time waiting for government officers to act, some of our children from the Island had been expelled from the local school. One of them was in grade one and I thought to myself, 'What's going on if they have to expel a child in grade one?' Mark withdrew his own children from the state school and we set up our own independent program. We operated for four days a week, and only up until lunch time every day.

Mark and Michelle (Mark's life partner) worked two days a week on Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) funding and the other two days as volunteers. By this time I'd begun working for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and would come at least one day a week to help. By the time that they (government and others mentioned earlier) forced us to close down, we had taken the children's educational standards up higher than the state school (and none of us were formally trained teachers).

Although embittered by this experience at the time, my Masters study provided the space for me to work through this, although the resultant cynicism was very difficult to shake off, as I experienced this push-pull phenomenon. While I was going through this, it was always just referred to as Black politics. Now Native Title is being linked to this phenomenon, which has only recently been 'named' as lateral violence by Mick Gooda, the Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner, in his 2011 Mabo Lecture. Mick Gooda, of the Gangulu people, from the Dawson Valley in Central Queensland, explained (quoting from the work of John Frankland) as 'internalised colonialism' that is exhibited as 'the organised, harmful behaviours that we do to each other collectively as a part of an oppressed group: When we are consistently oppressed we live with great fear and great anger, and we often turn on those who are closest to us.'

What I learned through this project in my home community was ultimately put to good use by my Uni colleague, Nat, who I mentioned earlier, in her profession as a secondary teacher, where she was in the position to set up an alternative program for Aboriginal learners in Mt. Isa.

## **5.12 Respect and recognition**

My studies at UQ went fine after I'd 'bitten the bullet' and got over the 'macho man' thing about not having a tutor. In one of the anthropology lectures there was a guest lecturer from NSW who was lecturing about Cultural Resource Management, a specialised branch of archaeology. I liked what I was hearing: the way that she argued and how she tore a couple strips of one specific student when he asked 'Why should Aborigines have more rights than anyone else in the management of our resources?' During the guest lecture, this person had also mentioned something about Peel Island Leprosarium and I thought this was a chance to meet her (Ross & Coghill. 2000).

I made it my business to meet Dr Annie Ross and speak with her about the coloured lepers at Peel Island. Meeting Annie was the start of my studying archaeology. Annie was right out there with issues relating to cultural resource management and she was a real go-getter as well. In meeting with lecturers, there are the inevitable interruptions and my interests around the discipline of archaeology stemmed from one of these interruptions. During the interruption, I started to flick through a photo album that Annie had sitting on her desk. I asked her where she had got all the great photos from. The photos were of places from all over the world. Annie said that she had taken them and I said, 'You have been to all of these places around the world?' She just smiled and nodded. How can I do this was the next question. Annie explained that to study in the discipline of archaeology was how she travelled the world looking at the places in the photos. Annie looked at my academic record and showed me that I had enough subjects in anthropology to swap my major from Aboriginal Studies to do an Anthropology Double major. In those days people

had to have a double major in anthropology before they could specialise in archaeology.

I was completely hooked; this was the stuff that I had been informally 'studying' all of my life. I loved it. Although all of the 'experts' were the same, and some of them were even more obnoxious, but I thought, 'Look at the shit that I had put up with all of my life - a couple more rednecks won't hurt me.' Eventually, Annie and I were involved in an archaeological excavation project that changed the archaeological records around the world (Ross, S. Coghill, B. Coghill, Ruska, D. 1999). The beauty of this project was that it involved many members of the community (Ross & Coghill, 2000). Through this involvement, we were able to show our mob what an archaeological excavation was. There were several prominent scientific breakthroughs (see my next section) that emanated from this research as well.

We are considering the idea of re-excavating an archaeological excavation at Wallen Wallen that produced the twenty two thousand years before present date (22KYBP). This is to see if this has similar material in the matrix as Peel Island (Neal & Stock, 1986). There will be other published academic papers generated from this project.

After completing the relevant studies at UQ, I'd been approached to work for the Department of Heritage (the EPA: spoken about earlier). They had a specific project – the Indigenous Cultural Heritage component of the Regional Forests Agreement (RFA) – for which the government needed a token Aboriginal person to finish off the last part of the funding for this program. It was a two-year project which the government had employed a non-Aboriginal person to do. The person sat around for eighteen months and had done nothing. I know that this person did

nothing because I inherited and gained access to the computer that went with the job. I closely looked at the workings to see who and which communities they had spoken with about the RFA. They had seen and spoken with no-one except the Native Title Representative Bodies who didn't want a 'bar' of any government department.

After several years working on different projects I believe that the government had to get rid of me for doing too much work. Then I went to work in the community on Traditional Owner issues from this specific region. This work was so mind-numbingly impossible due to the direct opposition from every level of government that I wrote a letter to the United Nations (UN) and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC). It was a big surprise to receive a letter back from HREOC stating, 'only a nation state can complain about their treatment of their indigenous people'. Uncle Cliff asked me what this meant, and I told him that 'only the wolf can complain about his treatment of the sheep'. Uncle Cliff nodded, signalling his recognition of the statement now (Pers. Comm. 2007).

I eventually enrolled at Griffith University as an escape from this new and completely racially-biased attempt at cultural genocide (Short, 2010). Here I met and worked with some more good-hearted non-Aboriginal people. At this university I met a person who did a thesis on the 'Native Police' who eventually became my friend and mentor. His thesis helped clarify some of my beliefs about what had happened to our people and what the real agenda is for our ancient culture (Richards, 2008).

At Griffith there was a group that was set up by Professor Mark Finnane called 'Ideas at the Club'. It was a group of post-grad students who get together and discuss world issues and other possible ways of achieving our own personal

educational aspirations. I have found the interaction with this group and these people invaluable in my own understandings and aspirations, and I can only applaud the efforts and the foresight of Professor Finnane. Other mature age post-grad students have mentioned to me the same sentiments. Without the support and mentoring of I feel that I would not have been able to cope with the rigours of completing this dissertation.

My purpose in recalling and writing the story of our ways of knowing and my expectations that the 'whitefella' education would be a way to 'certify' this in the system. The point of this chapter is to 'tell it how it is' for us blackfellas in that system, and get the message across that hey, it ain't easy for us, and there are some ways that Western academy could make itself a little more amenable to our aspirations, to say the least. And for the next generations of my family, to remember our Ancestors, who knew what they had to do to survive, so walking away just isn't an option.

## **CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion**

The contribution of this Master of Philosophy dissertation, which has consumed several years of my life, lies in its explanatory power as ‘research from the inside’ that is not based on theory, but on my lived experience of two worlds – the secret, loving, world of the Goenpul and the cruel, punishing and inhumane world of the white colonisers, recorded as memoir. It is knowledge that is described by ethnologists as ‘emic’ (Pike, 1954). Throughout the whole of my life I have struggled with the concept of my identity. When the non-indigenous people began to call me derogatory names I did not understand what the implications/inference was. It is my identity as a Goenpul man that has addressed my fears and shown me how to live the journey that I must make.

Young Aboriginal men who have done the same and gone on to further studies have ever so slowly started to come around the political circuit to find their Aboriginality. They patiently sit and listen to the stories about the struggles that the old people went through so that we could be free. Knowing what our old people have achieved is knowing the journey of where we, as the First Nation (Australians) people, have come from. There were no shortcuts, they just rolled up their sleeves and ‘had a go’. In the older generations of our family, the older siblings were expelled from high school. But our sisters led the way back into education for some of us and became schoolteachers. Some of the young men followed and, out of nine of our immediate family members, seven have achieved a tertiary education.

### **6.1 Whose ‘truth’ is more reliable?**

One of the more brutal lessons that I have learned about the state system of governance in Australia is that the truth is only true if it concurs/supports the government’s relevant truth of the time. When these same supposedly civilised

peoples stole, raped and murdered their way through this country they called it exploration. When they shot out the original owners of the lands, they called this settlement (Richards, 2008).. This was a justifiable truth used to justify colonisation (Weir, 2008).

All of the problems that we endured are due to the overly diligent work of so many of the 'experts' or 'ologists' (Ross & Coghill, 1998). Currently Traditional Owner (the rightful owners of Australia) Aboriginal people are the most selectively politically isolated, marginalised, discriminated against, racially vilified, studied and researched people in Australia (Ross, 2010). We had our own systems of governance and accountability in place long before anyone wanted to 'discover' us. The systematic use of one 'expert' or another to prove one thing or another about Aborigines is common knowledge amongst our people. Through the same systems of categorisation, the 'experts' have identified our Goenpul as Murrin (Thieberger, N. & McGregor, W. 2007). In our language the word Murrin is the word for kangaroos (Goenpul, Time Immemorial). Yet the 'experts' will prolong this line of imposed thought and think that it is most appropriate.

The peoples who are now identified as Aboriginal people have our own stories about this survival. Ours is the survival of our cultural ways of existence that emanate from the beginnings of time. Survival plays an intricate part in the human way of life. Literally over the millennia of human evolution humans have adapted to one crisis after another to eventually become the complicated, sophisticated societies of the modern era.

Contemporary education recognises that the struggle over 'truth' is an ongoing one that is politically and economically invested. At the dawn of the new millennium contemporary academics took sides in what became known as 'the

'history wars' or 'the memory wars', where 'critical revisionist' historians were labelled 'black armband' by conservatives, including the then Prime Minister, John Howard (Luker, 2006, p. 55)

The 'truth' of 'expert' historians such as conservative Keith Windshuttle who argued in his presentation *Doctored evidence and invented incidents in Aboriginal historiography* to the conference on Frontier Conflict National Museum of Australia in December 13-14, 2001 was vested in 'whitewashing' Australia's colonial history. His denial that genocide was perpetrated against the First Peoples of Australia has been labelled deeply racist. Windshuttle's 'truth' is easily challenged, because it is based on the illogical argument that because there were no gas chambers, extermination Australia's first peoples by the colonisers did not take place:

(t)here were no gas chambers in Australia or anything remotely equivalent. The colonial authorities wanted to civilise and modernise the Aborigines, not exterminate them. Their intentions were not to foster violence towards the Aborigines, but to prevent it. They responded to violence by the Aborigines towards white settlers cautiously and reluctantly, and their overriding concern was to prevent retaliatory violence by settlers and convicts from getting out of hand. None of this is remotely comparable to what happened in Europe during the Second World War (Windshuttle, 2001)

Here we see the role of 'the expert' in continuing the genocidal project. Do we believe his 'truth' or the 'truth' uncovered by Mr. Payne (refer to my Introductory Chapter), in the 1960s. Mr. Payne was a citizen with a social conscience and without the vested interested of the Bingera squatters of the 1830s. His investigation of the court documents in the public domain easily uncovered the record of events leading to and after the Myall Massacre. These documents recorded the words of the perpetrators, that 'in any case everyone was in favour of getting rid of the blacks altogether these days, and NOW was the time to make a start' (Payne, 1965:2). Due to the overly diligent work of the 'experts', Aboriginal

people (our family) were ruled by successive Aboriginal 'Acts' right up until 1975 (Evans, 1999: FAIRA, 1979). We were only recognised as citizens in 1967 but that has never altered the mentality of the 'experts' agendas (Evans, 1999). We have had our lives regulated by the government right up to and including the present day.

I have learned that rather than listen to people who know the issues faced by Indigenous people in this country, governments choose to enlist their acceptable brand of 'expert rhetoric' to deliver their same outcomes. The state has recreated the Native Police (Richards, 2008) to put down any Traditional Owners aspirations. Equity and justice for Aborigines in this part of the world are just words.

More convincingly true is the 'insider knowledge' of Aboriginal playwright Kevin Gilbert, who refers to removal of children and other acts of genocide a 'profound rape of the soul', explaining:

(t)he real horror story of Aboriginal Australia today is locked in police files and child welfare reports. It is a story of private misery and degradation, caused by a complex chain of historical circumstances, that continues into the present ... Aboriginal Australia underwent a rape of the soul so profound that the blight continues in the minds of most blacks today. It is this psychological blight, more than anything else, that causes the conditions that we see on reserves and missions (Gilbert, 1977, pp 1-2).

In my introductory chapter I used the words of methodological theorist, Sparkes (2002), to justify my methodology (auto-ethnography). Insider knowledge, such as my stories, and those of other Westbrook inmates from the 1960s and 1970s (Fletcher, 2006, Stoke, 2010) add to the growing pile of evidence about this brutal regime. These Westbrook inmates from the 1960s used the auto-ethnographical method, referring to historical records to confirm their recollections.

It is open to question whether our 'insider' stories, and my argument that genocide is still being perpetrated, and that it escalated in the 1970s, would be accepted as truthful had *The Report of the Inquiry into the Westbrook Farm Home for*

Boys not been conducted by Stipendiary Magistrate, Mr. A.E. Schwarten, and presented to Queensland Parliament on 27 September 1961. This report contains a review of the punishment book, which contains racist assertions about Aborigines: “a poor type of darkie, black waster, an Aboriginal of poor quality, a typical nigger, a black mongrel”. It includes evidence that Aborigines were subjected to far greater levels of corporal punishment, and more frequent beatings, for similar misdemeanours than those for white inmates. It is up to the reader to decide - is the punishment book a more authentic record of events than the scars on the bodies and minds of incarcerated Aboriginal youth, inscribing forever those particular memories?

A 1999 Report by Leneen Forde, Chair of the 1998 Commission of Inquiry conducted into child abuse in Queensland Institutions stated:

Throughout the 1970s, indigenous youths were being seen as constituting a ‘problem’ to the successful operation of the institutional system. They were thought to respond differently from white youths to work requirements, and they stuck together rather than mixing with other inmates, causing ‘an unsettled atmosphere’. Westbrook records, for example, reveal a tendency to characterize indigenous youth as problematic because of their race. Given such attitudes, it is a safe assumption that indigenous youth would not have been given favourable treatment with regard to levels of discipline and types of punishment.

Westbrook records show that numbers of Aboriginal admissions jumped from 13 in 1967 to 20 in 1969, 40 in 1970, 60 in 1971, and a projected 100 youths for 1972, a percentage increase of indigenous over white from 18 per cent to a peak of 40 per cent.

As early as 1971, the Director of the DCS notified his Minister of his concern over the growing numbers of indigenous children coming into care, which was placing extreme pressure on the Department’s facilities. If the situation within the Aboriginal community continued to develop, he wrote, ‘these facilities will be inadequate’. The Superintendent of Westbrook, at a time when 41 per cent of inmates were of indigenous origin, described the situation variously as ‘explosive’, ‘precarious’ and ‘the most dangerous ever’. culture and way of life had occurred, a 1971 proposal that a separate Aboriginal Training Home be established,

staffed by indigenous officers, was rejected by the Director. (Forde, 1999:23)

In her accompanying letter, Forde wrote:

*I urge all Queenslanders to contemplate the experiences of children in institutions, how it came to pass that many of them were abused and mistreated, and why it has taken so long for their stories to be told. It was society that failed those children. In acknowledging that, we must ensure that the same wrongs are not repeated, and that this Inquiry has a positive outcome.*

*To understand and learn from the past, we must all accept responsibility for children—our most valuable and vulnerable asset. Let us resolve to ensure that systems and policies leave no room for abuse, and create a framework for building a better future.*

## **6.2 Contribution of the study and recommendations future research**

As a survivor of this brutal regime of systemic and structural racism it is my responsibility to maintain and care for the Ancient Spirit Lore/Law/law. This Masters project was a necessary step in the learning journey that will continue when I take on my next challenge of a PhD in Archaeology relating to my Traditional Lands, whereby Goenpul Epistemology will have authority.

The contribution of this philosophical study to my life-long learning journey was transformatory. Instead of being disempowered by bewilderment, hurt and cynicism, caused by racist acts, through this ‘mongrel’ form (auto-ethnographical study) which has involved:

...systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall; the inclusion of the researcher’s vulnerable selves, emotions, body, and spirit; the production of evocative stories that create the effect of reality; the celebration of concrete experience and intimate detail; the examination of how human experience is endowed with meaning; a concern with moral, ethical, and political consequences; an encouragement of compassion and empathy; a focus on helping us know how to live and cope (Sparkes, 2002:209).

To Sparkes’s criteria I would also add *humour*. Humour is our antidote to sadness - this has always been our greatest survival tactic (Goenpul, *Time Immemorial*). I now

move forward as a Goenpul man empowered by the new knowledge gained through this study undertaken in the Western Academic discipline of 'The Humanities', to serve and empower my People, especially my family members, past and present, to whom this work is dedicated, and the generations to come.

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- Uncle Jimmy Newfong

Tracking, Hunting, Fishing, Catching Mud and Sand Crabs, Gathering, Traditional Bush Foods, Introduction to the Bora Ceremony, Spirit World

- Uncle Charlie Moreton

Humour, Hunting by Stealth, Tracking, Fishing, Mud Crabbing, Poetry, Early European Contact, Boomerang Making and Throwing, Artefact Manufacturing, Introduction to Spirits of the Ancestors

- Uncle Leon Jones

Mud Crabbing on mud flats, Honesty, Integrity, Humour,

- Aunty Louisa Jones

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# APPENDIX ONE – MY SECRET LIFE (MEMOIRS)

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## MEMOIRS ONE – THE FORMING YEARS

### FAMILY

#### **Granny Janey Sunflower**

After Great-Grandfather Mookin passed away, **Granny Janey Sunflower** was the matriarch of our family group (Steele, 1983). Our group is what is described as a Matriarchal Society. It is with deep regret that I never met our Great-Grandfather Mookin. Some of the people from One Mile on North Stradbroke Island referred to Granny Janey as a magic woman. My introduction to the Creator Spirit Ancestors was through a secret and sacred ceremony that Granny Janey put through me. She is possibly the greatest person that I have ever met.

As a child I was born with the debilitating illness asthma. My Mother took me to the Doctor and he informed her that, as an Aboriginal child (born in the 1950's) with asthma I would probably die soon. Our family had just lost my older brother Geoffrey to a brain tumor when I was still just a baby and this news was devastating to Mum. In the Elders' meeting they discussed this new problem, and Granny Janey instructed Mum to send my other brother Steven (who is a year older than me) and myself, to her so that she could treat us for our different illnesses.

This part is hard to describe and people can choose whether to believe the next part for themselves, but on the designated day, Granny Janey sent for us; Steven and I were instructed to get ready and were waiting at Nanny and Grampy's house when the back door just blew open wider than we had seen it before. Steven and I both went out of the door and followed what seemed like the wind down the winding track to Granny Janey's shack. It was at the head of One Mile creek. On reaching the shack, both of us were directed inside and instructed to stand in front of the fire that Granny Janey had already

*prepared for the specific purpose of what we were to be put through. Steven was called outside for his specific part of the healing ceremony, while I waited in front of the fire.*

*Granny Janey came into the shack and performed the appropriate rituals on me and then we went outside. This is one of those things that I am not permitted to tell what these rituals are.*

*The next part of the ceremony involved Steven and I being painted in our traditional dance colors and regalia, and taught to sing the song and dance to 'Kurran Inta Gnarrmi'.*

*After this basic introduction into the ancient ways of the spirit world, we were taken back to the main house where Nanny and Grampy lived. Here the next part of the ceremony was to be performed and played out. Granny Janey instructed both Steven and me to jump inside the house through the door and immediately drop into the agreed to stance and sing whilst dancing the appropriate actions. Our education into the ancient Goenpul Lore/law/Law had begun. When we jumped in through the door and began singing and dancing, it startled most everyone who had gather there for a get-together. One of the older men was so startled that he dropped a bottle of beer that smashed on the floor; someone yelled 'what the f—k! and only when hearing Granny Janey laughing out loud as she walked back to her hut did people realise what had happened.*

*After the simple ceremony that Granny Janey Sunflower performed, she instructed the Elders that as a part of her remedy, I was to stay close to the Elders just in case of an asthma attack. I was to be put across their knees, face down, and the sides of my ribs and back were pounded to loosen the phlegm, basically clearing the air passage. Included in this remedy, I was made to walk and run everywhere that I went so as to make me breathe heavier.*

**Nanny and Grampy Moreton** lived in a house at One Mile on North Stradbroke Island. As the poem at the beginning states, this is our magical wonder-land and

*that all of the descendants of Nanny and Grampy call home. I will speak about Nanny later. Grampy is the patriarch of this place, our world, and his word is Lore/law/Law.*

*One Mile is the place where the government officials placed the Aboriginal people outside the township of Dunwich (Fischer, 1997). The physical boundary that separated One Mile from the township of Dunwich (Fischer, 1997) was Goona Creek. Goona Creek was the physical boundary that the mission Aboriginal people could not cross as we were not permitted to go into to small township of Dunwich. Only the Aboriginal people who were exempt from the 'Act' (FAIRA, 1979; Evans, 1999) (more in next chapter) were allowed in town.*

*Grampy taught me the significance of fire and how to look after and manage country with fire. This introduction to fire management taught the initial meaning of what fire can do when applied to an area. He showed the clearly defined fire breaks and how to use the elements of wind and earth to direct and control its force. Progressively we learned how to apply it to areas that needed to be managed (Goenpul, Time Immemorial). The lessons that Grampy gave to me were interspersed over years even after the initial lessons from all of the other Elders.*

### **Exemption**

*When the government amended their Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act in 1939 (Evans, 1999), it allowed for Aboriginal people to apply for exemption (Johnson, 1991). I was told by our old people that the government representatives offered the people at One Mile two options:*

- 1. They could remain on the mission and regularly have all of their physical needs met and catered for, (food, blankets, clothes etc.); (by government)*
- 2. Or they could apply for exemption from the Act and then they had to be able to provide everything for themselves.*

*With option one the government people (obviously overcome with their own generosity) forgot to tell the people that they would also have every facet of their lives regulated and managed by the same government officials (Johnson, 1991; Evans, 1999).*

*Through the Freedom of Information Act, Beaver and me gained access to and read our Grampy Moreton's file. This was where he started to apply for this exemption in 1939. It read something like this: 'This is the fifth time that this person has applied for exemption from the Act; this is the tenth time, this is the fifteenth time etc.' It eventually said that after applying twenty-five times he was granted exemption. What the files did not say was that Grampy had to make his own way across Moreton Bay which usually cost money. I think that sometimes he would get a lift into the city from the fishermen mentioned in this thesis. Although there were at times tourist boats that visited the island (Moore, 1993: Ludlow, 1992). If Grampy was able to meet the expenses of travelling by the supply boat alone, it would have taken a while to travel to secure our freedom. It was just one more things that must have created confusion about the exemption policies for the Aboriginal people of One Mile.*

*One of the oyster-men told me that he had learned everything about his whole 'trade' from our Grampy.*

### **Uncle Archie Newfong**

*Only recently my oldest brother Benny told me a story about Uncle Archy Newfong. The welfare agents were coming over to the island to take him and (my) Uncle Jimmy away. Uncle Archie built a sailing boat and took himself and Uncle Jimmy to the mainland, where they ran away out west and got a job on one of the cattle stations. At the time my brother said that Uncle Jimmy was nine years old and Uncle Archie was fifteen years of age.*

*When Uncle Archie and Uncle Jimmy eventually reached a cattle station and secured work Uncle Archie was told that they weren't taking in minors. He told them Uncle Jimmy was his responsibility and he would not be any trouble to the station owners. They*

were allowed to stay and Uncle Arch raised Uncle Jimmy. I have never been told what happened to their parents.

Included in our One Mile community were other old people, but they weren't my specific Elders. Some of these people were the Campbell family. The men of this family were fishermen, who, after netting along the beach at One Mile, would pull their fishing boats ashore and sometimes allow us children to help haul in the net. Even before my first time hauling in the net these fishermen gave fish to the families at One Mile. At the time I did not know who these people were, I'd just thought why are they giving all of these fish away to me, a perfect stranger. I have only realized in the last couple of years who this specific family were to our family. The stories again clarified this point for me. I mention this later.

The fishermen would ask us which family that we belonged to and then fill up our sugar-bag with fish. It wasn't that they wanted to get to know me personally, it was that these men had grown up in this community and knew exactly which sort of fish that each of our Elders liked and so consciously put more of the old people's favorite fish into our bag. When the fishermen were at the beach, everyone in the One Mile would line up and get their share. Some of those fishing families are still around today and will come around to the old people who they identify as their mob and give out a tray of fish whenever they can. The old people told us of these exact same experiences when they were children.

**Nanny Moreton** is one of the kindest people in the world. Nanny is one of our Elders - Grandmother Lavina Moreton (Nanny). We called our Grandmother Nanny (Moreton). I think that she was a trained Midwife. My eldest brother, when I asked him about Nan, succinctly states that he would not be here if it wasn't for Nanny; apparently whoever the other (non-Aboriginal) Midwife was, forgot to tie the umbilical cord when Benny was delivered, so Nanny did it without hesitation (Goenpul, Time Immemorial).

*There is another story about this lady that I witnessed first hand, and that possibly no-one else has ever heard, so I will tell this story here. I think that it serves as a good example of how kind and gentle she was.*

*My story begins when there was another doctor, who was asked to come out to One Mile and treat one of the older ladies who lived in a shack, just in front of Nanny and Grampy's house. Nanny had called out to me, to go and fetch some fresh water from the creek and put it in the old lady's shack. The doctor explained to Nan that, without constant and continuous nursing, care and medical treatment this old person would pass away soon. Of course the doctor had more important matters (than dying Aboriginal people) to attend to and that was that.*

*Every morning after that for approximately one week or a little bit longer, Nanny instructed me to, first thing go down to this old lady's shack, knock and go in. I was to get fresh water and start the fire. I know now that the reason why Nan called me, was because I was shown how to light a fire with one match by Uncle Jimmy (mentioned earlier). Nanny would eventually come down and sit with and care for this old person. I watched as Nanny would chew the food until it was mashed up soft enough and then place it her mouth so that all she had to do was swallow it. This exact same routine of caring for the old lady happened every morning and every night, without fail. The old woman eventually got better and lived for a several more years. I would go back every morning and get fresh water until eventually the lady was strong enough herself, to get the water and didn't need any more help.*

*Initially, I was sent to be taught by one of the best hunters (my opinion), gatherer and fishermen providers of the time, Uncle Jimmy Newfong. Every holidays that our family went to One Mile on North Stradbroke Island, I was taught by Uncle Jimmy. As the poem at the beginning of my memoirs says, these memories I can never forget. These memories are some of the fondest of my life. I know that a lot of my writing sounds repetitive but that*

was how I learnt. These old people kept showing me until I was comfortable enough to have a go myself. Some things took a while to learn but the old people were patient enough to allow me cope. This is much like my learning today.

**Uncle Jimmy Newfong** was our Grandmother, Nanny Moreton's brother. For a short time Uncle Jimmy and Auntie Maree lived together and were responsible for the upbringing of three boys whose parents, we were told, had 'disappeared'. I learned about this only recently that there was no father, for what-ever reason I don't know and have never asked, and the mother was arrested and taken away. Whilst the children were without parental supervision the welfare had the right to remove them into the foster home care system. One of the brothers of these three boys ended up on the mission at Cherbourg. These three boys were hidden out at Uncle Jimmy's place that he eventually built further into the bush near Granny Janey's place. This was a short time after my initial introductions into the Lore/law/Law.

Before Auntie Maree came to One Mile was when I'd stay and learned from Uncle Jimmy. After the very basic introduction into our healing spirit Lore/law/Law from Granny Janey, I was sent to learn other aspects of Lore/law/Law from Uncle Jimmy. On the holidays while everyone of the extended family slept in the main household, I slept in the shack with Uncle Jimmy. We slept on sugar-bag sacks nailed between two logs stuck into the wall of the shack. My simple set jobs in the morning were getting the water from the creek, starting the fire and sweeping the shack inside and out, as well as sweeping the area immediately surrounding the shack. I didn't understand why these were my tasks.

Retrieving the water from the fresh water creek involved going over to the main house and asking permission to take one of the buckets. I would go down to our part of the creek, make a clear spot with the bottom of the bucket, dip the bucket into the water that was clear of debris, fill it up as much as I could carry and return to Uncle Jimmy's shack.

*There I was to fill up the billy-kettle for our morning cup of tea. Then put water in the face-washing basin and return the rest of the water back to the main house with the bucket.*

*Starting the fire in the morning involved gathering and picking up small twigs and other small kindling, putting them in the old wood-stove and lighting them with the match provided. Then later after the fire had started, getting larger chopped pieces of wood so that it would burn a while longer. The rule for starting the fire was simply that I was only permitted to use one match. If I did not start the fire with one match I had to go over to the main house and find something to light and take it back and light Uncle Jimmy's fire. Many of the resources that we take for granted today were hard to come by back then, so they had to be used sparingly.*

*Sweeping the area around the shack where Uncle Jimmy and myself slept, involved going over to the main house again and asking permission to borrow the broom. Then I had to sweep all of the floor inside of the shack and work my way sweeping to the outside. I had to sweep all of the area outside up to the walls of the shack. The floor of our shack was sand and so was the outside area surrounding the shack, as already mentioned. I used to wonder why I had to sweep dirt, but in hindsight I can now comprehend necessity of this function.*

*A very simple interpretation of these lessons: I developed a great appreciation for the ability to use one match to light a fire. Sweeping the sand floor inside and outside allowed for Uncle Jimmy to see if any 'snakes' had entered the area whilst we were away. The water was, as identified earlier, to make the tea and wash our faces in the morning. These simple tasks do not sound like very much but when you are four to five years of age they are important. As well, their simplistic nature entrusted me with the basic responsibility for some seemingly minor duties. In return for these simple tasks set for me, I was trained in the ways of interpreting our ontology; spoken about later in this chapter. This, in its most basic form, is the actual process of reciprocity in action.*

*It was Uncle Jimmy who I was sent to for 'training' after Granny Janey had introduced me into the spirit world of Quandamooka. Uncle Jimmy was my primary Elder in all of the ways of fishing, hunting and gathering since the ages of approximately four or five up until I was approximately ten years of age. As a child, I vividly remember once saying to our Mother that, when Uncle Jimmy spoke to the spirits at night - before we went out hunting and gathering the next day - it frightened me. Mum quite clearly explained that I was not to question what is done by this specific Elder as this is what is always done and I was just to obey my instructions. This explanation calmed and alleviated all and any of my fears and directly reassured and clarified for me my position. I was no longer frightened with Uncle Jimmy speaking to the spirits before we went hunting and gathering; it was always done (Goenpul, Time Immemorial).*

*Most parts of this basic learning were not exclusive. Moreover, with the basic knowledge given to me also involved further responsibilities. I was obligated to help all of the Aunties and Uncles when needed. If any one of the other Uncles, needed help with gathering oysters, quampies, eugaries or any thing else for that matter, then that was also a part of my job (training). I remember hearing Uncle Charlie say - when asked by the some of the Aunties to take one of the other many nephews out with him: 'I don't want any whinging bloody cry-baby with me while I am trying to hunt (and get a feed).' He was indicating, in his own round-about way, that some of the children would be better off just doing work around the house.*

*(Almost) all of the instructions that I was given from the older men were one to one. In this way of instruction there were absolutely no avenues for distractions. I personally enjoyed it like that because there was no-one else there to interrupt any of the many stories that they would tell, to constantly reinforce the lesson. Most of the relating of stories occurred at the times when we rested. At the times when we were hunting it was best to remain quiet.*

Most of what I was taught was given to me in story form. This, I now realize, was the theoretical perspective. Then, as I progressed and displayed behavior that suggested I might be ready to learn more, the practical lessons began (van den Berghe, 1979; Scheider Corey, et al 1992).

*Away from the shack and in the bush, Uncle Jimmy taught me how to read the various signs of the lands, waters and sky. First we started with the kangaroo tracks, and then I progressively and systematically built on this lesson over time and space.*

*The first lesson of reading the tracks went like this. As we walked along one of the many sand tracks that crossed and crisscrossed the island, Uncle Jimmy spotted a kangaroo sitting in the middle of the track. The need for stealth as a hunter had already been instilled into me in one of the many stories that I had already been told. A simple touch on the shoulder and nod of the head meant to look exactly where Uncle Jimmy's eyes were focused. However, this wasn't a lesson in stealth today, as indicated when Uncle Jimmy spoke out aloud and asked me if I knew how to count. I replied with a nod as we began walking towards the kangaroo. When Uncle Jimmy spoke it alerted the kangaroo which looked up, saw us and hopped away. Uncle Jimmy said to me to start my counting now. When we had reached the spot where the kangaroo had been sitting he asked what number I had gotten to and I replied twenty. He pointed at the tracks and said, 'That is what a kangaroo track looks like, twenty seconds after the kangaroo has gone; remember that' (Goenpul, Time Immemorial). Approximately half an hour later, after a short walk where I'd learnt about different resource trees and food plants, we returned to where the initial lesson began and was instructed to look once again at the kangaroo track and Uncle Jimmy said: 'This is what the kangaroo track looks like after a half an hour; remember this' (Goenpul, Time Immemorial). The intention was for me to consciously be aware and know*

*the difference between an old track and a fresh track, therefore by just recognizing the difference between the two, saved precious time in the hunt.*

*Another lesson that followed on from this lesson was the resource trees or bush tucker. When we'd leave camp with the Aunties and grannies they would shown us some of the nudgums and midgims, along with the blue berries. The importance of the blue berries is for when I went hunting with the Uncles.*

*If we weren't going near any water on a hunting trip the Uncles would gesture to pick more than just a few berries. We were told that out of several berries that we ate, there was always the elusive sweet one. I have never to this day found one of those sweet ones. Though what these berries did do was that because of very sour taste they stimulated the saliva glands on the tongue and kept of mouth moist. The seeds were too hard to bite so we would eventually spit them out and another tree or trees would eventually grow should they germinate.*

*We were taught the stories about water access and use and most of our stories about this access includes mention of the bunyip so I won't go into these further. There are protocols, processes and procedures that have to be followed when we approach water and I have already touched on as much as I am permitted to explain about. I'll talk about some of these things this later.*

*One specific occasion when Uncle Jimmy and I went to go out crabbing at the barge he saw that someone else had been on the track along the mudflats before us. This track was mostly under water when we left by the time we reached it. We had to follow the tide as it went out. This was to maximize the time spent at any one resource area that was tidal. He studied the footprints and said that we should go to the barge anyway, because (I can't remember the name of the person) is not that good at getting the mud-crabs out from under the barge. We went to the barge and hooked out approximately thirty mud crabs.*

Each morning my initial routine was the same. After the morning chores were completed, new lessons built on the previous sessions were implemented. If, for example the family needed fresh food of a specific variety, the lesson was structured on how to secure that resource. Fishing involved having the appropriate fishing lines, sinkers and obligatory sugar-bag. Our fishing lines were very basic, they weren't fancy rods or stuff. They were usually just fishing line wound around a favorite bottle, one hook and a sinker.

The tides had to be right and the appropriate bait obtained. When we fished from the dinghy, the tide had to be high and we had to have the right bait, mostly worms, which we dug when the tide was out. Approximately one hundred metres straight out from the One Mile creek was what the our old people called a parrot (fish) hole (**Fish Ref**). This hole is where we could catch any number of fish of any number of species. Here I was shown how to bait the hook and cast out the line without tangling it, or hooking Uncle Jimmy or myself. I was shown how to feel for the nibbles of the fish and feel the strike, then set the hook and pull the fish in and remove it from the hook and start the process all over again.

On one occasion we caught approximately thirty to forty fish of varying species ranging from bream, whiting, parrot and sweet-lip to perch. After this first lesson of fishing, when we returned to the shore, Uncle Jimmy showed me a shark that he had caught the day before. There was the constant reminder of a clear and present danger all around all of the time. But this was another lesson.

The experience of walking out across the mudflats following the receding tide involved a whole other different strategy. To catch fish at the beacon, we took the same basic fishing equipment with the garden fork added to dig for worms when we got there. Along the way we would also picked up a few cockles for bait or a few oysters for a snack.

When we went fishing at the beacon we had to time our walking out with the receding of the tide as mentioned earlier. We had to reach the beacon as the tide was still

*going out to maximize our time spent there. Then when the tide turned and began to flow back in we had to leave and beat the tide back in carrying whatever fish we caught. The beacon was closer to a deep-water channel and there were several small coral reefs on the shallower side. We never walked that way when I was being taught. I've only seen these reefs just in my older life.*

*One specific time, when Uncle Jimmy was taking me out to the beacon for fishing, we had to cross the shallow channel on the ocean side of the barge. That is where we crossed every time we went out to the beacon. The significance of this specific time was that as we were crossing, Uncle Jimmy saw a sand crab following the tide out. As we approached the sand crab it disappeared under the sand. Uncle Jimmy put the garden fork onto the place where it was hiding and pinned it to the sand, picked it up and put it in the bag. There were several more crabs and Uncle Jimmy said that it was a school of them going out with the tide. I was instructed to go as fast as I could to the mangrove trees and break off a branch and return to where he was. I had to run across the mudflats with bare-feet and be very wary of stonefish and cut-shells. This I did without hesitation. On returning to Uncle Jimmy he then proceeded to show me how to catch sand crabs. I watched Uncle Jimmy's face as he was catching the crabs; he had on sunglasses and I thought that they must be special sunglasses that could let him see where the crabs were hiding once they disappeared under the sand. He saw my confused stare and said, 'Watch where they settle on the sand, you can see where they disappeared,' I nodded, 'you know what the sand on the sea-floor looks like, look for something that should not be there.' That something was two tiny eyes protruding through the sand. There is where I was instructed to place my branch and when the claws appeared, he again said, 'You know how to pick up a crab, see which way the claws are pointing and reach around behind its back, pick up the crab and put it in the bag.' We caught approximately forty to forty five sand-crabs that morning and could not go fishing. Instead of fish for dinner that night we had sand-crab.*

*In all of the lessons, I was told never to take too many of any one resource. 'Only take enough (food resources) to feed yourself and our family' was another saying consistently reinforced into us at every opportunity (Goenpul, Time Immemorial).*

**Aunty Louisa Jones** was Nanny's, Uncle Archy's and Uncle Jimmy's sister. The very first time that I was taken to learn about the 'Bora' ceremony was when I went out with Uncle Jimmy and Aunty Louisa. My job that day was to wait with the boat and pull it in as the tide came in. Then pull it back out again to the low water mark as the tide receded. Or I could just sit in the boat and wait and make sure it was somewhere close when they returned loaded up with mud-crabs, quampies and oysters. Just staying in the boat frightened me so I decided to pull it in and out.

Uncle Jimmy went in to the mangroves and caught mud-crabs while Aunty Louisa walked into the mangroves and out onto the mudflats gathering oysters and quampies. I did not do my job properly and the dinghy got stuck. So we had to wait for the next tide which was later on in the evening.

We went into our designated camping place at Big Creek. Here we took in some of the mud-crabs, quampies and oysters for our meal. As we approached the camping area, Aunty Louisa went off to the left-hand side of the track and Uncle Jimmy took me into the area on right-hand side. Here we went into the men's Bora Ring. I was directed to sit in a specific place at the edge of the ring and Uncle Jimmy sat behind me and told me the parts of Lore/law/Law that I would need.

I was told what my role was to be in our extended family and how I was to conduct and behave myself at all times. I asked Uncle Jimmy what would happen if I did not do these things and said that I'd be hit in the head with a stone axe. He was describing the Law/Lore/law. In my own naive way I said wouldn't that hurt and what if it killed me and he said 'well they would not have to ever worry about you being disrespectful again.' After the

lesson at the ring we went over to the camp area where Aunty Louisa had prepared the evenings meal.

As the sun progressively went down, both Aunty Louisa and Uncle Jimmy said to me at the same time, 'Now listen carefully and you will hear the Ancestors' welcoming you to the area in song.' The whole area was surrounded by this chanting and singing and I drifted off to sleep with the Ancestors singing me into the existence of this place and welcoming me to the place that I grew to know as Big Creek. The part of Lore/law/Law that I needed was very simple and quite basic: 'Do not, at any time, question the authority of the Elders'. This was how I was introduced into the spirit place called Big Creek.

Having not done my job, with the pulling in of the boat, meant that we had to catch a later tide. By this time though, a storm had blown up and we had to navigate the boat from Big Creek to One Mile, several kilometers, through the waves, some of which were coming over the boat.

This frightened me so much that I started to cry. Uncle Jimmy said that we'd be alright and jumped out of the boat into the shallow water and began wading and towing us in the dinghy behind. As the waves surged up, around and past I could hear the bottom of the boat scrapping on shell-beds and I began to pray to the wrong 'god'.

Uncle Jimmy did not have too much time for this religion type stuff and on more than one occasion he'd told me so. I remember when he told some of the Aunties to stop 'filling my head full of that shit'. He didn't take my disrespect for him and his way of believing any better this time. The first part of disrespect was when I cried, after he said it would be alright and the second part was when I started to pray. That was it, I was not to go out and learn the Ancient Lore/Law/law from him anymore.

The Elders, who were instrumental in providing food for most of the everyday meals, the workers, hunters and gatherers, spoke for all of the issues concerning those specific things. Their say (opinion) was well respected and valued and they spoke for just about

everything else as well. These Elders had a great influence over every aspect of the traditional educational structures. Those people who did little to contribute to food supply sat in silence. I was not old enough as yet and I sat in silence too.

What should become apparent with the traditional training is that it varied with the cyclic seasonal fluctuations. Knowing this the Elders adjusted and altered their techniques for the differing levels of expertise needed for those unexpected events.

I have come to realise in my modernised world, that there does not seem to be things such as a coincidence (as Brother Bobby indicated), so I'll use the term circumstance. After approximately three years learning with the other Uncles, Uncle Leon and Uncle Charlie, who I speak about next, an unusual circumstance presented itself. Just about all of the relatives who lived on the mainland had come over to the island for holidays and as it happened, most of the Uncles were away except for Uncle Jimmy.

At this specific holiday time, for the special occasion, our matriarch Elders asked Uncle Jimmy if he could go out and get a feed of mud crabs. He agreed to, but wanted to know who was capable of helping him. The old people said that I was there, by speaking my Goenpul name to Uncle Jimmy; he agreed that this was a suitable choice and I was elated to go out with my original mentor once more. I never ever went out again with Uncle Jimmy after this time so the memory of it is extra special.

When we got to the barge Uncle Jimmy handed me the crab hook and said 'Show me what you have learned' from the other uncles. I took the hook proudly and began showing my mentor what he had taught me and what I had learnt from the other Uncles. I hooked out about fifteen to twenty big mud-crabs to start and we eventually filled two sugar-bags up with mud-crabs, I think that there were nearly forty in total once Uncle Jimmy took over. By the time we finished crabbing I was completely exhausted but we still had to carry the bags a couple of kilometers back to Nanny and Grampy's place at One Mile and I did not want to show any signs of tiredness on this most special occasion.

*On arriving back at Nanny and Grampie's place, Uncle Jimmy was full of praise for my expertise. He told everyone that I had caught most of the crabs and I was made to feel extra special about myself. I suppose that he was also, in his own way, acknowledging and paying his respects to me. I could hardly eat this wonderful meal I was so tired, but I finished the meal so that I could just be proud of sitting beside my mentor.*

*That night when the children were sent to bed Uncle Jimmy said that I was to sit at the table with the Elders. There were howls and shrieks of protest from all of the sibling cousins and one of my brothers, Spud. I'm older than him, we're older than him they protested. The reply was short and straight to the point all of the children get to bed. With that I waved them off to bed. Spud said 'I'll get you,' which meant he'd knuckle me later when none of the Elders were around. So I just raised my thumb to my nose and poked fun at him there and then. To his promise, he knuckled me later when none of the Elders were around.*

*I want to speak about **Uncle Charlie** here. After Uncle Jimmy refused to teach me anymore, I was sent to learn from my biological Mother's brother, Uncle Charlie Moreton. Uncle Charlie was named after his Grandfather, my generations' Great Grandfather Mookin (Charles Moreton). In the line of descendants, Mum was the oldest child of Grampy Moreton, then Uncle Charlie. I gained my love of poetry from Uncle Charlie, who would recite his favorite poems on most any occasion.*

*As mentioned, at various times of the year the children who were learning the skills of hunting, gathering and fishing went with different people. The purpose of going with the relevant Elder was to have access to the knowledge that they had acquired (from literally thousands of generations) about the appropriate times of the year and to learn how they were able to accumulate the different food resources. I have identified this as a genetic inheritance; an unbroken line of knowledge that has emanated from the beginning of creation through to the present time.*

*At various times of the year, some of the Uncles and Aunties were employed away in mainstream jobs, working away from home earning money to help sustain the family connection to country. The government policy permitted our family to live at One Mile if we could provide for ourselves.*

*Uncle Charlie Moreton, would amaze, tantalise and tease the children with little riddles, puzzles and sayings. One of his sayings for any of us who became sarcastic towards him was, 'sarcasm is the lowest form of wit.' I did not know what he meant but I'd just laugh, all the same. Humor was also encouraged and the good natured teasing and tormenting was another side of the coping strategies I tell those who I teach.*

*Uncle Charlie, as a child, was given a dictionary. Although not being permitted to attend school past the fourth grade, he learnt every word in that dictionary. As a further part of his own self-education, to amuse himself and others, he would make up poetry on the play of words.*

*When it became my time to be taught by and learn from him, Uncle Charlie stopped at the first tree and told me a story about what this tree was used for. Not only would he explain what the tree is used for, he would identify who in his time, had taught him about the tree. He explained how his Grandfather had taught him these things. Systematically he'd stop at various trees along the way and would give their story to me. I told this story to Lance E. when I visited Canada; Lance said that he now knew what his own father had been doing when he was only young. When he was a child every time that his family visited their property his father would plant a tree that they brought along. I told Lance that he had my permission to use my story and he could now tell his father that he now knew; and he said that his father had passed away a while ago.*

*The comparison that I made for Lance, is that it was just like walking into a library and someone was selecting books of the shelf for me to read and know. For a person*

*without any formal education, Uncle Charlie was well educated in the ways of knowing. Uncle Charlie also taught me how to make and throw a boomerang.*

*The boomerang became an ornamental piece for me, because the practice of any elements of our culture was against government policy. Learning the basic principles of wood, and how it was shaped and used, by whom and for what purpose helped my mind to formulate how all of the other artifacts were crafted from wood. The story of how these properties of wood were grown, where they grew, what treatment was needed for them to grow and how to manufacture and utilize this resource, was all encapsulated into this lesson from Uncle Charlie. Of course the obligatory test flight was needed to see if the aerodynamics warranted adjusting.*

*The very first time that I went out hunting kangaroo was with Uncle Charlie. This was a lesson in stealth, silence, looking, listening, learning, understanding, sign language, cunning, patience and respect. I was instructed to walk directly in the exact same footprints where Uncle Charlie trod. He consciously noted and watched where his feet trod so as not step on a dead branch and scare the kangaroo away; or to step on a snake. I followed exactly in his footsteps. Hand signals were all that was used from the outset, there was to be no noise whatsoever. Later on in life I was to learn about other hand signs and messages.*

*A funny thing (for me) about our hunting was that we were not allowed to own or possess any of our traditional paraphernalia such as spears but we were allowed to have a rifle.*

*After the holidays, most of the children at our school would be asked to give a presentation on what they did during the break. So as to ensure that I would not consciously lie about the hunting of kangaroo with Uncle Charlie, and because of the government policy about the practice of culture, the old people exercised some safeguards. It is only now with the luxury of hindsight that I can understand what happened.*

*I will explain: when a kangaroo was sighted, I was immediately directed by a hand gesture to stop and not move. My immature untrained eyes could not see what the seasoned veteran eye could see. Uncle Charlie moved in and took the shot and motioned that I was to stay exactly where I was. I was to remain exactly where I was, so that should there need to be another shot, Uncle Charlie knew where to aim in relation to where I was.*

*He went off through the bushes and I did hear another shot. I waited for what seemed like hours but in reality it would have been about forty-five minutes to an hour before Uncle Charlie appeared again. He was carrying the obligatory sugar-bag which was filled up with wood. There was a small patch of blood on the side of the bag. When we went back to Nanny and Grampy's house, I asked about what had happened. Uncle Charlie told me that he missed the kangaroo with both shots but decided to get some wood instead, which I accepted as to what must have happened.*

*In reality because the Elders did not want the children to consciously lie to the authorities of mainstream society and say that 'Aboriginal people were hunting kangaroos', they created an alternative truth for me in this circumstance. It was only many years later on in life when attending a cultural festival at Musgrave Park that I recalled and realized what had happened all of those years previous. Someone at the festival said that I should taste the kangaroo soup that was on sale there, the pleasure of which I explained to everyone in hearing range, that I had never tasted. Only to be completely surprised that this kangaroo soup was the exact same 'beef stew' that we had eaten as children on numerous occasions at One Mile. I had a little laugh to myself.*

*Not only did Uncle Charlie teach me several different levels of reading the lands, waters and skies, but with his own personal love of words, he enjoyed making up poetry. At any given opportunity he would start to recite. As mentioned I developed my own passion for poetry from this Elder.*

*I went fishing with Uncle Charlie on numerous occasions. One of these times we walked out, following the tide to the beacon. If we didn't get the resource that we had gone out to get for the meal that night we would improvise and get something else.*

*Once when out fishing at the beacon, Uncle Charlie accidentally speared a shovel-nosed shark with the garden fork, we thought it was a flathead fish. The spearing didn't hit any vital organs of the shark so we let it go. That was all of the 'fish' that we got that day, so as to compensate for this, rather than go home empty handed we filled our sugar-bags full with oysters. On a number of occasions, the hunting was hit and miss, but there were always many other resources that were readily accessible and available. I know now that this resource abundance was directly attributed to how the old people looked after and cared for our home-land estate.*

*I did get to go out in the dinghy catching fish with Uncle Charlie on several occasions. On one specific occasion, there was even more reason to remember it than the others because of the actual clarification as to who the Elder is at any given time and place. At this time I had thought over in my childlike mind of analysis, that Uncle Charlie was only my Uncle. Therefore, in my simplistic analysis of the world, he had no power to smack me should I misbehave. So whilst we were at one of the old people's popular fishing spots, the Parrot Hole, in the dinghy I told him, 'You know that if I play up you are not allowed to smack me.' Without even batting an eye he replied, 'Do you know that if I throw you overboard and a shark gets you, I just have to say that you fell overboard.' I developed a very deep and great respect for this man and his wisdom.*

*Another one of Uncle Charlie's specialties was hooking the mud-crabs out of their holes from underneath a rock crevice, the barge or the mangrove trees. A number of years ago, before I was even thought of, a number of old barges had been towed to a spot just off to the north west of One Mile and left there as a breakwater. Mud-crabs made their holes beneath the barge. Underneath the closest one of these barges to shore was the ideal place*

to teach any potential crabbers the basic lessons of how to hook out and secure mud-crabs; exactly the same place as Beaver had shown us. The crabs are usually sitting at or near the mouth of the holes. The skill is to know where the bend of your hook is facing and put the hook down the hole. Once the hook touches the crab they will immediately attempt to fight the hook with their claws. Thrust the hook past the crab turn the hook to now be angled towards the crab and begin to slowly and progressively wrestle and pull it or walk it out. The crab, once the hook is around it, will fight all of the way, but progressively it will come out according to the skill and experience of the crabber (Goenpul, Time Immemorial). Uncle Cliffy Campbell can get the mud-crabs out of their holes by just sticking his arms down the hole and grabbing the crab with his bare hands. Uncle Cliff (Campbell) is one of the fishermen family that I mentioned earlier. He is another person who needs a book written about his life history.

On another hunting excursion with Uncle Charlie, we camped out at Big Creek. The only times that I had visited the area was by boat. Big Creek is completely surrounded by a very big swamp on the north, east and south, and by the sea on the west and is therefore only accessible by boat. On the visit there with Uncle Charlie this time, he told me the story of how to walk there through the swamp, following our old Ancient pathway. Big Creek is a freshwater resource area. There are giant silver eels that inhabit this creek and our Goenpul stories refer to these specific resources as being plentiful there (Goenpul, Time Immemorial).

Approximately thirty years after the camp, I led a group of men through that swamp, relying wholly and solely on the ancient story that was given to me as a child by our Uncle Charlie. A group of us went in to Big Creek through the swamp to document and record the whereabouts of the Bora ground that I was taken to by Uncle Jimmy.

**Uncle Leon Jones** was Auntie Louisa's (nee Newfong) and Uncle Albert Jones' son. He was my second cousin Uncle. Mum's brother cousin. Uncle Leon taught me how to

hook mud-crabs from the mudflat areas. The locating of crabs was not that hard, but developing the technique to secure them was another story. This was what I was shown from Uncle Leon. As already mentioned, each of the Elders was skilled in different specialized techniques. Uncle Leon was able to instruct me in ways of how to conduct myself appropriately as a young man as well. After going out crabbing with Uncle Leon the first time, he explained to the rest of our Elders that I already knew what had to be done. It was a basic confirmation that Uncle Jimmy and Uncle Charlie had done their jobs effectively.

Throughout the educational process of becoming an appropriate Goenpul man, **Mum and Dad** together created the 'rock' onto which our families are anchored. Their undeniable love, strength, integrity and courage against all of the odds, steadied the upheavals and uncertainty that constantly ran through our family group and helped our part of the Goenpul become stronger.

**Benjamin Moody Coghill, Dad**, was born in 1927, a Scotsman who ran away from white society when he was just fifteen years of age to become an Aborigine. He told me that after one heated confrontation with his father who was a policeman, he ran down to the river, where he saw some Aboriginal people (the Campbells) at the fish market. He said that he had never seen Aboriginal people in Brisbane before, so he went up to the men and said, 'Hey, who are you?' They told him who they were and pointed to the east where they could see the giant sand dune islands, and said that they were from those islands out in the bay. Dad asked how he might be able to get to those islands and they replied, 'Jump up on the boat', which he did and never went back. Dad stayed with the fishermen's family and became a fisherman too, and in his time he learned all about the bay. Throughout his early years on Stradbroke Island, he played local sports and became an accepted member of the community and was acknowledged and seen as an equal.

*Throughout the new life that Dad had created for himself, he'd met with and interacted with numerous other Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal family that had graciously accepted him as one of their own resided at the mission site of One Mile. There were other family groups residing there as well and through just the simple acts of interacting in the various community functions, sports activities and social gatherings, he eventually got to know some of these people.*

*Inevitably, he'd noticed that some of the Aboriginal people were being treated a little bit differently by government officials when they visited. They seemed to be getting 'special treatment' and 'pushed around' a little more than the others and he had to know why. This he did by personally getting to know who these people were and why these government people seemed to target them. Once he knew what the official government policy for the treatment of Aboriginal people was, it all became clear (Evans, 1999; FAIRA, 1979). The people who lived at One Mile were often referred to as the 'One Mile Blacks'.*

*Dad's Mother died when he was a young child and Dad was sent to be raised in a Catholic boarding school. We (the Coghill Goenpul) were only ever told specific things about the non-Aboriginal side of our family. Color wasn't that much an issue for me in those days, and it has only been later on in life that the non-Aboriginal side of the family have began to contact us. While Dad was alive we were forbidden to even mention their names. Apparently some of Dad's brothers, not his (only) sister and other family members, disowned him when he 'slandered the Coghill family name' by daring to marry a 'black'; it was just unheard of, in those days, marrying up with Aborigines.*

### **Another level of Aboriginality**

*Grandfather Mackenzie called Dad 'Mardji', which in our Aboriginal language meant brother; brothers in the initiation ceremony together (Langevad, 1959). Dad joined the army and fought in Korea. He was inducted into the special-forces and was once on*

security detail for General Montgomery. He was a commando. My youngest sister Leonie told me Dad had talked about disarming bombs. Dad told me he was just a cook.

**Mabel Jane Moreton**, Mum, was born in 1927 at North Stradbroke Island. Mum was the oldest child of Grampy Moreton, who was entrusted with the care and maintenance of Quandamooka.

Nanny Moreton, Mum and Aunty Irene worked as nurses on the Peel Island Lazerette caring for the 'colored patients' that suffered from leprosy (Bryce, et al 2009; Blake, 1995). Because of the secret and sacred nature of Peel Island to our Goenpul family group, Nanny, Mum or Aunty Irene were never permitted to stay overnight on Peel Island. Grampy Moreton would row them over to the island in his dinghy in the morning and then row over again in the afternoon and pick them up.

### **Other Elders**

Whose Elders are They?

Bobby Mcleod was another Aboriginal man that I looked up to with great respect. We meet people on our journey in life who help us to understand the what for and whys. He was the man who helped me fill in some of these blanks.

Aunty Beryl Wharton: I will talk about later in my memoirs (5 – THE ACTIVIST YEARS)

Aunty Janey Arnold: Along with Aunty Beryl, were instrumental in the setting up of the Brisbane Elders. Their motivation was towards the political aspects of Aboriginal life in and around the Brisbane region.

### **CRABBING**

My brother took us out across the mudflat banks, to the old barge. This was the place where I had been trained how catch the elusive mud-crabs when I was about four or five years of age (Goenpul, Time Immemorial).

*Until this day, when my brother invited me to go crabbing, I hadn't thought much about the old ways of living off the lands and waters. These thoughts had long ago lapsed into the depths of my memory. However, on this occasion, I wanted to see for myself if my brother knew some of the skills that were needed for successful crabbing.*

*My only memories of crabbing the old way were of the last time that I had been out there crabbing, aged about thirteen or fourteen. This was with my initial mentor, our grand uncle Jimmy Newfong, who taught me the art of crabbing, along with other secret and sacred knowledge.*

*Sure enough my brother Brian, who we call 'Beaver,' did the same things and approached the tasks in the ways that I was shown by three separate Uncles many years ago (Goenpul, Time Immemorial). The ways that Beaver approached the skills of crabbing were similar if not almost exactly the same as these old men. We were taught to approach serious issues like food gathering with the relevant protocols, processes and procedures.*

*When we arrived at the spot, I thought to myself, I have seen these techniques applied before, and it looks like he had been trained by one of these Uncles. After some really physical work by Beaver we'd secured about eight sizeable mud-crabs from their holes. Mud-crabs dig a tunnel (holes) so that they squeeze beneath the old rusted barge.*

*The barges were an ideal place to train all potential mud-crabbers. The holes that the crabs dug out went in a straight line underneath the barge. In the process of crabbing, we learnt how to position the hook when sliding it down the hole, work it around the crab and eventually 'work' or pull the crab out of its hole. Once out of the hole, you had to know how to pin the crab to the ground and then pick it up, all without getting bitten by the enormous claws. Anyone who has been bitten by a mud-crab will attest to the importance of knowing the right way to pick them up.*

*After Beaver had tried all of the holes, he handed me the crab-hook and said, 'Now it's your turn.' Many years of training taught us to differentiate if crabs were in a hole or not (Goenpul, Time Immemorial). I already knew that he had emptied the holes and that he handed me the hook just to have a laugh at my expense. I did not try any of the holes that he had already been to, but walked back along the barge. Along the side of this barge there is a puddle that was created there every time the barge filled up with water at the high tide, and when the tide went out again, the water escaping through a crack in the side of this barge created this small puddle.*

*Here was one place that he did not check. Uncle Charlie showed me how to run the hook through this puddle, because he told me that one time in a hundred there just might be a crab there (Goenpul, Time Immemorial). This time there was a crab and it was the biggest out of the bunch. My brother immediately claimed that he had taught me well. I said 'You never taught me nothing' and he asked, 'Who taught you?' and I asked him the same question. Respecting me as his Elder, he explained that the exact same uncle who had trained me in different passages of our Lore/Law/law all those years ago was the same one who had trained him.*

## **UNCLE JIMMY**

*Uncle Jimmy when we had arrived 'home' for one of our holidays late one afternoon went something like this. At the time I had already been trained in the very basic skills from this man. Nanny and some of the other Aunts were explaining how Uncle Jimmy had a job with the then mining company (Moore, 1993; Salter, 1983; et al). He would come home and give Nanny some of his money for shopping after he'd had a good drink of beer at the club or with who-ever he had met after work. Sometimes some of the other drinkers would ambush and 'roll him' and take his money when he was drunk. So he took to coming home along the back track. After the others had realised what he was doing they would wait at his humpy and simply get his money when he was asleep.*

*He then started to come home along the back track and go off into the bush and bury his money when he got too drunk. The funny thing was that there are possibly a couple of hundred pounds still buried there somewhere. Everyone thought that this was hilarious and had a real good laugh. I did not think it was fair to laugh at 'my' Uncle. Eventually we all went to bed and I was instructed to go down to my Uncle Jimmy's humpy to sleep. This was also a test of me to see if I'd walk through the pitch-black darkness by myself to his hut. I know it was dark because as I was walking down to his hut through the darkness I put my hand up to my face and could not see it no matter how close I put it to my eyes. When Uncle Jimmy eventually came home I heard him say out aloud 'who's there' inside his humpy, suspecting that someone was waiting to roll him again, and I replied 'it's me Uncle Jimmy' and said my Goenpul name as he stepped through the door. He repeated my Aboriginal name again and went outside and spoke to the spirits thanking them for the day.*

*In the morning, I got up and went into the main house for breakfast. Nanny told me to go and get some money from Uncle Jimmy for the shopping. I went back to the shack and asked Uncle Jimmy for some money. He looked for it and said that he had buried it. Remembering the story from the night before, I did not want everyone to laugh at him again, so using the skills that he had taught me. No-one had been along the track thus far in the morning so I knew that there were no other tracks to confuse me. I tracked his movements back into the bush to where he had buried the money (I will talk about the learning of skills later). I dug it up still in its pay-packet and bolted back to the main house. The problem was that Uncle Jimmy had already gotten up and went up to the house and told them that he had again buried the money, and then of course I walked in with the money. I was half-heartedly 'chastised' and told not to do what I had done, though more importantly we had the money and the Elders also saw that possibly some of the old ways had rubbed off on to someone of the next generation.*

## MEMOIRS (2) THE UNFORMING YEARS

### 1964 – NINE YEARS OF AGE

Sometime in the mid sixties the Telegraph newspaper approached most of the schools in the Inala area and asked if some of the young boys wanted to earn pocket money after school. I went home and asked if I could go on the paper-run. Mum gave me permission. So, along with several of the other boys from Serviceton South State School, we became 'paper boys'. The paper truck would pick us up just after the 3.00 pm bell and take us into the city of Brisbane. I was nine years of age when I started this job. I tell some more stories about this later on (in Paper, Tele)

Before getting a job on the paper run after school, I used to go down the bush and wander around. There was an old track there and it was well worn, and thinking about it now, it must have been one the pathways from the original owners of the land, the Yuggera (Steele, 1983). The track followed the creek, crossing over it here and there. I had been taught how to catch freshwater crayfish (lobbies) and saw a potential for food opportunities.

Some afternoons, using my stalking skills, I would sneak up to one or two of the creeks and see what lived in the (riparian zone) there. To my great surprise one afternoon there was a creature there that I had never seen before. So I didn't tell anyone and I would just lay there silently watching what they did. There were at the very least two of these unknown creatures (I learnt later that they were platypus). I'd see them most afternoons as I'd study and watch their behaviour.

I was able to see that at the first sound of anyone walking along the track they would immediately disappear and not reappear at all. It amazed me as I'd never witnessed this behaviour before; where did they go? Sometimes they alerted me to strangers and I would hide as well until I saw who it was. Some of the other older children that I did not know would beat me up if they could catch me. When they couldn't catch me they would yell abuse, the usual racist taunts, and tell me to keep out of 'their' bush. If I knew who it was, I'd show myself and eventually start to play some sort of game with them.

There were some of the children who lived on the other side of the bush and would use one of these tracks as a short-cut home. I got to know a couple of these children and became friends with two of them. I met Ian Ovenden in the first week of starting school. We didn't get off to a real good start. Ian and his brother Daryl were the children that my

brother Steven and I fought with in our first week at this new school. The other fellow I met was Wayne Weston. Wayne became another one of my best mates. Apparently my oldest brother Benny was acquainted with Wayne's older brother Allan.

Ian ended up being in one of my classes at school and we became best friends too. On one of the many times that I went to his place to play, I asked him who owned the bush and he said that it belonged to everyone, which confirmed my suspicions about those other children. They were just there to pick fights.

I found a strong sense of comfort in the bush and spent long periods of time enjoying the beauty and peacefulness that emanated from its presence. I recall now that whenever I was in the bush, mum and dad never seemed to worry about me that much, but it was when I was in the city or around the streets of Inala that they became a bit overly concerned. I eventually met another best friend, Michael Mancini, down in the bush one day and because we had similar things in common at the time, we were the same age, we started to hang around with each other.

Michael and I became best friends and most times we'd sit together in art class. The teachers would separate Michael and I as much as possible; I don't know why. But I remember when the school buried a time capsule they were given strict orders for the Head Master not to let me or Michael near the area. A funny thing happened many, many years later when the school wanted to dig up the time capsule, they couldn't find it. I was present at this time capsule recover operation and of course because Michael and I were not allowed near the place when it was buried nobody knew where to look. The only people who might have possibly remembered where it was weren't allowed to know.

There was this funny thing - which I eventually believed was some sort of idiosyncratic thing about the people from Inala - that, with all of my best friends, I would always have to hide from their parents. It must have been like the first time I went around to Bodge's place to play. When his father first saw me he screamed 'get out of my yard you little black c—t.'

As well, the children seemed not to want to play with me when there were other children around. It really didn't matter to me that much because whoever I was playing with that day or afternoon was my immediate best friend. Looking back now, I suppose that I was really lucky; I probably had more best friends than anyone I knew.

The friends that I eventually made remained a part of my young life for years and some of those people I can never forget. The friendship that I craved and was given at that

time can never be repaid. There were serious lessons learned about friendship and mateship in those times and other serious lessons as well.

Michael Mancini, Ronny King (when I met him I thought he was the King), Michael's brother Peter, Rat and I were down the bush this one day when one of the other gangs of children came up to our swimming hole. We called Malcom Craft rat because at a fancy dress ball one night he came as Batman, and when he put the mask on he looked exactly like a giant rat. It was our swimming hole because we, Rat and I went into the water and cleared most of the dead logs and branches out so that we could swim there.

On this specific day when we arrived at our creek, there was a rope hanging from one of the many trees around our creek; someone had put up a swing. Not long after we arrived this other gang of boys from another school, who were a little bit older than us, claimed that the creek was theirs. These older boys started to bully all of us around and I think that one of them smacked Peter in the head. They ordered us not to swim in their creek. They chopped the tree down to get the rope. We just had to comply with everything they said and put up with threats and being bullied and pushed around. We could have run off, but the slower fellows would have got caught and really beaten up so we stuck together and just toughed it out.

A short while later we heard some other voices and another group of older boys who were from our school began to yell at these bullies who immediately took off into the scrub. None of us knew these older boys but we knew we had seen some of them at our school and reminded them of that. They acknowledged this and did not push any of us around. They asked what had happened and we told them. They replied that the creek belonged to them and how dare these other boys cut down their swing. I thought that if the creek was going to belong to someone it might as well be someone from our school then it wasn't too bad.

One of the bigger boys walked out along the now fallen tree as it lay in the water. He went out to retrieve the rope. He had a tomahawk and proceeded to cut the rope loose. The blade of the tomahawk as it hit the water swerved wildly and hit him in the ankle. Immediately blood shot into the air and he fell down in the water half lying across the log. Someone screamed out that he had cut an artery and blood now flowed freely from the wound into the water.

His mates all immediately panicked and bolted off and left him lying in the water. I don't know why but I immediately jumped straight into the water and waded out to him. As a ten year old child, I had limited understanding of what to do but I knew that I had to stop

*the bleeding and held the severed artery closed. I called out to my friends to help me and we succeeded in dragging this fellow to shore. Ronny was the fastest runner of all of us so we sent him off up through the bush to the telephone booth at Lorikeet Street to dial 000 and get an ambulance.*

*Ronny took off as the rest of us struggled to lift this larger boy out of the creek and began to carry him up the hill, a good half a kilometre, through the bush to the telephone booth. I didn't know it then but I think that he went into shock because he lay very quiet and didn't say anything or struggle or roll around. I kept thinking that we would not have to go far because the ambulance officers would arrive with their stretcher and take him off our hands, so if we just kept going slowly we will eventually get him help. The ambulance did not arrive and we had to carry him all the way to the telephone booth on Lorikeet Street and wait for their arrival.*

*Approximately ten to fifteen minutes later the ambulance arrived and the officers asked what the problem was. I told them that he had cut an artery in his ankle. They just laughed and said that there would be more blood than that if he cut an artery. I let the wound go and the first spurt of blood shot up one officer's shirt and down the others shirt. They said (almost in unison) he's cut an artery and who stopped the flow of blood. I said that I did, which, by the way that they looked at me, I could see that they did not believe me. Nothing more was said and we went off back to our playing back down at the creek. I didn't get to know that older boy's name until later on in life. Another day, another lesson; what's that other saying? 'Ah such is life (Ned Kelly, 1880).'*

*A couple of years later we were fishing in a lagoon down along Bowhill Road. While we were just peacefully fishing a couple of older boys came along and started yelling and hurling abuse at us. I didn't know them but Skinny (I talk more Skinny later) knew one of them and he didn't like Skinny's older brother. So that was enough for them to start picking a fight. I think it was Michael (Mancini) who started to throw mud at them – Michael always had to be throwing something - and they retaliated by throwing really big rocks at us.*

*We had to defend ourselves and picked up the rocks that they threw at us and threw them back at them. One of our 'team' got hit bad and went down crying, so we had to surrender and now put up with another lot of bullying. I don't know where he came from but the fellow who we had saved a couple years previously showed up. He went straight over to the bloke who knew Skinny's brother and slapped him up the side of the head, and then told the rest of them to 'fuck off'. Then he just left too. I still didn't know who he was.*

*It was a few years later than that mentioned above that I got to know this fellow's name. We were at a party. I was about fifteen by this time and doing my impression of an Inala drunk. Some big (Pommy) prick named Thomas, who didn't like anyone from Inala, let alone black fellas from Inala, called me out for a fight. This bloke was a couple of inches taller than me, a couple of years older than me and about two stone heavier than me; but I couldn't back down in front of the rest of the gang. I went outside and everyone followed to see this bloke tear me limb from limb.*

*As I was shaping up out on the grass, the fellow who I saved walked straight in front of me and pushed me out of the way. He told me that this was his fight as this prick had been going around skiting that he had given 'Paul' a hiding. Paul was about two inches taller than me and about a stone heavier so I wasn't going to argue with him and gave him the fight. This other bloke looked at him and said 'Zwitser' - that was Paul's last name - 'I'm gunna kill you.' Paul walked straight up to him and hit him once, right on the chin and 'dropped him like a bag of shit'.*

*As mentioned Paul Zwitser is this fellas' name and he eventually saved me from a couple of good beltings from older boys. As we grew up I got to know him, and we became good mates. I stood up for him as grooms' man at his wedding. He had three children before he got divorced; one girl and two boys. We worked together on a couple of jobs and I still have a scar under my chin where he hit me a shovel while we mucking around playing French Cricket instead of doing work. Paul's got my same sort of wicked sense of humour and to this day I still don't know if he hit me on purpose.*

*Paul and I have played cricket for Inala on numerous occasions and we've backed each other up in many a fight and came out on top most every time. Just recently he told me how many times he had been called a nigger and can basically understand what it must have been like for me growing up.*

*On more than one occasion we have been mistaken for each other: relatively the same size and weight, plus he's a bit darker like me though he's not a blackfella. There's this old bloke Mr Downes - Ian and Snakey Downes' (who I talk about later) father - who when he sees me, mistakenly calls me Paul and he calls Paul, Shane. We used to think that he did it on purpose but he didn't.*

*Paul knows how long that I have been studying as we keep in touch regularly. Whenever I see him around, we never go past one another without stopping for a good laugh about the good old days. He said to me one day, 'You haven't changed a bit,' and I said 'What're ya talking about?' He told me that some of the other good old Inala boys that*

he sees, told him that I've gone all 'black activist.' I asked him 'Do you think that I have?' and he said that I hadn't, although he added that I was able to explain the (Aboriginal) politics a lot better and clarify some of the more glowing inconsistencies for him.

I care a lot about what Paul thinks and I didn't ask him who said it as the majority of the good old boys outside of our gang only ever just tolerated me when I was growing up anyway. I had an idea who it was, so I explained something to Paul that I'd only just learnt myself: 'In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king' (Erasmus, 1466/1469-1536). We had a laugh and then he went off to prepare his dinner. I've got to go back to see him soon because he's got one of my books.

INALA –

Paper, Tele

Michael and Peter Mancini, Ronny King and Kevin Nicholls were some of the boys who I went on the paper run with. There were a couple of other children who drifted in and out of selling papers as they needed money, but these were the main bunch. Skinny (David McDermaid) and Rat (Malcom Craft) were a couple of others who I'd eventually got to know from our school Service South and together we were some of the Skylark Street paper boys, although I think that Skinny only came on the paper run with us once or twice.

Where all of us lived, the streets were named after birds. Rat and I lived in Lorikeet Street, Michael and Peter lived in Canary Street, Ronny lived in Tern Street, Skinny lived in Clipper and Kevin Nicholls (he spelt it Pigy) lived in Sandpiper Street. The other side of Inala was named after trees, and these guys were the Biota Street paper boys. I didn't get to know many of the Biota Street boys until I started high school.

Ronny had a younger brother named Frankie and he took to hanging around with us as well, and then there was 'Bodge' (Gary Kirby) and 'Froggy' (Stanley Brown). Together all of us called ourselves the Skylark Street Boys. Eventually when we got older and got to know some of the Biota Street Boys, inevitably we joined together which earned some of us the right to call ourselves the Inala Boys (and that is another part of the story).

Bush (Skills) Games

Sometimes when we'd go up into the bush we'd play different games. Most of these games were modifications of other games that we'd played at school only we'd invent our own rules to suit the diversity of the environments within which we played. When we went swimming in the creeks, we had this game that we called 'Crocodile'. Most of the creeks

were murky, so it was ideal to swim underwater to escape being caught. There would be someone in the middle (of the creek) like the games Red Rover or British Bull Dog. Whoever was 'up' called out to someone by name and their goal was to reach the other side of the creek and get out of the water before being caught. If they made it, then all of the rest had to try and make it across without being caught. The first one who got caught was automatically 'up' for the next game.

Because it was easy just to say that you had caught someone underwater, the rules that we made up, were that whoever was up, had to physically and visibly bring you to the surface of the water and say out loud so everyone could hear: 'Crocodile, Crocodile you're a Crocodile.' It was hard when there was just one of you left to get across the creek, but when there were several crocodiles in the water at the same time it became a game of stealth and strength. Throughout this game we all got to know who the weak swimmers were and we would consciously make amends for this unevenness. Most of our summer holidays were spent in this leisurely pursuit.

Another game that we'd play was 'Hide and Go Seek' only with our usual modifications. Once you were discovered in your hiding spot the seeker would call your name out loud, so that everyone could hear. If they weren't sure of who it was, they would have to go right up to the hider and identify them. All of us would hide our facial features so that when the seeker came close enough, we could out-sprint them in the race back to home. I was always at a disadvantage for me because there were no other black children in our gang. Again, we all knew who were the slow runners and we used this to each of our own advantages.

When I was 'up' for hidey go seek, I never to this day, told the other boys what I'd do to catch them and even up some of the disadvantages I had. I used the old hunting skills that I was taught over at home to look at their tracks. Most of the boys, when playing in the bush, had to wear shoes. I knew who wore which shoes, and it was just a matter of seeing whose tracks went where and I'd just call out that I could see them. On numerous occasions the hider would come out stamping their feet madly in disgust accusing me of cheating. 'Shane, you're cheating by looking to see where we are hiding' was the call. I'd sit back and have a little chuckle to myself: if they only knew.

Once, I was even surprised that my older brother Spud (Steven) wanted to go up the bush, so I let him in on this secret. I'd told him how I played this game with the other boys. He asked me to show him and we spent a whole day up the bush perfecting this skill, only with a couple of modified twists and turns that I didn't use on the non-Aboriginal boys.

*I don't know if Spud was shown any of the old ways so I showed him how to 'read' tracks, and then laid a trail so that he could see. When I thought that he had got it, we proceeded with another one of our games.*

*Steven and I were basically the same speed at running, so the hiding, much like the game with the gang, had to be more secure with plenty of start when running for home. When I saw that he was starting to be really confident with using the tracking skills, I laid another trail that completely confused him.*

*I walked along the dirt road purposely leaving footprints that could be easily seen. I walked up to a big old tree with notches, clearly visible that someone had cut into and climbed it before. Only this time when I got to the tree, I walked backwards about six or seven steps in the exact same footprints and stepped off on to a big rock . From there I jumped onto some grass and climbed up a thin tree, bent it over to another thin tree and so on for about three or four trees. Eventually landing at the base of another big old tree, which I climbed up and sat on a fat branch to watch what he would do.*

*As expected, I watched Steven creep up to the tree following the carefully laid tracks. He snuck up with the trepidation expecting me to jump out at any moment and race him back to the home base. I lay down on the branch of the big old tree for a better vantage point to watch. After watching him creeping up and searching around the tree I could not hold my laughter any more and burst out laughing at him, which startled him at first and then he asked how I was able to get right over there.*

*I climbed down and showed him how I had purposely laid this track to lead him away, and then of course this other level of understanding ensued another level of excitement for our game.*

*There were many adventures that the Skylark Street paper-boys got up to. Some of us worked on Saturdays selling newspapers and most times after we finished work on the Saturday night we got the first Sunday Truth and Sunday Mail papers. On Saturdays, we'd get picked up at Skylark Street shops, where we got dropped off every week-night that we worked. On Saturdays, we worked from 9.00 am in the morning to 6.00 pm at night with a break for lunch in the middle of the day.*

*Some Saturdays I would play rugby league for the Newspapers side; no extra money, only the prestige of playing for the team. None of the other Skylark boys would play. Once we were told that we could go for a swim at the Centenary Pool and spent the whole of our lunch time running around madly looking for the pool. When eventually we did find it, we had to go back to work.*

*I think that we went swimming there once after that then we gave it up and entertained ourselves in other ways. To this day I can still remember many of the short-cuts and back street access points to different places in the city. We played the usual British Bull Dog throughout the city, very careful to remember where not to go as paedophiles haunted some of the old toilet blocks. We had a game that we called 'tag (tiggy) on the trams'. Trams were still running up and down Queen Street and we would play tiggy jumping from tram to tram. If the conductor caught you, you immediately became 'up' for the game until you tagged someone else.*

*On another occasion on the paper run Michael, who was as mad keen on fishing as me, Skinny and Rat, brought his fishing gear to work and during the lunch break we all went fishing down to the river at the Botanical Gardens. He caught a couple of fish and left them in his bag for the rest of the day in the sun. By the time we went home they stunk the whole paper truck out. He was barred, by the driver and everyone else in the truck, from ever fishing at lunch time on Saturday again.*

*The girls*

*There weren't too many girls in our young lives then and most of us didn't care; sure we would secretly tell each other about who we liked but rarely, if ever, did we dare to speak to the girl that we secretly fancied. For me, all of the girls that I liked did not want to ever touch me for fear of contracting black germs. I'd found this out when we were forced to participate in dancing as part of the school's dance curriculum. To justify it in my young mind I thought it was something like the best friend saga and I'd just learnt to accept the fact that I wasn't liked, and for what reason I could not understand why, then.*

*I did not try to dwell on it too much and enjoyed the things that we Skylark boys did. Eventually as we grew older and more confident in the bush our little group would go on weekend camps. Most of us were in the same grade but in different classes. We would laugh about one specific redneck teacher who had a number of pithy little sayings. I honestly think that they did not consciously know how obnoxiously offensive they really were by saying to children that we would never amount to anything in life. It was the same teacher from before who said that we would only ever garbage men or toilet men when we grew up. Another one of his pithy little sayings was, 'When they passed out brains, we thought they said trains, and we jumped on ours.'*

*I would like to meet this wonderful state sponsored teacher Mr W. today and let him know, that yes, I did do a garbage man's job as well as a toilet man's job and personally thank him for his wonderfully insightful words of wisdom.*

Near Inala is the place now called Forest Lake. I jokingly say it is a suburb of Inala. Whoever they are, destroyed the bush to develop a housing estate. It is the part of the bush that we played in and took so many of our own children into and taught them the basic things that we knew and learnt. Our bush was a place full of magical treasures for uncorrupted minds to enjoy and explore. There were several creeks with species of fish in them that I have never seen anywhere else again or since, and I have consciously researched, studied and looked into the benthic parts of most of the other creeks and waterways (Allen, G.R., Midgley, S. H., Allen, M., 2002; Hersy, David).

On another one of the creeks where the Forest Lake estate exists, and has destroyed, I saw this magnificent waterfall that only our childlike minds could enjoy and envisage. In the pool below the waterfall lived species of freshwater crayfish that I have only ever seen in that specific pool.

At another place in the Forest Lake estate there was a Bora Ring. I knew only too well, from the lessons that the old people gave to me to stay away from there. There were koalas all over the area (Ryan, 1995), and Crossey (Arthur Cross) another one of my best (bikie) mates who I had met when we were about ten years old, showed me, what he called the king koala. He had seen this creature when he was just a young child playing in the same area.

I knew some of the workers who were eventually employed by the developers to knock down the trees for the development of the Forest Lake estate. I asked them why they did not stop knocking down the trees with koalas in them and try to save some. Their simple reply was that they were paid to knock down trees not to save koalas. From my own observations I saw that there were also several species of animals, there were kangaroo, wallaby, echidna, ring-tailed, brush-tailed and glider possums, I saw at the very least seven species of snakes, poison and other, lizards of every variety (Ryan, 1995); grasses, grass trees and trees of every just about all of the species of the Brisbane region. There were birds of every kind (Pizeey, 1997), too many to mention here; all destroyed and for what some of us now refer to as Forest Mistake.

When the Skylark gang went out on a camping trip and sometimes just on day trips we would catch freshwater crayfish (lobbies) and cook them up for a meal. As we progressively learned how to catch the sometimes elusive 'lobby', we learned the specialised techniques to get them. Each of the many creek systems, that we made ourselves aware of,

had their own special diversity and specific ecosystems (Ref...) and amongst our little group of children the specialist for that particular system instructed the rest of us.

Some creeks needed traps while other creeks needed patience, but they were all creeks and that was the main thing for me; I loved it (Ref...Here). In the traps we would sometimes catch eels or see a species of fish that we hadn't seen before and so we would design and make our traps and develop the skills needed to catch them (Allen, G., Midgley, S. H., Allen, M. 2002). I think Skinny was the first one of us to have fresh-water fish tanks and he and I would not hesitate to strip off and wade into one creek or another. I think that was one of the things that the gang saw in me, Skinny and Rat; a sometimes crazy fearlessness towards most things in the bush, but more specifically towards the creeks. Skinny would (very cheaply) buy old mosquito nets at the local second-hand shop, and we'd use those to trawl the creeks with.

In and around the Inala area, mum always cautioned each of our family members about creeks and the spirits that we might encounter in them. I know now how mum knew about this area even before we moved here because she was told the stories by her grandmother. Our brother Russell only told me in 2008 what he and his mate saw in two separate creeks that we'd fished in. There was one of these specific creeks that my group of mates bluntly refused to go back to because they saw something in it that frightened the shit out of them; they could not even give me a reasonable description of it, because they were so frightened. I eventually grilled Rat about it as he was as fearless as anyone I knew; he described something that I'd only heard about in stories and I eventually I accepted their word that something sure scared them. The Elders have said that the Bunyip can appear in any shape or form and so I put this unexplained thing down to that (Reed, 1993; Roberts, 1986; Isaacs, J. 1992; Lorenz, J. 1996; Goenpul, Time Immemorial).

I remember another day fishing down at Bowhill Road; this place became one of our favourite places for everything, Skinny, who'd usually 'double' me on his bike (I could never afford to buy one), had rode on ahead with some of the other boys as I was left behind to lift all of the other pushbikes across a particularly narrow place. Whenever we went fishing anywhere it was usually hit and miss. We'd either catch lobbies, a new species of freshwater fish or turtles (Ryan, 1995).

This was a place where only one person could stand to lift the bikes across. I ran up to the rest of the gang after I had lifted the last bike across. They were where we could get

*a drink out of this other creek; we had different creeks for different purposes, it was the only one from which we could get potable water.*

*When I got to the creek and went up to where Skinny lay on the ground drinking, all of the boys were lying with their heads down drinking, I saw that he was lying within inches of what could have been a king brown snake, though it looked more taipan-like to me (Parish, 1997). I knew from my Goenpul bush-training that both these snakes were deadly poisonous (Goenpul, Time Immemorial). All of the children in our group knew when I was deadly serious about things and when I told Skinny not to move he just froze. I grabbed the snake by its tail and cracked it like a whip, thus killing it in one motion. I can't remember where I'd heard this technique; I think it was while I was listening to one of Dad's stories (Goenpul, Time Immemorial). After all of the initial excitement died down I gave it a rough measurement and it was about six feet long.*

*I've thought about that event many times trying to justify to myself my actions of killing that poor snake and came to the conclusion that there was nothing else that I could have done. There were no such things as antivenin around then and a bite from one of these snakes was basically a death sentence for whoever it had bitten. Was the Bunyip warning me again?*

*The initial way that we learned how to catch lobbies was with cotton and a piece of meat tied on to the end, if we didn't catch any we would just roast the meat on an open fire and have that as our meal. Almost religiously each of the other boys, in turn, would try to light a fire. Inevitably they would use all of the matches. Then when each of them got to the last match, I would be called to then light the fire with the last remaining match. Many times I was able to apply the old sometimes not so secret knowledge to situations in the bush (Goenpul, Time Immemorial).*

*I don't know if my mates did this purposely trying to impress each other, but I'd shrug my shoulders and light the fire anyway. This trying to light the fire until the last match continued on right up until someone invented lighters; thank goodness.*

#### *Home Life*

*There were, at any one time in our humble abode, our immediate family which comprised of three girls and eight boys.*

*Sometimes as a child at Inala, I'd selfishly think that if there weren't so many mouths to feed that I might be able to enjoy some of the luxuries that some of my non-Aboriginal friends had. From my first memories, I had to share a bed with one brother or another and when we took in some of our cousins, I had to sleep down the foot-end with*

two older boys. I was the youngest and waking up with one or two stinking feet in your face cures the most ardent of wanting to sleep together. Although I can remember that once we had bunk beds for a short time before I had to start to share them again. My bed eventually became the lounge-room floor until we got a fold down lounge and then the lounge became my bed.

The only time after this that I had a bed all to myself was when I was on remand in the home for boys, and I was soon cured of this when I got sentenced and had to sleep in the dormitories. I still had my own bed but some of the younger children would climb into bed with me and this alarmed me. Some bad things happened in these homes for boys and it is hard to forget. I will talk about this in more detail later.

I can not consciously remember the first time when I had to wear shoes. Some time later on in life I remember being forced to wear some for school once or twice. I know that I never owned a pair of shoes until I eventually went to high school.

I can recall that at any one point there were about eighteen people living in this three bedroom house at Inala with one Post Master General (PMG) fortnightly pay-packet feeding the lot. That was about the time that I started work on the paper run that I spoke about earlier. The meagre fifty cents that I'd earn would buy a small packet of Vita-Brits and a loaf of bread. As it turned out, this was barely enough money to supplement dad's fortnightly pay.

The Vita-Brits supplied breakfast and the loaf of bread was just enough for the younger children to have lunch at school. Sadly for me there wasn't enough bread for my lunch so I would just have to go without. Sometimes the other children in my class would share some of their lunch with me, but friendship can only go so far. Eventually at lunch time I'd just go home. Sometimes, if I was lucky, the baker may have been and left bread, while at other times I'd just go home because I couldn't stand to watch someone else eating while I was starving.

As a part of the discipline from the old people, I was able to convince myself that I could hold out and get something to eat as soon as I went on the paper run. After the first papers I'd sell, I'd buy some food with that and make it up with my tips later.

#### *1969: The Teenage Years*

Interspersed throughout the majority of my time growing up I played sport. At primary school, I won the junior cross-country race and when I was a senior I won the senior cross country race. I played in the senior cricket team and we were undefeated in our Inala district. I started my football career early and was the only child in grade three at Serviceton

South State School that was allowed to play rugby league in the school team. In my senior year, our team won the premiership on forfeit; there were no other teams in our over-weight division (over six stone).

There was a local Souths Inala Rugby League Club which I'd joined in the under elevens. I stayed with this club until the under sixteens and I'll talk about what happened to me at this age later. Although, when I played for the Souths Inala under fourteens team, it was the only Grand Final that I ever played in and won.

Throughout this specific season we had never beaten any of the teams that we played against in the semi-finals. No one expected us to go any further than the first play-off. Our coach had quit and even the club had given up on us and we were constantly harassed to get off the training field when there were other teams training. We just kept on training ourselves and it was actually really good not having anyone yelling at us to do this or do that. We would just play touch football all night.

When we made it past the first semi-final game and every one of the other teams for Souths Inala got knocked out of the competition, even our coach came back. The club also supplied a specialist coach who was a little bit younger than the old farts that ran everything. He had a different way of talking to us. I think that he had remembered how he was as a teenager and how he liked to be treated and talked to when training. Johnny Robinson (Robbo) was this fella's name and he got us through to the Grand-Final.

The team that we played against in the Grand-Final was Valley U-Stars and as my brother, black-fella way, Mick likes to emphasise, they were undefeated going in because they had 'stars' in just about every position in the team. Eight members of their team were playing for the Queensland Schoolboys Team and our Inala team had no hope. Years later I found out when I was down the pub drinking one day - I would have been about twenty-five by then - that Robbo had 'put his house' on us and had got odds something like a hundred to one.

When we got to the game that day we were all given our individual pep talks. Before the game started, Robbo took me aside and told that some of the other players on the other team had called me a black nigger. He knew that I'd blow my stack and I immediately wanted to go over and belt the crap out of them. But he stopped me by saying, 'No, no get even with them out on the field.' My brother Mick had broken his leg and couldn't play. He had to watch the game from the sideline cheering all the way. I mention Mick because whenever I'm trying to tell anyone about this game in front of him, he'll just jump in and take over the telling to give his own accounts of the story and add his own little

bit of emphasis to it. He tells me that I only played the game so I didn't really see it that well.

Randy Le-Burrs (I think that is how it is spelt) was our kicker and Robbo had briefed him as to where he should kick-off the first ball for its greatest effect. He kicked it straight to the players that Robbo had said called me a nigger. Robbo said that I out-sprinted our whole team just to get to the opposition first, and drove the first player backwards and into the dirt. Robbo had kept secret his winnings for years and it has been only just recently Robbo that he opened up to have his say about the game. He said that this kick-off and tackle set the tempo for how the whole game was played by our team. Every time one of their players got the ball, all of our players followed my example and we just drove them into the dirt.

In those days in rugby league, a field-goal was worth two points and Randy potted one to give us the lead of two nil. The opposition potted one field-goal and the score was two all. We got a penalty kick and Randy converted it to put us in front four to two. They got a penalty kick and slotted it over to make the score four all. Just before half-time, Randy kicked another field-goal and we hit the lead of six points to four. There were no other points scored in the game, we tackled them into submission and we won the Grand-final six to four.

Whenever I see Robbo around today, I make it a point to always ask him how much he put on us to win. He just feigns memory loss and laughs about it and I call him a mongrel and then we laugh some more about it too.

I have only been able to analyse it later on in life; as I grew up as a small Aboriginal child, it seemed that I did not pose too much of a metaphorical threat. But as I grew, so too did the attention of the older rednecks and the police. It seemed as if they were always around where members of our family were. It seemed as if all of the time they were directly trying to harass and intimidate us. The police would pick me up for anything. In retrospect, I know it was only because I wasn't wearing my 'dog tags' (FAIRA, 1979; Evans, 1999).

Later on in life, other Aboriginal people that I'd met called the piece of paper that Aborigines had to have pinned to their shirt 'dog tags'. The piece of paper had to have acknowledged on it that we had applied for and were exempt from the Act (FAIRA, 1979; Evans, 1999) which kept most other Aboriginal people confined in the State run 'concentration camps', segregated and isolated away from mainstream society.

To cope with this, if I went anywhere in the built up areas of the suburb, I'd always make sure that I was with one of my best mates. This was so that they could go and tell my

*dad what happened when I was eventually arrested. Dad didn't hesitate to confront the police for their ill-mannered attitude towards black people.*

*Dad would have to explain to any of the new coppers that we were exempt from the 'Act', to which they would then make up a lie and say that I was using obscene language (swearing) or when questioned about my antisocial behaviour, that I had 'resisted' arrest. To this day I wondered how they could hear my swearing as the drove up to us.*

*Dad eventually got to know one or two of the senior detectives who, in turn, would brief many of the new police of their potential miscalculations of tangling with someone like Dad.*

*I learned from other Aboriginal people later that this was the favoured arrest ploy of the Queensland police their 'trifector of charges'; obscene language, resisting arrest and assaulting their fists with our faces. Just about every political black-fella I know has made reference to this attitude by police (Evans, 1999).*

*I remember one night down at our local hangout at the pool and skating ring. I'd just come out of the fish-shop when I was confronted by a policemen who slapped me around and threw me up against the wall. He was then joined by a couple of his police mates and they proceeded to beat me up. I was eventually handcuffed behind my back and thrown into the police car, slapped around a bit more while sitting in the back seat and taken to the police station.*

*When I was questioned about my age and I told them that I was fifteen (years of age), one of them said that 'he's only a minor'. They now had to contact my parents and when Dad had seen that they had given me a beating, he blew his stack. He immediately wanted to know who was the person in charge of this bunch and informed them in no uncertain terms that they would be hearing from a lawyer. Because we had no money Dad was going to sell the car and proceed with charges of assault against the police officer in charge. I told dad not to sell the car for our legal costs, as even then, there were very few if any police made accountable for their actions against Aboriginal people (Evans, 1999).*

*Our family could not afford to buy a car and the one that we had, Dad had won in a competition that was run by the car-maker Holden. I was prepared to 'wear' the consequences and take the punishment as the car was possibly the only thing that our family owned. However, after the threat of legal actions, the 'hero' resigned from the police force and the case was conveniently dismissed.*

*These beatings and threats were not just isolated incidents. I have been taken to the watch-house so many times and beaten up that I have lost count. Nearly every*

*blackfella that I know (who is still alive from the old days) will tell how they were beaten up by those great and wonderful people of society.*

*After the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (Johnston QC, 1991), at one of the many Land Rights protest rallies, 'M.' (who is in the police force) told me that all of those deaths in custody were suicides and accidents. I asked this person if they believed me if I told them about what I knew about accidents and suicides and they said yes. We walked to the rally, and along the way I proceeded to tell my friend about how on four separate occasions I was nearly murdered in custody.*

*I described one of the times to 'M.' when a large calibre pistol was put to my head and cocked and the person was just about to blow my head off, when the other officer saw a young white girl coming towards us. The other copper grabbed the gun and said 'Not here.' They didn't have too much of a problem with shooting me, but if it was witnessed by a young white girl, they would have had to shoot all witnesses and then there would have been questions asked. Whenever I see that officer who pulled the gun away around, I go up and shake his hand and tell him thanks.*

*'M.' told me that she wanted to resign from the police because she felt disgusted about the lies and misinformation that had been given to her. I said, 'Stay in the job.' If she was able to prevent one death in custody, our little discussion would have at least saved someone and she was somehow able to partially fulfil her obligation to our people.*

*Another one of my mentors, a fellow who had introduced me into the discipline of Aboriginal politics, a brother named Mervyn, told me about how he and a couple of other blackfellas were picked up by the police in the city (Brisbane) one night (Pers. Comm., 1994). They were taken to Pinkenba, near the mouth of the Brisbane River and told to swim for their lives. They dived in and he said that he immediately went underwater. He'd already been told about this place and what was going to happen. While under the water he heard the muffled gunshots and could hear bullets as they whizzed past him underwater.*

*Yes, we all know that there is no such thing as 'accidental' Aboriginal deaths in custody.*

*It can be traumatic for many – 'from the top of the pile to the bottom' - the transition from primary school to secondary school, with a whole new bunch of rednecks with a whole new bunch of redneck teachers to back them up. In my new school, Inala State High School, I found that I'd have (at the very least) one fight a week. After starting*

high school I got another job delivering groceries. This job paid more money and offered shorter Saturday work.

Rob Sales was the man who had the contract to deliver the groceries and I was his offsider. Rob was a good and kind man to me and I found his basic good nature was all that I needed to stay working with him. Rob also had a milk run in the mornings and used this same truck to deliver the groceries in the afternoons. Ronny King got me this job with Rob. Ronnie worked for Rob's brother, whose name I have forgotten. I worked in this job until I eventually got expelled from school.

Retrospectively, I know one of the reasons why I left so many jobs that I'd had was because I didn't like the attitude of one boss or another. After being incarcerated in the youth detention centres, I had a real problem with anyone in an authoritative role. This system of (so-called) accountability did not care if I was wrong or right; as an Aborigine in my own country I would always be wrong.

I did not last inside this new schooling system for very long. I tried to tolerate it because I think Mum and Dad wanted at least one of us to finish school. Not one of our family ever finished high school at Inala High. The only one to ever achieve this insurmountable feat was one of our nephews. The same young fellow who stood beside me to go to the Bora ring when everyone was making excuses not to go. He eventually completed grade twelve at Inala High with as much support as I could give and I used the incentive that he would be the only one of our family to ever do so.

The rednecks of every category at high school, humiliated, provoked and taunted me continuously. For every and any reason, I would be summoned to the head-master's office and caned. When the canings increased to include every morning, mostly on parade, every lunchtime and afternoon before I left to go home, I took the hint that I was possibly not welcomed here any longer and as mentioned earlier, eventually got expelled.

The crucial point of the expulsion came from one night, in grade ten. One of the redder-necked teachers slapped me around in front of my mates at a school dance. The dance was not even on school grounds, so in retaliation to the humiliation of being slapped around, I punched him back, and I was expelled. If I counted the number of teachers that belted me, I'd say that it would have to be every one that I met, except for maybe one teacher in grade two, I think.

After nine years of systematic bullying, intimidation, beatings and humiliation, I again convinced myself that I had done pretty well for myself even to get that far. I've tried

to calculate the number of beatings and fights that I had been involved with in my schooling years and just gave up counting.

After being forced out of the state schooling system, it was time for work and the only work that I was trained and qualified to do was be a garbage man or a toilet man; as was prophesised by our primary school teacher. The only problem with that was to apply for one of these positions involved getting an interview in some obscure head office outside of Inala. Inala was deemed a no-go area for all who had heard about it. It was on the wrong side of everywhere. I jokingly call Inala 'Dodge City;' A lot of people like to dodge Inala. Apparently we were the dregs of society.

Even in contemporary times, someone who came from another suburb to pick me up to go somewhere informed me that they lock their car doors as they enter Inala. I often wonder if they should have put up signage on all of roads leading into Inala saying, 'Abandon all hope all ye who enter this place.'

### **MEMOIRS (3) – THE RE-FORMING YEARS**

#### **WESTBROOK**

The first time that I got to experience being detained in a boy's home was when one of my young friends who I had met in Inala, a bloke named Chico, wanted someone to accompany him as he hitch-hiked back to his home at Rockhampton. Chico was a young Aboriginal boy that our small group of friends and acquaintances got to know. He initially visited with friends at Inala for a short period. A small group of us - not the Skylark boys - went along with him just for something to do. We hitch-hiked out of Brisbane and eventually got to Bundaberg, where we decided to go back. Chico went on to Rockhampton, I can only assume, as I have never seen him again. Because none of us had any money, and we were tired of hitch-hiking, we 'jumped' a freight train back to Brisbane.

Our little group was comprised of Snakey (Gary) Downes - he was the oldest - Moose (Allan Henry), Ian Downes (Snakey's brother) and myself. After Chico departed I was the only Aborigine left in the group. We went down to the local goods yards and asked some of the people there which trains were heading towards Brisbane. One of the freight trains was pointed out to us so we sneaked into the empty freight carriage.

The goods wagon that we were in had already been emptied of grain, so we had this whole carriage to ourselves. Snakey wanted to know where we were all of the time and tore a hole through the canvas so that he could stick his head out to have a good look

around. Moose and I protested at first about him doing this but Snakey was just plain hard headed and refused to listen; I suppose that is why Ian didn't say anything as he had grown up with Snakey and knew what he was like.

Someone eventually saw Snakey with his head stuck out of the hole in the tarp and the goods train was stopped by the police at Maryborough.

The train was halted along a part of track at a junction close to Maryborough and the police got all of us out of the carriage. The whole lot of us were then hand-cuffed and 'frog-marched' along the tracks to the waiting police cars. This was happening while the police had their guns trained on us like we were known and wanted criminals; we were teenagers just having what we thought was fun. I thought to myself, this is just like a movie.

On arriving at the police station we were all processed: fingerprinted, height and age recorded and where we were from. The police then locked up the minors (Ian, Moose and myself) into a padded cell. Snakey was processed as an adult. After spending a short time at the police lock-up we were taken to the Maryborough Court House and charged with some obscure law that prevented people from 'jumping' trains.

We were eventually taken by train, hand-cuffed all the way, to Brisbane by the police. On arrival in Brisbane we were taken to the watch-house and treated like hardened criminals. I felt like screaming out, 'We only jumped a bloody train!' Our child-like adventure had turned into a capital offence for which we were now going to be incarcerated. Ian and Moose were sent to Westbrook Boy's Home and I was taken to Riverview Boy's Home with some other escapees - a couple of them were black - who had absconded not long before and had now been recaptured.

The group that I was with had been 'hunted' down like wild animals and recaptured. It reminded me of one of those nightmare escape movies, except it was real. I had never seen anything like this before and felt really frightened and powerless. Where were my parents? What the f-k was going on? Had I suddenly turned into some sort of hideous monster that needed to be caged away from everyone?

When we arrived at the boy's home we were taken out of the paddy wagon and locked away in this dungeon-like place. By this time, my mind was wildly racing, to where I just did not understand. Then the boys that I was interred with were systematically taken out one at time and flogged with this overly thick leather strap. I thought to myself once again 'What the fuck's going on? Why am I being punished for this?' Then something must have clicked with the flogger and he saw that I was new and moved me off to the side. Thank goodness.

*I was taken away and fitted with some army green clothes and given some basic instructions as to how I must toe the line or I'd end up like the escapees; this was my induction into the Salvation Army. I wondered, 'What have I gotten myself into?' I was given a towel, some ridiculous looking 'clod hopper' work shoes and odd socks and shown to a bed in a secured dormitory. I was told that all new inmates were held in this dorm when they first arrived to dissuade them from 'running' on the first night. As well, some of the children who were being punished were also locked up in this dorm.*

*Terror and hatred are what immediately comes to mind and scared shitless does not quite describe how I was feeling. During the night some young boy came and got in bed with me and I immediately told him to get out and he said that I'd get used to it. Used to what I was wondering.*

*I can't remember that clearly anymore but I eventually ended up staying three nights and four days in this youth detention centre. I have consciously tried to erase the horror of those times from my memory. In their infinite wisdom to expedite us into the state controlled detention system, they forgot that as minors our parents needed to be informed as to what was happening to their children in the legal system.*

*Wasn't I glad to get out of there; but as it turned out it wasn't too long before I returned. Apparently my juvenile record followed me, all of the trumped up 'obscene language and resisting arrests' and when some acquaintances of mine broke and entered into a shop, my name was implicated in the crime.*

*At the time, some of my friends and I were playing at the Civic Centre in Inala. These other boys, who some of my friends knew, broke into a fish and chip shop. I immediately knew that if I was a part of this and my father found out, I would not have been able to sit down for a week.*

*The big mistake that I made was to walk past the shop to go home before the police arrived. I said jokingly, 'Can I get ten cents worth of chips?' and laughed about this on the way home. When the actual thieves were eventually caught, what I had said came up in the police evidence and I had to appear in court. I thought it was a joke so went along to the court house to make an appearance.*

*All of the other non-Aboriginal boys who were guilty and pleaded guilty were 'admonished and discharged'. I did not do anything wrong so I pleaded not guilty. I was immediately remanded into the maximum security youth detention centre at Westbrook. All of the friends that I knocked around with in Inala had heard of this detention centre and what happened there. This was the worst nightmare that I could have ever imagined.*

*In the clothes that I attended court in, I was placed in the Inala police lock-up. I was detained there until transport could be arranged. Westbrook was situated on the outer western side of Toowoomba. The town of Toowoomba was the closest major residential area. As some sort of deal with the transportation of prisoners, the police would meet us at a half-way point. This half-way point was the town of Marburg. Here, the Brisbane police took their hand-cuffs off us and the Toowoomba police took over. The first time that I experienced this 'criminal' treatment, I was the only prisoner so I was hand-cuffed with my hands behind my back.*

*People who have never been arrested, locked up or incarcerated will never know or feel the complete humiliation of being helpless and at the mercy of people who will not hesitate to degrade you any more or less. When we arrived at Westbrook I could see that this was maximum security and the only thing missing from the movie-like setting was the guards with rifles walking along paths on the extra high detention fence.*

*The immediate introduction into prison conformity was meant to be intimidating. There was an imposing security area. Inside of the secured enclosure there were three separate sections divided by unscalable walls. One area was for people like me who were on remand; then there was an exercise yard for escapees who were punished very harshly; and a sick area. Between the sick bay and the punishment areas was a twenty foot wall dividing them. The only access to all of the areas was through the guard's section. The only other way was over the twenty-foot wall.*

*I was 'frog marched' through the security doors, still in handcuffs. Immediately, the 'inmates' all started to howl, whistle and yell their approval of possible new, I think the term they used, 'meat'. One bloke in this remand section yelled out my name and I thought to myself, a little relieved, that I am not completely alone. It was Brian Dillon, one of the boys that I knew from our extended Inala Boys Gang.*

*Thankfully, he did not hesitate to claim me, which I think at the time, reinforced his own standing within the other black-fellas in there. Knowing someone inside any institutional detention facility was crucial to living on your knees or being allowed to stand up. Brian wasn't black but the recognition of an Aboriginal friend immediately gave both of us status within this mostly institutionalised population. There were more Aboriginal people incarcerated here than anywhere else that I had ever seen or been.*

*I was stripped completely naked in front of everyone and made to bend over. The guard pulled my buttocks apart and prodded to see if I was hiding any contraband and most of the boys whistled at my embarrassment – calling out 'new meat'. This complete*

and utter humiliation served to harden my resolve. Bravado went a long way in this place and I resolved myself to fight if the need arose and it did on several occasions. As well I found out from hanging out in our Inala gang, there was an unwritten code. People acknowledged you if you stood up for yourself.

I know now that maximum security was meant to 'break us' mentally and destroy our wilfulness. Later, when I worked in the youth detention centres as a mental health worker, I saw that the children who were incarcerated there bordered on being highly intelligent to an extreme intelligence. I believe that their detention was only because mainstream society could not cope with their over exuberance towards education. Basically these children had learnt what state school education was about and saw that they needed more than what was offered.

I once took a Swedish exchange student, who was a member of the organisation called the International Working Group of Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), a lobby group to the United Nations, into one of our counselling sessions at the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre. This was to see how our children were accommodated inside an institutional process within the State system. He coped with the initial counselling process but outside of the session I could clearly see that it had upset him.

He eventually came to the same conclusion as me and that was that these children were political prisoners: locked out of sight and out of mind. They were incarcerated in maximum security to 'break them' mentally. It was disturbing for me to see that things had not progressed much from when I was institutionalised.

Back at Westbrook, I was told the rules and regulations and ordered to call the officers or guards - we called them 'screws' - sir. If I wanted to urinate, I was ordered to ask 'make water sir' and for a crap I had to say 'sit on sir'. I suppose that this is how they can justify their treatment of young boys by completely and utterly dehumanising us and the more successful they were at it, the better to handle an uncontrollable recalcitrant. Moreover, the strategy is to make us believe that we are below human interaction and care. I remember being told by one of the guards, 'You are nothing here and you could disappear without anyone caring (what happens to you).' How very true this phrase became for me later on in this prison-life.

I was handed the prison issue of clothes, shorts and shirt that were worn at Westbrook and given a sheet, a pillow, and pillowcase and shown to my cell, number two. Some of the children who had been on remand there at Westbrook for several months told me that the boy who had this cell before me had hanged himself.

*On my next appearance in court, I was approached and threatened by the case worker handling my case (this was the first I'd ever seen or heard of him), who told me that if I pleaded not guilty again, the judge would lose my file and I would possibly be remanded in custody for the rest of my juvenile years. Plead guilty for something that I never done?*

*In my simplistic analysis of things I came to the conclusion that, it did not matter if I was right or wrong (as mentioned earlier): as a black person in white-fella eyes I would always be guilty. On release I eventually lost control and became a self fulfilling prophecy. Not that long after being released someone else called me a nigger one night on a bus and I give him a beating. I had only been out of the detention for approximately a week or two. I was sent straight back in so fast that I got my same cell back.*

*This time I was remanded for approximately another two and a half months. I spent Christmas and New-Year in maximum security. A funny thing happened (funny to me) while incarcerated during this period inside. As Christmas presents, we were given stationery – writing pads, envelopes and pens - so that we might write home. The problem was most of the Cherbourg teenagers never knew how to read and write very well.*

*I found out about their inability to read and write one day while reading a Mickey Mouse comic. I had been laughing at one specific thing in the comic when one of the older Cherbourg children asked me if I could read it out so that they could hear what I was laughing at. I said to him that he could have the comic after me and he said that he couldn't read. I asked all of the Cherbourg fellas if they could read and they all said no. I'd taken it for granted that everyone could read and write and here were young boys my own age that couldn't.*

*After finding out their inability to read and write, I asked if they knew their A B C's and they said that they did a little bit. So I got the Mickey Mouse comic and taught them how to read by first showing the captions of the cartoon characters and then reading and pronouncing the words that went with the actions. I used the stationery that we'd got for Christmas and showed them how to write out the words. Eventually they were able to write home to their parents at Cherbourg. The funny thing was that when their parents got their letters only some of them could read them.*

*When I went court the next time, I was telling myself, I will only have four months to serve because I'd already done two months on remand. I don't know what the processing circumstances of the corrective system but only people with sentences of six months and over were kept in Westbrook. I knew half of the children there and I'd convinced myself that it wouldn't take me long to adjust to the routine of serving out my time.*

When I appeared in court this time I got sentenced into custody at the Salvation Army Riverview Boy's Home and had to serve the whole six months. Riverview was called a Training Farm and, apparently only the hardened criminals got sentenced into Westbrook, and I wasn't 'hard' enough. I was sentenced back into the same place that I was trying to erase from my memory.

The Salvation Army Endeavour Training Farm was at Riverview along the Ipswich Highway. It must have been at one time a big farm. It was approximately two hundred acres and was bounded on two sides by the junction of the Brisbane and Bremmer Rivers. The only fences were to keep the cows in and anyone who wanted to 'run' I was told, would be running for the rest of their lives. The training consisted of either working in the Dairy, the Piggery, the Machine Shop, the Kitchen, House Duties or the Farm.

At the commencement of your sentence in Riverview everyone had to start their first day in the dairy and I was no different. The boy who was the nightwatchman woke me up at about four o'clock in the morning and showed me to the paddock where the cows were, then helped me herd them back to the dairy. I found out that children who were close to finishing their sentence (time) were given trusted roles like the nightwatchman, in this Salvation Army boy's home. Release from this home was decided on a points system and I was eventually told how this involved the child earning one thousand points. In the 'training' that we received, we were allocated fifty points per week depending on how we performed our tasks in one of the above-mentioned jobs.

After proving that you could be trusted, you could get promoted through the ranks and earn extra points as we were in the (Salvation) Army, and all of the children except the trustees, who were soon to be released, wore old khaki green army clothes. The promotions went through from Lance Corporal (an extra ten points) to Corporal (twenty points) to Sergeant (an extra fifty points). Any overtime work was rewarded as per the discretion of the Supervisor of the jobs mentioned earlier.

A child could get a 'day pass' only after we'd earned over two hundred and fifty points. I can't remember the exact details now, but I think to get a 'weekend pass' - we had to have in our 'bank' at least five hundred points. With the passes we were given enough money to catch the train to wherever we wanted to go that wasn't too far from Riverview and back. If we were late back we were fined. If we were caught with tobacco, it was confiscated and we were fined. If we were caught coming back drunk, we were fined. I did all of the above and I was fined so many times that I didn't think that I would have ever gotten out.

*If you did your job well you were given the whole fifty points. Then from the initial fifty points, points were deducted for various misdemeanours. If you were caught smoking you were fined and lost one hundred and fifty points. The points system worked quite well for controlling the children. I'd made a promise to myself that I would do my time no matter how long it took.*

*As mentioned, I started out my time in the dairy and learned my lessons well. I also learned that the dairy cows were not like the cows that I had seen in the dairy over at home (Straddy). The majority of these cows were donated to the Salvation Army, I think, because they were good milkers but bad cows. The cows had the tendency to kick, bite or gore the unsuspecting child at any given time.*

*I think Ken was the name of the dairy officer and he was possibly the best person for running and operating a farm that I had ever seen. The reasoning for this was that he knew everything you needed to know about the functions of a farm. Many of the big paddocks on the farm contained crops that were directly related to the purposes of producing milk and it was absolutely clear from the start that Ken was a dairy farmer.*

*Ken taught me how to drive and operate the tractors on the farm with all of their attachments and machinery. These were tractors, a Massey Ferguson, a David Brown and a Ford. Each of them was used for different purposes. The tractors operated and functioned best in a specific gear ratio for the specified machinery attachment.*

*He taught me how to cut the crops with a slasher on the back of the David Brown, when needed, then showed me to roll the crops over with a hay rake so that they could dry out faster. These same crops were rolled over again, a week after the first rolling so that they had sufficient sun drying. Then after another week they were rolled again. After they were sufficiently dried, I was shown how to attach the hay-baler to the David Brown and select the appropriate gear ratio that was best to bale the hay.*

*The bales of hay were left to dry and turned over manually after they had dried sufficiently. I was told that if they weren't dried enough when we eventually put them in the hayshed, that they could combust and burn the shed down. I was told by Ken that after the bales had dried for several weeks, I was then to use the truck, an old flat-back clunker with a crash gearbox, and pick them up ready for storage in the shed.*

*Other than use the clunker truck, there was the option of an unstable trailer that I could use. This was attached to any one of the tractors, the revs set on the accelerator, and we then ran along throwing bales onto it. After there were enough bales to cover the floor of the trailer, Ken would slow the tractor and I was shown how to stack the bales so that*

they wouldn't fall off. The reasoning behind showing me was that eventually I was given my own crew to go down and show them the bale stacking routine.

Ken showed me, after the planting had been done, how to irrigate the same crops. The home had an irrigation pump on the banks of the Brisbane River and this was used to irrigate the fields when the tide was out. The large aluminium pipes had to be moved every couple of hours or so. This involved having to go down to the pump and turning it off, then I had to go back to the fields to unscrew the pipes from each other after I had shut the valve off so that I did not have to reprime the pump, and move them over to where the previous spray of the water reached. I had to make sure that all of the pipes were secure and the sprinklers worked and then the valves were opened and I had to race back down to the river and turn the pump back on. Ken said that he'd only entrust me with this specific job as on a few occasions some specific procedure wasn't followed properly and some of the pipes burst. He said that when he gave me a job, he knew that I'd do it and that is why most of the time I was doing this work by myself.

I learned how to plough the fields, plant the fields, harvest and gather the crops. There were a couple of stages of ploughing before planting could commence. Initially for the breaking of the soil, the big plough was used on the back of the Ford. The ploughing had to be done in a relatively straight line. Then I'd have to get the David Brown and use a small, runner type plough to break the big clods and after that was done I'd drop off this plough and put this set of spikes on. They were to break the soil down even further. When all of that was done I'd put the seed spreader on and disperse the seeds of whichever crop that was needed to be planted at that time of the year. I was specifically involved with the planting of Oats, but Ken showed me how to plant sorghum and Lucerne as well.

Husbandry was practiced on the farm and there were two bulls Buster and Hopeful. When the bulls didn't do a good enough job some vets taught us how to artificially inseminate the cows. When the calves were being born Ken showed how to deliver one of the calves whose head had turned inside the cow. I learned that we had to take the calves away from the cows and wean them. The calves were fed on a dried milk diet until they were weaned. The young calves when weaned were called poddy calves and after they were just over a year they were called yearlings. After the yearlings, they were heifers and this was the time that they were sent into Buster's paddock.

Ken taught me just about everything there is to operating and running a dairy farm. He had taught me enough so that when he went on his six weeks holiday, I ran and operated the dairy and did most of the farm work as well. There was one specific Salvation

Army officer who thought that he knew everything about running a farm and Ken told me that he did not want him to stuff it up too much before he came back.

From the outset, with all of the overtime and being taught about the farm and its functions, I looked as if I might get out within three or four months: the record for getting out early was three months. This was until I got caught smoking and came back drunk after a day pass; so I did the full six months. It's clear that I am no angel and I was fined points more than just these two times.

There was one time when I was supposed to move back into the dairy from the farm. The differences were that on the dairy I had to get up before the sun rose. As well, I had to milk the cows, a job that I hated. I've mentioned about their goring and kicking, and to highlight it, there was this fellow - I'll call Willie - and his whole job entailed cleaning up the cow shit inside the dairy. He came up behind one of the cows and started scrapping the cow shit up. Ken said that the cows knew and targeted people that they hated and Willie was one who nearly all of the cows didn't like.

The first cow lashed out with a bucking type kick which sent Willie across the aisle, landing at the back legs of another cow that proceeded to do the same as the first. He was booted across the aisle and landed at the back legs of another cow, a little off to the left of the first cow. The second cow's aim was off. The third cow did the same bucking kick and Willie was punted out into the middle of the aisle. I think that the only thing injured was poor Willie's pride. If cows had a sense of humour I'd swear that they were playing tennis with Willie.

I believe that I had sufficient cause to protest being reinstated to the dairy. I did not like it one bit and indicated as much where upon I was duly sent to the wood heap for the day. The job on the wood heap, everybody knew, was for punishment and I was furious and nothing that anybody said or did would convince me otherwise. I had to split the logs with steel wedges and a sledge hammer. I split as many logs as I could see before the hammer broke from the numerous thunderous belts with which I was hitting the wedges. It was one of the ways that I was able to vent my anger and get my frustrations out of my system.

I was told to get the old 'clunker' truck and set it up with one wheel jacked off the ground. I had to attach an elongated belt to the back wheel and put on some molasses to make the belt stick better. I then had to attach the belt to this giant saw. There were no such things as safety gear and I just had to make damn sure that I didn't get hurt in the process. The next day I had cooled down some and resolved myself to my fate. At the end

of the week I was only deducted one point for misbehaving because I had cut enough wood to last the home at least another six months.

### Dental treatment

There was a specifically horrendous chapter to my incarceration in this home. At one point, I don't know why, a dentist was sent to do the rounds of detention centres, although this wasn't my first encounter with the dental industry whilst incarcerated in youth detention centres.

While I was in Westbrook, I had to be taken to the dentist in Toowoomba. I had an abscess underneath one my back teeth. Apparently, the appropriate treatment is to use antibiotics and under no circumstances should it to be extracted because the patient could bleed to death. The dentist numbed the tooth area and proceeded to pull it out. The tooth refused to budge and his efforts to extract it were extremely painful. The pain was so severe that I grabbed him by the scruff of his shirt in an attempt to halt the pain. He said 'a bit sore is it' and stopped the attempts to pull it out.

He took an X-ray of the tooth and found that the roots were abnormally shaped. So he went out into the waiting room and got the two 'screws' that had brought me to the dentist and went and got some other assistant. He got the two 'screws' to firmly hold me in the chair, then he got the assistant to firmly hold my head, then he jumped up on my stomach and grasped the tooth as hard as he could and yanked it out.

This is still painful to remember though that with the dentist who had visited the Riverview Boy's Home it was much the same story. He 'numbed' the teeth, both of my incisors and proceeded to torture me. He rammed some sort of 'probe' up into the gums where my incisors were, tears were pouring from my eyes as the pain became more unbearable. He extracted the right side tooth first, completely ignoring my tears and pain. The left side tooth was a bit harder and he had to loosen it by working it from side to side. This only served to crack the teeth on inner part of the gums - they had been filled at least two years before by a more humane dentist. I didn't have much time for dentists after this.

In the dentists' defence I suppose, Aboriginal people were still ruled by the 'Flora and Fauna Act' which identified me as an animal so they treated my injuries as they would treat an animal. I just wonder why they never sent a veterinarian to treat me.

Overall, I had been incarcerated for approximately nine months and learned quite a few things in that time. The most important lessons that I learnt about justice - was that there is no justice for the indigenous people of this land. The time that I'd spent inside Westbrook was so miserable and depressing that it is really hard to talk about this time of

*my life. I have spoken to other people who were incarcerated there and unanimously we believe that there are unreported deaths and murders. As well, I believe that a Royal Commission, coupled with an investigation and research involving previous inmates will not only uncover paedophiles but expose a paedophile ring that operated within the parameters of these state-sponsored facilities covered up by a 'bullshit' Redress Scheme.*

## **MEMOIRS (4) - THE TRANSITIONING YEARS**

### *ESCAPE FROM THE (LUNATIC) ASYLUM*

*Due to on going harassment and marginalisation Mum and Dad made up their minds to eventually move our family to a place called Twin Hills in Queensland. Twin Hills was a telephone exchange on Mistake Creek, approximately halfway between Clermont and Charters Towers. Dad was the Linesman for the local area maintaining and servicing the P.M.G. telephone poles and lines in the surrounding district.*

*Mum and Dad knew that there would never be any justice for our people in anyone's lifetime and the next generation of our family would potentially go through exactly the same legal system that my generation did.*

*As one of the older generation of children, I went out to Twin Hills to help the family settle into a bush lifestyle. Plus I wanted to keep out of the reach of the police, as the all too present memories of incarceration were still quite prominent.*

*Mum and Dad had lived in the bush before so they knew what was expected and needed for the family to settle in. Dad was a Linesman for the Post Master General (PMG) and mum operated the telephone exchange. I did the basic house duties of chopping the wood, keeping the diesel engine fuelled up and make sure that the pump was pumping, along with whatever else came up. When some of the telephone poles needed replacing around the local area, I did a small stint as the linesman's assistant.*

*The few dollars that I'd earned working as a linesman's assistant kept my head above water for a short time. When it ran out, I didn't want to beg charity from anyone, so I took to sleeping underneath vacant houses or in the bush with some other guys who had found themselves out on the street. Eventually the rain flushed me out of the bush and from underneath the houses, the other houses that I slept under became occupied, and the bush became too wet, so there was only one place left to go. I went to the drains down the street from where we used to live in Lorikeet Street.*

*There wasn't that much to do out in the bush for an older teenager - I was seventeen going eighteen - plus I'd convinced myself by now that I was a 'city slicker'. Eventually most of the rest of the family moved from Inala out to Twin Hills, and I had fulfilled my part of the agreement so I went back to live in Inala.*

*Having fished and caught crayfish (lobbies) in all of the creeks around where we lived, I knew exactly which of the drain pipes would and would not flood. That was where I*

stayed for several weeks. I became a street urchin living by my wits and handouts. I did not believe in stealing so I just starved until one of my friends invited me over to their house when no-one else was home. On other nights, different people that I knew would see me walking the streets and 'shout' me a feed.

One of my friends explained that I could get on the 'dole'. The big problem being was that I just needed an address for my mail to be sent to and sadly none of my friend's parents wanted people to know that there was a black person living in their area. So it was back to my home in the drain.

There was one night that I'd just arrived home to the drain and an old friend Kevin Nicholls (Piggy - but Kevin spelt it Pigy) was driving past in his car and saw me. He pulled up and asked me what I was doing. I was too ashamed to tell Kevin that I was living here in the drain so I just told him that I was doing nothing. He told me to get in (his car) and come over to his place as he was still living with his mother at their old place in Sandpiper Street Inala.

I remember old Mrs Nich (Mrs Nicholls) as I fondly used to call her. When I was younger and in one of the school classes with Kevin, I'd go around to his place to play. Sometimes she'd swear at me and call me a little black this or that. She was a cranky old person but she had a heart of gold. Mrs Nich was one of the cleaners at our primary school.

Mrs Nich fed me the best meal that I'd had in weeks while Piggy (his new name in the bikies) got ready so that we could go off to this bikies meeting. Somewhere in the world it might be argued or said that I'd fallen in with the wrong crowd, but I was accepted into the group with open arms and made to feel welcome. Another one of my dreams had actually come true: I had always wanted to ride motorbikes and now I had become a 'bikie'.

I rode with these guys for several months and got to understand the bikie culture and code. Most of these guys were the kindest people that I have ever met in my life. Sure we lived to ride motor-bikes, but I'll bet lots of people have dreamt of riding a motorbike. My bikie career ended one day when an idiot in a car ran me off the road at one hundred miles an hour. I eventually woke up naked in Ipswich Hospital. This misadventure eventually cured me of some of my need for speed, but did not impair or hinder my passion for motorbikes.

It does not detract from the facts that, the only people who lifted me out of the gutter (drain) when I needed help were bikies. After the accident, mum and dad insisted

that I move back out west with them. But by this time I had already established myself with accommodation and some employment.

Throughout most of this time in and out of society, I did have romantic liaisons with members of my opposite sex, but because I want to spare them and their families any of the humiliation and embarrassment that I felt, I will not mention their names.

After the all too short stint of being a bikie, I was approached by a couple of activists to get involved with some of the more radical elements of Aboriginal politics. I went along to some of the meetings but the greatest problem for me was that I had no transport. Sometimes I'd get a lift to the meetings but after walking home from town to Inala several times, it sort of curbs the enthusiasm somewhat. I agreed with most of the sentiments and all of the possible outcomes, but it was just too hard to get around the lack of transport.

I drifted in and out of itinerant work in and around the Inala area for years. The majority of this work only served to put food on the table and cheap booze in my guts, and a marijuana joint here and there. As with most of the jobs, I'd ultimately get into trouble with either one of the workers or the boss about one redneck's comment or another. Similar to the times when I was in the boy's homes, whenever anyone picked on the most defenceless, I would have to say something and ultimately I would end up in the trouble. I missed the New Year's Day celebration in Westbrook for one of these speaking out against equality.

I worked for a while as the head of security at the Jindalee Hotel, though not by choice. The only night-club sort of entertainment around where we lived was at Jindalee. They had pool tables and my friends and I would go over and play a lot of snooker, then after the bar closed we'd go into the night-club for a few more drinks and try our luck with the ladies. More often than not, I was the only blackfella within our group of friends, which had the undesired effect of attracting trouble in the form of drunken racists - a perfect combination.

All of my friends knew how much I loved the combination of alcohol and rednecks and as soon as they saw some dickhead starting to press the 'buttons' they'd know that here we go again; barred from another pub. I heard my best mate say when he saw one redneck warming up, 'That poor bastard doesn't know what he's in for.'

I remember on another occasion where there was one boof-head running around after one specific bloke picked me for a fight, yelling out 'I want to back my mate for twenty dollars.' This sort of startled me at first, until he eventually shut up. It wasn't until several months later that my other best mate Skinny told me he had shut this person up by

covering the twenty dollar bet. He had won the bet and I'd asked him 'where's my cut,' and he just laughed. There were times when my friends wouldn't let me go out with them because the place that they were going to did not like blacks.

The bouncers continuously harassed me and would think up one excuse or another not to let me into any Cabaret, because in the majority of cases I was the one who stuck out the most. If push came to shove, I dealt with them in the same ways that I dealt with most of the rednecks. The contractor of the security firm at Jindalee eventually approached me one night while I was playing snooker and asked me if he could speak to me for a while, so I did. He said that every one of the bouncers that he'd employed to work at Jindalee, I'd had one run in with and they'd lost; so would I be interested in taking over as head of security at Jindalee Hotel for him. I took the job.

My policy for the security under my charge was that the customer was, on most occasions always right. I never had to physically 'handle' anyone whilst I was in this employment. My employment there didn't last very long as the management changed hands and the new owners didn't like to see blacks in positions of authority. I wasn't worried too much about it, as I'd done my job without too much harassment.

Within the area security work, I have to mention the Noosa Rock Concerts. Our Aboriginal brother Jimmy Madrid obtained the security contract for the very first concert event. At the time he was living at Lismore and running his own Dojo teaching his own brand of martial arts.

I first met Jimmy down at the Inala Hotel (The Jaw Break Hotel). My brothers knew some of his family and being black-fellas, we'd all just naturally claimed each other. Eventually he asked us (two of my older brothers and myself) to support him and a couple of his martial arts students to do the security for this, the first Noosa concert. The Australian Rules Club who owned the field where the concert was to be held were responsible for the rest of the security.

All up there were about ten in Jimmy's crew. Together with the Australian Rules club, there were about one hundred involved in security. It was a great event and I got to know several aspects of security that our brother Jimmy was only too glad to instruct me in. We did two more concerts after that before the redneck attitude kicked in and they hired someone else. Some of the things that happened at these concerts are another story. Jimmy Madrid is an amazing individual and is someone who should have a book written about him.

*The only constant work that I could do was in the meat packing/ processing industry. By this time the laws and 'Acts' governing Aboriginal rights had dramatically changed and we were permitted to work there (Evans, 1999). I have worked in meat processing plants in Brisbane, Moree and Alice Springs. It is hard to differentiate which of these places was the most racist, but I think on any scale, I'd say that they are just about even. The in-depth understanding of my work in the meat industry is another story as I have mentioned. My employment in the meat industry continued right up until I'd injured my back, which I talk about in the next story.*

## AWAKENING

*At one time in our community over at home (Stradbroke Island) there was something like thirty funerals in one year. After a particularly very emotional and sad funeral, I was sitting on the back veranda of my brother's place with him and our nephew. I was feeling pretty sorry for myself, I (think) wasn't crying drunk, but I was drunk and stoned and the younger fellas rhetorically asked 'What is happening in our community?' I wasn't thinking clearly and I remember something being mumbled, something about the old ways and that we needed to start practicing the old ways more. At the time it was just drunken mumblings but we consciously set out to do something that included intimate aspects of our ancient Lore/Law/law (Reed, 1993; McKnight, 2005).*

*These young men that I had been drinking with knew that as a child I had been taken out to camps with some of the old people, so we asked our Elders' permission and if it was appropriate to do what we were going to do next. We were trying to organise to go to an Ancient Bora ground on the southern part of the island. Our old people gave us permission and their acknowledgement so we agreed to go ahead and just do it.*

*On the special day we all came together, most of the older people of our family were at Nanny Moreton's new place in Dunwich, Grampy had died not long before, and most of our younger men were next door at Beaver's place. The rain was a slight drizzle and my hopes and expectations were not too high. I was extremely anxious and concerned about going into the old business again with younger men. Some of the young men came to me and said that it is too wet and we might think about going another time. I thought to myself, that it was either now or never and said that I had a raincoat and tent. 'Just drive me down there and leave me,' I told them. 'There were a couple of strings to this bow.' A couple of our really young nephews, Steven (Spud's son) and Adam, moved over closer to*

me and just stood there beside me. This was their way of saying that they were coming too. There was no way in the world that they were going to miss out on their first Bora ceremony.

One of these nephews then said out aloud, 'Uncle Shane can I come?' and I just nodded my approval. He started to cry and said that his mother would not let him go. I yelled out to his mother (my sister cousin) who was next door, (first cousin) and said, 'Let that boy come with me' and she replied that 'You better look after him.' I said, 'He's with me.' I did not know it at the time but this was the very first time in his young life that he was ever allowed to leave his mother.

We drove down to the Bora and some of the others, not to be too embarrassed, decided that if two little children are not afraid to go then they'd go too (one and two strings). It rained all the way there until we reached the Bora Ground, then it stopped. A couple of our sacred birds made a noise to greet us as we walked in. We set up camp and began clearing all of the small trees out of the ring. We put the cleared brush onto a set of six fires. It was tiring work. Then we lay back to admire our work. Night had fallen by now and the sky above us was crystal clear, stars shining more brightly than I can ever remember and to top it off, the moon was full, putting a radiant glow over the whole place. We were obligated to do what Aboriginal men do in these places and circumstances: we danced for the Ancestors, ourselves and the future generations of our people.

When we arrived back in Dunwich the Mothers were patiently waiting for their children; our Mum was there too; she was the only authorisation that I needed. Some of them said to us that we must have had a terrible time as it belted down rain the whole time. I looked at them all whilst grabbing the sleeve of my shirt and said 'Here, feel my shirt, we never even got wet.' They immediately understood that something really significant and important had happened and never doubted for a moment that we had done our part in the ancient men's business for Quandamooka (Moreton Bay).

## **MEMOIRS (5) THE ACTIVIST YEARS**

### **AUNTY BERYL**

*Our old people have known Aunty Beryl and her family since before I was born. I personally met Aunty Beryl, I think, when I was about four or five years of age. The Wharton family had moved into a house just up the street from us in Sibley Road, Lindum. It wasn't anything obvious then for me but they were the only other identified Aboriginal people in our immediate area.*

*In 1992 Aunty Beryl, who was one of the original founders of the Brisbane Council of Elders called up the administration of the Indigenous unit attached to the Kangaroo Point College of T.A.F.E. and asked to speak directly to me. Students were not allowed to receive personal telephone calls so I was surprised when the staff told me that I had a call. Not many people (including me) denied Aunty Beryl's requests.*

*Aunty Beryl issued orders like a general going into battle: We 'borrowed' a minibus from one of the schools and I was to be one of the support people for the Elders going to 'storm' the conference. I was instructed to pack a bag and be ready the next day to leave for Cairns, which of course is exactly what I did.*

*The next day we headed for Cairns. On the journey, some of the Brisbane Elders (Aunty Beryl, Aunty Jessy Bundby and Aunty Delli Tyson) directed the younger women and men on how to, and who to approach for strategic support. Along the long drive to Cairns, people talked about the many and varied political protest rallies that they had attended and what had happened as a result of their actions at these sometimes violent protest marches. Aunty Beryl told me about one of the rallies where they knocked her down with a baton and 'sunk the boots' in until she bled from her wounds. I was considered to be at the time a 'clean skin'; no scars from political rallies or police batons (I suppose). (Although) I'd had bruises and scars from police beatings out at Inala, but these weren't considered to be much in comparison to protest march scars.*

*In Cairns all of the higher flyers were accommodated in the luxurious five star Ramada Resort. Our group, on the other hand, had been given permission to stay at an old disused football clubhouse. At this clubhouse the Elders slept on camp beds and we slept on the concrete floor. When we arrived, pretty late at night, we thought about sleeping on the beach and went to a caravan park beside one of the beaches. Someone suggested that we could just camp for the night on the beach. I mentioned the possibility of crocodiles, which*

everybody laughed at, but when the fellow who was running the caravan park walked out and everyone saw that he had a wooden leg from the knee down, we couldn't get out of there fast enough.

The next day when we attended the conference, the organisers were told - in no uncertain terms - that these elderly women were sleeping on camp beds in an old run-down clubhouse. They were immediately offered rooms at the resort, but they refused to move. Staying at the clubhouse meant that they were able to direct and invite other delegates out to visit them; which was a part of my job. These Elders lobbying skills were sharp and well-developed.

One of my jobs was to approach different Aboriginal male spokespeople and issue them with an invitation (that they couldn't refuse). I did this by listening to their presentations and then hanging around them when they went for drinks later on in the day. There were a large number of other younger people who were support people for their own Elders at this meeting. One of these men I knew from Westbrook Boys Home (Memoirs 3 The Reforming Years, WESTBROOK) and he introduced and presented me to some of the men. Within our blackfella politics, being seen with one person or another was as good as an introduction. Once I was close enough to the intended person, I would explain to them who had extended and invitation to them and what was needed of them. As mentioned, none refused the offer to meet Aunty Beryl.

This was my first experience in the area of political lobbying with the politically astute Aunty Beryl. Aunty Beryl had specifically pointed out the ones that she wanted me to bring out to the clubhouse, and it didn't surprise me that nobody refused an invitation from Aunty Beryl. She was well known and respected throughout the state, I thought to myself.

One night after pizzas I spoke to a man called Mick Miller (Miller, 1985). Miller was employed by the government to develop a specific report on education and employment in Aboriginal communities. Other people included specific spokespeople for specific areas. This time we arrived back, I was a bit tipsy (half shot) and one of the younger women who was also a support person, gave me a mouthful for getting half drunk and having a good time while they were planning other things. It was a part of my job to bring Mr Miller out to the meeting with Aunty Beryl, and I'd thought that I had done a good job considering that most of the people that I had to get to these meetings, I didn't know. I blew my stack and told this person where to go and what to do with their part of the politics and grabbed my meagre bed things and gear and stormed off yelling something like,

*I'm out (of this) and went to sleep outside. In hindsight I do not think this sleeping outside was a very good idea.*

*In the morning Aunty Beryl came out and said, 'You're not out, get back in there and do your job.' I still have a little chuckle to myself about this time. I'd thrown myself out, but Aunty Beryl just came out and threw me back in again. Our lobbying procedures were a success. At one part of the conference, Aunty Beryl demanded a turn of the microphone and let all of the organisers and everybody else within earshot there, have it. There were a few hundred people at this conference, and when the count was eventually taken, the government land rights package was defeated. Sadly this wonderful old lady is gone now but through her unrelenting pursuit for social justice and equity she had shown me what a week in Aboriginal Politics was all about. I will never forget this lesson. My own personal understandings of how to lobby in Aboriginal politics, was helped by what I learned from Aunty Beryl Wharton.*

*Commitment to the cause along with an unwavering pursuit of social justice, equity and fairness are some of the basic criteria needed for the roles that we as Aboriginal people will play in later life as Elders. I understand that Aunty Beryl touched many people's hearts and was an active member in the rights for Aboriginal people. She was an acknowledged and respected Elder in every community that I knew at the time.*

#### **BOBBY McLEOD**

*Bobby McLeod would never allow me to call him an Elder or acknowledge him in any context that raised his profile over or above my own. Even though Bobby was several years older than me he told me not to call him Uncle. Through his own personal experiences, Bobby had set up the Doornoch Healing Centre on the south coast of New South Wales. It was a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program specifically focused on indigenous Australians.*

*The way that Bobby contextualised our continued fight for survival clarified my own belief about a covert war still being waged against our peoples. In getting to know him, I don't think anyone ever really got to understand him, but his simplistic deep analysis of things will be treasured by me forever. One of his constant sayings was, 'We don't have to worry about the Gubbas killing us anymore, we are doing it to ourselves.' Gubbas is what his people referred to non-Aborigines as.*

*I met Bobby at the Woodford Folk Festival. My free admission into Woodford was to show some sort of films, I can't even remember them now, in the 'Murri Tent' for some*

group who I seem to have forgotten as well. I'd heard about Woodford and wanted to see for myself what it was all about. At the time I was at least two years away from finishing my undergrad degree at UQ. Because I'm a largish type person and stick out a little bit in a crowd (Bobby was also as tall as me with the physique of a Rugby League footy player), when he saw me he immediately walked straight over to me. He just started straight out to tell me about how to cleanse myself up and get off drugs and alcohol. As I got to know him, and how he introduced himself was through a standard line about 'spiritual' healing; this was another of his basic 'lines'.

I could see and feel his passion for our people's justice in him. For two and a half days whenever I had a spare couple of hours, I'd purposely seek him out and listen to him telling some of his amazing life story. After he had finished explaining about 'healing,' I was comfortable enough to tell him that I was already 'off' the illegal drugs and alcohol and that I'd given up smoking years before. He asked how that I'd done this and was it through any formal government funded program.

I told Bobby that to help 'clean up' myself, I went back into our Goenpul Lore/Law/law. We went back into the Bora. He wanted to know if I could write my 'cleansing' processes in a program for him and I agreed to.

Bobby started his battle for Land Rights in New South Wales, which also included fighting for the recognition of our rights as people back in the 1970's; many years before I'd even thought about it. One of his stories that he told me was of when he took the Aboriginal & Torres Straits Islander Commission (ATSIC) hostage in 1976.

Bobby told me that he was 'blind drunk' and completely 'pissed off' with the ways that so-called Aboriginal people were supposed to be representing the interests of our people. He went into their head office in Canberra and pulled out a gun. Someone said to him that he was bullshitting and that there weren't even any bullets in the gun. He told me when he lifted the gun up to point it towards the ceiling, a bullet fell out of the chamber onto a desk and that they all then realised and knew he was deadly serious.

He skipped over the next six hours and explained to me that he had then begun to sober up and that reality began to set in for him. The prominent 'Aboriginal Activist' Charlie Perkins was sent in as a negotiator. Charlie told him that there was a police 'SWAT' team on all of the roofs around the building and that he wasn't coming out of there alive. After a quick discussion with Charlie, Bobby told me they decided to take all of the bullets out of the gun. Charlie then put them into his socks. Bobby said that Charlie then went out and told the masses that it was all 'bullshit' and that there weren't even any bullets in the gun.

*The authorities then came in and arrested Bobby and took him away. He said that they charged him with 'deprivation of liberty' which was eventually broken down to six charges of assault. He said that Charlie went out to his house somewhere in the suburbs of Canberra and buried the bullets in his garden.*

*I can personally verify the validity of this story. When I once visited Canberra with Bobby we ran into Charlie (Perkins) and Bobby asked how his garden was going and Charlie said that 'those bullets just won't grow'. I smiled to myself knowing what the underlying joke was and at Charlie's attempts to distance himself from what Bobby was implicating him in.*

*Another one of his selling points was when he told how he commenced his program. Bobby told me that the only Indigenous specific drug and alcohol program that he found in his world wide search was with the Lakota people of North America. He told me that the Lakota people simply explained to him that their program was for sale for seventy-five thousand (American) dollars, of which Bobby never had. But they said to him if he was a Lakota, he could have the program for nothing.*

*He told me that he asked them how he could become a Lakota person. To this they replied that he would have to go through their Sundance Ceremony that lasted for several days. He did their Sundance Ceremony and brought their drug and alcohol rehab program home to commence his Healing Centre.*

*Bobby drove me home to Inala from the Woodford Festival. A couple of days later he rang me up from Nowra and asked if I was available to write that program. He drove up and picked me up.*

*In only the few weeks that I got to know him, I had personally learnt to respect this great man and his passion for our basic human rights and justice. My passion for justice for our people was burning wild and in just this short amount of time he taught me how to channel and focus that energy through the Ancient Lore/law/Law. As an example of his mentoring, he explained quite simply that, in my giving up smoking cigarettes, I replaced the craving for nicotine with the craving for knowledge. His Lore/law/Law was centred on 'healing' and in a short amount of time he was able to explain to me about the Mother's (our creator) cycle of healing. It all made a whole lot of sense to me now as to part of the reasons for me being shown the Ancient ways.*

*He was instrumental in helping me contextualising how to disseminate the various levels of our knowledge that I have educate and give to the younger and not so young people. His position on Lore/law/Law is in line with the Mother's cycles' of healing. Everyone is given the right to breathe and what we do with that breath is our own choice. Everyone is*

entitled to learn and how we choose to learn is also our own choice. If people come to me to teach them, they get out of it what they want. They will then choose which path that they want to walk on. He would draw an imaginary place and explain that this is where we are now, then point to another metaphorical place and say that this is where we wish to be. Now it is up to us to just design the path.

In going to Bobby's part of the world I was immediately included into his family. I was given the status as Uncle to the younger generation, brother to all of Bobby's siblings and I was shown who to call Uncle or Aunty in the older generation. Here in Nowra was another part of my extended family.

Bobby died at the beginning of 2009. I only found out about his death a couple of months later and was deeply shocked and saddened by it. I know that when I pass on his healing messages to all and any that it is him speaking through me.

I think that what he taught me about my obligation to teach others is somehow fulfilling a destiny that I'd had dreams about when I was a child. I used to have these strange dreams about meeting all of these different people, 'black, white and brindle'. I'd mentioned these dreams to Bobby and he interpreted them through Law/law/Lore. He pointed out what I have to do and to just do it. Just two black-fellas sitting around talking is the continuity of our cultural obligation and responsibility. He once said to me 'calculate the coincidences that it took for you to meet me', his people had also experienced all of the insurmountable massacres. 'You were meant to meet me' he said.

Today other young indigenous men from all over this part of the country have been coming to me at different times for their simple education in the Ancient ways.

## NAT & CONRAD

I met Nat when we were studying the same subject – anthropology – in our undergraduate degree program at UQ. Nat met Conrad, a medical student, and after Uni they went together to regional and remote communities. We stayed in contact, and through our learning exchanges, Natalie knew that before I'd come up to meet them at any of their regional centres, I'd have to get permission from the Traditional Owners of that area. The method to this madness was multi-pronged. Initially, it would involve Nat having to ask around and get to meet people from the Aboriginal community. I'd already taught Nat that being seen around the community was as good as an introduction, then if she wanted to implement a process, just mentioning or being seen working with another Aboriginal might

*just get her permission, and people also saw that Nat was very respectful in the way that she conducted her protocols.*

*One of the regional centres that Conrad and Nat went to was Townsville. I went up there from the Legal Service (I was on the Board of Directors) to participate in a Youth Conference that Nat had helped organise. Due to it being quite hot in Townsville, the conference was held inside, the air conditioning was working overtime. Unfortunately, the air conditioning triggered an asthma attack in me and I had to be raced to the hospital. Nat and I knew that Townsville was not the most Aboriginal friendly place in the world and we'd realised that I might not get the appropriate treatment, possibly having to go through one redneck after another to get help.*

*When Nat and I left to go to the hospital, she rang Conrad to meet us. On arrival Conrad took me straight in and told the person attending to my needs that I was his personal friend and to make sure that I was cared for most appropriately. I could see by 'the look' on the face of the person that he could not understand how a blackfella could have a mate who was a surgeon. I was looked after quite well.*

*When Conrad then got transferred to Mt Isa - and of course Nat went too - they had most of their protocols appropriately in place by then. Nat became a high school teacher at Mt Isa Catholic High School and Conrad was one of the surgeons in Mt Isa Hospital. The high school had a poor retention rate for Aboriginal students and Nat asked if she could do something about it. She asked me if it was appropriate to implement some of the programs that we had discussed, and of course, I agreed.*

*With the okay from the high school Nat approached the community and was given a community house where she set up an annex of the Mt Isa Catholic High Schools. They called this school Brilla Brilla and of course I got an invitation to attend, I was the honoured guest for the day and was presented with a tee shirt to commemorate the occasion.*

*Both Nat and Conrad wanted me to stay at their place while I was in Mt Isa. I was sent up by the EPA to deliver a paper on Cultural Heritage Management at a Land Care Conference that Nat had a hand in organising. I'd told them that I was already booked to stay in a motel as I was there whilst working for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) but was able to have dinner and a good yarn with them.*

*At their hospital supplied accommodation, we sat and talked about everything. They told me how with many of the things that I'd taught them in how to deal culturally appropriate behaviour, both in work and in general, they were 'leaps and bounds' ahead of anyone else. Then both of them started to tease me by telling me that they had already*

been taken into the bush for six weeks at a big ceremony. Then they started to rub it in by telling me that they had seen a species of wallaby that was thought to be almost extinct. They showed me some of the different species of gecko that were in the area; some of the geckoes lived just outside their door.

Conrad's last regional placement was at Broome. Nat said to me that she thinks that there might be at least sixteen separate Traditional Owner groups around that region. Natalie of course works voluntarily for with some of these groups. Conrad half jokingly (I think) swears at me when he sees me for teaching her about political indigenous issues and everything else - and I swear at him back for taking away the best youth worker that I'd ever trained. I must add that the training was mutual. Conrad and Nat now have three children, Ella, Indigo and Phoenix and when each of them were old enough, they were brought to Stradbroke Island and introduced to the spirit of the Earth through our sacred lake Brown Lake by their Aboriginal Uncle Shane. I asked Conrad where and when they were coming back to set up his practice and he looked at me with a wry smile on his face and said that they didn't want to leave Broome. I rang Conrad recently (2010) and they are coming back.

## **APPENDIX TWO: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### *One Mile*

*One Mile is the location where the then authorities of the time placed the displaced Aborigines 'onto the mission'. As the famous line from Archie Roach's song goes:*

*They set us up on mission land, taught us to read,  
to write and pray,  
then they took the children away (Roach, Took The Children Away).*

*To me, One Mile was my paradise here on earth. Here I could roam free without a care in the world. There were numerous guava trees that were planted all over the place. Someone planted them a long time before I ever appeared on the scene, and at any time when they were ripe, people could have some. If the guava trees were in someone's 'yard' (there were some fences around) you just had to ask permission. Then as a trade off you would probably have to pick some for the owner, who would, without hesitation ask you which family you belonged to. Rarely, if ever, were you refused. There were other fruit and bush tucker trees growing all over - lemon, mango, avocado, blue-berries, cherry guavas, midgims and nudgums. But to know about some of the bush tucker trees involved being taught by an Elder.*

*Grampy Moreton had his rocking chair set up next to a window so when he sat there he could see the beach at One Mile and out across the bay almost to the city of Brisbane. When no-one was around, I'd sneak myself onto Grampy's chair to look out over the world from this vantage point. From it I could see Peel Island, right across the bay to parts of the main-land and out across a small part of the bay towards the southern bay islands. Any time that the dolphins were at our One Mile beach, I had this extraordinary*

*feeling as if they were calling out to me. There were thousands of dolphins. We weren't allowed to play with them as this was one of the strict rules of the family. I did not know it then but the Act didn't permit us to practice any aspects of our culture (Evans, 1999; Reid, 2006; FAIRA, 1979). I would sit gazing out of this window and watch them for as long as I could. I don't think that anyone was allowed to sit in Grampy's chair.*

*The beach at One Mile was approximately five to six hundred metres long. We were never allowed to swim at the beach unless accompanied by an adult. If children had been specifically disrespectful to a potential adult 'supervisor', the adult would say out openly, 'I'll take all of you swimming but X can't come', and X would not be permitted to come. As well, we were never permitted to swim at the beach on an incoming tide.*

*Let me add that not every non-Aboriginal person is inappropriate. There are so many, as the old people say who have a good heart. This basically meant that they were really good people. As I've mentioned, some of my non-Aboriginal friends treated me extremely well. I personally believe that each of these people deserve a separate book written about them individually. In writing about these individuals, it will be so that their children and children's children can know about them and their honesty and integrity and how far they were willing to extend their friendship.*

*There are too many good people to mention in this short dissertation, but I want to special mention of some of them here.*

*Mr and Mrs Craft - They were the parents of Rat (Malcom). I think it was because Rat told Mr Craft about my fishing that he was permitted to play with me. I vaguely remember Rat telling me that his Uncle was someone special in the world of fishing, a Mister Evans. As a young child it was hard for me to comprehend why so many white people did not like me. This family were some of the first non-Aboriginal people that did not chase me away but allowed me to play in their yard with Rat.*

*Mrs Nicholls - I've already mentioned this lady.*

*Mrs and Mr Downes – They are the parents of Ian and Snake (Gary). They welcomed everyone into their home. Some of us young black-fellas were doing it really hard living on the streets, and at just about any time we went around to these kind people's place we could get a feed. I suppose it does not mean that much to people who have never wanted for anything but it meant the world for us.*

*Unbeknown to me at those times, Mr Downes' mates were all of these black fellas from around the region.*

*Mrs and Mr McDiarmid - These people are David's (Skinny) parents. As mentioned, it might not mean much, but they welcomed me into their house.*

*Mrs and Mr Cross - Crossey (Arthur) was a childhood friend. He was eventually murdered in Inala. I secretly had a crush on his two sisters Moya and Susan. I had to pretend that I was going over to see Arthur, to just catch a glimpse of either sister. Mr Cross was a footy fan and enjoyed watching me play when he was at his local club and would always tell Arthur, 'Why can't you be like Shane?' It used to make me laugh. One day I'd gone around to see Arthur and he was told by his Father to clean up the mess underneath their highset house. I had to wait for Arthur while he did his work so I lay back in the hammock that was strung up under there. He eventually cleaned the whole place and was now waiting for his father (Mr Cross) to come back so as to collect his pocket money. While I was lying in the hammock, I screwed up a piece of paper and threw it at Arthur just to stir him up. In his reasoning I threw the paper so I should pick it up. He left this paper on the ground and refused to touch it. I got out of the hammock to pick up the paper and Arthur dived into it to have a lie down, and wait for his Dad. Just as I picked up the piece of paper Mr Cross came around the side of the house and saw Arthur lying in the hammock while I cleaned up (my mess!). Mr Cross said, 'that'd be right: Arthur lay around while I did all of the work.' He promptly gave me the five dollars that Arthur was supposed to get for pocket money and told me not to give any of it to Arthur.*

*When we went out for the rest of the day and night Arthur kept pestering me to give him the money to which I kept refusing. I knew that Arthur and his Dad argued and fought all the time and he would immediately tell his Dad that I gave him the money and then I would be in trouble with his Dad. So I shouted him out for the night with his own money.*

*Roby Scanlan - One of the best people I ever had the privilege to meet and become friends with was a fellow by the name of Robert Scanlan (Roby). I first met Roby when I just started high school. Roby married one of Mr and Mrs Downes' daughters, Charmaine. I went with Roby looking for work out to Alice Springs. I had already been to Moree with Roby working in the meat industry there.*

*At Alice Springs I tried to get work in the meat-works there without much success. The company had their regulars that they had contracted for the opening of the seasonal meat industry out there. It didn't help my work aspirations much by having a flood coincide with our arrival. Some of the local people said that it was their first flood in over one hundred years.*

*Roby introduced me to Jackie and Wolf Miller, who I was to live with whilst in Alice Springs. Jackie was one of the teachers at the local primary school. Wolf was a part of the Freezer Gang that Roby was contracted to work in at the local meat processing plant. Where we lived was a block of council flats. The room where I slept in the flat was shared by Wolf's black-headed python Grover. Wolf loved the bush and just about everything in it. He and I would go off exploring at any given opportunity and most of our free time was spent in one adventure or another.*

*One weekend a group of us went out to Palm Valley. There was a hint that there was permanent water there so we took the necessary fishing gear and I was asked to make a 'lobby' (freshwater crayfish) trap. We didn't catch fish or anything in my trap, although a good while after I'd left Alice Springs I was informed that Wolf and Prof (John Rhodes) took*

*the same trap out to a place called Boggy Hole, some forty to fifty kilometres past Palm Valley and used it there to great effect. They told me that it worked well and they got a really good feed of lobbies.*

*When I visited amazing places like Alice Springs I had to adopt a tourist type mentality. I did not want to consciously expose any of my cultural secrets to the non-Aboriginal people. Only those people from Inala knew about my Aboriginality. I'll try to explain this: doing (any) business in someone else's country called for the level of protocols, processes and procedures that I hadn't learnt yet about Alice Springs. Mum instructed me to 'ask permission' of the spirit world and that would afford me a certain level of 'protection'.*

*A part of my nondisclosure 'policy' was due to the reason that in our whole circle of acquaintances in Alice Springs there were no Aborigines and many of the group referred to the indigenous people as 'coons'. I remember at one specific party, one of the group, whose names escapes me, kept calling me Kiwi. Eventually in front of the whole group I said to him, 'I am not a Kiwi.' He then said, 'If you're not a Kiwi, what are you then?' I replied, 'A coon.' I noticed that people stopped referring to the Aboriginal people as coons from then on or only when I was around.*

*Roby saved my life once when I was out of my mind on prescription drugs. He took me to Darwin where I was able to break the cycle of addiction and get my life back on track. Roby had friends over most of Australia and I was extremely fortunate enough to be one; he is one of those 'men amongst men'.*

*Michel Zabik - I met Michel when he was working at the Aboriginal and (Torres Straits) Islander Community Health Services at Woolloongabba. Our meeting wasn't long after I'd commenced studies at Kangaroo Point TAFE. Michel was working at the medical centre as the dentist. Any time that I'd have a few hours to spare I'd go in and get my teeth*

looked at. My teeth were appalling from the dental treatment that I'd received while incarcerated in the youth detention centres.

After a couple of more visits and seeing that Michel was still there, I asked him whether he had ever wondered why there were not many Aboriginal or Torres Straits Islanders accessing free dental service provided by the medical centre. He said that he did wonder why. So I told him about how I'd been treated by other dentists whilst under the care and protection of the state. I hadn't meant to, but I could see that what happened to me had clearly upset him. Just through small talk, we got to know each a little better and I told Michel that I was now studying at college.

I also mentioned that, due to this, further studies, I could (possibly) articulate what had happened to me slightly better than some of our other people who had experienced the same if not similar treatment. It was hard to understand why, let alone explain why we had been treated abysmally. I pointed out that this was part of the reasons why we needed our own Medical, Legal and Child Care Services.

For me to be able to mentally cope with any potential pain relating to dental work that I'd receive I insisted that I must be completely numbed with a needle. I was able to convince myself that the initial pain of a needle was a necessary pain that I could cope with even if the ensuing dental treatment was just something simple.

Michel and I became friends and we'd often have lunch together when I was in town (Brisbane). I suppose you know that you are friends when you are asked around someone's home to help clear the nuisance weeds and chainsaw unwanted trees. Through my causal interaction with Michel we got to know more about each other and he does not hesitate to contact me when he and some of his acquaintances needed clarification on specific indigenous issues. The interactions with Michel helped me enormously in my own interpersonal communication skills.

*On one of the visits to his home I was fortunate to meet his Father Mario Zabik. If ever there needed to be a book written about someone I would recommend that someone write about this amazing man's life story. He immediately took to calling me Brother.*

*Dave Beckwith - I was fortunate to meet Dave and his family when they were on sabbatical here in Australia, as a part of tour group that I'd shown around Stradbroke Island (home). Dave, as I found out later was a marshal at a rally for Martin Luther King, the great human rights activist from America. Dave was twelve years of age (12) at the time. I got to know a lot more about these things better when I stayed with Dave and his family in the United States of America. We'd sit outside at his place in Toledo and watch the fireflies and discuss all types of politics. It was Dave who I emailed eight months before the elections in the USA to find out who would win. In his usual way of speaking forthrightly he emailed back and said 'Obama of course'. Dave and his family had already been out fundraising for the campaign.*

*Dave is also an informal environmentalist and he was able to tell me about some of the dynamics of the Great Lakes. There are too many things to discuss about this man in this thesis and I believe that his life story needs to be recorded in a book.*

#### *Other non-Aboriginal People*

*It is impossible to put a number on the good non-Aboriginal people that I have had the opportunity to meet. In my simplistic observations, if it wasn't for the good-hearted non-Aboriginal people, we the Aborigines would still be living in chains.*

#### *Wrap Up*

*My Aboriginal brother Mick, whose own life is almost exactly the same as mine, said to me that his 'work mates' kept questioning him about this beginning of time stuff that we Aboriginal people keep referring to. I said: 'Mick, doesn't your story about the Southern Cross tell of its creation?' and he said, 'Yes it does.' I explained, just based on the latest scientific analysis of the 'Big Bang' theory it had been identified that this happened*

some thirteen point seven billion years ago (13.7 BYA) - that's some-body's beginning of time somewhere.

Non-Aboriginal scientists have studied the known universe from several hundred years and are still uncertain how it was created and why. Our old people have studied the same stars since time immemorial and have known that we are connected to them by more than just an aesthetic perception, yet no-one has even bothered to ask our thoughts about them.

From what Bobby (McLeod) taught me through law/Law/Lore, I am to teach the healing. Any of the young men that have come to me for advice I'll take the time to assist. I am obligated through our responsibility to the Mother Spirit to teach those who want to listen to the Ancient ways, but there just is not any easy way to learn this; I have to do this according to the old ways. I won't speak about our Law/Lore/law here but I will speak about it in another thesis, should the opportunity arise.

Somewhere along this almost insurmountable journey I got married to Liisa, but the hatred and racism that we experienced and faced never really gave us much of a chance at too much happiness. Together we raised one daughter. From our daughter we have grandchildren: a boy and a girl. The older of the two, a boy, comes with me on most of our camps. On the first camp that I took him on, he negotiated an agreement that once he knew that we were camping on the surf beach, that he had to be allowed to go swimming in the surf every morning. I think something rubbed off on him when I took him to some of the meetings that we'd had.

I still have a little laugh about it now, just he and I in the bush. One of the old fellas, who Mark Jones and I call 'Uncle Pirate', told me that he had brought some of his friends to see the sunrise at one of the eastern most parts of Queensland. He said that they were rugged up because of the chill in the air and to their great surprise they saw two Aboriginal people swimming in the ocean before the sun had even risen.

### **APPENDIX THREE – RESUME (Community & Professional)**

The First Nation Peoples Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation	<b>President</b>	2007 2008
Purga Elders and Descendants Aboriginal Corporation	<b>President</b>	2006
Natural Resource Management SEQ inc.	<b>Director</b>	2006
Yuggera (Thompson Family) Traditional Owners	<b>President</b>	2004- 2010
Koenpal (Dandrabin) Inc	<b>President</b>	2005- 2010
Wangerriburra	<b>Director</b>	2005
Aboriginal & Torres Straits Islander Legal Service	<b>Director</b>	2004
South Queensland Traditional Owners Federation	<b>Secretary</b>	2000- 2004
Independent Murri School	<b>Director</b>	2003
Djargum Umpi	<b>President</b>	1998- 1999
Australian Archaeological Association	<b>Indigenous Rep.</b>	1997- 1998
Creative Training Aboriginal Corporation	<b>Director</b>	1998
Aboriginal & Torres Straits Islander Legal Service	<b>Secretary</b>	1997
Quandamooka Lands Council	<b>Director</b>	1996 & 1997
ATSI Student Union UQ	<b>President</b>	1995 & 1996
Yulu Birri Bah Medical Centre Quandamooka	<b>Director</b>	1993
Quandamooka Lands Council	<b>Director</b>	1992
FAIRA	<b>Director</b>	1991
Quandamooka Lands Council (QLC)	<b>President</b>	1990

Windshuttle, Keith

*Doctored evidence and invented incidents in Aboriginal historiography* Paper presented to the conference on Frontier Conflict National Museum of Australia December 13-14, 2001. Reprinted in *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience* Bain Attwood and S. G. Foster (eds.) (National Museum of Australia, Canberra 2003)

Winterbotham, L.P.

Some native customs and beliefs of the Jinibara tribe as well as those of some of their neighbours in south-east Queensland. "The Gaiarbau Story" in Langevad, GS 'Some Original Views around Kilcoy, Book I, the Aboriginal Perspective —', from *Queensland Ethnohistorical Transcripts*, Archeology Branch, Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement, Brisbane, 1984, pp 21-109.