Chapter 1
Journeylines

Introduction

This journey begins with an autobiographical look at how my past experiences have framed my desire for opportunities to examine learning and organisational change in an educational research partnership. The research on which this thesis is based starts at Kulai Aboriginal Preschool, Coffs Harbour. In this chapter I explore the process in which Julie, as director, elects to be part of a pilot study of quality assurance practices and includes me as a research partner. I identify gaps in knowledge about organisational change and communication processes in Aboriginal, early childhood and adult education. Gaps are also evident in the understanding of participation in organisational learning. The multiple meanings of forming partnerships are explored, with particular reference to authentic partnerships as core elements of both Indigenous and participatory action research. These methodologies are then described as guides to developing a research plan at Kulai. In the final section of this chapter I present a chapter outline.

Relationship with country

This research project is situated at Kulai Aboriginal Preschool in Coffs Harbour, on the coast halfway between Sydney and Brisbane. The preschool stands in the midst of the homelands of the Gumbaingirr peoples, providing prior-to-school education for Aboriginal children from the local community. The preschool team of eight is led by Julie as director. The team's overarching support comes from guidance provided by the local Garby Elders. My involvement with Kulai begins with the negotiation of a collaborative research partnership to explore the implementation of quality assurance processes in this setting. The beginning of my interest in issues surrounding organisational change and learning had begun some time earlier.

Although I had a sense of belonging in Gumbaingirr country, I wondered if the Kulai people would see me as a foreigner/alien always in the position of visitor, or situated with a foot in each camp, concurrently insider and outsider? Poppenbeck (1994: 34) suggests that being a descendant of migrants, I would always be a visitor. My intrusion could be interpreted as continuing the

invasive work begun by Captain Arthur Philip and his convicts over two hundred years earlier. I pondered the legitimacy of claiming links, relationships, or engagements of my family with the Gumbaingirr people.

My relationship with Gumbaingirr country stretched back four generations. My paternal great grandparents had lived in this country since 1867. The NSW colonial government allocated them a piece of the Wollomombi valley. They named the portion of land they lived on as 'Fairburn' and built a house there, raised their family and died in the same place.

Their ability and that of their descendants to survive in this harsh land was facilitated by the knowledges shared with them by Gumbaingirr people. An example of this is recorded by Bill Cohen (1987: 6-9), grandson of Gumbaingirr King Bobby, in his autobiography. He tells stories of how his father, Jack worked on Fairburn and lived there with his family when Bill was a boy. The way I read this narrative indicated that my grandfather, Roderick and his brother, Alec were so impressed by Jack's abilities and deep knowledge of the country that "[A]pparently they persuaded him to come to Fairburn to work" (Cohen 1987: 6). Bill could not recall how long they had lived there, but indicates some of the joyful interactions with my grandfather and great uncle:

> As a boy I enjoyed the bagpipes. Alec and Roderick could both play the bagpipes. Often I found myself scampering on down to the homestead to listen to pipes. Eventually the McRae brothers gave me one of these old pipes and didn't I enjoy blowing it! I suppose the noise I made blowing it was unbearable to a sensible person (Cohen 1987: 7).

My family were also the bearers of sad news:

> I noticed one of the McRae brothers ride up to our hut when Dad and Dick knocked off work. I guess his message to my Dad was my wonderful mother had passed away (Cohen 1987: 8).

Cohen's story of Fairburn stops there, as his father Jack and the family moved away to other work not long after Bill's mother died in child-birth. However, when I was a child my mother told me stories about my father, Roderick's eldest son, and how he learnt skills to hunt and catch animals from the Aboriginal children he played with as a boy. My Dad, born 1910 and Bill

Cohen, born 1914 were much of an age so they could have been play mates. My grandfather, father and I were all born in this country and carried knowledges passed to us by our ancestors. I believe a love of this country and its people emerged with us from the womb.

Judith Wright, whose family came to live in the area somewhat later, grew up on the land next door to Fairburn. She was born, around the same time as Bill and my dad, in 1915. She describes in her autobiography the important role Aboriginal people played in guiding her ancestors in navigating uncharted territory and in the effective use of the land (Wright 1999). It has been suggested recently by Liddle (2001:150) that Anglo-Australians need "Aboriginal understanding and input" in learning about land management in Australia today. Just as Liddle relates the importance of this to understanding the land, I felt unable to function in the preschool environment without the "understanding and input" of Kulai peoples.

This narrative of my family living in Gumbaingirr country does not seek to legitimise colonial settlement and the dominance of Anglo-Australians over the last one hundred and fifty years. Keating (1993: 5-6 cited in Jacobs 1997: 207) seems to sum up the often unspoken effects of settlement in his opening address at the International Year of the World's Indigenous People:

> We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and prejudice, and our failure to imagine these things being done to us.

I grew up with an awareness of partnerships and sharing with Gumbaingirr people, oblivious to the atrocities that had been perpetrated. I felt as though I belonged in Gumbaingirr country, but with such direct links to the violence of colonisation, did I? Stepping into Kulai for me was like inverting the colonial world. Each person at Kulai had strengths in understanding his/her unique culture or propriospect (Wolcott 1991 cited in Gonzalez 1999) and was proud to celebrate and live it. Outside of the safety of Kulai, in wider Australian society, each one was marginalised and subjugated in some way. This happened particularly when attempts were made to speak of Kulai's position in Anglo-Australian settings, including amongst early childhood professionals. Such occurrences are still a common feature of cross-cultural communications

in Australian society. These situations make me conscious that Australia "is still far from postcolonial" (Jacobs 1997: 216).

Place in Country

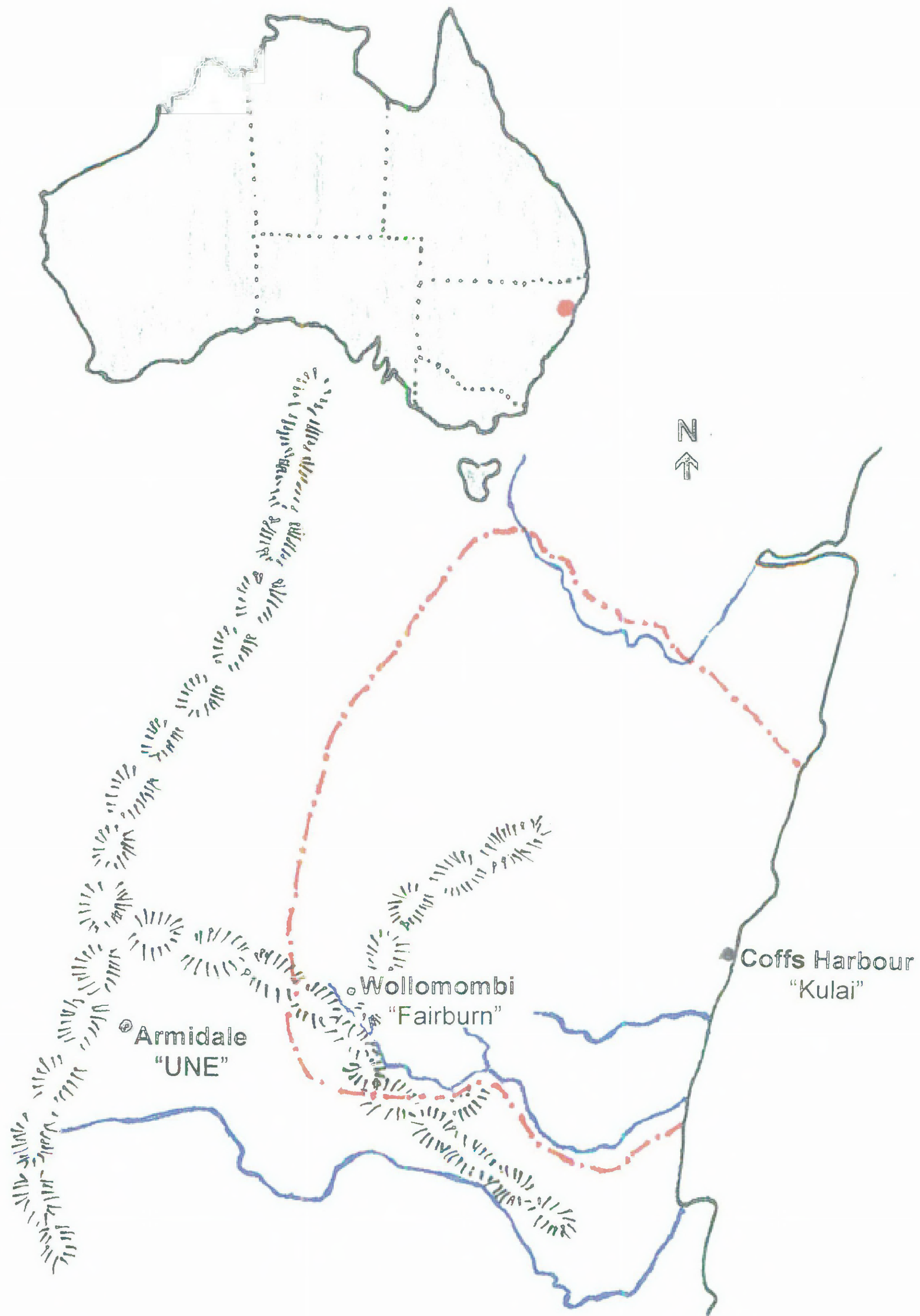
One task that confronted me as the research process began, involved (re)kindling my sense of place and belonging in Gumbaingirr country; understanding my changing identity. One staff member showed me my place of belonging, as seen in Map 1 below. He had checked out the geographic boundaries and pinpointed the inclusion of my birthplace on the western margin of Gumbaingirr country.

As a child I frequently travelled eastward in Gumbaingirr country for day visits and holidays with extended family who lived there. As an adult, Coffs Harbour also was a favoured destination for holidays with my husband and daughter. These were joyful times that built knowledge and accumulated awareness of the physical nature of the area. However, I was largely unprepared for the non-concrete aspects of living, listening, learning and forming loving relationships at Kulai.

As a researcher, I entered the Preschool apprehensively, unsure of how I might be received or even if I would be 'allowed' to stay. In dreaming about the best possible outcomes, I imagined Leanne and Michael would afford me the respect and responsiveness they had shown when I was their TAFE teacher. I secretly hoped they would communicate these ideas to the other staff to help establish a position for me in the Kulai workplace. Does this demonstrate that I was operating from a colonising standpoint, having spent so much of my life to this point learning and teaching in such a framework? (Davies 1997:26)

This imaged scenario was a myth. Leanne and Michael had moved on, they had graduated from TAFE, they owed me nothing and the power of the student-teacher relationship had dissipated. They had no need to give respect to the university or people who operated within such environments. Life went on on a day-to-day basis without the need for researchers to come interfering and delving into their worksite. There seemed no need to disrupt the status quo as they were quite comfortable with their routine.

Julie, as director of the preschool, seemed to operate on a different plane from the other staff. I sensed value and leverage in our research partnership.



Map 1: Locating in Gumbaingirr land*

* Note adapted from Blevin, Benson, Duroux & Murphy 2001: 1

Julie had checked out my credentials and ability to contribute constructively within a preschool environment, with some of our mutual friends, including Dianne Roberts of Minimbah Aboriginal School, Armidale, and Jenny Cook from TAFE Child Studies, Coffs Harbour. They may have affirmed that I had skills that could be of value to the Kulai people. Almost immediately I felt Julie treated me as an equal and trusted friend. From that time the relationship only deepened and extended to one of mutual care and support for each other and our associated families. Julie allowed me a relationship and professional base to work from and over the first five months of the project we spent a lot of time reflecting on what was happening. We talked about what needed to be done and how we might get the staff to come on board to perform in ways that we judged should meet the accreditation principles.

When I met the other staff (Diane, Melissa, Katrina, Sid, Georgina) I felt they saw me there in body, but not in spirit. I had little or no impact on them one way or another. The food I brought was nice and they were happy to share that, but there was no need to relate more deeply than that. Each time I (re)entered Kulai country, I took food with me, which was typically a mud cake (Leanne's favourite cake), bee sting or mudji bun (a berry and custard bun made in the shape of Kulai's totem, the echidna). This food was a point of contact, a leveller and whilst sharing food most often there was also a sharing of stories and practices (Germov & Williams 2001a & b; Ikeda 2001).

Mapping the research site

Kulai Preschool, led by Julie as director, sought to examine the way the workplace had operated in the past, the current position and to explore how to generate new practices to meet the future needs of the local community (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence 1999; Kemmis & McTaggart 2000). Julie's initial challenge was to gain interest from the Kulai staff to embark on the exploration with her. The opportunity for Kulai to join in a larger pilot study of 25 NSW early childhood services to evaluate the implementation of a quality assurance system, gave Julie the leverage point with staff to begin a journey of organisational change (Senge 1993).

In our initial period of contact, Julie spent a deal of time with me, face to face and on the telephone, talking through a range of issues. These primarily hinged around community, family, and her learning as a mature aged student,

and more general conversations. These discussions gave us a sense of our linkages and shared experiences (Power & Roberts 1998). Julie questioned people who knew me, to assess if I might fit in her team. In time she began to talk about the NSW pilot study of the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) and of Kulai's participation. After a substantial period of contact and affirmation of my credentials to operate in a respectful, reciprocal and responsive way (Brown & Barrera 1999), Julie made a place for me to participate with Kulai in the research journey.

My prior experience in moving across cultural borders, as a TAFE student supervisor in Aboriginal Early Childhood Centres, suggested the importance of operating in a context where a climate of trust and understanding already existed towards me as a person. Three centres within NSW had two or more staff with whom I had existing extensive personal and educational links. They are situated at Coffs Harbour, Tabulam and Toomelah. Amongst my considerations was local community acceptance of me as a researcher (Smith 2001). This was assisted at Kulai by my principal supervisor's strong and established links with the Garby Elders of the Gumbaingirr Nation (Somerville, Beck, Brown, Murphy, Perkins & Smith 1999).

When I looked for the research site on a street map of Coffs Harbour, I found a small rectangle at the top of end of a long rectangular council park. The preschool building appeared as another smaller rectangle on the edge of this space, a small box laid on top of a larger box. The reality was quite different. The council park was a level grassed open area with several clumps of gum trees interspersed across the land. The preschool block rose up on the edge of the parkland in stark contrast. On entry to the building there were straight walls, disrupted by life sized cut outs of the Kulai children flanking the interior. Large glass doors to the north opened out onto a flat paved verandah, extending into a large lake-like pool of sand. From there the land formed a sloping grassy hillside, which seemed to invite one to run up onto another level. Some banksia and gum trees stood proudly and knowingly towards the far corner. These plants provided a quiet shaded area for play and a resting place for numerous birds. The act of climbing the hillside was rewarded with a change of vista to look out over the preschool building to the parkland in the distance.

Gaps in research knowledge

Since the early childhood profession began, it has sought to establish warm caring uncomplicated environments. In reality conflict has also been apparent within the profession for over a century, as I will discuss in Chapter 2. In recent Australian research Sumsion (2001: 201) notes the need to examine the whole complex range of "emotional landscapes of early childhood settings". Prior to Sumsion's study, resistance and trauma in early childhood were more commonly associated with child abuse and power struggles, which positioned adults in power over children. The avoidance of difficult and complex issues by the early childhood field has been criticised by Buell and Cassidy (2001: 209-210). They claim that the early childhood debate "fails to capture the complex processes involved ... [through an] assumption that variables will behave in a linear and predictable way". At Kulai I believed, that if it were possible to open up the complexities of the preschool to scrutiny, with the aid of participatory action research tools, some answers might be found to Sumsion's (2001: 206) questioning of:

> The structural and political forces that can have an adverse impact on the ecologies of early childhood settings. By making visible forces that otherwise might remain invisible, we may be able to work more effectively towards realising ideals of early childhood settings as communities of care.

MacNaughton (1996), in a review of Australian research in early childhood, notes examples of the use of action research since the late 1980s. Her study indicates that much of this work tends to stress the technical aspects of practice, rather than taking an emancipatory approach. She describes action research as "an ethical, epistemological and practical way forward" for early childhood educators interested in issues of quality. Dahlberg et al (1999: 6) indicate the need for early childhood "to go beyond the concept of quality ... [to] the concept of *meaning making*". Further they recognise that the introduction of such a new concept requires detailed exploration. Two of the questions Dahlberg et al (1999: 115) specifically identify for examination which relate to the Kulai study are: "'What do early childhood institutions require for their projects?', 'What do we need for the pedagogical work and the process of meaning making?'"

Research problems

To examine the ecology of the research context and illuminate the factors that generate a caring community, I identified participatory action research carried out in partnership with Aboriginal researchers as an appropriate framework for my doctoral studies. The original aims of the research as discussed with the preschool were to:

- establish what the Kulai people (preschool staff and parents) and the wider Indigenous community want their children to learn at preschool and set up a collaborative action plan.

- identify individual and group competencies staff bring to the preschool by virtue of their Indigenous identity, cultural knowledge, caregiving skills and experience.

- identify individual and group learning needs for the effective transmission of culture within their preschool.

- facilitate the development of a workplace education action plan through which individual and group learning needs can be actioned and then translated into effective preschool programs.

However, the primary research question that unfolded with the study was: How can an external quality assurance process be used to enhance learning and organisational change in an Aboriginal early childhood workplace?

Organisational research

In organisational research how people learn or meaning-make has been examined in many ways. For example, Roth and Kleiner (1999: 460) report on the valuable role learning histories, based on personal stories, can perform in stimulating "open-ended reflective conversations throughout the rest of the organization." Hargreaves (2001: 1075) uses the term "emotional geographies" to "make sense of these forms and combinations of distance and closeness that threaten the emotional understanding that is foundational to teaching and learning".

According to Whyte, Greenwood & Lazes(2001) organisational theorists are still debating methods of recording and analysing people's participation in the workplace. Their paper advocates the use of participant action research techniques to:

> extend the researchers' learning ... [be led] into previously unfamiliar pathways ... to stimulate us to think in new ways about old and new theoretical problems, thus generating provocative new ideas.

In the development of Aboriginal teacher educator programs with Batchelor College, Kemmis and McTaggart (2000: 582) report on their participatory action research in which they "worked through with Aboriginal teachers to inform [their] work". As researchers, they are mindful of the colonising effects past research practices have had on Aboriginal people and on their own ways of operating. In interpreting the meaning made from their study, Kemmis and McTaggart (2000: 582) conclude:

> Only by understanding the historical location of our own work and by examining these understandings with Aboriginal people could we participate adequately in changing the work ... to articulate simultaneously a theory of educational practice and a theory of educational research practice that mutually support, inform and challenge each other.

The outcome of their project was to produce transformative changes to practice in the participant schools and universities (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000). Reports of approaches such as these helped me to build a clearer picture of research options as I engaged with the Kulai work site differently and looked more closely at individuals' learning histories, emotional landscapes and their associated geographies in the preschool.

Whilst the research of Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) hinges on Aboriginal teacher education, there are a limited number of studies which examine Aboriginal meaning making practices in Australian early childhood centres. These include Butterworth and Candy (1998); D'Souza (1999); Eastment and White (1998); Fasoli and Ford (2001), Ford and Fasoli (2001), McClay & Willshear (1999); Power (2002b); Power and Roberts (1998); Watson and Roberts (1996). Whilst these studies provided a base for developing research ideas in the Kulai project, major gaps are apparent in the understandings of the

complexities of organisational learning in Aboriginal preschools. Nakata's (2000: x) challenge to educators at all levels has relevance to the Kulai study:

> The ongoing quest for those in the field of Indigenous education is that more productive and powerful legitimating conditions be constituted through which to produce educational outcomes for Indigenous people which do not reproduce colonial social formations. Fundamental to this will be further innovations in the methodological and theoretical practices that inform scholarship and research in the field.

Participatory research and collaborative action research are identified by Kemmis and McTaggart (2000: 572) as approaches developed to counter the colonization perpetrated by traditional research methods used in Indigenous communities. In the following section issues in Indigenous research will be explored further.

Participatory action research

The task of identifying terms to describe the methodology used in the Kulai study and establishing the origins of such an approach had its own complexities. In Australia and internationally, Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart's names have been prominent in educational research. Their early studies refer to *collaborative action research*, where emphasis is placed on university academics and educators working together to describe their methodology (Grundy & Kemmis 1981; Kemmis 1988; Kemmis & McTaggart 1988; McTaggart & Garbutcheon-Singh 1988). More recently, Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) use *participatory action research* to embrace a range of qualitative research methodologies which intersect under the umbrella sub-terms of action research and participatory research.

References to action research made by Jacob Moreno in 1923 in a publication titled "Das Stegreiftheatre" (Theatre of Spontaneity), are amongst the earliest. His approach to action research was of particular interest to psychologists (Scheiffele 1997: 227). Hodgkinson (1957 cited in Kemmis 1988: 31) suggests action research began with the emergence of the scientific movement in education at the beginning of the twentieth century. Cherry (1999: 4) states that until recently "[T]he English-speaking world has generally attributed the notion of action research to social psychologist Kurt Lewin". During World War II Lewin conducted nutrition programs for women from three ethnic and

socio-economic groups and used action research techniques to evaluate his work (Lewin 1952). Stephen Corey is described by Anders (1988: 317) as "the father of action research". However, Corey (1953 cited in Kemmis 1988) attributes its beginnings to Collier's field work with First Nations people from the United States of America.

Descriptions of participatory action research and action research portray the process as occurring in regular symmetrical spirals of activity (Grundy 1995; Kemmis & McTaggart 1988). Within these spirals there are five phases of "reconnaissance, planning, acting, collecting evidence and reflecting" (Grundy 1995: 11). More recently Kemmis and McTaggart (2000: 595) indicate the movement between these phases is not as smooth as previously thought:

> The stages overlap, and initial plans quickly become obsolete in the light of learning from experience. In reality the process is likely to be more fluid, open, and responsive. The criterion of success is not whether participants have followed the steps faithfully, but whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices, their understandings of their practices, and the situations in which they practice.

Gibbon (2002), Wadsworth (1997), Worby and Rigney (2002) similarly indicate the importance of the community being active in identifying the problems, associated questions, data collection and future directions. They suggest that development should be driven by the data, which emerges from co-participation in reflection, shared learning and meaning making. Robertson's (2000: 323) narrative further clarifies the process as

> constantly being transformed through keeping diaries of reflections, shifting through the data, rereading (or exploring new) literature to make new decisions as to the next action, involved in continual discussions, all of the time [participants] becoming more aware of themselves and the process we are utilising ... to consider how the activities of the researcher may have shaped these findings (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983) ... built up sufficient trust to be open and vocal about the issues concerning [research partners] ... Reflection-in-action is the essence of praxis ... [this] lead to the 'knowing-in-action' which is so important.

Percy (1999) describes action research as operating at ever deepening levels:

> The layers of work start with concrete experience (the raw data), then progress to multiple realities (different perceptions of the raw data), and paradox (contradictory constructions of the data). The core layer of work is one of interactive patterns, where the dynamics and patterns of the organisation and of the consultant's interaction with the organisation form invisible forces and what Argyris (1990) refers to as 'undiscussables'.

Gilbert and Smith (2003: par 2) caution workplace researchers to be aware that aspects of practice are "often unreported or undisseminated, unrewarded and not valued". The non-linear nature of participatory action research can limit such oversights by generating large quantities of data. Schied, Carter, Preston & Howell (1998: 162) states that as a consequence of such an increase in material, it would be likely that "research issues were much more complex than originally thought". Gibbon (2002) indicates that the non-linear nature of her study presents challenges to using a traditional thesis format. According to McLaren and Datnow (2002: 258) "the greatest challenge ... [is] walking the fine line of participant/observer" in recording and analysing the data.

In the wide range of studies reviewed above where participatory action research have been used the difficulty of defining the process is apparent. However, the explanation that most closely resonates with the approach I used at Kulai is described by Kemmis and McTaggart (2000: 573):

> Making the familiar unfamiliar (and making the unfamiliar familiar) involves treading a fine line between an attitude towards the situation that aims to "uncover" or "unmask" hidden forces at work in the situation (the attitude of the outsider who claims special insights into the setting) and illuminating and clarifying interconnections and tensions between elements of a setting in terms that participants themselves regard as authentic (which may involve giving more weight to relationships participants had previously discounted or devalued in their deliberations).

Participatory action research, and action research, have been identified as approaches that have relevance for postgraduate students working across

cultural borders (Cherry 1999; Gibbon 2002). There can be significant tensions created for doctoral students electing to use this methodology, when concrete research plans and time frames are expected by university committees (Gibbon 2002). The lack of prescription in participatory action research can be misunderstood, where "[O]ften, there is a beginning and a vision of an end point, but the researcher has no idea of how the research will unfold" (Gibbon 2002: 547). As will be shown later, at Kulai the research plan and questions I originally submitted for ethics committee approval were superseded as the project emerged.

Wadsworth (1997) has developed a workbook to make action research readily accessible for practising teachers. Included in the material is a drawing of a large action research spiral, which features a chain of focus questions (Wadsworth 1997: 40-41). I used these questions to provide a framework to plan out the route or journeylines of the research at Kulai. These questions suggested forming partnerships as discussed later in this chapter.

Protocols and ethics in Indigenous research

Research involving Indigenous participants across the world, contains many reports of non-Indigenous researchers 'mining' research sites for their benefit, without reciprocity, respect or responsiveness to Indigenous people (Boughton 2001; Schwab & Sutherland 2001; Smith 2001; Worby & Rigney 2002). When consent is given for Indigenous research within a community often it affirms that individual's involvement and "credibility" (Smith 2001: 136) rather than addressing the topic of the particular study. The Maori academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2001: 92) descriptions of decolonising methodologies, warns Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to avoid actions which "communicate to [Indigenous communities], explicitly or implicitly, that they themselves have no solutions to their own problems". She raises a consciousness of the "multiple ways of being both an insider and outside in indigenous contexts. The critical issue with insider research is the constant need for reflexivity" (Smith 2001: 137).

In Smith's (2001) study amongst Maori mothers and young children in New Zealand, she was an insider (as mother) and outsider (as researcher). When she visited the families to do research she was treated differently, "barriers were constructed to keep the outsider at bay, to keep the outsider becoming the intruder ... resisting the prying eyes of researchers" (Smith 2001: 138).

Indigenous researchers often have additional and complex criteria to meet in their studies, in an effort to satisfy both Indigenous and non-Indigenous expectations (ChrissieJoy Marshall personal communications 1999-2003; Smith 2001). These differences have been explained by Smith (2001: 140) as follows:

> The spaces within the research domain through which indigenous research can operate are small spaces on a shifting ground. Negotiating and transforming institutional practices and research frameworks is as significant as the carrying out of actual research programmes.

In planning the Kulai study I increasingly recognised the emerging, complex and fluid nature of research as Smith (2001) describes above. I examine below the ethical challenges of participatory action research, in postgraduate research in an Aboriginal workplace.

To counteract colonial approaches to research, I used the *Guidelines on Ethical Matters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research (NHMRC 1991)* as a navigation aid in the journey. In taking community ownership of the project, the Kulai people gave the primary direction. The current guidelines state "some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations remain mistrustful of the enterprise of research itself" (NHMRC 2002: 2). This suggests much mistrust has been generated as a result of the on-going attitudes of Anglo-Australian settlers, and their descendants', "ill-formed perceptions and assumptions about the values and ways of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and social organisation" which continue to impact on research partnerships conducted across cultural borders (NHMRC 2002: 4).

The NHMRC ethics guidelines identify six core values with significance in terms of Aboriginal identity. The first and most important of these to Aboriginal researchers is spirit and integrity. This value was described as "working over time to bind together the other five values" of reciprocity, respect, equality, responsibility, survival and protection (NHMRC 2002: 9). Reciprocity is understood as mutual obligation with "an equitable distribution of resources, responsibility and capacity and to ensure cohesion and survival of the social order" (NHMRC 2002: 11). Respect is seen as valuing human dignity and worth as "fundamental to a functioning and moral society" (NHMRC 2002: 13). Equality assumes the equal value of people through

"distributive fairness and justice … [in] peoples' right to be different" (NHMRC 2002: 16). Responsibility is described as central. A key to this "is to do no harm" (NHMRC 2002: 18). Survival and protection involves "act[ing] to protect their [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander] cultures and identity from erosion by colonisation and marginalisation" (NHMRC 2002: 20).

Such values were the base on which I planned the Kulai research as equitable and inclusive. I checked that the approaches used would be beneficial to the community throughout the period of the study. I aimed for "[T]rust, openness and engagement" as integral elements in the project (NHMRC 2002: 13). I was particularly conscious of the temporal nature of research as described in the guidelines:

> The understanding that the present is absolutely bound up in the past, as in the future, and that these cannot be separated from each when discussing issues where key values are at stake (NHMRC 2002: 10).

In the guidelines (NHMRC 1991) principles are espoused for Anglo-Australians working in research partnerships with Aboriginal people. Other researchers identify the need for major shifts from past practices employed by researchers so that relationships become "mutually respectful and supportive", results are formulated to be shared, "truly collaborative", its impact … [to] "overtly advance the cause of Aboriginal people", and to ensure Aboriginal people can participate (Walsh 1996 cited in Liddle 2001: 150). Similar advice is given by Baker, Davies & Young (2001: 142):

> Collaborative research places responsibilities on the researcher to respect indigenous ownership of cultural information and to develop and publish research findings cooperatively. ... the communication and trust that develop between the researcher and the relevant indigenous people are the critical ingredients for effective collaboration.

Unlike Walsh (1996), Baker et al (2001) make reference to outcomes ahead of relationships. I think this position runs counter to establishing a base of trust for communication. In evaluating the use of participatory action research in her doctoral studies, trust and relationships are central issues to Gibbon (2002: 548): "The dynamics of group processes, visualization, critical self-awareness, and the ability to embrace error and to adapt and share without boundaries are all necessary." I felt that knowledge of how to work in partnership with local

communities would be integral for my contribution to the Kulai research. I explore below the various meanings of partnership in relation to the current study.

Partnerships of co-participation

In the last three decades the term 'partnerships' has been so widely used in the social sciences area that it has taken on multiple meanings. Some writers cite this as overuse leading to a consequent diversity of interpretations marking it as a "something nothing" (Fowler 2000: 3) or a "buzz" word (Cornwall, Lucas & Pasteur 2000: 4). Much research illustrates only a vestige of genuine co-participation in the way 'partnerships' are implemented. For example, reports of urban regeneration projects (Atkinson 1999), cross-cultural education research (Nagai 1999), health services reviews (Cornwall et al 2000) and Aboriginal partnerships (Ball & Pence 1999; Boughton 2001; Smith 2001) identify some inappropriate applications of the term. Many recent reports document how the concept is used discursively by government and non-government agencies, including universities, to try to entice local communities into action (Atkinson 1999; Boughton 2001; Smith 2001).

In reality such relationships, branded as partnerships, centralise power and control in the funding agency, whilst individuals and groups at the local level do the work. Partnerships used in this way advocate for government, quasi-government and non-government ideals, with the resultant outcome of pseudo community control (Cornwall et al 2000: 7) and consequently are largely counterproductive (Fowler 2000: 6).

Fortunately, some partnerships produce positive outcomes from co-participation. Some projects add such adjectives as authentic, responsible, collaborative and intentional, to make the difference obvious. The definitions of these concepts would provide useful ground for the Kulai project to build on. Fowler (1997: 3) defines "authentic partnerships" as "understood and mutually enabling, interdependent interactions with shared intentions". Fowler (1998 cited in Fowler 2000: 3) extends his explanation to "a joint commitment to long-term interaction, shared responsibility for achievement, reciprocal obligation, equality, mutuality and balance of power."

Another notion used is "responsible partnerships", which Jalal (1999 cited in Cornwall et al 2000: 5) envisages as relationships based on promoting "a sense

of co-ownership not only among the providers but also among the service users". Butcher, Dhungana, Pant & Prasai (2000: 98) provide a description of operationalising effective community partnerships, which stresses the need for "increasing local participation and developing approaches to self-help with all the stakeholders ... based on principles of increased visualisation and interaction". Another the descriptor, "collaborative partnerships", is used by Perry, Komesaroff and Kavanagh (2002: 243) in their report on a quality improvement project applied in Australian schools with a university facilitator. Speaking from the perspective of the facilitator, crossing organisational borders, they state their "primary role is to be available, to be responsive, and to help develop effective working relationships to accommodate the needs of the schools they are working with". Wong and Tierney (2001: 1091) use the term "intentional partnerships" to describe the climate that surrounds the process of change they studied in a university based quality improvement project.

Billett (2000) and Ulichney and Schoener (2000: 178) propose related theories of co-participant research. These approaches allow collaboration in a manner that I considered would benefit the Kulai people and the study. Their ideas resonate with Ball and Pence's (1999; 2001) reports of working with the First Nations people of Canada, initially with little awareness of local culture or where the research would lead them. The outcomes of this collaborative research demonstrated significant gains for local communities and for the University of Victoria. The Regional Australia Summit Committee expresses similar partnership ideals from its meeting in October 1999 to formulate plans for the development of regional Australia (Regional Australia Summit Unit, 2000: 2):

> for governments, for businesses, for individuals and for local communities – actions that must be taken in partnership, and guided by the knowledge that solutions must be approached from the bottom up, that is, focusing efforts and resources locally.

These definitions of partnerships signalled the need for development in regional Australia to be focused at a local level.

However in light of Butterworth and Candy's (1998: 27) statement that "Aboriginal concepts and consensus differ vastly from those of the majority Australian culture", at Kulai I thought it would be necessary to examine more

specifically the perspective of an Anglo-Australian researcher working in an education partnership with Aboriginal people. Haig-Brown (2001:24) describes this process as:

> struggles of coalition work ... together across differences and pain and in many moments of joy and friendship to establish, deliver and refine a program ... and the deeper understanding which graduate work allows.

These experiences highlight the potential for positive outcomes amongst the intense challenges of working between cultures. Pence (2001: 8) in his conceptualisation of co-participation with Indigenous peoples in Canada provides a framework which I thought might be potentially relevant to the Kulai study:

> For me, the starting point in such work was to focus on the space between the western university community and the tribal community and to utilize that space as a place for co-creation, rather than for conversion ... we must approach it stripped of our "agendas"; entering with our ears first, not our mouths; seeking to hear and to listen, rather than to teach and to shape ... listening, learning, being themselves moved and transformed by the interaction. [underlined as in original document]

I thought the positioning Pence describes would require changes to the practices that had been integral to my previous ways of operating. They suggested a major move from a dominant controlling position as a teacher, to insecure border work on the boundaries between cultures. I would enter this new place knowing few rules and my practice knowledges might be undone. My awareness of how to act appropriately was limited, such as how or if to approach people. Perhaps it was best not to push contact, but rather to wait in a respectful manner. I was confused about when to speak or remain silent, and for how long. Observing the preschool in operation could be read as rude and intrusive.

Descriptions of authentic, responsible, collaborative and intentional partnership, increased my consciousness of the notions of engagement, sharing and co-participation between members of the research groups. Some studies warned that entering new territory and changing practices was fraught with complexities and paradox (Fullan 1999), along with opportunities to continue learning. In Australia "Aboriginal traditions respect human dignity and regard

all people as teachers and learners" (Butterworth & Candy 1998: 22-23). So too in Canada, "all became learners, all became teachers" (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence 1999: 176). In Northern Australia, "Yolngu understandings of knowledge require everyone to become a learner … Being seen as learners gives us status as people who are knowledgeable about the things we have learnt" (Mununggiritj 1999: 308). In the Kulai research we entered the project with some individual perspectives gathered from previous experiences, without prescribed questions to examine, but rather, anticipating that the research questions would emerge in the course of the project.

Forming research partnerships

The irregularity and overlapping of Kemmis and McTaggart's (2000) research phases mentioned above, linked to Haig-Brown and Archibald's (1996: 246) "rambling map to the borderlands", plus Grundy et al's (1999: 37) "exploring an emerging landscape", provided fragments on which we could conceptualise a map for our current study. As the Kulai project got under way, the route of the research seemed to take on an asymmetrical form. This was not unlike the road journey between the University of New England at Armidale and Kulai at Coffs Harbour. The research moved along the high country of ethics proposals and on through twists and turns descended quite irregularly, until the beach came into view. There were side roads off, loops, cul de sacs and other resting points. The views changed almost continuously as yet more corners were rounded and new knowledge became apparent. Much of the scenery was pretty, though a portion was drab and uninteresting and significant temperature changes occurred (much akin to generally being greeted with more genuine warmth in the coastal setting than in the corridors of the university).

The journeylines did not always take the research forward; there were opportunities to double back, even to take short cuts around events to avoid them. There were blind spots and occasional situations where it was impossible to turn back. Time gradually became less of an issue as I became better able to cope with conversational silences, and less driven by the clock. Similarities appear to the way that Berman and Brown (2000: 57) describing their experience.

> To enjoy the journey it is important to be able to see experiences along the way, both the positive and negatives, as steps in the learning process.

> As long as you learn from the experiences you have, there is no reason to regard anything untoward that happens along the way as a mistake. It is important to see both successes and failures as events in the unfolding of who you are.

Berman and Brown's (2000) report provided stimulus for me to keep going when the route seemed too challenging. Along the way I heard terms such as "methodological complexity", "messy" and "convoluted" in dialogue from Margaret Somerville, Jo-Anne Reid, and Laura Hartley (personal communications 25.10.01). These concepts also appeared in the literature as descriptors of participatory action research and action research projects (Butcher et al 2000; Cook 1998; Gatenby & Humphries 2001; Gibbon 2002; Ladson-Billings 1994; Robertson 2000; Whyte et al 2001).

I followed Spence's (1999: 108) recommendation that researchers approach a site with "an attitude of artificial naivety" noting every aspect of what happened as though it has not been previously confronted. Assuming this position was not to be so difficult for me as prior to this study I had only brief visits to Aboriginal preschools in the role of evaluator of student practicums. As a researcher I tried not to assume a position of power, conscious of Bond's (2000: 55) reminder:

> The outcome of research is knowledge. Knowledge is power. The wrong kind of research gives the wrong kind of power. The right kind of research gives the right kind of power. Research can never be neutral.

The fact that the director and teaching staff knew me allowed entry to the preschool with some relationships already established (McLaren and Datnow 2002). Over time, as explained in Chapter 3, the quality and depth of relationships changed, as we got to know each other at another level. The staff, whom I had known for some years, were able to explain my purpose and give a character reference to other people connected with Kulai (Grundy et al 1999). This made a significant difference in establishing relationships and overcoming "suspicions, fears and potential prejudice and find access to the research community smoother than anticipated" (Jenkins 1984 cited in Spence 1999: 108).

When I arrived at Kulai the first time, I had a mix of ideas to share about work based research. In my head were thoughts relating to examining and writing

about the journey, which were later clarified by terms such as emotional landscapes and geographies, and learning histories. That day, 16 November 1999, I was on the doorstep with cap in hand, bags packed for a local stop over and a cake on a plate, asking:

> *What has been happening in your lives since we last met? What are your plans? I enjoyed our times together at TAFE, but we've all moved on. I am keen to do research and write about what's happening when people work in preschools and to examine whether training can help to make your jobs more interesting.*

This journal reflection indicates something of the underlying apprehensions I felt in regard to a territory largely unknown (Sumsion 2001). I returned again the next week with another cake and we chatted further, catching up on family things mainly between staff members who had been my students. It had been a few years since staff members Leanne, Michael and I had met regularly. Again we made no definite plans or commitments to each other about doing research.

The Kulai staff talked excitedly of plans for a new building which would double the floor space available to educate their children. The plans envisioned a warm magical welcoming environment, very much in tune with this country. The architect, a young creative woman, who listened well, had worked closely with Julie, the director, and the community to develop a place to fit naturally within the cultural base of which it would form a part. The first sod was about to be turned to start the building work. The operation was delayed somewhat for several giant poles to arrive that would hold up the roof. They were exposed tree trunks, reimplanted in Kulai soil to hold the roof of the shelter in place. The trunks would form focal points of the learning area. The Kulai people spoke of flowing curves which would provide the surrounds at ground level and above of rich earth colours to echo the feel of nature. No guttering would disrupt precipitation, but rather the roof run-off fell into channels in the path below.

The building program could be constructed as being disruptive of the normal operation of the Preschool. Alternatively, it could evolve as a fascinating learning project for the children in observation of the building as it grew, to talk about the changes and dream about what was to come. The children observed new noises, big machines, people coming and going to the worksite and always something different happening. When Kulai got this new space

there would be the potential for the same old practices to be transported intact from the existing building. There was also a chance to generate and implant fresh ideas and approaches to meet the community's needs.

When I began to reflect on the obligations of doing research with the Kulai community, a feeling of vulnerability welled up inside. Half of the Kulai people already knew me and had a rough idea of where I had come from. A beginning level of trust existed with them, which had already opened the preschool door to allow me to communicate about options for researching (exploring) learning in the workplace. I had spent a considerable amount of time previously, over a four year period, with Leanne, Michael and twenty other Aboriginal women and men from across northern NSW. Most of these interactions and experiences had been in the territory of my workplace. This had been a colonial institutional educational space within the hierarchy of the NSW TAFE child studies section. As their course coordinator I taught some units, so throughout this period I was situated in the more powerful position.

My experiences as course coordinator had taught me some lessons about communicating and operating with Aboriginal people from a range of places and histories. I learnt each was an individual, each with her/his own version of what was culture. Broad generalisations could be drawn about how they liked to learn, but these assumptions were inevitably changed by exceptions to the rule (Butterworth & Candy 1998). They did not react just because I or any other teachers spoke, unlike many of the non-Aboriginal students doing such courses. They wanted to know the reasons for doing things in a particular way and expected consideration of other aspects of their family, community and work life to be taken into account in planning their programs.

Food sharing played an important role in bringing together this range of cultural groups (Germov & Williams 2001a & b; Ikeda 2001). Most students lived away from home for several days a term to attend the TAFE workshops. I had the responsibility of organising the catering for break times and their accommodation. When there was food to be shared, even if there were a few additional family members at meal times, everyone always had enough.

At Kulai, Leanne and Michael knew me, but the other staff did not. No doubt they had been told some stories of stimulating sessions and others of mundane materials delivered by me as TAFE. But what and how I was proposing to do

now was quite different from the past. I imagined they could be questioning my reasons for coming into the work place.

I knew little or nothing about Kulai culture and had not yet met the Garby Elders. I feared that my lack of understanding of their spirituality, history and world-view might be revealed. Just as McLaren and Datnow (2002) identify, there are many challenges such research in the social sciences can place on a person's identity. I did not know the cultural rules at Kulai, what I could do and not do, could say, not say or was better to leave unsaid. The potential for me to get offside and offend seemed enormous. Perhaps no one would be prepared to work with me, even want me to be there.

The way I talked about workplace research echoed back incomprehensibly to me, so I did not expect it to make sense to anyone else. I was not sure I could interpret correctly what Kulai people meant in what was said to me (Brown & Barrera 1999; Houston 2002). My understanding of non-verbal communications was another significant challenge. I would have to listen more and ask less questions (as I was prone to do in my Anglo-centric way). The "[A]nxiety and vulnerability" I was feeling, Luke (1996: 286) suggests, came "from the pressure to get it right". I believed it would be necessary to 'get things right' to be accepted as an authentic participant in the Kulai research.

To establish a base of common understanding for the Kulai project I drew on Marika and White (1999a & b), de Vere (1999a, b & c) and Grundy et al's (1999) explanations of the use of metaphorical bridges as communication devices, as detailed in Chapter 4. These perspectives were supplemented by Butterworth & Candy (1998), Nakata (1998:23) and White's (1998) descriptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning styles. Things are interpreted from different values and reality bases, according to Butterworth & Candy (1998). These approaches are less well known and often misunderstood, by Anglo-Australians. Nakata (1998) and White (1998) describe Indigenous and Western knowledges as different and separate. However, I was also conscious of the skills of Kulai people to operate successfully in both the minority and majority worlds (Dunn 2001; Power 2002b).

Communication

The partnership with the Kulai people and earlier with Aboriginal TAFE students, led me to consistently question whether I understood their meaning correctly. My interpretations were made, with an awareness of the need to resist over-questioning, yet wanting to record my observations authentically. Eades (1993: 185) warns that tension is frequently created in communications, particularly through inappropriate questioning, as a disparate form of "information gathering". In Aboriginal English, Eades (1993: 186) reports four indirect approaches commonly practiced:

> they make a hinting statement and wait for a response ... they may volunteer information for confirmation or denial ... tell people what they want to find out about, and then wait for a later occasion before receiving an answer ... silence – giving people time – is important to all of these Aboriginal ways of finding out information.

I was perhaps most uncomfortable initially with silence, as my experience in Anglo-Australian culture suggested negative, even disrespectful, connotations. I found it hard to allow for an extended pause, without interjecting to pose replies to my own questions. Eades (2002) in a study of court proceedings in the New England region, highlights how lack of cross-cultural understanding can influence communication outcomes. Sensitive application of silence with Aboriginal witnesses in the cases studied, can involve an elapse of six seconds. In contrast, Eades (2002: 7) notes that most Standard English speakers tolerate no more than one second of silence in conversation.

It took time for me to understand that silence could be used as a period for reflection or as a way to affirm "the presence of others" (Eades 1993: 187). Another way to conceive the use of silence I have come to recognise, was reported by Cleary and Peacock (2002: 7) as a period of "letting the listener create inner pictures before going on". Half-way through the research project I made these reflections in my journal:

> *If you don't check (question) you can never be sure if you were on the right track. If you do check, at least at times, you wonder if the reply you get is what the staff think you want to hear; maybe an edited version of their real intent; or precisely their intent or something else entirely. Who knows? How you read or hear something can vary also with your mood,*

your level of attention, the context, your wellness or otherwise, other things that are going on in your head, etc. The speaker's voice will surely be impacted by factors that could be very similar to these.

Somerville (1995: 32) refers to the issues involved in translating from an Aboriginal language to English. Translating from Aboriginal English to Standard Australian English also posed many complexities for my understanding. The translations were complicated by diversity of background. My interpretations came from a different base of experience from the Kulai peoples. A particular word meaning in Standard Australian English often times was not what was implied in the local dialects of Aboriginal English (Dunn 2001). Frequently, words were left out of a conversation as it was assumed others had that knowledge and that there was no need to clarify the meaning.

When I was growing up I had the opportunity to learn English in an unconventional manner. I was on a farm, amongst a large extended family of mainly men and boys. My mother and father, two grandfathers and an uncle all lived under one roof. I did not go to regular school, but rather learnt via curriculum materials posted out by the Blackfriars Correspondence School, Redfern, Sydney. Contact with people outside the family, who spoke in other forms of Standard English, only happened occasionally. Once a week we went to the local Sunday School and church. Even there, my mother often was the Sunday School teacher.

The other outside language input I had was from multiple newspapers, magazines, ABC radio, books, written input and feedback from the teachers at Blackfriars. The major language (re)source to build my vocabulary was the family, who engaged in an unique form of English. Interpretation was particularly challenging as our family often took joy in speaking in riddles, which could be understood in multiple ways. Questions asked to clarify meaning could well receive an equally convoluted reply; even if a version of the truth was told it might well be accompanied by a wry smile which caused further confusion. A meaning was constructed and acted on, that could lead to trouble when the unintended interpretation was central; but most often life just went on.

These early experiences of communication helped me to develop skills using metaphors and hearing multiple ways of knowing. Often I can see a range of

ways a set of words could be interpreted. People outside the family who do not operate this way, find it hard to understand. It can lead to trouble in some work environments, particularly where the organizational line is strictly followed. My experience suggests that to put forward that which is inconsistent with management, often produces a label of obstructionist. My actions could be perceived as challenging the power structure, rather than another way of examining or even balancing the power. In some places labels, such as 'stirrer' are constructed, which tend to make me more resistant to accepting one central linear meaning, one way of seeing, to be obeyed.

Becoming embedded in the Kulai workplace I found myself at "sea" working amongst people from perhaps six or seven different cultural groups. All had their own styles of communicating that were more alike to each other than my way of speaking and understanding English. Meanings would clash with each other from time to time – I was left wondering how much was it a clash of cultures and how much just different ways of knowing. One wondered whether what was verbalised by one, was heard with that intent by the other, or was the riddle unravelled differently by the recipient. This was further complicated when messages were not given directly from one staff member to another. A third party would be asked to go and tell … The message was spoken through an interpreter. If I was listening to the conversation or had it relayed back to me by another party I got another layer(s). I often thought "What does this mean?" Baker et al (2001: 18) identifies some of the paradox in cross-cultural communication:

> Such diversity, if not properly acknowledged and catered for, can also be destructive … should they [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples] try to suppress their internal diversity in the cause of presenting a united front that is more likely to gain them favourable reactions in the mainstream; or should they openly express the fundamental realities in the hope that non-indigenous mainstream administration will accept this and adjust its approach accordingly? Either approach raises problems.

At Kulai, half of me feels a sense of belonging and of being in a familiar welcoming place. The other half recognises that I am from away and will never know the full meaning of the Kulai peoples' words, nor they of mine. However a link exists between each of them and me. The depth of the link/relationship varies, according to the level of our knowing and engagement with each other. A part of me will always be there, and a part always away.

With some Kulai people, there is a period of re-establishment when I visit again; with others there is an immediate picking up from where we left off and a continuation of the journeylines as if there has been no pause.

In finding a way to present a narrative of the Kulai research Somerville's (1996: 33) description gave useful leads: "I begin to trace the process of this movement and my growing ability to give meaning to an experience". I thought that maybe if I focus on the performance of Kulai journeying and re-run some of the transcripts, an analysis could be extracted and meanings emerge from the experience. Gellatly's (1999: 8) comments about documentary photography outlines the relevance to using visual elements in presenting a narrative of the research journey:

> What emerges on these pages is evidence that one of the fundamental elements of photography – its inherent attachment to the 'real' world – persists. No form however, remains fixed. If it does, it's likely to become 'tired' through overuse. As ideas about realism evolve, documentary photography is understood to be, like any other visual form, highly subjective … [it] should be seen as a fluid form. On the surface it may appear to be treading water, but if you look, a lot happens just underneath.

Working at Kulai involved relationships, partnerships and coparticipation all in fluid and complex forms. Julie challenged herself in a range of directions, and I continued to push myself, and surrounding boundaries. There were spiralling energies amongst everyone at Kulai that caused movement. At times we progressed in harmony as partners. At other periods, sometimes simultaneously, people's directions were different. They could be opposite, maybe off at a tangent, along another channel, possibly pausing for a rest or time to re-group. There were opportunities to double back, dig your toes in and maintain the status quo, even to take another route entirely to avoid "that overwhelming pain" (Probyn 1993 cited in Somerville 1995: 44). All these options were selected at some point in the process.

There is a need to relate a narrative of all of us if the Kulai process is to be shared with others (Bailey 2001). We would recall past experiences, share our learning and talk about how our (inter)actions led to meaning making. This can be possible when the narrative "tells a critical organizational story in the words of many of the people involved, each with his or her own perspective"

(Roth & Kleiner 1999: 460). It is inappropriate to directly replicate the Kulai project on another site, but perhaps the narrative can provide a stimulus to perform and record a locally situated program in another context (Somerville 1995).

Chapter outlines

I develop this thesis around six chapters. In the first, I introduce Julie, Kulai staff and myself as co-researchers. I look at the research site, and research problems that initially emerge from this context, followed by a discussion of relevant methodology. My literature review includes major elements of the research topic in chapter two. My narrative of the data is embraced in the third chapter. In chapters four and five I present a macro-analysis and micro-analysis of the narrative. In the final chapter I draw together the implications and recommendations that arose and suggest points for further study.

Chapter 1

The introductory chapter situates myself as researcher prior to making linkages with Kulai Aboriginal Preschool. I then show how my acceptance by the community to work with Kulai is a core element in allowing the study to proceed. From this position I map the research site and discuss the initial aims of the study. Then I interweave ideas about collaborative partnerships with protocols of Indigenous research and participatory action research in my methodology. I also explore the term partnerships as a key issue in studies of organisational change. In the final section I open up the challenges I experienced in communicating within my family and between Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian peoples.

Chapter 2

In this chapter I review the quality literature, represent in a diagram a genealogy of quality assurance concepts in early childhood organisations. The chapter outlines the beginnings of accreditation and quality improvement in health systems, industry and higher education. I show the influence of these approaches on how quality improvement and accreditation was adopted in Australian early childhood centres in the 1990s. Then I explore Kulai's involvement as part of the larger NSW pilot study of the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS), to provide an example of the quality assurance process in operation in an Aboriginal preschool.

Chapter 3

I use a chronological narrative of QIAS implementation at Kulai to form the basis of chapter three. In this way people's experience of integrating and resisting QIAS in the day-to day operation of the preschool is illuminated. These stories situate the data that I analyse later. I also include some brief anecdotal evidence of the experiences of other early childhood participants in the NSW pilot study of QIAS.

Chapter 4

I begin this chapter with a review of the literature relating to metaphors as communication and analytical tools and how they formed a base for my understanding their multiple meanings and functions. I follow with a meta-analysis of the visual metaphors and maps that emerged as an integral parts of the Kulai project. I outline the role of each metaphor both in communicating with the staff and in analysising the data. I explore reasons for adopting new metaphors to replace earlier ones.

Chapter 5

This chapter focuses on the participation of Kulai staff in the QIAS process with a micro-analysis of learning and change experiences. I make particular reference to two key events, a learning workshop with an external facilitator, and an internal dispute over professional practices in the preschool. Mapping techniques are employed as core elements in my analysis of the process of organizational change.

Chapter 6

In the final chapter I draw out the implications of this research and make recommendations based on these outcomes. These include ways in which researchers can assist organisational learning to be a more visible and accessible form of meaning making. In the final section I point to areas where further study is appropriate.