‘Marruma ginyaang ngurra ngarra’ (creating a better place through knowing)

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Abstract

Despite the vast amount of funding and services currently targeting Aboriginal people in current day Australia, the impacts of invasion, assimilation and cultural unsafety continue across generations, undermining the wellbeing of Aboriginal people mind, body and spirit.

This thesis incorporates an exegesis, 'Australians all let us rejoice: Using story as a catalyst for transformation and improved wellbeing', and a creative project – a fictional work, *Consequence.* Both works aim to explore a central question relating to how storytelling can communicate and engender a greater understanding of Aboriginal Lore and culture as expressed in the form of young adult fiction – and do so in a way that educates and entertains young adult readers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), with a hope they better understand the causal factors of the problems facing Aboriginal people today and hence support a healing process inclusive of all Australians.

The novel uses the creative elements of character, setting, plot, dialogue, theme, connection, conflict, and resolution to provide storylines that raise several points of reflection including respecting Mother earth, the importance of family, respecting women, learning from Aboriginal spirituality, depression and mental health, the consequences of not embracing our responsibilities and the importance of listening. It is my hope that the novel will make a valuable contribution to the growing field of Aboriginal young adult fiction works, enabling the reader (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) to reflect on their internal world (their personal story) and the external world (other people's story) in a way that supports a more harmonious and culturally safe Australian society.

The exegesis explains why the novel is considered the most appropriate creative form in which to service the objectives of the thesis; why it is in the form of a young adult fictional work; the organisation involved in developing the creative work (including decisions on architecture, story arc, content, literacy style and techniques); the research, shared cultural knowledge, and family and personal knowledge that I have drawn on in writing the novel; my review of other Aboriginal authors and writing styles; the methodology I have used to draft and write this work; what I have learned in this process; and the challenges I have overcome to complete this project.

Through examination of the novelistic form and technique, my awareness of the importance of storytelling throughout the traditional history of Aboriginal people, and my research of diverse fields of discourse and endeavour to create knowledge that adds to the ongoing conversation in creative practice and scholarship, I have developed two integrated works that aim to increase social understanding, and the opportunity for reconciliation, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

As a 'Loreman', I have a responsibility 'to care for my place and all things in my place.' By sharing some of the knowledge I have been given by my Elders, I hope to demonstrate to the reader, the significance and accessibility of Aboriginal culture to all who live in this country. By bringing the two worlds together, we all win.

Certification

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this thesis are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

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Candidate Name	Date

Acknowledgements

To the Spirit Ancestors who have come before me, I pay my respects and acknowledge the stories and wisdom you have placed in the land for us to listen and learn from.

There are many people who have played important roles in the story of my life. Without them this exegesis and the associated novel would have never came to be. I give thanks to my Mum and Dad for the love and nurture they have provided all my life. I give thanks to John Grogan, a primary school teacher who gave me a love of learning at a very young age.

I acknowledge how blessed I am to have met my wife Alison on the 24th of December, 1986, the most important day of my life and the three children Rhys, Brianna and Liam we have had the privilege of sharing the last three decades with. Watching our children grow in the cultural embrace of Worimi country has shown me the power of our culture and how it is very much alive. Seeing what wonderful adults, they have become has inspired me to write a novel targeting young adults so that others may also be able to grow in the fertile soil world's oldest living culture provides.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dugald Williamson for his guidance, nurture, and patience in helping me navigate the many challenges I have encountered in completing this project. I also give thanks for the masterful input provided by my co-supervisor Ariella Van Luyn. I would like to thank Eliza Kent for convincing me to enrol in this program of study. Without her unbounded belief in me, I would never have contemplated undertaking such a task.

In particular, I would like to thank Uncle Paul Gordon, my cultural mentor who has shared so much with me over many decades. I hope this work is something he and the Old Men who passed the Lore onto him, can be proud of.

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Chapter One

Introduction

My name is Paul Callaghan. I am an Aboriginal man belonging to the Gummipingal Clan (Enright 1932, p75), one of many clans ..of the Worimi people. I am a man who walks two worlds. I am a Loreman - a man who has undertaken ceremony and understands, lives, and celebrates the unique belief systems that connect Aboriginal people physically and spiritually to country and place. I also walk the footsteps of the Western world as a husband, father, taxpayer and holder of several Western qualifications. *'*Guri Worimi barray guudji yiigu nyuranang.' As a man of Worimi country, I say hello to you all.

In 2013 I was appointed into one of the most senior Aboriginal roles in the NSW Public Service. Working in the public sector until my retirement was my plan. The fact that I have undertaken a PhD at this time of my life (I have turned 60 since undertaking this project) is therefore a surprising one for me. Given my background in analytics, strategy and executive leadership, and my degree in commerce, it is even more surprising that I have undertaken a PhD in Creative Practice. Now that I have completed my thesis, there is no surprise. In addition to providing me with the opportunity to research, develop and communicate new knowledge, this PhD has provided me with the opportunity to understand why I write and to be a better writer. It has also enabled me to gain insight into who I am and to better articulate my life's purpose. This process of inner growth is not new to me. In my late thirties I was recovering from a nervous breakdown and feeling lost. During this time I met cultural Elder and senior Loreman, Uncle Paul Gordon. I was given access to ceremony and knowledge that healed me and

gave me meaning and purpose in my life. Becoming a Loreman was a transformation that provided me with new ways of thinking and seeing the world that made life easier and more fulfilling. A Loreman's primary role is to 'care for our place and all things in our place.' Part of our role is to show others how to do this. By enabling people to connect with the teachings of the Lore, a Loreman hopes to create an opportunity for improved wellbeing for both the land itself and things that live on it, including humans. In Aboriginal culture, knowledge is of no use if it isn't shared (Paul Gordon 2014, pers. comm.). It is therefore important to me that the information I provide in this exegesis is relevant to the reader and the world they live in so they may be inspired to share the knowledge it contains. In doing this, it is also important that the awareness I create for a reader reflects an Aboriginal perspective of history, pre-and post-invasion. Sebbens (2020) conveys what I hope to achieve:

> The golden age of Indigenous television is upon us and why? Because, we First Nations people, have gained control of our narrative. We are exploring storytelling through television in every way we can. We will make mistakes, we will make history, we will spark dialogue and incite empathy. We will no longer accept a non-Indigenous lens fogging over our history and our lived experience.

Much of what has been written about Aboriginal people's history has been written by non-Aboriginal people. I feel very privileged to be part of a process of cultural reclamation where Aboriginal people can conduct research and convey narrative that explains our history and lived experience through an Aboriginal lens of truth.

Central problem and question

This project has evolved from two threads that are somewhat interwoven and yet distinct. Thread one is the collective story of Aboriginal people pre- and post-white colonisation/invasion. Thread two relates to my personal journey and lived experience as an Aboriginal person. Exploration of both threads exposes the ongoing effects of

white occupation and in particular, cultural genocide, on Aboriginal people in Australia today. This line of inquiry can be framed into an overarching central problem:

> The impact of invasion and control of Aboriginal people (including the attempted annihilation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and practices) has accumulated across generations, leading to socioeconomic inequity that undermines the wellbeing of Aboriginal people, non-Aboriginal people, and the land itself.

The exegesis explores the central problem by reviewing a chain of critical events that have occurred since 1788, the consequences of these occurrences and the need to communicate these impacts to represent Indigenous agency. This investigative process requires cross-disciplinary research and expression of my findings to explain what fuels my creative endeavour, which is captured in the central question:

> How can storytelling in the form of a novel targeting young adult readers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), balance the desire to educate and the need to entertain, in representing complex social, cultural and personal issues that face Aboriginal people today, and communicate the importance of culture and Lore in addressing these problems and creating a healing platform for all Australians?

Providing an understanding of why I have written this novel and the organisation involved in developing it (including decisions on architecture, plot, content, storylines, and techniques as they relate to the development of a sequel to an earlier creative work) gives insight into how I have gone about answering the central question. Understanding the causes that underpin the complex problems that Aboriginal people face is pivotal in the work I have created and vital in the bigger picture of enabling Aboriginal

communities to achieve a state of improved wellbeing. It frustrates me that analysing the cause of a problem in developing a solution is so often ignored by politicians, planners, social justice advocates, systems, and processes. This failure of logic often leads to programs, activities and actions developed for Aboriginal people, addressing symptoms rather than cause, meaning at a deeper, systemic level, nothing changes. When a critical mass of Australians better understands the journey of Aboriginal people and our story, they will be in a better place to sit down with us, listen to us, and do things with us rather than to us. This coming together can facilitate a national voyage of healing and reconciliation where we can all benefit from the cultural narrative that has been in the land since the beginning of time.

Creative objectives

By combining the central question with the central problem, three critical project objectives have been articulated to guide the writing process. This is important given I have chosen the telling of story to be the platform of cultural exchange that assists to redress some of the repercussions of colonialism relating to assimilation, cultural unsafety, intergenerational trauma, and the lack of focus on cultural reclamation.

Objective 1

Through the culturally expressive form of storytelling, develop a young adult novel that provides a creative and engaging means to generate increased understanding of the problems Aboriginal people face in Australia today and the importance of culture and Lore in addressing these problems.

Objective 2

Through the form or storytelling, provide Aboriginal people with literacy challenges, a culturally engaging and safe resource that can be used to support improved reading and writing skills.

Objective 3

Provide storylines, characters and events that appeal to young adult readers while also potentially engaging a broader readership through the generation of dramatic interest, connection, tension, character empathy, and literary pleasure.

Objective 4

Contribute to a broader cultural and social understanding that provides:

- Aboriginal readers with a stimulus to review their sense of cultural identity and its importance in achieving a state of wellbeing.
- Non-Aboriginal readers with an ability to contribute to a more united, culturally respectful, and safe environment for Aboriginal people.
- All readers with an increased understanding of the value of traditional Aboriginal ontology in the modern Australian landscape.

Addressing the central problem, central question and creative objectives

The novel created for this project isn't the first written work I have produced. Over the years and prior to the start of this candidature, I had authored a self-help book, *iridescence – Finding Your Colours and Living Your Story* (Callaghan & Gordon 2014),

and the manuscript of a novel titled, *Coincidence.* When analysing my project aims, it became apparent to me the characters and story arcs I had created in *Coincidence* provided me with the perfect springboard for what I hope to achieve with this PhD. By situating the novel, *Consequence,* as a sequel, I could build on existing characters and delve deeper into the complex and confronting themes this project requires. Although *Consequence* flows from a prequel, it is a work with its own scope, purpose and need for new research that adds to, and integrates, my personal, cultural and professional knowledge. Traditionally, storytelling is a primary pedagogical tool and an inherent part of our cultural practice. As a Loreman, I have a sacred responsibility to do this. Through this project, I have the privilege of shifting the delivery mode from an oral to a written form which reflects the need for me to be adaptive to the evolving real-world environment that I am required to navigate in order to fulfil my obligations. My research into the how and why I choose to do this has enabled me to bring together diverse fields of discourse and endeavour for a common purpose, the creation of knowledge that adds to the on-going conversation in creative practice and scholarship. In my endeavour to provide new insights into Aboriginal lived experience, spirituality and how this improved understanding can lead to a more united, harmonious Australia, I have leveraged various methods of literary expression, including the incorporation of Indigenous realism, into numerous storylines. By incorporating indigenous, magical and supernatural phenomena into real world, storyline settings, I have hopefully provided the reader with an opportunity to 'experience' the essence of Aboriginal spirituality and the beliefs that are so intrinsic to our way of being. The use of story within a story (hypodiegesis) has also been important in constructing this novel as it enables me to use rich and varied characterisations in an intimate and interactive way to cover a range of

complex issues Aboriginal people face in contemporary Australia. The use of Indigenous realism and hypodiegesis is hoped to increase the entertainment aspect of the novel to address some of the possible barriers I face in accessing the young adult audience, such as competing with alternative pursuits that provide more instant gratification and a perception that reading is not an enjoyable experience.

Organisation of the chapters

The sequencing of chapters is important in the construct of the exegesis as each chapter builds insight into the logic I have used to address the central problem, the central question, the associated objectives and inform the creative work itself.

Chapter Two provides insight into the genesis of the central problem through the provision of a chronology of Aboriginal people's collective experience post-occupation and how these experiences have disrupted tens of thousands of years of wellbeing in mind, body, and spirit. These ordeals include high mortality; disconnection from Lore, family, land, language, and ceremony; assimilation and acculturation; racism and cultural unsafety; and socioeconomic disadvantage.

Chapter Three explores the genesis of the central problem from the perspectives of my mother, my father and myself. Specific examples are provided of the racism my mother endured and my father observed over many decades. The chapter also sheds light on how the absence of traditional cultural knowledge and practice in my life affected my self-esteem as I transitioned from child to adult, eventually leading to depression, a nervous breakdown, and thoughts of suicide. The chapter concludes with

my career experience of targeted government programs failing to service the needs of Aboriginal people.

Chapter Four examines political and social contexts of current day Australia that make the novel and exegesis so pertinent. It also investigates why I believe storytelling through the written form to be the most appropriate form of creative practice to address the central problem I have identified and why a young adult audience is targeted. In doing this, works of various Aboriginal authors are reviewed with a view to comparing themes, styles, and author motivations. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 in essence explain the why of this project.

Chapter Five identifies key architecture underpinning the development of the novel including my responsibilities as a Loreman; setting (including time, location, and physical environment); points of reflection; narration; style and characters.

Chapter Six provides an outline of the issues and challenges I have faced in completing this project. These challenges have involved maintaining flow within the written work, minimising verbosity, balancing the desire to educate with the need to entertain (edutainment – the intention of being education and enjoyable), providing scenes and storylines that capture the hardships faced by Aboriginal people without being seen as overly negative or cynical, and the potential for lateral violence being directed at me. In this chapter, I also explain the ethical dilemmas I struggled with in terms of feeling assimilationist pressure to conform with mainstream dominant culture (including academic practice and literary practice). Chapters 5 and 6 in essence explain the how of this project.

Chapter Seven concludes the exegesis by summarising the key points of why the creative work was developed, the intended readership, how it relates to other creative works in the novel genre and how as a work of historically informed fiction, it addresses the central question and imaginatively seeks to enhance understanding of and invite reflection on the central problem.

Chapter Two

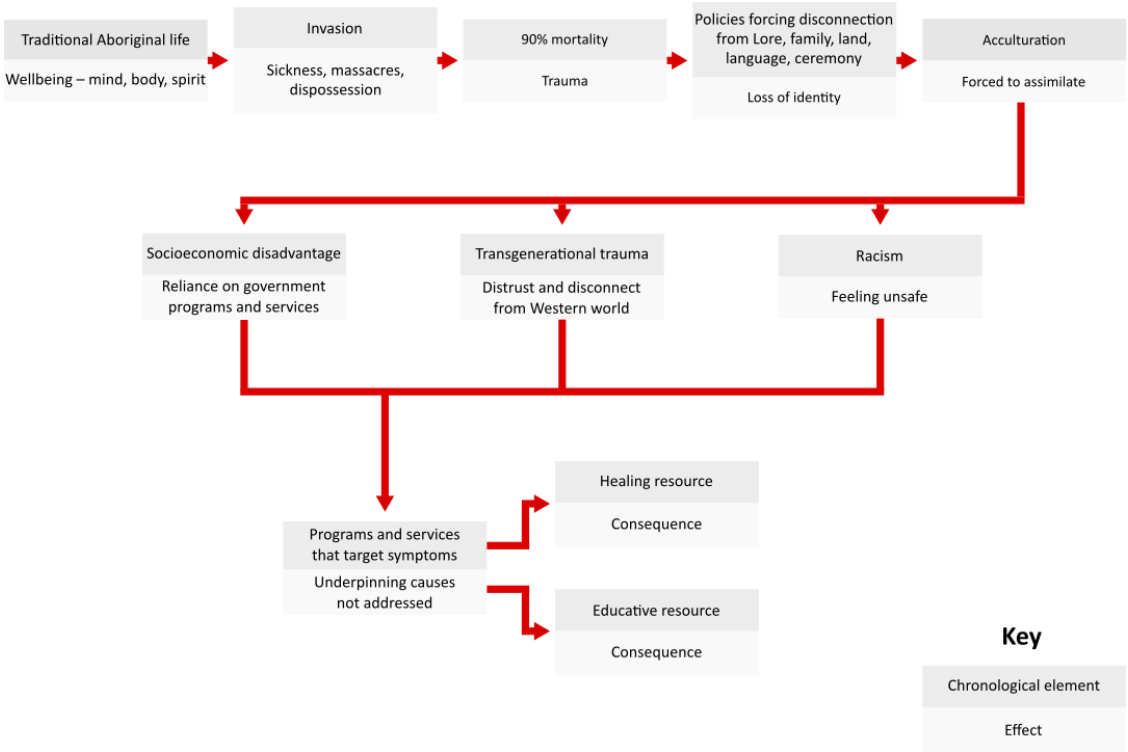
The genesis of the central problem

Before starting this exegesis, it was important for me to reflect on why I wanted to write a novel and what I wanted to write about. Answering these questions required me to undertake a research journey where I contemplated numerous lines of enquiry and discourses in areas such as philosophy, psychology, history, culture, archaeology, politics, health, literature, film, and creative arts. As I began to understand myself and my drivers, it occurred to me that a first step in explaining to others why I do what I do required me to tell the collective story of Aboriginal people pre- and post-invasion.

A chronology of Aboriginal people's collective experience

The flowchart below is a roadmap of how the central problem has come to be.

Figure 1 – Chronology of Aboriginal people's collective experience



It is my abbreviated interpretation of key experiences and events that have significantly impacted on Aboriginal people since the white sails appeared in 1788. Each item listed in the chronology is a metaphoric iceberg for further investigation and contemplation. Each iceberg provides a gateway of learning on the many and varied external forces that have dictated the Aboriginal living environment over the past 230 years. They provide an exegetic narrative relating to the central problem and insight into the many stories that need to be told and heard. These events are the driving force that underpin the development of the novel's story arc, key storylines, and characters, which in turn address the project objectives.

Life BC (Before Cook)

Scientific figures on how long Aboriginal people have occupied this continent vary from 50,000 to 120,000 years depending on what research is accessed. From an Aboriginal perspective, our Old People say we have been here since the beginning. The comment below from Paul Gordon (2017, pers. comm., May) suggests that in traditional times, Aboriginal people lived rewarding and contented lives mentally, physically, and spiritually:

> Imagine a world where there is no war and no poverty. Imagine a world with no castles or fences, where there is no hunger or homelessness. Where people live to be old and contented in mind, body, and spirit. That is the way our people lived for a very, very long time. Life could sometimes be hard, but our knowledge of the land meant that we always had what we needed.

Since occupation, many non-Aboriginal Australians haven't understood the state of wellbeing achieved in traditional times, preferring to believe that invasion has saved Aboriginal people from their primitive ways: 'When the white man first carried the burden and blessing of civilisation to the shores of Australia, he found the land inhabited by a very primitive race of people' (Thomas 1923). This kind of thinking is

still evident in Australia today as reported in an article by NITV relating to a comment made by Prime Minister Tony Abbott in 2018: 'What happened on the 26th January 1788 was, on balance, for everyone, Aboriginal people included, a good thing because it brought Western civilisation to this country, it brought Australia into the modern world' (Thorpe 2018).

Gorman (2018) suggests this kind of labelling has been used for sinister purposes over hundreds of years:

> American anthropologist Lewis Morgan … argued that all human populations passed through the stages of "Savagery, through to Barbarism to Civilisation". Stone tool technology, he argued, was a feature of savagery … in the 19th and 20th centuries, these ideas were put to sinister use as European nations expanded their colonies in Indigenous lands.

This kind of socially and historically constructed image of Aboriginal people coming from the stone age still problematically informs stereotypic views of Aboriginal traditional society and Aboriginal people today. Westaway (2014) provides commentary on this kind of thinking, using an archaeological, scientific lens:

> The archaeological history of the First Australians is a truly remarkable story … unfortunately, very few Australians are aware of this story. It does not easily fit with the colonial mythologies around which popular histories of Australia have traditionally been constructed … perhaps the most insidious myth perpetuated about Aboriginal society is the idea it was 'primitive', 'stone age', 'nomadic', or 'unevolved'. This type of thinking feeds racist stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes which continue to marginalise and disassociate Aboriginal Australians from the national identity. The archaeology of our continent directly refutes this type of thinking, but until recently the monuments and achievements of ancient Australia have remained largely invisible to the mainstream public.

It is important that the monuments and achievements of ancient Australia aren't invisible. The creation of a novel that provides insight on the complex nature of traditional Aboriginal Australia culture and the destructive impact of colonialism on that society demonstrates how an artistic work can reflect deeper understandings and sit alongside scientific and specialised fields of research and discourse. The artistic voice doesn't speak in isolation. It sits within a wider dialogue of unified desire where

different fields of endeavour can become a collaborative, educative force of positive change for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Consequence aims to challenge the stereotyping of Aboriginal people (and culture) as being primitive and stone age, through characters such as Uncle Shakey, Uncle Clarry, Dinegal and Wollambi. These characters provide insight into traditional ontology and the sophisticated ways of thinking that enabled the achievement of wellbeing in mind, body, and spirit for so long. It is hoped these insights will motivate the reader to further explore the integrated and complex systems traditional Aboriginal people utilised in areas such as education, socialisation, governance, health, land management and leadership. As Tatz posited (1999, p. 319), Aboriginal social organisation was highly complicated, including systems of kinship, reciprocity and child rearing, totemic ties and holding of land title. By showing the reader the systems and values embedded in Aboriginal culture, the written work aspires to an opportunity to look back in time and visualise Aboriginal people smiling, laughing, singing, socialising and in general, living happy, contented lives. The creative work also seeks to show that Indigenous culture is not frozen in a past time, but also evolving.

Invasion and assimilation

The first century and a half of European-Aboriginal relations in Australia can be characterised as a period of dispossession, physical ill-treatment, social disruption, population decline, economic exploitation, codified discrimination, and cultural devastation (Gardiner 1999) with loss of life over the period 1788-1920 estimated to be somewhere between 80% and 96% (Harris 2003, p. 81). The physical, spiritual, and emotional wounds inflicted on Australia's First Peoples through these acts continue to impact on the current health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Griffith

University n.d.). In addition, Aboriginal people have been continually subjected to legislation and policies based on Western value systems that control almost all aspects of Aboriginal people's lives (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2022). The collective impact of these various dominant culture constructs, including forced disconnect from cultural practice, on Aboriginal people has caused considerable pain for Aboriginal people (Australians Together 2019):

> Land, family, law, ceremony, and language are five key interconnected elements of Indigenous culture … the five elements combine to create a way of seeing and being in the world that's distinctly Indigenous. Understanding how intricately interconnected these elements are, helps us understand the damage done when colonisation occurred. Being disconnected from culture can have a profound impact on a person's sense of identity and belonging. Identity and belonging gives meaning and purpose to people's lives. Understanding this will help us find appropriate ways to respond to the pain caused by colonisation.

This passage posits how cultural genocide can impact on a person's sense of identity, belonging, meaning and purpose, reinforcing the damage that acculturation continues to generate in Aboriginal communities. Atkinson (2002, p. 71) indicates the destructive impact of cultural genocide:

> Cultural genocide not only works to destroy the cultures of oppressed peoples, it also eradicates the sense of self, of self-worth and of wellbeing in individuals and groups so that they are unable to function from either their own cultural relatedness, or from the culture of the oppressors. They feel in a world between, devalued, and devaluing who they are.

Consequence aims to inspire the Aboriginal reader to commence a journey of self-reflection and healing to address the effects of the oppressive forces that surround them.

The fact that adolescence is a such a critical time in identity formation (Pfeifer and Berkman 2018, p. 158) supports my decision to target this novel to a young adult readership. The work explores the concept of identity through the journey of three important young adult characters. In this novel and its prequel, *Coincidence*, the reader follows the story of Daniel (who was taken from his mother at birth), as he explores his identity, including what 'being Aboriginal' means. This includes several scenes where

Elders Uncle Shakey and Uncle Clarry share time, experiences and cultural learning that enables Daniel to connect with country, ceremony, Lore, family, and language. In this creative work and the prequel, the reader also follows the story of Inala, a young adult who, unlike Daniel, has grown up with Aboriginal family and culture. Her identity challenges are different from Daniel's. So, for example, in a scene in Chapter 26, Daniel is called a 'comeback boomerang' which challenges his belief as to whether he is a 'genuine' Aboriginal person. In the same scene, Inala is abused and wonders whether she is helping her people or harming them rather than questioning whether she is Aboriginal. The sequel, *Consequence,* introduces a new female character, Jasmine, into the narrative. Jasmine's journey includes healing from several hardships she encountered in her early years. By providing storylines and alternative worldviews through characters that are accessible and believable, I seek to show young adult readers alternative ways to deal with pressure they might feel to 'fit in' with peer groups and a propensity to conform with societal expectations that might undermine their life dreams and goals. Instances where I have done this in the novel include Jasmine saying no to domestic violence, Daniel resigning from his job, Inala's conversations with Jasmine and Daniel, and Kyle who is non-Aboriginal but has been friends with Daniel since school and going bush with Uncle Shakey for many years. In doing this, I aim to create a safe space for the reader to contemplate who they are and what they want to do in their life.

Dudgeon et al. (2016, p. 119) captures the pressure on Aboriginal people to assimilate to the dominant post-colonial culture: 'It is the unquestioned ethnocentric and hegemonic view that Western normative practices are the 'right' or 'correct' ways of being and that Western knowledge, including norms of scientific enquiry are superior'.

The enforcement of ‘white’ value systems and practices on Aboriginal people and the forced disconnect from Aboriginal value systems and practices can make it difficult for an Aboriginal person to define meaning and purpose in their lives. As Milroy et. al. (cited in Dudgeon et al. 2016, p. 126) suggests, without restoration of culture, assimilationist pressures will continue to undermine the ability of many of our people to free themselves from the chains of ‘white’ societal expectations:

> When Indigenous people have their rights and cultures restored, genuine reconciliation or healthy acculturation can take place. Without cultural survival, Indigenous acculturation sees only two options, one of assimilative nature that repeats oppressive policy form the last two centuries, and one of living in the fringe of two worlds, resembling and reflecting the case of marginalisation.

Young people in Australia indicate their greatest issues in 2021 relate to health, the environment, equity and discrimination, mental health, education, and job prospects (Mission Australia 2021). In addition, young people are worried about how they look, what they are going to do with their life, pressure from peers relating to drugs and alcohol consumption, having friends, being popular, having fun and identity (Walton 2022). For Aboriginal youth, these pressures can be even greater, particularly relating to marginalisation from the Western world or feeling like they are living on the fringe of two worlds. By creating a safe place for the Aboriginal young adult reader to visit the Aboriginal world (through traditional and contemporary storylines), the novel aims to encourage the reader to focus on who they are, what is meaningful to them and to pursue their life goals and purpose with belief and confidence. To do this, the written work explores the construction of complex time where storylines are presented in current time and also earlier time (sometimes a few years, sometimes decades, sometimes thousands of years), as a means of showing the reader problems and solutions in different contexts, thereby adding to the learning experience. Although the storylines and characters will provide Aboriginal young adult readers with the

opportunity to connect with a process of cultural reclamation, the novel is also intended to resonate with a broader young adult audience and provide similar opportunities for reflection and growth.

Racism and cultural unsafety

Racism is fuelled by the belief that certain races of people are superior to others. Schmid (1996, pp. 31-40) considers racism based on three different approaches: behavioural (the failure to give equal consideration), motivational (the infliction of unequal consideration motivated by the desire to dominate), and cognitive (unequal consideration, out of the belief of inferiority). Aboriginal people experience all these aspects of racism on a continual basis through a variety of settings such as social media, mainstream media, when shopping, when accessing services, when undertaking recreational pursuits and when socialising. Part of the novel's intent is to provide young adult readers with an alternative view of Aboriginal culture, thereby undermining the potentiality for racist ways of thinking and behaving to become established. Dudgeon's earlier comment that Western knowledge, including norms of scientific enquiry are seen as superior, is an example of the type of thinking that feeds racism. Dudgeon, Rickwood et. al. (cited in Dudgeon et al. 2016, p. 126) suggest that contemporary racism results in significant impoverishment in almost every aspect of Indigenous life, including mental health, social and economic outcomes, educational achievements and over representation in the justice system.

The combined effect of racism and the pressure to assimilate to the dominant Australian culture has created a nation where many Aboriginal people feel culturally unsafe. Unsafe cultural practice comprises any action which diminishes, demeans, or

disempowers the cultural identity and wellbeing of an individual (Nursing Council of New Zealand 2011). This process often starts at school where Aboriginal children are taught to, and assessed against, a curriculum that is reflective of Western world values and white privilege assumptions. In many instances, Aboriginal children respond negatively to this assimilationist learning paradigm, often leading to poor learning results, feelings of shame and embarrassment and disengagement from the learning process (mentally and physically). The Western system of learning can undermine self–esteem and create self-doubt that the student carries into their high school and young adult years. These feelings of self-doubt can escalate when stereotypic labels such as lazy, unreliable, smelly, thief, dumb, stupid, drunk, and violent are directed to them or their family members. This experience of trauma, when combined with the effects of intergenerational trauma and cultural genocide can give rise to numerous barriers and hurdles for an Aboriginal young adult to navigate. A more constructive, inclusive, and culturally safe and inclusive pedagogy is essential in the school system if positive change is to occur. *Consequence* aims to complement a new pedagogical approach by introducing the reader to insights that facilitate cultural learning in a culturally rich learning environment. This is another example of the specialised field of creative practice harmonising with alternative fields of endeavour (education and social development) using story as an agent of transformation. The novel has several storylines that demonstrate the culturally unsafe and racist environment that Aboriginal people are required to navigate daily. The incident at Mendalgah Pub and the scenes involving Minister Conard and the Aboriginal Elders, Gail in the ER waiting room, Katie at the Australia Day protest march, Uncle Charlie at the RSL, and Mick Saddler, provide authentic insight into the short, intermediate, and long-term experiences of

racism (personal and systemic), cultural unsafety and unconscious bias in Aboriginal people's lives.

Socioeconomic disadvantage

The consequence of the chronological elements outlined so far in this chapter is that the current lived experience for many Aboriginal people is one of widespread socioeconomic disadvantage and health inequality (Institute of Health and Welfare 2017). The Social Health Reference Group, National strategic framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's mental health and social and emotional wellbeing 2004-2009 (cited by Dudgeon, Milroy & Walker 2014, p. 99), state that social disadvantage is one of several risks to wellbeing that Aboriginal people face because of colonisation:

> The enduring legacy of colonisation on Aboriginal life has been pervasive and affected multiple generations and extends to all dimensions of the holistic notion of Aboriginal wellbeing, including psychological, social, spiritual and cultural aspects of life and connection to land. This has resulted in serious additional risks to wellbeing.

Although *Consequence* provides numerous storylines and learning opportunities that are intended to be motivational and aspirational, it is important that the overarching narrative accurately represents the difficulties Aboriginal people have faced and continue to face in Australia today due to the enduring legacy of colonisation. Issues such as grief, loss, trauma, abuse, removal from family, substance misuse, racism, exclusion and social disadvantage are therefore captured in a variety of ways through a variety of characters and scenes.

In many instances, the hardships faced by the respective characters are the result of the power imbalance Aboriginal people face in their daily lives. The inclusion of a character who is a government Minister with an ability to influence policies relating to

Aboriginal people, the creation of a storyline involving an energy company with legislative powers that override Aboriginal cultural demands, the depiction of an Australia Day protest rally in Canberra relating to Australia Day, and the inclusion of an incident where an assault doesn't result in natural justice, provide realistic and emotive scenes in the novel that demonstrate how powerless Aboriginal people are in a wide range of contexts. It is important the creative work shows the influence of 'white' power and control in current Aboriginal lived experience to counter the notion that Aboriginal people are a problem. Alyawarre Elder, Rosalie Kunoth-Monks (Knox 2014) spoke for many Aboriginal people:

> … this is the country I came out from. I didn't come from overseas. I came from here … I am alive, I am here and now … don't try and suppress me and don't call me a problem. I am not the problem. I have never left my country nor have I ceded any part of it. Nobody has entered into a treaty or talked to me about who I am. I am Arrernte Alyawarre female elder from this country. Please remember that. I am not the problem.

The novel also aims to counter any thought that Aboriginal people are to blame for the many problems they face. Logic would suggest that any community or grouping of peoples that has been invaded; suffered 80% mortality within 100 years of invasion; had multiple generations of children taken away; been geographically relocated from a place of physical, emotional and spiritual significance; forced to change spiritual beliefs and practices; forced to change language; been racially vilified, alienated and prevented from accessing opportunities to social determinants of health in an equitable way; would be in a place of socioeconomic impoverishment. If one follows this logic, Aboriginal people can be in no other place of social standing then where they are currently situated. Through the provision of stories that generate understanding and empathy, the novel aims to be a catalyst of change for improved relationships and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people so that Aboriginal people are no longer seen as 'the problem'.

Changing the chronological tone

For most Aboriginal people, the chronological tone, that is, the overarching 'feel' of events since 1788, has not been a pleasant or positive one for Aboriginal people. It is a tone of trauma and hardship. Since the early 1900s, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have protested, marched, and advocated for change to support improved Aboriginal social standing. The table below captures some of these critical events.

Table 2 – Critical events that have supported positive change for Aboriginal people

Critical events	**Year**
Day of Mourning held	1938
Cummeragunja Walk Off	1939
NADOC formed	1957
Right to vote in Commonwealth elections	1962
Freedom Ride	1965
Wave Hill Walk Off	1966
Establishment of Aboriginal Legal Service and Aboriginal Medical Service – Redfern	1970-1971
Tent Embassy Canberra	1972
Whitlam hands back title to Gurundji people Racial Discrimination Act passed Aboriginal Day extended to National Aborigines Week	1975
Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (NSW) passed	1983
Uluru Handed Back	1985
Bicentenary Marches on Australia Day	1988
ATSIC Established	1990
Royal Commission into Deaths in Custody Report	1991
Mabo Decision	1992
Bringing Them Home Report	1997

Sea of Hands National Sorry Day	
Rudd Says Sorry National Sorry Day	2008
Black Lives Matter protests	2020

Each of these events involved people of passion, courage, and vision with a commitment to change. There is no time like the present to continue and build on legacy of our past heroes to change the chronological tone for the future.

Healing from the trauma and loss

Trauma and loss have had a significant impact on the wellbeing of Aboriginal people since European invasion and continue to have intergenerational effects (Commonwealth of Australia 2013, p. 3). The constitution of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) (2011, pp. 5-6), describes Aboriginal health as follows:

> Aboriginal health means not just the physical well-being of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural well-being of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being thereby bringing about the total well-being of their community. It is a whole of life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life.

Intergenerational trauma compounds the challenges an individual faces relating to cultural identity and cultural safety, meaning the achievement of wellbeing in accordance with the NACCHO definition can become so difficult, people can give up trying to achieve it. Reclamation, protection and promotion of traditional principles and practices as outlined by Professor Ngiare Brown (cited Commonwealth of Australia 2013, p. 9) may be the catalyst required to reshape this current situation:

> At our best we bring our traditional principles and practices – respect, generosity, collective benefit and collective ownership – to our daily expression of our identity and culture in a

> contemporary context. When we are empowered to do this, and where systems facilitate this reclamation, protection and promotion, we are healthy, well and successful and our communities thrive.

Access to tools and events that assist cultural reclamation can be a significant component of the healing process. There are many ways to do this including through the powerful medium of creative practice. Daniel's journey of healing following the Mendalgah Pub incident is an example of how culture can play a crucial role in remedying the pain and suffering triggered by trauma. Caruana (2010, p. 5) suggests the term healing can mean different things to different people:

> Given the complexity and diversity of needs in Indigenous communities, "healing" will mean different things to different people … however, there is a degree of consensus in the literature that healing relates to the personal journey of individuals, families and communities dealing with the trauma caused by past policies and current disadvantage.

The earlier NACCHO definition of wellbeing states an individual can't be well if the entire community isn't well. If we embrace this definition in a broad context, non-Aboriginal Australians can't achieve a state of wellbeing until all Aboriginal people are well and vice versa (hence the need for a healing platform for all Australians as stated in part in the central question). According to Phillips and Bamblett (cited in a report by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team 2009, p. 4), for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, healing is 'A spiritual process that includes addictions recovery, therapeutic change and cultural renewal'. *Consequence* aims to support the healing process. Helen Milroy in the foreword to *Traditional Healers of Central Australia: Ngangkari* (2013, p. 13), provides insight into what healing feels like from a spiritual perspective:

> Healing gives us back to ourselves. Not to hide or fight anymore. But to sit still, calm our minds, listen to the universe and allow our spirits to dance on the wind. It lets us enjoy the sunshine and be bathed by the golden glow of the moon as we drift into our dreamtime. Healing ultimately gives us back our country. To stand once again in our rightful place, eternal and generational.

Given the importance of spirituality in the healing process, the novel includes many references to Aboriginal spirituality through stories told by Elders: Uncle Shakey and Uncle Clarry, and storylines involving spiritual characters Baatjay, Wawaii, Wollembi, Dinegal and the Yurri. Several characters undergo profound emotional, physical, and spiritual transformation and healing, including Daniel who unexpectedly finds himself caught in the dark web of depression, Katie who is involved in a serious accident that leaves her with a severe physical disability, Jasmine who has been subjected to life threatening domestic violence, and Gail who is a recovering alcoholic. The intention of the novel is to allow the reader to observe each character, understand what they are thinking and feeling, follow their setbacks and successes, and learn from each character's experience.

Reconciliation

At its heart, reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples for the benefit of all Australians (Reconciliation Australia 2019). The act of reconciliation can be supported in many ways including by learning about Indigenous history, watching movies, learning about art and artists, attending community events, learning about on country protocols, visiting organisations, visiting sites of cultural significance, undertaking cultural awareness activities, engaging in conversations, displaying flags and artworks, and reading literature. As an item of literature, *Consequence* is therefore an important opportunity to support reconciliation.

In 2016, Aboriginal journalist Stan Grant delivered an erudite and captivating speech that included the following words (Ethics Centre 2016):

> We heard a howl. We heard a howl of humiliation that echoes across two centuries of dispossession, injustice, suffering and survival. We heard the howl of the Australian dream and it said to us again, you're not welcome. The Australian Dream. We sing of it, and we recite it in verse. Australians all, let us rejoice for we are young and free. My people die young in this country. We die ten years younger than average Australians and we are far from free.

Grant's words are a powerful substantiation of the need for reconciliation if Aboriginal people are to attain the rights of freedom and freedom of choice that many non-Aboriginal Australians take for granted. Grant's reference to the Australian National Anthem provides an opportunity to explore the word 'young'. From an Aboriginal perspective, we have been 'in country' since the beginning of time. We are ancient, not young. The inappropriate use of the word 'young' in the National Anthem is an indication of the invisibility and unimportance of Aboriginal people (and Aboriginal culture) in the national mindset as captured by Carroll (2017) where she states: 'The (pejorative) comment about being a "young" country (with no time to build "culture") always gets to me. It of course denies (forgets about?) Australian Indigenous culture which is an issue in itself'. The fact that the ancient peoples and culture of this land are so unnoticed in the national symbols of Australia (anthem, flag) reinforces why the central question of this project is so important to me.

It is my intention that the novel provides non-Aboriginal Australians with an increased desire to pursue reconciliation at a granular (personalised and lived) level. It is my hope that one day, non-Aboriginal Australians from all walks of life will respect Aboriginal culture enough to sit down with Elders and allow our stories to be shared with them. It is my dream that one day, all people of this land might feel part of the land and accept the responsibility we all have, to care for the land as described by traditional owner Bill Neidjie, Bunitj Clan (Moreton-Robinson 2020):

> Our story is in the land … it is written in those sacred places. My children will look after those places, that's the law. Dreaming place … you can't change it no matter who you are. No matter you rich man, no matter you King. You can't change it … Rock stays, earth stays. I die and put my bones in cave or earth. Soon my bones become earth … all the same. My spirit has gone back to my country… my mother.

By seeking to give non-Aboriginal people the confidence and understanding to sit with Aboriginal people and learn about this ancient place, the novel aims to provide all Australians with the opportunity to be given the gift described below in the following way by David Mowaljarlai, senior Loreman of the Ngarinyin people of the west Kimberley (Grieves 2009, p. 7):

> We are really sorry for you people. We cry for you because you haven't got meaning of culture in this country. We have a gift we want to give you. We keep getting blocked from giving you that gift … all we want to do is come out from under all of this and give you this gift … it's the culture which is the blood of this country, of Aboriginal groups, of the ecology, of the land itself.

After the many atrocities inflicted upon Aboriginal people since 1788, and given the many hardships Aboriginal people face in Australia today, I am inspired by the fact that Elders such as Grandfather David Mowaljarlai want to give the Australian people a gift. The spirit of generosity and love shown by our Elders has been my personal motivation to create a novel that enables culture to be shared with young adults and hopefully motivate them to come together on a journey of reconciliation and healing that enables all Australians to benefit from the gift of culture which is the blood of this country. The novel has numerous occasions where culture is shared, including Uncle Shakey telling Dreamtime stories in real time and in flashbacks, Inala passing on learning she has been given by Elders, Uncle Clarry giving Daniel advice, and the use of Indigenous realism in specific scenes and dream sequences.

Addressing cause as well as symptom

The Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report (Productivity Commission 2020, p.2.6) lists Council of Australian Governments (COAG) targets and headline indicators

relating to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage.

Table 3 – COAG targets and headline indicators relating to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage

COAG Targets	**Headline Indicators**
4.1 Life expectancy	4.8 Post and secondary education
4.2 Young child mortality	4.9 Disability and chronic disease
4.3 Early childhood education	4.10 Household and individual income
4.4 Reading, writing and numeracy	4.11 Substantiated child abuse and neglect
4.5 Year 1 to 10 attendance	4.12 Family and community violence
4.6 Year 12 attainment	4.13 Imprisonment and juvenile detention
4.7 Employment	

The COAG targets and Headline Indicators, although important data sets to monitor, are problematic given they reflect symptoms of the disadvantage faced by Aboriginal people rather than the causes of disadvantage. By setting targets that measure symptomology, causality is often not addressed (including the appropriate funding of programs that support the renewal of culture and cultural identity). The lack of focus on cause explains why Aboriginal social standing has failed to substantially improve over the years despite an annual expenditure on Aboriginal services of $33.4 billion in 2015-2016 (Productivity Commission 2017).

Over the past 20 years I have spent much of my time sharing cultural knowledge and story with Aboriginal people of all ages as part of my responsibility as a Loreman to give back what I have been given. I have seen many people benefit from this exchange process (including myself). Observing the cultural evolution of young adults has been a particularly rewarding experience. I have seen many of these young people transform from feeling lost to feeling they have purpose, and I have seen many transition from justice system candidates to role models in their communities. Given my

observed success of the power of cultural immersion to change lives, I recognised some years ago the need to touch more lives, to 'scale up' the experience. The development of this thesis has validated my belief that the modality of creative practice and in particular, the vehicle of a novel, can be an effective means of achieving this goal by broadening the reach of the metaphoric cultural arm to embrace more of our young people (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal). By attempting to engage with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth, I am seeking to facilitate connection and help create a safe space for new relationships, sharing of ideas and personal growth.

The novel therefore aims to resonate with how young people are thinking and feeling at this time of their life through storylines that seek to entertain as well as educate. Many of the characters are young and face the challenges that young people face. The setting of Gulliwai Haven, a healing place for young adults, provides a positive example of the kind of infrastructure and resources needed to support young people as they navigate the difficult stepping-stones to adult life. Gulliwai Haven also shows how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can share culture on a common journey of connection. The conversations between key characters such as Uncle Clarry, Uncle Shakey, Daniel, Jimmy and Billy inform the reader on the 'old ways' and how they can be applied in everyday life. It is my hope that these characters provide a learning experience that can be shared by the reader with others, leading to increased community awareness of Aboriginal worldviews and in the longer term, increased opportunity for reconciliation, healing and unity.

Given the socioeconomic disadvantage faced by many Aboriginal people, families and communities, the dependence on services and programs funded by

government is predictably high. This is argued by Altman and Sanders (1991) to have occurred in the 1980s:

> The 1980s saw a rapid growth of financial resources earmarked for Aboriginal people … With this proliferation of programs, two broad problems arose. The first is Aboriginal dependence on welfare provisions. The second is the fragmentation, duplication, overlap and inefficiency in program delivery.

To overcome inefficiency, government programs are invariably aligned to measurables informed by quantitative evidence framed by dominant culture thinking and value systems. It is therefore unsurprising that programs targeting Aboriginal people (that have been developed with minimal Aboriginal input or understanding of Aboriginal ontology) are failing to meet the needs of our communities. The novel aims to shift this paradigm by showing the non-Aboriginal reader how Aboriginal people think and feel, the importance of listening to Aboriginal people and their stories, the wisdom contained within Aboriginal culture, and the importance of cultural reclamation in addressing the social problems Aboriginal people face.

Although there is no doubt that an ability to achieve parity for Aboriginal people by driving measurable improvements in symptom areas such as life expectancy, child mortality, education, employment, health, and incarceration rates is important, the lack of significant focus on causal elements such as erosion of cultural identity, cultural unsafety and unhealed trauma undermines the ability for longer-term, sustainable and material shifts in wellbeing to be generated. Having asserted the need to assist the reader to not see Aboriginal people as 'the problem,' and to create enhanced cultural and social understanding of the solutions to the problems Aboriginal people face, it is important that the novel generates reader introspection. It does this by providing storylines that expose the falsity of stereotypes placed on Aboriginal people, the impacts of government policies past and present on Aboriginal people, and the traditional values

and practices that enabled Aboriginal people to achieve contentment for thousands of years. This introspection will hopefully be broad and deep and enable the reader to recognise that Aboriginal people's reliance on government services has not been created by Aboriginal people themselves; that culture-based programs that support Aboriginal people to explore their identity are essential for the current socio-economic indicators to shift in a positive way; and that for true reconciliation to be achieved, mainstream Australians need to become part of a combined story rather than a 'white' narrative. It is not the intention of the written work to focus directly on all issues Aboriginal people face today, as to do so would create a convoluted web of storylines that confuse rather than educate and that bore the reader rather than entertain. The novel's aim is to be a catalyst for further learning.

Connecting the past and present in a way that is engaging and represents truth

It is acknowledged that incorporating the challenging and relatively unattractive concepts of invasion, sickness, massacres, transgenerational trauma, acculturation, and racism in a written work that aims to entertain young adults is a risk. To overcome the potential for this work to sound transparently didactic and boring to the young adult readership, great effort has been channelled into developing story arc and associated storylines, characters and conversations that are interesting and engaging without losing authenticity. I have taken particular care in the creation of Aboriginal characters to provide scenes, dialogue and events that encourage the reader to connect with the character at a personal level. In writing the novel, I have sought to construct imagery, events and storylines that can withstand any accusations of having taken a 'black armband', 'unAustralian,' view of history as described by Clark (2002, p. 2):

> This 'black armband' tag was a strategic conservative swipe at histories that revealed Australia's past as racist and violent. Its application served to present critical history as unbalanced, a misrepresentation of our national heritage. Such a view held that, in spite of its historical 'blemishes', to deny Australia its rightful national story was at best recklessly naive, at worst unAustralian.

My desire to avoid accusations of adopting a 'black armband' view is to create a safe and constructive space for 'truth telling'. The novel's determination to express truth, albeit through the fictional form, is critical in seeking to show genuine experiences of Aboriginal people. The young adult fiction mode affords the occasion, and the means, to deliver storylines that can exhibit a wide variety of moods, points of reflection and situations in ways that can be mysterious, entertaining, and engaging.

Consequence aims to inform conversations and actions with the young adult audience that will stimulate long-term change. It seeks to do this by providing the non-Aboriginal reader with insights on how Aboriginal people live and feel in today's Australia; traditional culture and its importance to Aboriginal people; and how Aboriginal culture and ways of thinking can improve their personal wellbeing. By doing this, I hope that grounded and informed conversations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people will flourish, thereby stimulating a symbiotic, mutually beneficial learning process. This process of shining a light on the past to trigger conversations about the present and future isn't a new thing. Much of the scholarly discourse and community commentary that I have cited in this chapter relates to the past. I am hopefully complementing the efforts of those who have come before me. Also of significance is that the many quotations I have cited in this chapter are not situated in the field of creative practice and yet they are very relevant to the process of creative writing I have adopted for this project. Listening to the voices of other writers and speakers in sources ranging from senior Elders (Gordon, Kunoth-Monks, Neidjie and Mowaljarlai) to analysts of history (Clark, Harris and Tatz) to highly regarded

organisations (Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Reconciliation Australia) has been critical in identifying and confirming the issues Aboriginal people face in today's society and the way forward for a healed and reconciled country.

The chronology of Aboriginal people's collective experience since 1788, built upon the observations and historical records of a diverse range of scholars, observers, and people with living memories, provides an exegetic narrative and anchorage points that inform and guide the creative work as it navigates and explores aspects of the central problem and seeks to initiate reader awakenings. This is achieved by including a range of characters with distinct relations to, or varied knowledge of, the past and storylines and scenes that link the past with the present. The importance of connecting the past to the present cannot be overstated. To situate the present project further, in Chapter Three, the non-literary sources of project guidance I have used are complemented by my personal and professional experiences. Chapter Four combines the insights of Chapters Two and Three to examine the political and social context of the novel, discuss the question 'why a novel targeting young adults' and review how other Indigenous authors have represented the historical problems and social consequences faced by Aboriginal people.

Chapter Three

The central problem – a personal account

This chapter provides a biographical and autobiographical account of the central problem and historical narrative outlined in Chapter Two. Although the research and insights in Chapter Two provide an evidential chronology of the impact of the past on the present social standing of Aboriginal people, using a first-person voice provides a depth of lived experience that amplifies the resonance of the exegesis, reinforcing that the problems our people face are tangible, real, and lived. In addition to reinforcing the potency of the central problem, the personal perspectives of my mother, my father and myself are also intended to provide readers of this exegesis with seeds for ongoing contemplation on what needs to change in Australian mainstream culture and practice to create a more cohesive and unified country. The personal perspectives also further inform the writing process itself given they reinforce the project objectives, provide a context for the novel, are reflected in character traits and story events in the novel, and complement the academic and literary research cited throughout this exegesis.

My mother

My mother, Carol, is Aboriginal. She grew up on an Aboriginal reserve at Karuah, affectionately called the ‘Mish’ by locals. Aboriginal people have been living at Karuah Mission Reserve from around 1896 (Enright 1932, p 75). In 1952, Mum attended Karuah Mission school, located on the Reserve, and attended by between 25-30 Aboriginal students. She tells me she loved the Mission School (2019, pers. comm., April):

> In winter they had nice Milo and we got bread and butter and in summer we got a little bottle of milk. We had a trellis going into the school that had the most beautiful red and yellow roses. When I close my eyes, I can still smell those roses.

When I asked her why she loved it so much, her response was 'I think I loved it because we were all the same colour and the teachers treated us good'. The Mission School was closed in 1955 as part of a government assimilation policy, but many white parents objected to the closure, leading to conflict and severe racial tension (Perry 2013, pp. 163-164). Problems between white and black people arose regularly, but overall, Mum said Karuah Primary School was a good place.

Image 1 – Karuah Primary School Students 1955

1955. UPPER DIVISION.
Back: Warner Ping, Peter Shersingh, Richard Ridgeway, Terry Manton, Dan Ridgeway, Ross Farley. 2nd: Rex Pepper, Bill Neil, Bill Evans, Phillip Manton, Roy Johnson, Des Johnson, Brian Huckstardt. 3rd: Lynne Huckstardt, Phyllis Newman, Valerie Lilley, Pat Ridgeway, Brenda Dawson. Front: Judy Witt, Kathy Johannson, Carol Ridgeway, Valerie Barclay, Grace Waters, Leonie Johnson, Carol Ridgeway, Lyn Symmonds. Teacher: Mr. H. Pepper.

In the photograph above, you can see my mother in the front row, three children from the left. When Mum's family moved to Oyster Cove for work, she had to attend Raymond Terrace Primary School. Her experience was not as pleasant as at Karuah Primary School. 'There was one boy, he called me black nigger and black slut. When he was told to stop, he used to mouth the words at me.' She found the move to the high school environment at Raymond Terrace no better (2019, pers. comm., April):

> I hated it. They used to put me up the back of the class even though they knew I couldn't hear. It made me feel awful. I was one of the best at sport. I used to win the running races, I was good at vigoro and softball and I used to win all my swimming races. But whenever they picked sports teams, I was always picked last. I felt like I was picked last because I was dark.

My Dad is non-Aboriginal, a white man. He first met mum when he was very young and delivering eggs to the Mish. At that time, people who lived on the Mish, like all Indigenous people in New South Wales, had their lives controlled by the Aborigines Protection Board (Charles Sturt University, n.d.), under the NSW Aborigines Protection Act, 1909. When Dad was older, he asked my mother out and they become a couple, much to the disdain of Dad's 13 brothers and sisters. According to my father, his sisters would continually try and break them up. Mum tells the following story about one of these attempts (2019, pers. comm., April):

> I had been going out with your dad for about a year and my mother received a letter that said I had to go into the Raymond Terrace doctor. It said that I had to be examined to see if I had been interfered with, you know, sexually. Your father's sisters had made the complaint. The doctor examined me with the lady from the welfare there and the doctor said 'I am sorry to say she hasn't been touched.' I felt so embarrassed.

Dad and Mum married on the 17th of September, 1960 at Raymond Terrace at the Methodist Church. Mum's wedding dress was borrowed from her sister-in-law and her shoes were borrowed from a friend. Over 50 people attended their wedding. None of them were white. I was the first born. After I was born Mum tells me there were several instances where Dad's sisters contacted the welfare and raised concerns about my wellbeing. She says I was a sickly baby, but thankfully every time the welfare people came, I was healthy and happy, so they had no reason to take me. I often think about that. If by chance I was not well on one of the many visits, I would no doubt have been taken and my life would have been very different.

When I asked Mum if she feel a lot of racism in her life, she said it was hard to tell but she doesn't think so. Then she told me the following story (2019, pers. comm., April):

> When I was giving birth to one of the kids I went to hold the nurse's hand because of the pain I was in. I was only about 22 so it was pretty hard for me. She flung my hand away and her face looked like she was disgusted with me. I don't know if it was because I was Aboriginal or not but something caused her to do it.

Moving forward to the now and Mum is 75 years of age. She tells me she is surprised to have reached this age given her mother and four of her aunties were 58 when they died.

After 60 years of marriage, Mum and Dad are still inseparable. They have been through many hardships, but the biggest challenge they have faced was the passing of my younger brother Billy to lung cancer in 2016 at the age of 46.

In all the years I have spent time with my mother, I have never seen her angry. She and my Aboriginal aunties and uncles do not appear to have any bitterness despite the many times they have been at the receiving end of racist stares, racist comments, racist actions, and racist systems throughout their life. Mum's positive attitude to life was never more clearly demonstrated then on the 15th of November, 2018. In trying to help me connect my tractor to some farm equipment, her thumb was partially severed. As I drove the 80kms to the hospital, she spoke about how glad she was it happened to her and not Dad or me. A week later, after the doctors had amputated a major portion of her thumb, I asked her how she was feeling. Her response was 'I'm on top of the world. Compared to losing a son, this is nothing. But I'm worried about how I am going to peel prawns.'

My father

My father grew up on a small farm about five kilometres west of the Karuah Mish. He is the second-last child and youngest son. He left school at fifteen years of age to work with his brothers in timber camps around the Port Stephens area. In some ways he is typical of his era, a country 'old school' man with a tough veneer and heart of gold. Only a few years ago it occurred to me that it wouldn't have been easy being a white man marrying a black woman in 1960. I don't know why I hadn't thought of this in my earlier years. When I asked him about his experience, his body language and voice projected a surprising amount of sadness. He told me of an occasion at a pub in Raymond Terrace where he was drinking with ten younger men. One of the men had looked at him and said, 'You don't want to get involved with those black gins.' An older white man who Dad didn't know that well overheard the conversation, walked over to him and said, 'Come on Dall. Let's take them outside and sort them out.'

Dad tells another story about how going out with a black woman attracted unwanted attention (2019, pers. comm., April):

> Your mum and I had been out fishing and my sisters had tipped the police off that I would be coming onto the Mission without a permit. When we got back the Police were waiting for me. They were two of the biggest coppers I've ever seen. I ended up in court. The solicitor did a great job. He explained how I used to deliver eggs to the Mission people when I was younger and how everybody knew me. He said what do you think this is, South Africa? The judge said no conviction.

He told me numerous other stories, all of them emotionally disturbing and abhorrent. Upon hearing these stories, I realised that I had always looked at racism from the perspective of the hardship inflicted on my mother. With a degree of embarrassment and guilt, I reflected on my narrow mindedness and realised that I hadn't really given

thought to how hard it must have been for him. When I said this to him, he replied (2019, pers. comm., April):

> I needed nourishment not punishment. But everyone wanted to punish me. I had no one to turn to. My sisters were nasty and my brothers didn't care about me. None of them even helped me to build my house. Not many men could have put up with what I put up with.

Listening to him say this was very moving. The story below was even more moving. It is one of the few times I have seen my father cry (2019, pers. comm., April):

> My dad wanted to talk to me about something just after we'd been married. I thought he was going to say something about me being married to Carol, so I didn't let him speak. Whenever he started to talk, I would find a reason to go somewhere away from him. After a couple of days, Dad was finally able to have his say. It turns out he was trying to tell me he was dying, and he needed me to look after Mum. It is one of my biggest regrets.

As we grew up, Dad and Mum were often the go-to people when someone from the mob needed financial support to get through a hard time. Over the years, Dad has funded numerous funerals, car engines, groceries, and other things without hesitation and with no regrets even though they were poor themselves. He has been a good friend to many of my Aboriginal Uncles and Aunts and he is loved and respected by many. Many of my mum and dad's experiences are captured in the scene at Gulliwai Haven where Grace and Harold, the parents of a worker named Dot, share their story at dinner with Inala and Jasmine.

Myself

My younger years are full of fond memories, many of them relating to playing with my cousins and other kids on the Mission Reserve. As I transitioned into senior primary school, I won many awards for academic achievement. In Year 6, I was appointed School Captain as well as captain of my sporting house. High School was nothing like Primary School and a tremendous culture shock. Although I felt like a fish out of water, I worked hard at being a good student. During this time, some of my age group from the

Mish accused me of trying to be a whitefulla. One even wanted to fight me. This confrontation hurt at a very deep level, and I found myself seeking refuge and friendship with non-Aboriginal students. This meant tolerating being called a 'blackfulla' and 'coon' by anyone that wanted to call me those names. I would even put myself down to be accepted. I was in denial of my identity due to my non-existent self-esteem. I did well in the 1978 Higher School Certificate, finishing in the top 10% of the state and matriculating to every University in Australia. During this time, a Career's Advisor had told me I wasn't smart enough to go to university and I believed him. Instead of going to university, I completed a qualification in surveying at TAFE enabling me to work locally before moving to Cairns, Queensland for a few years and then to Sydney where I met my wife to be, Alison.

Looking back, the years before I met Alison were a lonely mess of disappointment and feeling lost. I don't have a lot of happy memories. Alison and I were married in Sydney on the 6th of January, 1990. Over the next five years we were blessed with three children Rhys (1990), Brianna (1993) and Liam (1995). Witnessing their birth and being a dad are the greatest things that have happened to me in my life. Even though I was a hard worker, doting father and caring husband, my need to be needed infused all aspects of my life and drove me harder and harder to do better. I completed a Bachelor of Commerce during this time for no other reason than to prove to myself I was smart enough to complete a university qualification.

In September 1995, I was diagnosed with major depression. The advice I was receiving from the medical system was consistent and deflating. I was told that my condition was incurable, and I began to doubt whether I would ever improve, let alone recover. On a normal day as everybody around me did normal things, I walked down to

the edge of the water near our house and contemplated suicide (Callaghan & Gordon 2014, p. 295). After making the decision to live, I threw myself into an assortment of healing activities including meditation, counselling sessions, meetings with a psychiatrist, and the voracious consumption of self-help books. The book that became my bible, *Self Help for Your Nerves* (Weekes 1981), was a rock for me. I referred to it so often that it became a frayed and broken looking relic very quickly, testimony to the nurture, solace, and belief it gave. I read numerous other books gleaning small fragments of gold here and there and then I came upon a book entitled *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* (Jeffers 1987). This book gave me the next stepping-stone from *Self Help for Your Nerves*, and enabled me to emerge from the jail I had locked myself in. I came to realise that for many, many years, my purpose in life was to be all-things-to-all-people-at-all-times due to my lack of self-esteem, self-belief, self-confidence and self-identity. The many times I laughed with my friends when they called me a 'dumb black nigger' had covered the silent tears that fell inside my spirit. My lack of understanding of my culture meant that I believed the lie. I believed I truly was a dumb black.

As I did my best to heal myself, much to my surprise, I was invited to 'go bush' and learn about my culture (Callaghan & Gordon 2014, p. 299):

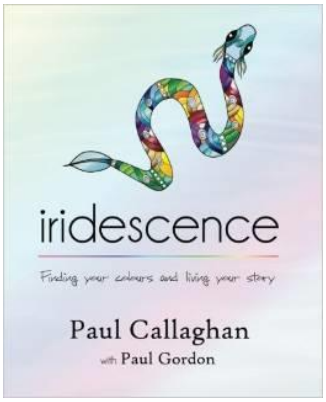
> I, like most Aboriginal people in NSW, had been told culture was dead, particularly in NSW. I had been told that anyone pretending they knew about culture in NSW were liars and frauds and to be treated with appropriate disdain. I had also heard all the rumours about those taking people bush. The stories were all negative and involved labels such as 'cultists', 'try hards' and 'weekend wannabes'. There was also a strong belief that those who went bush would get very sick and invariably die because they were doing the wrong thing. Despite all the best of intended warnings, I went bush anyway. After the first trip, I enjoyed the experience so much, I went again, and again.

Every time I went bush, I was filled with love, knowledge, and acceptance and over a short amount of time, I found that I finally had meaning in my life. At a point in time on my cultural journey, I became a Loreman where I found incredible peace in walking the

footsteps of those who have walked country before me. Much to my surprise, I found I was also better able to navigate the complexities and expectations of the Western World including achieving career progression beyond what I could possibly have envisaged even before my breakdown. Eventually I became the first Aboriginal person in TAFE history to be appointed into a CEO position. After three years into this role, New England Institute was awarded the title of NSW Large Training Provider of the Year (Training Services NSW 2021) in addition to being judged in the top three large training providers in Australia. My success was primarily due to the great team around me, but I know none of it would have happened without the cultural reclamation journey I had been afforded.

In 2013, I was offered a more senior role in government responsible for the delivery of housing services to Aboriginal people. I found myself back in the big smoke of Sydney. This was something I never wanted or expected to do, but the lure of supporting Aboriginal communities at such a large scale was too strong to resist. In the first year of this role, I was surprised and dismayed to find that try as I might, I had little ability to effect the changes needed to help my communities. During this time, I started writing a wellbeing book based on Aboriginal spirituality, culture and philosophy with my mentor and good friend Uncle Paul Gordon. Given the significance of self-help books and culture in my recovery from depression, it was a project of passion that I felt strongly about. *iridescence – Finding Your Colours and Living Your Story* was published in December 2014.

Image 2 – The cover of *iridescence* and Paul Callaghan and Paul Gordon launching the book



Over the years, I have sold thousands of copies *of iridescence* and received many inspiring testimonials from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people throughout the world. The testimonial below is a representative of the wonderful feedback received (Darrall Thompson 2019, pers. comm., September):

> Paul Callaghan with his mentor Paul Gordon have, I believe, written one of the most compelling books of this Century. 'The Message' from the Old Spirit at the beginning of this book is profound and irrefutable. A thousand wisdoms, stories and sayings with practical exercises are structured to form a guide for young and old, and for leaders and educators in all realms of society – world-wide. This engaging, timeless and poetic resource is both a testament to First Nation wisdom and an inspiring story of resilience … and 'iridescence'.

Since the release of *iridescence*, I have witnessed the overwhelming prevalence of depression and trauma related suffering in our communities. In that time, although I have met many inspirational and passionate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people doing great things, I continue to see a lack of progress in the reduction of pain and suffering in mind and spirit. A range of programs is necessary to address the ongoing effects of the past so that healing can occur (Dudgeon, Walker et. al. 2014, p. 27). Various government policies and performance indicators such as the Closing the Gap targets don't focus enough on mental health issues and the role of culture in addressing them. This is particularly important when contemplating our societal responsibilities for the safe development of Aboriginal youth. The creative work, *Consequence,* is a

progression from the non-fiction work, *iridescence.* It aims to continue the educational experience and sharing of culture and Lore through a mode of storytelling that offers the young adult audience an alternative and entertaining means of engagement through the personal and emotional dimensions provided by fictitious characters that are relatable and thought-provoking.

How lived experience informs this creative work

The life experiences of my mother and father have informed this project in many ways. Listening to my mother's stories has given me an acute and emotive awareness of the negative impact of various government policies on Aboriginal people over many generations. My mother's story is also an inspiring one. Despite the socioeconomic disadvantage, racism, stereotyping and cultural unsafety she has faced, much of her life, and despite the acute grief she has endured from a young age (including the loss of her parents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, and a son), she has continued to be a role model of positivity, kindness, and joy. My father's experiences give me insight into the vicarious racism many non-Aboriginal partners (including my wife) are subjected to as they watch their loved ones become targets of racial profiling. My father's support for our community has also reminded me of how many non-Aboriginal people support Aboriginal people in their search for justice and equality. The comment below from Paul Gordon (2020, pers. comm., November) reminds me that Aboriginal people are not alone in fighting for their rights:

> Think about what happened in 1967 with the referendum. It was passed and Aboriginal people were finally recognised in the Constitution because 91% of Australians supported the yes vote. The Aboriginal population was less than 1% back then. We should never forget there are a lot of good white people that support us.

The creative works aims to harness this goodwill by connecting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young adults at a time of their life when identity, values, and ways of viewing the world are still being explored, considered, and formed. My lived experience has highlighted the problems many Aboriginal people face in their everyday lives with regards to poor self-esteem, lost identity, racism, cultural unsafety, pressure to acculturate, lateral violence and transgenerational trauma. My lived experience has also shown me the power of cultural reclamation as an agent of healing, transformation, and improved wellbeing.

In reflecting on wellbeing, I believe both the Western world and Aboriginal world have much to offer. From the first day they attend school, all students are inducted into the Western system. The challenge is for non-Aboriginal people to realise they can benefit from being inducted into the Aboriginal system. This is reflected in a keynote speech I gave some years ago at an Aboriginal Health Conference titled 'Stronger leaders through understanding and respecting Two Worlds Knowledge' (Callaghan 2017). In this presentation, I posited that all Australians need to understand and respect Aboriginal knowledge and practice, understand and respect Western knowledge and practice, and combine the best of both worlds to create an improved Australia. This is the essence of why this exegesis and the novel *Consequence* are so important to me. As my formal career gained momentum and I ascended to the top of the leadership pyramid, I found that I wasn't having the impact I had hoped. The danger of this happening as a leader is captured by Paul Gordon: 'Don't be a ghost. Leave some tracks for others to follow (Callaghan & Gordon 2014, p. 65). I realised at the time, that I wasn't leaving any tracks, I was being paid a lot of money to be a ghost. I left that role so that I could leave the right tracks for others to follow. This project aims to support

that goal. Since starting this project, I have had a self-help book titled, *The Dreaming Path* (Callaghan & Gordon 2022), published and have another book, targeting children eight to nine years of age, scheduled for publication in the near future. These are satisfying footsteps that have further inspired me in this project.

Chapter Four

Methodology and literature review: questions of storytelling, genre, and audience

Chapters Two and Three unpack the central problem from research and lived experience perspectives and how they relate to the central question of this work. It is now appropriate to outline the methodology I have used in deciding to choose the novel form to target a young adult audience. In addition, this chapter will explore my motivation and style compared to other, successful, Indigenous authors. Before doing this, I will provide a picture of the political and social context that has helped me define this work.

Political and social context

Within the Cherbourg Ration Shed Museum (2019), Queensland, is an exhibit that provides a timeline of the town's history in terms of policies that have affected it. The timeline is somewhat reflective of the political and social agendas most Aboriginal communities have been subjected to over the past 230 years.

Table 4 – Cherbourg Ration Shed Museum: Aboriginal policy key themes

Political Policy Theme	Impact from an Aboriginal perspective
Tradition	For thousands of years Aboriginal people lived in close kinship with the land and were of the land.
Protection	Total control, denying Aboriginal people of their freedom and basic human rights.
Segregation	People from different clans forcibly removed to one settlement.
Consolidation	Population in reserves increased as the government's removal policy gained momentum.
Domination	Every aspect of life on the settlement controlled.
Assimilation	Aborigines made to be more like white people.
Integration	The 1967 referendum recognised Aboriginal people's rights but paternalism and racism-continue.

Self-Determination	Recognition that Aboriginal people are the original custodians of the land and Aboriginal culture is an essential and permanent part of Australian society.
Reconciliation	Recognition of the concept of coming together to overcome the division and inequality in Australia.
Many tribes one mob	Survival of Aboriginal culture and the Aboriginal race.

The last descriptor, ‘many tribes one mob’, in some ways captures the current feeling of many Aboriginal people, communities and nations as they unite to celebrate cultural survival and continue to demand increased sovereignty, described by Fenley (2011, p. 374) as a means for Indigenous people to seek greater control over their lives by exercising a form of self-rule with limited government interference in Indigenous Affairs. Although progress towards sovereignty is not optimum, it is important to acknowledge the positive changes that are occurring across the country. Many developments provide me with hope: increased observance of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country; growth of organisations developing Reconciliation Action Plans; media interest in NAIDOC week and other major community events; acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples in various major sporting events; growth of Aboriginal language and cultural programs in schools; continued support for National Indigenous Television (NITV); growth of Aboriginal enterprises; and a recent government commitment to increasing the procurement of products and services from Aboriginal companies.

Although the milestones outlined above are much needed and meritorious, there is still a long way to go before my hope is realised, given the social and political environment surrounding Aboriginal people in their daily lives is still infused with policies, attitudes and conversations that undermine the progress that has been made.

Politically, state, and federal governments are seen by many Aboriginal people to be lacking in their willingness to allow Aboriginal people to lead the changes needed in vital areas such as education, employment, life-expectancy, children being placed in out of home care, imprisonment rates and suicide. An article by Holland (2019) argues this point:

> If Morrison is serious about addressing the extremely high rates of Indigenous suicide, he would know that disempowerment, lack of self-esteem and identity, loss of community control and even loss of their own leaders are key drivers to this crisis.
>
> Indigenous people know what drives success in Indigenous policy-making – not a co-design process with governments, but the ability to design and implement their own solutions. Indigenous people must lead and governments must support.

The federal government's deconstruction of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in 2005 and successive governments' failure to create an alternative elected Indigenous body in the Australian political system fourteen years later, raise questions over whether successive governments have a genuine commitment to allowing Aboriginal people to have authentic input, let alone control of policy relating to them.

From an Aboriginal perspective, government and the politicians that have driven legislation and policy over the past 230 years have failed to fulfil their responsibilities to the original peoples of this country and continue to do so. The current social context that Aboriginal people are forced to endure is just as problematic. In 2019, two documentaries, *The Final Quarter* and *The Australian Dream,* were released in Australia. Both tell the story of Adam Goodes, former Australian Football Player and 2014 Australian of the Year. Stan Grant, writer of *The Australian Dream,* captures the struggle of trying to fit into white culture when he says: 'Adam Goodes bent towards White Australia. He devoted his life to reconciliation and fighting racism – and paid an

enormous price' (Grant 2019). In both documentaries, comments made by various high-profile Australians demonstrate culturally unsafe and abhorrent ways of thinking that Aboriginal people know to be ever-present in the dark underbelly of a portion of Australia. The views are both real and disturbing, as reflected in a comment by film reviewer, Luke Buckmaster (2019) relating to *The Final Quarter*: 'Andrew Bolt, Alan Jones and Sam Newman haunt Ian Darling's film like ranting apparitions'.

The argument that Australia is as racist and paternalistic as it has ever been is further supported when reviewing commentary by sections of the television media. In 2018, The Australian Communications and Media Authority found that Channel Seven Sydney breached the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice with the television program *Sunrise* 'Hot Topics' segment broadcast, finding that the segment provoked serious contempt on the basis of race. Channel Seven undertook and then discontinued court proceedings against this finding. (Australian Communications and Media Authority 2019). A comment by Prue MacSween (B&T Magazine 2018), one of the non-Aboriginal panellists, in this *Sunrise* segment, reflects the type of sweeping references and stereotyping Aboriginal people are subjected to in the media:

> It would be crazy to even contemplate that people are arguing against this. We can't have another generation of young Indigenous children being abused in this way … don't worry about the people who decry and hand-wring and say this will be another Stolen Generation. Just like the first Stolen Generation, where a lot of children were taken because it was for their wellbeing, we need to do it again perhaps.

It is saddening to know that this kind of ill-informed judgement from white people in the media is not a one off. On the 28th of January, 2019, Studio 10 co-host Kerri-Anne Kennerley was accused of racism by fellow panellist Yumi Stynes during a conversation about Invasion Day protests after the presenter spoke about sexual violence in Indigenous communities. Kennerley attacked the motives of the protesters

who wanted the date of Australia Day changed by implying they were ignoring the alleged rape of children and women in the 'outback' (Meade 2019).

The enthusiasm of some of the Australian public to hide racist comments under the guise of their right to freedom of expression, is adding to the culturally unsafe burden being created by radio and television media. The responses to an opinion piece by Senator Pauline Hanson in *The Courier Mail* (Mundine and Hanson 2018) on why Hanson thought the 26th of January should remain Australia Day, demonstrate the hostility Aboriginal people know is alive and well in the Australian landscape. Outlined below is a comment (Hanson 2018) that is representative of the 90 responses received:

> Ron t – Leave Australia Day alone. stop (sic) giving sympathy to the Aborigines. they (sic) are non achievers, unlike the American Indian they never provided shelter for there (sic) family, planted crops for food they were simply nomads that would be camping under a grass tree if not for the white man. respect (sic) must be earned.

Although there is no distinct measure of the proportion of Australians who hold views like those responding to Hanson's opinion piece, a survey conducted by the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation* called 'Australia Talks' (ABC 2019) suggests Aboriginal people are facing an uphill battle in achieving improved social standing. Of the 54,000 people that responded to the statement 'Australia must do more to address injustices against Indigenous people', 23% of participants disagreed. To the statement 'Australia Day should not be celebrated on January 26, given the historical significance of that date for Aboriginal people', the percentage of participants who disagreed by state was as follows.

Table 5 – Percentage of people (by state) in an ABC survey who do not want Australia Day moved

State/Territory	% Disagreed
Australian Capital Territory	23
New South Wales	35

Northern Territory	51
Queensland	52
South Australia	39
Tasmania	40
Victoria	37
Western Australia	49

These figures are not a surprise given the kinds of remarks that are seen and heard in the media and in public areas and social gatherings throughout this country. The aggregate impact of this kind of individual and collective mindset is that many Aboriginal people feel alienated, unheard, and disrespected in a country their ancestors have cared for since the beginning of time. Despite the hardships our people face in terms of political and social barriers, it is inspiring to see many in our community continue to advocate for social justice parity. In achieving this goal, it is important that we do so in a way that decolonises us from the assimilationist forces that demand we embody a western way of doing, being and acting.

One of the intentions of *Consequence* is to explore the potential of a written fictional work to connect with readers so they might better understand the social and political contexts of the problems Aboriginal people face and reflect on how one's own cultural values, knowledge, skills and attitudes are formed and affect others, including a responsibility to address unconscious bias, racism and discrimination (Victoria Department of Health 2021). It is hoped that this process of introspection might motivate non-Aboriginal readers to advocate for Aboriginal people to have a greater say in government decisions that affect their communities and to call out culturally unsafe comments and behaviours whether they be in the media, on social media or in daily life.

Why a fictional work targeting young adults?

Feedback on *Iridescence* over the years indicated to me that the knowledge contained within it is highly regarded by adult readers. Given my experience in supporting young people, it occurred to me that the content of *Iridescence* was just as important, if not more important, to young people, but required a different structure and approach if it was to engage this target audience. For over two decades, I had been mentoring Aboriginal men of all ages and witnessing the power of storytelling in creating an engaging, culturally safe, and effective learning space. Over this time, I had seen the power of story reshape value systems, mindsets, and behaviours in a positive way. I had witnessed profound, personal transformations in people of all ages, but the shifts in young people stood out to me. Seeing these young people reshape their identity and way of being to become role model parents and leaders in their community has been a true privilege. I knew storytelling was the best way to connect with a younger audience, but the question was 'in what form?' Film or digital art platforms were appealing, but neither suited my bank balance or skill set. After considering a range of alternative art modalities including dance, visual arts, poetry, music and theatre, my thoughts circled back to the medium of the written word.

To me, books have several positive traits. They are relatively inexpensive, are portable, can be consumed in a variety of locations, are durable and can be easily passed on. My deliberations then turned to whether I should try and create a self-help book targeting young people or challenge myself and write a novel targeting young people. When faced with this kind of dilemma, the Old People teach us to use our intuition, our gut feel, to guide us. My gut feel was quite clear in this instance – a novel it would be. My next step was to explore what form a novel can take. Most descriptions I researched

suggested a novel to be a long fictional narrative describing human experiences through a connected sequence of events. This appealed to me as it was apparent that I could have great flexibility in what I wanted to say and how I said it. As I considered the opportunities a fictional work would give me, I realised I could allow my imagination and creativity to go to places *Iridescence* could never go whilst providing an educative experience in an almost invisible way. I found this potentiality extremely appealing. Given that being a young adult can be so difficult for individuals irrespective of their gender or race, it became clear to me the novel I wanted to write needed to reach out to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth.

I started writing a novel in November 2017 with the title *Coincidence*. This literary work primarily targeted Aboriginal youth 14-18 years of age and adopted a positive, strength-based tone to motivate and inspire this audience. A synopsis of this book is provided as an attachment (Appendix A). I found the writing of that novel hard at times, but also highly rewarding. When the opportunity arose to create a new work as part of a PhD in Creative Practice, I jumped at the chance to write a sequel.

Having now completed the sequel, *Consequence,* in this PhD, it is clear to me the target audience, includes young adults (14-18 years), and 'new adults,' a grouping that fall between the ages of 18 and 25, though some consider the market to range as far as age 30 (Kieffer 2017). New adult characters often echo the challenges that the 18-25 years group faces. This is the case with *Consequence*, where the central character Daniel is now in his mid-twenties and encountering issues that are different to those he faced in the prequel novel. Many of these issues are typical of those that confront the new adult age group which can include work, study, trauma, being assertive, mental health, self-care, relationships, bullying, diet, drugs and alcohol, and loneliness (Kids

Helpline 2022). *Consequence* builds on the young adult themes covered in its prequel to show the young adult reader the new adult journey that is ahead of them and thereby prepare them for the next phase of their life. Although this book and its prequel targets the young adult/new adult age group, I am optimistic *Consequence* will also appeal to an older audience given 55% of buyers of Young Adult books are 18 or older and 28% are aged 30-44 (*Publishers Weekly* 2012).

Presenting historical problems and their social consequences from an Aboriginal perspective in a field of creative practice

Having explored the political and social context of the work and why a novel targeting a young adult/new adult audience is the most appropriate creative means for me to address the central problem, it is now timely to reflect on the creative work itself. *Consequence* is intended to be a catalyst for personal growth and communal reconciliation through a greater understanding of Aboriginal traditional culture and Aboriginal post-occupational experiences. To achieve these aims, the novel first and foremost needs to tell a good story. It needs to provide the reader with the motivation to continue to turn the pages until the final page is read. Marshall (2019 pp. 150-169) suggests there are five fiction modes critical to writing fiction successfully: action mode (show what is happening); summary mode (tell the reader what is happening in a condensed form); dialogue mode (advance the plot through conversation); feelings/thoughts mode (show the workings of a character's mind); and background mode (provide background information).

I have used all these modes to varying degrees. Action mode has been dominant in many scenes in order to engage the reader to feel they are in the story, including the various dream sequences; Jasmine being subjected to domestic assault; the on-country

camps with Uncle Shakey, Uncle Clarry and Daniel; Daniel's assault; the school student and Australia Day protests; and the climax of the story arc at Gulliwai Haven. Given summary mode condenses events to convey, rather than show, what happens within a story, it doesn't have the same dramatic impact as other modes but is never-the-less an important tool in enabling the story to flow. An example of where I have used this mode is at the start of Chapter 10, 'Daniel had been involved with government ministers a great deal in his role as Aboriginal education advisor, so the difficulty in trying to arrange a meeting with Minister Conard and the Elders was no surprise.' Dialogue mode has been dominant throughout the creative work, given I feel conversation to be an effective way to convey the nuances of Aboriginal characters and reinforce their voices in the personal stories they tell. The feeling and thoughts mode has been used in many instances to enable the reader to better understand a character and how they are feeling at a particular moment, For example, the scenes involving Daniel's panic attack, Wollambi walking country, and Gail waiting in the hospital Emergency Department, provide the reader with an ability to understand how the character is feeling as events unfold. Interior monologue has been presented using italics without the accompanying words 'he thought', 'she thought,' in most instances, to increase dramatic affect by providing the reader with short, sharp fragments of insight into what the character is thinking in a given situation. Background information mode is used primarily through the vehicles of backstory and flashbacks such as Jasmine's years in foster care, Jimmy's years as an angry young man, Harold and Grace facing racism early in their marriage, Rolly's life of hardship and struggles with the justice system, and Mick's life as a long term unemployed Aboriginal person facing racism on a daily basis.

In researching other writer's views on how to tell a good story, I became aware of the importance of tension and conflict. Although I have tried to generate sufficient tension and conflict to service this element of storytelling, I have also heeded a suggestion that tension is all about balance and allowing it to ebb and flow (NY Book Editors 2022). This has allowed me to include dialogue and narration that might be considered by some literary purists as superfluous (in terms of creating tension) but critical for me in developing cultural understanding, for example, the importance of family to Aboriginal people, and the use of humour to demonstrate trust and facilitate learning. A major challenge I encountered as a result of my research on literary practice has been the importance of setting of chapters and scenes at points in time, given this contradicts the Aboriginal perspective of time which is that time isn't exclusively 'linear' (ie. past, present, future), and events are often placed in a 'circular' pattern (Janca & Bullen 2003). In my first drafts of *Consequence*, I made very few references to points in time. Looking back, I can see I did this because the many Dreamtime stories I have told over the years would invariably start with the words, 'In the beginning,' or 'Back in the Dreamtime,' and then make no reference to time from that point on. Given I am writing for a mixed audience (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) who will construct meaning and narrative from the written word in different ways and cultural contexts, I knew it was important to go back through the entire story arc and anchor it in time. This has not diluted the cultural integrity of the novel. The Aboriginal perspective of the non-linearity of time is evident in a number of ways including through dream sequences, the reappearance of characters who have passed away in spirit form, and storylines involving spirit entities who have been present for tens of thousands of years. The Aboriginal perspective of the cyclical nature of time is captured through the appearance

of characters Jasmine, Leo, Sandra, Frank and Inala in the opening and closing chapters. The 'bookending' of the novel is symbolic of the continuity of life, an important theme captured in Chapter 8:

> The old man faded into the landscape and Daniel felt himself turn to ash. A wind clawed his remains from the bare gravel he was lying on and threw them high into the air. Over time he became scattered across the entire continent. He discovered he still existed in every particle of his former self.

In conjunction with the various methods of literary expression used to develop storylines and narratives within *Consequence* (and the occasional detour from the rules in terms of time and tension), an important point of difference in the telling of this story has been the incorporation of magic realism into many storylines. Magic realism is a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative where a novel reaches beyond the confines of realism and draw upon energies of fable, folk and myth while maintaining a strong, contemporary social relevance (Rios 1999). Alexis Wright, the Indigenous writer and winner of the Miles Franklin Award (ABC News 2007), takes magical realism in new directions in the novel *Carpentaria* (Wright 2006), by drawing on Aboriginal mythology, spirituality, and traditional oral storytelling techniques (Holgate 2015, p. 634). Wright's desire to incorporate culture, the land and spirituality into her story telling is reflected in an article by *The Guardian* (Azam 2014):

> Wright describes the intricate bonds between faith, the land and storytelling as an Indigenous Australian. It was important to her to bring the long and ancient spiritual connection to country into her writing."

Upon reading *Carpentaria*, thanks to Wright's extraordinary ability in the written form, I was able to see and hear her characters and scenes as if I was sitting in them, amplifying the power of the story and the events that unfold. Her use of magic realism added to the storylines in a profound way. The scenes involving the groper place, and

Norm Phantom saving his grandson from drowning, will remain with me for a very long time, while reading the words 'Is it the spirits of the old people? Coming to take them home' (Wright 2006, p. 286) moved me deeply. My reaction to Wright's work is echoed in an article by the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Davison 2006):

> With public debate flaring about what stories should be enshrined in Australia's history and mythology, Wright's stories present as something other than myth in the Western sense of imaginary tales … they voice a knowledge that is either not recognised or not taken seriously by Western readers, in the same way that magical-realist writers give voice to the silenced, oppressed and marginalised.

Although I can't pretend to sit in the same authorial league as Wright, there are several similarities between *Carpentaria* and *Consequence* including points of reflection around racism, lateral violence, the power of spirit, the importance of Elders, the beauty of country, the corruption of justice and the impact of mining on country. There are also some unusual coincidences in terms of both books using helicopters, fish kills and birds to accentuate specific narrative elements.

Melissa Lucashenko, winner of the Miles Franklin Award in 2019 (Evans 2019) for *Too Much Lip* (2020), also harnesses the creative influence of magical realism in her writing. In an interview with The Garrett (2019), Lucashenko commented on her use of magic realism:

> In a way the use of the Indigenous realism or magic realism, whatever you want to call it, comes very naturally to me as an Aboriginal writer, because that's just one way of seeing the world that I have access to. It's not the only way that I see the world. You know, I'm bi-cultural at least. But you know, using an Aboriginal prism, that's how the world actually operates.

Unlike *Carpentaria,* where magic realism is within the fabric of the story, *Too Much Lip* uses magic realism, or Indigenous realism as Lucashenko terms it, much more sparingly, such as when lead character Kerry talks to the crows, Kerry meets Grandad Chinky Joe's ghost, and Uncle Richard is involved in a tense show down with 'The Doctor' in the penultimate chapter. Lucashenko's description of how she sees the world

using a bi-cultural lens reflects my approach to writing. This possibly explains why there are so many comparable points of reflection in *Too Much Lip* and *Consequence,* such as racism, domestic violence, beauty of country, birds exhibiting unusual behaviours, wisdom of the Elders, power of the spirits, contemporary hardships Aboriginal people face, corruption of justice, capitalism, and impact of invasion. Comments in *Too Much Lip* such as 'Steal a million acres and you're a pioneer hero, with a brass statue in the council chambers, but pinch a car or a mobile phone and you're some kind of fucking monster' (p. 164), 'No fucken clue what was at stake when you walked out into the world wrapped in dark skin' (p.171), and 'How to invade other people's countries and murder em, and call it civilisation' (p.218) are powerful messages that convey how many Aboriginal people feel about important themes such as racism, invasion and assimilation. I am trying to build a platform that conveys messaging in a similarly profound manner, albeit using less graphic language and violent imagery. Readers of *Too Much Lip* are taken into the home of Pretty Mary and shown that her life isn't pretty at all. And yet, in this cloud of pain and trauma, Lucashenko shows how Aboriginal spiritual belief provides hope in even the darkest of times. In a similar way, by providing the reader with an improved understanding of our spiritual belief systems in *Consequence,* I hope to generate a new awareness of the importance of Aboriginal spirituality and culture in Aboriginal people's lives today. Lucashenko's use of the term 'Indigenous realism' to describe her treatment of Aboriginal spirituality in story is highly relevant to me as it reinforces the notion that, for Aboriginal people, the characters and events that might be considered magical or fairytale by some, are just the opposite for us, they are very real. In *Consequence,* the stories told by Uncle Shakey about how the earth was created, how the earth is our

‘Mother’, and how the bad snake ‘Baatjay,’ came to be, are not tales of fantasy; they are true accounts of the past that guide us. Uncle Shakey’s messages are based on traditional stories that have been handed down for tens of thousands of years.

Although Indigenous realism has a resemblance to mainstream magic realism, incorporating it into the written form is not just a matter of tapping into a magical world of infinite possibilities. Portraying Indigenous realism involves following important cultural protocols that, in turn, requires a great deal of multifactorial consideration with relation to respecting and honouring the past as part of the writing process. Writing a novel that honours traditional storytelling without compromising the confidentiality of that which is sacred and cannot be shared, involves an acute awareness of cultural boundaries that cannot be crossed. The scenes in *Consequence* involving Indigenous reality have therefore been vetted by senior knowledge owners to ensure narrative and storylines have not crossed ethical and cultural borders. In a similar context, great care has been taken to ensure scenes involving Indigenous reality and sacred concepts are general in nature and not explicit to a given community. Creation of fictional places such as Sturt, Narrawirri, Gulliwai Haven and Mangden Mission protect communities and individuals in the real world from being placed under a microscope of judgement. Lucashenko talks about this with regards to the creation of a fictional town named Durrongo in *Too Much Lip* (The Garrett 2019):

> No, I couldn't… So, like for example set the book in Mullumbimby … it gets almost to the point of naming individuals, you know, because Pop is one of 12 people who set up the housing co-op. So, then you go, ‘Oh OK, who runs the housing co-op in that town?’ And you know, ‘Which of them used to be an ATSIC Councillor?’ So that's not fair on those people.

Being aware of cultural boundaries and protocols is a consideration an Indigenous writer must consider when creating story, particularly if the narrative includes spiritual or cultural contexts that reflect the footsteps of our ancestors. The role

of ‘Aboriginal writer’ is an extremely privileged one as it provides the opportunity to continue a sacred tradition that has existed for tens of thousands of years. The role of ‘Aboriginal writer’ is also one of great responsibility.

Kim Scott was the first Indigenous author to win the Miles Franklin Literary Award in the year 2000 (ABC News 2011), with his novel *Benang: From the Heart* (Scott 1999). In the ‘Acknowledgements’ section of *Benang: From the Heart,* Scott states that he hopes his book will ‘help create more space into which all our stories and voices may grow’ (Scott 1999, p. 500). His words mirror why I have chosen the novel form for this project. I am hopeful that, like Scott, my writing will also help create a space into which our stories and voices may grow. In an interview with Robert Wood (2017), Scott says ‘reuniting language and old stories – Creation stories – with landscape, as part of a community of survivors, [is] a catalyst for this recovery and spirit … It has an authenticity, a groundedness’. In a similar way, I am trying to reunite old stories with the present to support an authentic healing experience. In reading *Benang,* I am reminded of the importance of truth-telling. Scott does this in a very raw and uncompromising way through what the book’s narrator terms ‘historical fiction’ (p. 323). His graphic and disturbing descriptions of oppression, white control, assimilation, massacres, sexual abuse, exclusion, slavery, trauma and the impacts of farming and mining on generations of Aboriginal people – an alternative way to describe Indigenous realism perhaps – scrub clean any ignorance or illusions a reader might have had prior to reading his book. Comments such as; ‘They’re a Child Race. It’s our duty to train them for Useful Work, and keep them from harm’ (p. 45); ‘Sergeant Hall was proud there was no nigger problem in his town’ (p.72); ‘be a good darky and find us a camp and some water’ (p.126); and ‘Please, Miss. It stinks down here near the blacks’ (p.

293) reflect the negative chronological tone that Aboriginal people have faced since 1788 up to the present day. In many ways, *Benang* depicts the chronology shown in Appendix A of this project, but in a creative work form.

The commonality of purpose between Scott and myself is also reflected in an interview with Di Jenkins (2018), where Scott says 'Yes. I am really interested in [the] connection with pre-colonial heritage and the healing that's possible through that. Not only for Aboriginal people, but also for non-Aboriginal people: the healing that's possible for relationships, really'. Although I believe myself and Scott are coming from a similar place of intent, our writing styles are very dissimilar. Fremantle Press (2021) provides a number of testimonials for Scott's book *Benang,* including the following statement from the *Sydney Morning Herald*: '*Benang* is brilliant. It is a mature, complex and sweeping historical novel which will remind people of Rushdie, Carey and Grenville at their best'. Although *Consequence* is a work I am very proud of, I think my work as being granular and uncomplicated more so than mature, complex or sweeping. This could partly be due to my target audience, my desire to create a learning literacy resource and my personal writing style.

When I first read the works of Wright, Scott and Lucashenko, a part of me felt inadequate as a writer. My writing style is far simpler in language, grammar, and architecture than these authors. Words such as 'grandiloquently', 'juxtaposing', 'spoliating', and 'scotopic' used by Wright are not words in my writing lexicon, whilst the ways in which each of the authors turn simple observations into intricate and descriptive poems of nuance and emotion are beyond my writing ability at this point in time. My exploration of these highly acclaimed authors, however, has reinforced to me that although we are all different, we all have a role to play in driving conversations that

will change the Australian political and social landscape. Upon reflection, my writing has some aspects of Wright (magical realism and spirituality), Lucashenko (contemporary real-world experiences) and Scott (truth-telling) and we all leverage the modes of action, dialogue, and background in achieving our writing aims.

In my reviews of other Indigenous writers, I have found that my writing style has similarities with autobiographies I have read from Aboriginal authors such as Joe Williams (2018) *Defying the Enemy Within*, Archie Roach (2019) *Tell Me Why: The Story of My Life and Music*, and Sally Morgan (1987) *My Place.* This isn't a great surprise given the storylines and characters within *Consequence* are framed to a large degree around my life experiences and are therefore somewhat autobiographical in nature. This is not dissimilar to Aboriginal writer Lisa Fuller who says in a video clip (Fuller 2020a) her book *Ghost Bird* (Fuller 2020b) was based around her hometown and experiences as a teenager growing up there. Reading *Ghostbird* helped me not feel so inadequate as a writer. I feel that Fuller's style in *Ghostbird* is somewhat like my writing in *Consequence*, which I suspect reflects we are both targeting a young adult audience. Fuller's writing is very character driven with two of the teenage characters, 'Tace' and 'Rhi' having many similar traits to the characters 'Inala' and 'Tuuriiki' in *Consequence*. Fuller's coverage of issues such as racism, coming-of-age, the effects of white invasion, is balanced with positive messaging throughout. Phrases such as 'I close my eyes and imagine all the places I'll see and waters I'll dive into once I'm a marine biologist' (p.18), '… what we can do as a people when we put our minds to it. Community politics and infighting aside, we back each other (p. 128), and 'Knowledge isn't free and given whenever you want it, you gotta earn it (p. 145), echo the kinds of messages I am trying to embed in *Consequence*. As demonstrated in the following quote

from the judges of the Children's Book Council of Australia (2020), Fuller has filled an important void in the Young Adult fiction market:

> Fuller's use of informal and colloquial language not only makes this book appealing to teenage readers, but also adds a level of sincerity that in no way feels contrived …. The book very successfully fills a void in Australian YA fiction.

Fuller is one of a small number of Indigenous authors who have written books targeting young adults as per the table below constructed from data provided by AustLit (Harawira 2021).

Table 6 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young adult fiction authors and books

Novel Title	Author(s)	Year	Genre
Rise of the Fallen	Teagan Chilcott	2013	Fantasy
Ruby Moonlight	Ali Cobby Eckermann	2012	Aboriginal-white relations
Second Life	Chaise Eade	2011	Fantasy
Becoming Kirrali Lewis	Jane Harrison	2015	Aboriginal-white relations
The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf	Ambelin Kwaymullina	2012	Fantasy
The Disappearance of Ember Crow	Ambelin Kwaymullina	2013	Fantasy
The Foretelling of Georgie Spider	Ambelin Kwaymullina	2015	Fantasy
Killing Darcy	Melissa Lucashenko	1998	Aboriginal-white relations
Too Flash	Melissa Lucashenko	2002	Friendship
Ubby's Underdogs: The Legend of the Phoenix Dragon	Brenton E McKenna	2011	Science Fiction
Ubby's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings	Brenton E McKenna	2013	Science Fiction
Grace Beside Me	Sue McPherson	2012	Coming-of-Age
Fog a Dox	Bruce Pascoe	2012	Friendship
Mrs Whitlam	Bruce Pascoe	2016	Friendship
Rift Breaker	Tristan Savage	2014	Science Fiction
Us Mob Walawurru	David Spillman Lisa Wilyuka	2006	Aboriginal-white relations
Sweet Guy	Jared Thomas	2002	Coming-of-age

Calypso Summer	Jared Thomas	2014	Coming-of-age
Songs that Sound like Blood	Jared Thomas	2016	Coming-of-age
Wraith	Shane Smithers Alex Smithers	2018	Fantasy

In terms of genres outlined in this table, I think *Consequence* sits within the Aboriginal-white relations category although it might be argued to also be a coming-of-age story. A review of three of the novels in the table above – *Becoming Kirrali Lewis* (Harrison 2015), *Grace Beside Me* (McPherson 2012) and *Songs that Sound like Blood* (Thomas 2016) – gives me confidence that the messages, storylines, and language in *Consequence* are appropriate for the young adult audience I am targeting. The three novels all reflect different contemporary community settings (small town and cityscape) using grammar and flow of narration that is easy to read through protagonists that are in the young adult age group. Thomas uses the backdrop of the live performance music scene to convey his messages. The book connects with a young audience through symbols of modern youth pop culture. I don't think I will ever read another book that incorporates Aboriginal cultural themes, has characters that text each other, includes the term 'steampunk Goth drummer,' and references modern music stars such as Beyonce, Ed Sheeran and Justin Bieber. McPherson's approach is framed around a young girl named Fuzzy Mac and her life growing up in a small rural town with her grandparents. Although there are some dark scenes such as when Mayor Ridgeway tries to sexually assault her, Fuzzy's worldview is an extremely positive one captured in the novel's penultimate sentence '… have a good one and remember everyone's got a good story'. Although *Consequence* has some alignment with both novels, it is Harrison's approach to storytelling that I feel most connected to. Harrison's division of the novel into two

parts, part one being a view of the world from young adult Kirrali's perspective and part two from her non-Aboriginal mother Cherie's perspective, is a clever mechanism through which different perspectives on assimilation, brainwashing, culture, the stolen generation, stereotyping, racism, police apathy and black celebrity are provided. Through these different lenses, Harrison provided me with a reader experience that I found entertaining and educational. The story of Kirrali's transformation from a foster child ashamed of her Aboriginality to someone who is proud to embrace her black skin is described by Kirrali's character as follows (Harrison 2015, p. 163):

> I was a frightened of my own Aboriginality, fuelled by the negative stories in the media. I was a racist. My parents weren't, and Martina wasn't, but I was. What an idiot I had been. I thought I was so clever, so superior. But I was just a lost, scared girl.

Through the novel, *Consequence*, I hope that I can echo the words of Kirk, the boyfriend of Kirrali (Harrison 2015, p. 155): 'Times are changing, Unc. Our stories are changing things. We're edumacating them fellas but doing it our way'.

The authors listed in table five reflect the small number of Indigenous writers that have targeted the young adult audience over the years. The table below, which lists the number of Australian fiction works from November 2020 to August 2021, reinforces this notion (AustLit 2021).

Table 7 - Australian fiction works

Target Audience	Works	% of total Australian fiction works
Australian fiction	41,508	Not Applicable
Indigenous fiction	4,172	10.1
Australian young adult fiction	3,228	7.8
Indigenous young adult fiction	245	0.6

Indigenous young adult fictional works are an important means to shift understanding of Aboriginal issues and introduce truth telling into the Australian psyche. I hope that I am but one of many Indigenous writers who will fill this gap over the next decade. To do this, I am appreciative of the resistance and barriers that I might face with the some of the young adult prospective audience. A survey of 8,00 primary and secondary English students by Clark and Foster (2005, p. 86) indicates that reluctant readers would read more if they enjoyed it more and it was about more interesting topics whilst Parsons et al. (2018) suggests books compete against a range of pursuits that can give more immediate gratification and that problems with literacy can be a barrier. In writing *Consequence,* I have endeavoured to make it interesting and enjoyable in addition to being a tool that can be used to improve literacy skills.

The writing experience

Through the power of the novel, I am offering multiple points of imaginative engagement for readers who already come from diverse perspectives and are open to new insights, in the hope they are changed from the experience. I am offering potentially diverse readers ways of engaging with a variety of dramatised situations and the emotional, logical, and ethical implications that relate to them. The kind of effect I hope to have on a reader is captured more generally by Jake Lyda (2018):

> Once we become entranced with a good book, we go down the rabbit hole. Eventually we come out of that rabbit hole the same person – but not the same worldview. A small change has happened, we don't think as we did, we're wiser due to our experience in the wonderful, wonderful rabbit hole.

The challenge in developing an item of creative work that changes how a reader sees themselves or the world around them has therefore been an exciting and exhilarating one. I find it hard to believe what started with a non-committal thought in 2013 about

writing a self-help book based on Aboriginal culture has led to the creation of *Consequence*. As shown in the words below, I'm not the first author to do this (Penn 2012):

> I started with writing non-fiction because I needed to change my own life. Writing self-help enabled me to do that. But then I was freed to write with more honesty. To actually investigate the topics that interested me in a story.

Branching from a non-fictional to a fictional space now seems a natural progression for me. Building a fictional world piece by piece, working carefully with the materials of this artform and creating a safe space where the reader can find personal meaning through fictional characters, settings, and events (as opposed to a heavily didactic approach to disseminating thought), has been tremendously satisfying. Reflecting on his own experience as a writer, 2006 Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk (Nobel Foundation 2006) describes a process that captures, in many ways, how I feel when I write:

> As I sit at my table, for days, months, years, and slowly adding new words to the empty page, I feel as if I am creating a new world, as if I am bringing into being that other person inside me, in the same way someone might build a bridge or a dome, stone by stone. The stones we writers use are words. As we hold them in our hands, sensing the ways in which each of them is connected to the others, looking at them sometimes from afar, sometimes almost caressing them with our fingers and the tips of our pens, weighing them, moving them around, year in and year out, patiently and hopefully, we create new worlds.

In writing this novel, I have grown to love many of the characters that have been given to me by my ancestors. Finding the right words, or as Pamuk suggests, assembling the stones, to create new worlds where these characters can come alive in the minds of others, has been both challenging and rewarding. The sense of satisfaction I feel when I write a storyline that captures my intent, is channelled from a place deep within me. A place where I am both past and present. A place where I am not alone. I feel humbled when I can visit this place knowing that I am continuing the important Aboriginal tradition of storytelling to providing answers to life's questions (Perry 2013, p. 8).

Storytelling is my heritage and is in my blood. It is a ceremony that connects me with my past, with my present, with my future, with my people and with my mob. It is a way of sharing information, truth, history, knowledge, and wisdom that most Aboriginal people embrace almost intrinsically. For tens of thousands of years, this was done around the campfire in landscape settings that were critical props to the story being told. For me as a writer, the challenge is to convert the richness of oral tradition into a written format without losing the nuance of vocal intonation, physical gesticulation, and geographic setting. For some, the written word is not an easy communication medium to consume. Aboriginal literacy is an issue that therefore required my consideration given that in 2017, 71% of Indigenous students were identified as meeting National Minimum Literacy Standards compared to 93% for non-Indigenous students (Commonwealth Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2018). In writing this novel, I have attempted to position the creative work as a literacy learning resource (in addition to personal growth resource) for those who might be struggling with the written English word. By creating culturally embedded story, I am hoping those who might be tempted to turn away from books, will instead turn towards books and in so doing, be able to better traverse a society that leaves behind those who struggle to read and write. To engage with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audiences, I have also considered how I can use the creative elements of character, setting, plot, dialogue, theme, connection, conflict, and resolution to provide storylines that entertain and educate in a manner that doesn't blame, generate guilt, or prompt a defensive reaction in the reader. My understanding of the cultural nuances I need to consider in this creative work, the flexibility the novel format provides, and the ability of the novel to engage a reader, has reinforced my belief that a written work that primarily follows the novel form is the

most appropriate of the different creative practice forms I could have used to pursue my project goals, including targeting a young adult audience.

Consequence, as a literary work, intends to contribute to a growing field of creative practice, integrating young adult fiction with Indigenous storytelling. The novel attempts to demonstrate the effects of white colonisation on Aboriginal people, Aboriginal ways of life and the land, by situating storylines in current day, historic and cultural contexts to demonstrate the resilience of Aboriginal people, their culture and practice. Although the number of writers bringing Indigenous knowledge (including the Lore) and history to light is small, their voices are a critical in a community of creative practice, and in particular the young adult audience, where the use of Indigenous realism is an important means of ensuring cultural integrity and reader engagement. Having explored why I have written the novel, who the novel is written for, how other Indigenous writers have gone about this, and how I have felt during the process of writing, it is now appropriate to explain the creation process itself.

Chapter Five

Creating the story – key architecture in constructing the narrative

Now that the political and social context of this work has been explained, genre and audience discussed and the art of storytelling explored (including a review of other Aboriginal author motivators and styles) in Chapter Four, it is appropriate to review the construction of the novel itself. The foundations from which the novel is built include my cultural responsibilities, setting, points of reflection, narration, style (including decisions made), and characters.

Cultural responsibilities – being a Loreman

In traditional Aboriginal ways of being, becoming a Loreman is a rite of passage for young males where 'he "dies" to the former life of childhood and of ignorance of esoteric knowledge and "rises" or is "reborn" to a new life' (Elkin 1977, p. 3). The attempted eradication of culture throughout Australia since invasion means that the ritual of becoming a Loreman is no longer as common as it once was. I am fortunate that I was given the opportunity to access this profound linkage to the old ways. The role of the Loreman is to uphold the Lore, which in turn is a sacred responsibility to care for country and all things in country. My privileged connection to the oldest living culture in the world, combined with my studies and experiences in the Western world, places me in a position to bring the two worlds together with positive purpose. This project is more than a passion; it is part of my sacred obligation to share cultural knowledge that will lead to greater care for the land, our Mother, and her children (all living things). My belief in the importance of cultural reclamation and the Lore is

captured by the words ‘and communicate the importance of culture and Lore in addressing these problems and creating a healing platform for all Australians’ in the central question of this thesis.

There is much learning a Loreman undertakes that is not to be shared with the uninitiated, but there is also much that can. This is what I have done in this project. I have shared knowledge and learning by using fictional characters and story-lines to create new knowledge, understanding and perspectives through the modality of storytelling. Elders I have consulted in the creative process have been very supportive and encouraging about the opportunity to share culture and educate those who are open to listening. The essence of the Elders and their willingness to share is captured in the novel through Uncle Shakey’s close connection to Daniel, his willingness to introduce Daniel to senior Loremen from other tribal groups, and the way in which Daniel is accepted by the Old Men from different tribal areas. Uncle Clarry’s friendship and loyalty to Daniel through good times and bad is an example of the role Elders play in our communities. Elders are highly regarded role models due to what they do (as opposed to when they were born) as explained by Paul Gordon (2020, pers. comm., July):

> People talk about Elders all the time but sometimes they get confused between someone who is an Elder and someone who is old. To me, an Elder is someone who has been given cultural knowledge, uses that knowledge to lift a community and is respected in that community. They are always positive and they live by the values of love, respect and humility.

To ensure the cultural integrity of my work, all aspects of this project, both the exegesis and novel, have been reviewed by an Aboriginal Elder to ensure it reflects cultural practice, does not cross-cultural boundaries and describes the lived experiences of many Aboriginal people in an appropriate way. It is satisfying to receive the approval of the Elder I approached (2020, pers. comm., October):

> As Paul's mentor and Aboriginal adviser, I would like to say what a wonderful job Paul has done on these two novels. As I was reading them so much of my own story came up. I know this will be the case for many Aboriginal people if not all. Young Aboriginal people will get much from these books and I am sure it will help them in so many ways. I hope non-Aboriginal young and old get to read them as well. It will teach them much about our story and lives. I hope Politicians read these books and take a good honest look at their truth. The deals that are being done in Parliament eg coal seam gas needs to be exposed. Paul came very close to secret lore ceremony at times, but very cleverly conceals it with Harry Potter's magic. Once again thank you Paul for the pleasure of these two wonderful novels. All the best.

Setting

Setting is the time and place an author chooses for a literary work including physical landscape, climate, weather, and societal and cultural surroundings that serve as a backdrop for the action (2020 Masterclass). Chapter 1 of *Consequence* is set in the year 2021 to reflect the current political and social contexts in Australia and global issues such as climate change and protests against racially motivated violence. The novel is set seven years after *Coincidence,* which enables themes, storylines, and points of reflection to broaden in complexity, reach and depth compared to the prequel. Although many of the novel's storylines are set in the present, the novel uses the technique of 'backstory' on many occasions to take the reader back in time so they may better understand a character, their behaviour and motivation (backstory has been used in a many of the novels written by Indigenous authors that I have reviewed in this exegesis). The novel also leverages real events that have happened in recent years to demonstrate the currency of targeted issues and to create a sense of urgency for the identification and actioning of remedies. Events that have influenced plot lines and scenes include The Uluru Statement, mass fish kills in western New South Wales, cyclones in northern Queensland, bushfires in south-eastern New South Wales, Australia Day protest marches throughout the natin, and student protests relating to climate change throughout the world.

In terms of geographic settings, the novel takes place in three primary locations – Sydney (CBD and Western Sydney), far western NSW (Uncle Shakey's camp) and central western NSW (Gulliwai Haven). The situating of key storylines in a city setting and remote settings is crucial in terms of physical, environmental, and social backdrop. The city setting is pivotal to the introduction of Jasmine to the novel including the CBD apartment where she is the victim of life-threatening domestic violence, the streets of Sydney where she is forced to flee in order to find safety, and Leo's café where she meets Inala and through the relationship that is established, gains access to social support. The various settings provide convenient platforms for creative contradiction. The apartment setting shows the reader how a place of perceived safety and comfort can be a place of terrible acts. The setting of the streets of Sydney shows the reader how a place of crowds and noise can be a location of social isolation and loneliness for the homeless. The setting of Leo's café shows the reader how a place of business can be a place of friendship and caring.

Daniel, the central character of the novel, has grown up in Rose Bay, Sydney and met his partner Inala at Bondi Beach in the prequel novel *Coincidence.* This setting provides a stark contrast to the desert of Western NSW where Daniel sits with Uncle Shakey and Uncle Clarry on many occasions and is given learning that changes his life in a profound way. In *Consequence,* Inala and Daniel live in Western Sydney (a stark contrast to where Daniel grew up in Rose Bay), a place most Australians would be surprised to know has the largest Aboriginal population in Australia with a population of 41,887 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the year 2016 (Lawton 2016, p. 11) of a New South Wales Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population estimated to be 265,685 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018). Locating Daniel and Inala in

Western Sydney aims to challenge a perception that Aboriginal people reside primarily in regional and remote areas of NSW. The location of Innovation Energy's head office on floor 46 of an office tower overlooking the beauty of Sydney Harbour seeks to show the reader how a small group of people in the city can make decisions that affect a much larger group of people in rural Australia that they have no understanding of, or connection to. This thematic construct aims to stimulate thought about power and leadership, providing a point of reflection about how Western leaders often make decisions in isolation (mind, body, and spirit) from those affected by the decisions they make.

The contrast in setting of city versus country provides an opportunity for contemplation about how issues country people can face (drought, flood, bushfire, environmental destruction, the tyranny of distance) may be invisible and therefore somewhat 'not real' to city people. By understanding how invisible country issues can be to city folk, I am hoping to stimulate people to think about how unseen Aboriginal issues are to non-Aboriginal people.

I am hopeful that upon reading *Consequence*, readers will see Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing in a new light. For example, Uncle Shakey's camp is in dry desert country in far western NSW. Some people would consider Uncle Shakey's humpy as a hovel surrounded by landscape that is dry, drab, and unappealing. Through observing Daniel's visits to Uncle Shakey's camp (and the stories and backstories shared with Daniel), the reader becomes aware of how Daniel has grown to feel the beauty of this country (and camp) to love it dearly. This storyline seeks to show the reader how something that might be considered ugly or unremarkable can transform into something beautiful and astounding when its stories are revealed. This important

insight can be used to help us see the beauty within all people (including ourselves) and how we all have remarkable parts of our personal story we can feel good about. 'Gulliwai Haven' is a critical setting in the novel where Jasmine is able to continue her healing, an environmental disaster occurs, Daniel starts his healing process, Harold and Grace share their experiences of racism, Jasmine's ex-partner visits and is subjected to the consequences of his actions, numerous cultural scenes involving Uncle Jimmy Gordon and Uncle Billy Williams take place, Innovation Energy conducts exploration activities, the helicopter disaster occurs, and the novel's climactic ending takes place. The setting provides the reader with critical incidents that generate points of reflection on the importance of country, the importance of healing, the need to listen to the spirits, and the consequences of what happens when Lore is not upheld.

Points of reflection

To achieve the desired outcomes of the novel, storylines have been constructed and organised around seven critical key points of reflection.

Respecting the earth our Mother - the impacts of global warming

Throughout the book, events and storylines reflect the importance of the earth and the environment in Aboriginal culture. For Aboriginal people, the love for 'Mother Earth' has informed strict and sound environmental management of 'country' for tens of thousands of years. This is not the case in many aspects of the contemporary world as captured in a comment by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at the Conference of the Parties 26 (United Nations 2021):

> Our addiction to fossil fuels is pushing humanity to the brink. We face a stark choice: Either we stop it – or it stops us. It is time to say enough. Enough of brutalizing biodiversity. Enough of killing ourselves with carbon. Enough of treating nature like a toilet. Enough of burning, drilling and mining our way deeper. We are digging our own graves. Our planet is changing before our

> eyes – from the ocean depths to mountain tops; from melting glaciers to relentless extreme weather events.

Although the state of the environment is seen by the United Nations as an issue requiring urgent attention, negative impacts on the environment are often seen by the voting public as a justifiable sacrifice for the higher priority of a strong economy, employment, and affordable power, with research suggesting 73% of progressive voters in the 2019 Federal election and 26% of conservative voters see Australian action to reduce emissions as 'extremely important' (Colvin & Jotzo 2021). This can lead to political point scoring such as Treasurer (now Prime Minister), Scott Morrison's brandishing a lump of coal in parliament crying 'This is coal – don't be afraid' (Paul 2019). This kind of political grand standing undermines informed debate on issues such as energy generation, thereby undermining an ability for the public to develop opinions based on truth. From an Aboriginal spiritual and cultural perspective, the first and foremost priority of the Lore is to 'care for my place'. Debate over affordable carbon-based energy at the expense of a healthy, thriving environment for future generations is therefore puzzling from an Aboriginal ontological view of the world. For many Indigenous peoples throughout the world, the concept of the earth being seen as the sacred Mother is a critical focal point of their spirituality. In March 2019, native intellectuals and Spiritual Elders from Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, and Guatemala came together in a unique meeting to share insights about the state and future of 'Mother Earth', and to share knowledge, ideas, and actions through the unification process (Smith 2019). As a Loreman, I have a cultural, spiritual, and ceremonial obligation to advocate the importance of caring for country in all that I do. I feel very blessed I can do this through this PhD. The message of the need to care for the earth and the urgency of addressing the potential impacts of climate

change is communicated throughout *Consequence* in various ways including through Dreamtime stories, dream sequences, conversations between characters and numerous scenes involving natural disasters. The novel also provides fictional characters who represent and reflect the behaviours of some politicians and corporate leaders in the real world. The creative work aims to encourage the reader to consider Australia's current response to scientific data on global warming (governmental and public) and stimulate action that leads to an improved desire to care for our planet.

The importance of family

Family has been an important part of Aboriginal culture for over 60,000 years. The significance of family, particularly children, is demonstrated in a quote from Paul Gordon: 'Your life's journey is not just about you. It is about your children's, children's, children's, children and thereon (Callaghan & Gordon 2014, p. 77).' Family responsibilities can often override an Aboriginal person's other responsibilities such as employment (someone might be sick and requiring support), attending an appointment (someone might need transportation to a funeral) or servicing a financial debt (someone might need money for food), often leading to misunderstanding and a reinforcement of negative racial stereotypes in the broader community (they don't turn up to work, they don't keep appointments, they're not good with their money). It is hoped the novel will help to alleviate this type of racial profiling by, amongst other things, creating an improved understanding of the importance of family. Daniel's connection to his birth mother Gail and his sister Katie, the scenes where Inala announces she is pregnant, and their daughter Rosie's birthday party scene, aim to capture the importance of family to Aboriginal people. From an Aboriginal worldview, all living things including animals,

plants and insects are family. This is highlighted when Uncle Shakey tells Daniel the creation story and how the Mother Earth gave birth to all living things.

Respecting women/stopping domestic violence

In traditional Aboriginal society, topics of critical importance were captured in story and shared as a means of educating young people about specific elements of the Lore. Respecting the Earth our Mother, respecting motherhood and respecting women are interrelated core elements of the Lore and the subject of many Dreamtime stories. The fact that an Aboriginal woman in 2014-2015 was 32 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence than a non-Aboriginal women (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018, p. 83) highlights why I have included numerous critical conversation points in *Consequence* relating to respecting women. In addition to critical conversation points, the novel contains several female role models including Inala, Jasmine, Katie, Gail and Tuuriiki in the hope it will inspire young adult female readers to feel more confident in saying no to misogynistic behaviour and systems that nurture this inappropriate way of thinking.

Learning from Aboriginal spirituality

Aboriginal spirituality is at the core of Aboriginal being and identity. It gives meaning to all aspects of life, including relationships with one another and the environment (Grant 2004; pp. 8-9). Throughout the novel, insights on spirituality are shared in different ways such as characters telling traditional stories involving spiritual themes and beings, characters that are of the spirit world, and scenes and dream sequences that incorporate spiritual symbolism. It is hoped that these spiritual insights will inspire Aboriginal readers to explore this aspect of culture with appropriate Elders. It is also

hoped that these insights provide non-Aboriginal readers with increased respect for our belief system as stated by Paul Gordon (2017, pers. comm.): 'We don't expect non-Aboriginal people to believe what we believe, but we expect them to respect what we believe.'

Depression and mental health

Part Four of my book '*iridescence – Finding Your Colours and Living Your Story'* titled 'The Journey So Far' is an autobiography including graphic details around my nervous breakdown and meeting the 'black dog' of depression where I state: 'My self-belief, self-worth and self-esteem had been obliterated. Whenever the black dog growled, I would cower and whimper' (Callaghan & Gordon 2014, p. 293). The torturous journey of trying to find an escape from my place of desolation was all-consuming and littered with dead ends leading me to the darkest of places. Over the years, I have delivered several keynote presentations to various conferences on the topic of mental health, my journey through depression and the significance of culture in my recovery. Each time I speak on this topic, Aboriginal people come up to me and tell me how my story is the same as theirs. It is sad to think that my story is not an unusual one. This was first bought to my attention in a conversation I had with an Aboriginal colleague around three years after my breakdown where he said: 'Once upon a time, an Aboriginal man's rite of passage was initiation. Now it is a nervous breakdown. That is what the white man has done to us' (Aboriginal colleague 1998, pers. comm.). The comments I have received over the years are confirmed by Dudgeon, Walker et. al. (2014, p. 2) who state: 'Indigenous people also experience poorer social and emotional wellbeing outcomes than non-Indigenous Australians'. Given the impacts of transgenerational trauma and cultural unsafety on Aboriginal people's ability to achieve good mental health, a pivotal

story-line in the novel tracks the protagonist character Daniel's descent into depression, his suffering, and his eventual recovery. This storyline is a relatively graphic one to create a feeling of authenticity regarding Daniel's experience. I hope that the support Daniel receives from Inala, Uncle Clarry, Billy Williams and Jimmy Gordon resonates with readers and motivates them to reach out for help should they or someone close to them encounter challenges with their mental health.

The consequences of not embracing our responsibilities

This point of reflection is so important, it has been captured in the title of the creative work. In Aboriginal spirituality, I have been taught that the Lore belongs to the land. Given the land is timeless, the Lore is timeless. I have been taught the spirit ancestors therefore expect those living on this land today (all people regardless of their place of origin or bloodline), to respect the Lore and follow the Lore. Our belief system tells us the spirits are always watching and assessing as to whether we are caring for our place and all things in our place, sharing what we have, being humble in all that we do, acting from a place of love, and treating all things with respect. The spiritual consequence of not upholding the Lore is punishment in some form. Throughout the written work there are times where Lore is broken, for example, Minister Conard not respecting the land or the Elders she meets with; Joshua not respecting his partner, Jasmine; Rex Thompson not respecting the land or Dinegal's remains; staff of Innovation Energy not respecting the land; and severe consequences resulting. Readers might be surprised that in some instances, people who have not broken the Lore suffer hardship such as the storylines involving the cyclone in Chapter 19 and the bushfire in Chapter 24. These illustrations are provided to highlight how important it is for all people to uphold critical aspects of the Lore such as caring for country and the environment.

These storylines are meant to challenge in a way that creates conversations and introspection leading to positive shifts in areas such as domestic violence, authentic leadership, caring for country, caring about future generations, and greed. To do this in a way that engages the reader, a narrative of good versus evil in the form of Baatjay the evil snake and Wawaii the rainbow serpent is woven throughout the novel. This construct of good versus evil has existed in literature all over the world since people were able to record things (Penguin India blog 2015). The construct of good versus evil is also represented symbolically in the conflict between Innovation Energy (greed, environmental destruction, spiritual ignorance) and Gulliwai Haven (nurture, environmental protection, spiritual reclamation).

The importance of listening

Throughout this exegesis I have highlighted the importance of sharing story. Just as important is the need to listen as explained by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann in an interview with Beyond Blue (Beyond Blue n.d.):

> Dadirri is deep listening, silent awareness. And it's to bring people around to look at themselves. Because, look, we're in the digital era now, modern Australia. And you fast, you know, the world is going faster and faster. And we forget about who we are.

The novel contains numerous scenes and narration that highlight the importance of listening and how being silent is an important part of Aboriginal culture. Daniel's interaction with Uncle Shakey and Uncle Clarry involves a great deal of 'dadirri' which enables him to deal with numerous personal challenges including fatherhood, depression and fulfilling his cultural responsibilities. Jasmine's ability to listen to Inala when they first meet enables her to free herself from the cycle of domestic violence and fulfil her role in the climax of the story.

Narration

The complexity in purpose and objectives of this novel has required the development of numerous characters and storylines of significant depth and meaning that the reader can connect to. The narrator voice used to achieve this is reflective of the third-person omniscient point of view (contrasts with most of the books I have reviewed as part of this project where first person narrative dominates). This multi-layered flexibility is essential as it enables me to go back and forth in time; explain what is happening from different character's perspectives in different events and situations; access different character's experiences, thoughts, and feelings to reinforce a storyline message; give the reader the opportunity to create their own impression of different characters; use variations in descriptions and dialogue to better capture a scene; use the neutrality of the third person voice to connect with different readers; and generate increased intimacy between with the reader. As an example, this style of narration allows the reader to access Daniel's experiences, thoughts, and feelings (interiority) as he tries to understand his depression and anxiety. At the same time, through the voice of the narrator, the reader can see Inala's alternative perspective being one of concern and care and, alternatively, Uncle Clarry's perspective being one of positive dialogue and purposeful action. The use of narration, interior monologue and conversational dialogue provides each reader with the opportunity to create their own view of a given character and therefore personalise the reading experience.

In reviewing my writing style, I will discuss the following elements: language, communication and expression; dialogue; holding back information; story within a story; dream sequences; the treatment of Elder characters; and the decisions made in developing the final manuscript.

Language, communication, expression

In terms of language, communication and expression, the book adopts formal and informal dialogue. In scenes involving Minister Conard, the Innovation Energy Board Members and interactions with representatives of the justice system, the novel reflects the types of formal language that would be used in these situations. These scenes are in jarring contrast to the informal, culturally nuanced conversations that occur between Aboriginal characters (Uncle Clarry and Daniel, Inala and Tuuriki, Billy Williams and Jimmy Gordon). Using Aboriginal English and Aboriginal terminology in many of the storylines has been critical. At the same time, the use Aboriginal language, ways of communicating and expression has been challenging given the pressure I have felt to write in a way that conforms with mainstream literary practice. The pressure I have felt is captured by Grossman (2013, p. 248):

> Moreton-Robinson acknowledges the "different degrees' to which various Indigenous life-writing texts have been shaped to fit the "requirements of white literary practice" by non-Indigenous editors and collaborators, and, while not discussing specific examples, sees this as an extension of "power relations" between coloniser and colonised.

In this novel, the inclusion of Aboriginal expression may be considered a risk in terms of disconnecting the reader from the storyline, but it is essential in maintaining cultural meaning, authority, integrity, and authenticity. Having written both fiction and non-fiction works in recent years, I think the fictional form provides a far greater ability to resist the pressure to conform with white literacy practice that Grossman alludes to, validating my decision to choose the novel form as my best means of responding to the central problem identified in this project.

The ordering of events including the use of backstory

In terms of ordering of events, there is a real-time chronology from the start of the novel to the end. At the same time, the novel is regularly interjected with flashbacks (narrated and personal) relating to several of characters (Daniel, Sandra, Leo, Jasmine, Minister Conard, Jimmy Gordon, Joshua, Susan Donald, Rolly, Gail, Wollambi, Dinigal and Mick Saddler). Although there is a risk that this interruption of real time flow might confuse the reader, the construction of complex time enables the sharing of relevant background information to support the reader to gain a better understanding of a character and how they interact with the world.

Dialogue

Conversations between characters are critical in the novel. I am hopeful my focus on dialogue enables me to position the characters and events in way that maximises reader understanding and connection. The table below identifies how dialogue is used.

Table 8 – How dialogue is used in the novel

How Dialogue is Used	Example
Reveal a character's emotions	Inala talking to Turrikki after being abused at Aunty Flo's funeral
Draw the reader into the character's life	Rolly, Jimmy, Harold and Grace's telling their life stories
Show how the character reacts to different situations	Katie talking to her Mother about the accident
Keep the pace of the story flowing	Batjay's expressions of bad intent
Give balance to the narrative and narration	Uncle Shakey telling the creation story rather than through narration
Contribute humour	The way Uncle Clarry expresses himself
Create, escalate, and demonstrate conflict	Baatjay's conversation in Daniel's bedroom
Create reader emotion	Uncle Clarry talking to the spirit of Uncle Shakey just after his death

Create immediacy	Dialogue between Daniel, Uncle Clarry and Jasmine at climax of story
Facilitate cultural transformation	Uncle Shakey's stories and conversations

As I write the narrative, I can almost see and hear these conversations happening between characters, making it relatively easy for me to convert what I am observing into word form. It is therefore no surprise that dialogue is such a critical part of my writing style.

Holding back information

Withholding information about Jasmine until the last few pages of the novel was pivotal to its dramatic conclusion. The seeds of this twist were planted in the prequel novel *Coincidence.* Holding back information until the student is ready is an important part of Aboriginal traditional pedagogy. Aboriginal Dreamtime stories are often layered, and a student told the same story several times with a new level of learning added when the learner is ready. This key element of Aboriginal teaching methodology is captured by a character in *Ghostbird* (Fuller 2020, p. 145): 'Knowledge isn't free and given wherever you want it, you gotta earn it.' The scene in *Consequence* where Daniel is taken by Uncle Shakey and Uncle Clarry to a place where he is introduced to the evil energy of Baatjay is reflective of this learning approach. The Old Men had been 'holding back' this information and experience for nearly eight years, waiting until he was ready. *Consequence* honours this cultural practice by introducing new information as the reader progresses and 'earns the right' to access it including the spiritual experience delivered at the very end of the novel.

Story within a story (hypodiegesis)

To address the complexity of Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal lived experience, the purpose of this written work, the storylines required to both educate and entertain, and the number of characters involved in tell the overarching story, I have adopted an approach of delivering several stories within the main story. The primary plotline of Daniel's responsibility as 'the one' to destroy Baatjay is intersected with multiple allegories that introduce or reinforce the points of reflection that are so critical in achieving the purpose of this ngarra wiya. The chapters involving the bushfire and the cyclone, for instance, involve characters that do not appear anywhere else in the book. The overarching narrative could continue without these chapters, but their non-inclusion would undermine what *Consequence* is trying to achieve. *Born Into This* (Thompson 2021) was an interesting work to review in that it is a book of sixteen Indigenous short stories. Through the short story format, Thompson harvests the flexibility this creative form provides by introducing a vast number of different characters, settings, and storylines free from the constraints of having to connect the different components into one story arc. Thompson's use of short story to cover a diverse range of themes (racism, assimilation, identity, cultural reclamation, colonialism, environmental vandalism, relationships) is an alternative and clever way of educating readers on the barriers contemporary Aboriginal people face in modern day Australia. Although he has used a different approach to me, the need to convey several stories to the reader is something we share and explains why the story within a story technique I have used in this novel is so important.

Dream sequences

The Dream sequences used in this novel are an important vessel to introduce the reader to spiritual imagery in a way that is inconclusive. This lack of certainty is hoped to stimulate the reader's imagination, thereby increase engagement through the creation of interpretive and plot tension as the reader tries to unpack the riddles the dreams contain.

The treatment of Elder characters

Achieving the purpose of the novel would not be possible without the inclusion of key Elder characters who provide profound insights and stories that are critical in achieving the educative aims of *Consequence.* The roles of Uncle Shakey, Uncle Clarry and other Elders in the novel demonstrate their importance as nurturers, mentors, guides, and positive role models to young people. As the story progresses, we see Daniel's mental, physical, spiritual, and moral growth as he faces and overcomes numerous challenges. Much of this growth is due to the advice and nurture provided by the Elders around him. Daniel's story is somewhat typical of the Bildungsroman genre in that it involves a formative journey from youth to adulthood. On this journey the Elders support Daniel as struggles with the responsibilities of being the 'Boomerang Man'; wrestles with doubts about his identity; experiences racism (personally and systemically); and loses himself in the darkness of depression. Jasmine's growth through her connection with Inala, Dot, Billy, Jimmy, and Daniel is also typical of the Bildungsroman genre.

Decisions made

I have discovered that writing a novel is not a simple as pulling together several scenes into a story arc. There are many decisions to be made in the development of the first draft (plot, storylines, characters, themes, stylistic approaches and setting) and even

more decisions to be made in the review and finalisation process. I have found this part of the creative process challenging (there is no right or wrong in many instances) and rewarding (the head scratching and changing of things I thought were set in concrete invariably led to a better result). Major decisions I have made during this journey include the following: to write on a conventional assumption that the reader has read the prequel (negates the need for me to have to spend time introducing characters from earlier book); what to take on board in terms of comments from those who provided feedback on the manuscript (comments included move Chapter 7 to Chapter 1, reduce the number of characters, include tension in every scene, locate every scene in time; have Uncle Shakey die before the start of the book); merging and rearranging of chapters (enables better story flow); moving Chapters 3 and 4 to Chapters 1 and 2 (introduces the new character Jasmine with a known character Inala, and facilitates a smoother continuation of Daniel's character); and to not include the conversation questions shown in Appendix A (undermines the literary resonance of the creative work). At the time I made these decisions, I was optimistic they would facilitate the flow of the story and the achievement of my project goals. Now I am about to submit the final draft of this thesis, I can say with confidence they have been the right decisions.

Characters

The need to tell a story within a story means there is a wide range of characters in *Consequence* (possibly too many characters from a literary purist perspective). Many of these characters are introduced in the prequel novel *Coincidence.* Those who appear in both novels include Daniel, Inala, Uncle Shakey, Uncle Clarry, Susan Donald, Tuuriiki, Kyle, Gail, and Katie. Writing a sequel provided me with a dilemma around the

question – 'Do I introduce the protagonist and other key characters as if they are new to the reader or do I assume the reader will have already read the prequel? Although I have made the decision that the characters aren't new to the reader (this won't be the case with the examiners of this PhD of course, hence the provision of a summary of the prequel in Appendix B), it is still important that I reintroduce the continuing characters and the context of their relationship with each other. The table below gives examples of how this has been done.

Table 9 – Outline of how characters in prequel novel are introduced

Character(s) introduced	**Reintroduction narrative**
Inala and Daniel	"Come off it youse fullas. It's been eight years. The honeymoon should be well and truly over by now." Denise teased.
Uncle Shakey	*I'm so lucky,* he thought. His eyes strayed to a photograph on the wall. The lines on Uncle Shakey's dark, thin face were contradicted by the youthful sparkle of his eyes.
Uncle Clarry	"Uncle Clarry, its Daniel." "Hey there, bud. How's the celebrations going? Me and Uncle Shakey would've loved to be there."
Susan Donald	"I'd be happy with that," Daniel's birth mother, Gail said. "The more grandchildren the better. "I'll second that," Susan, Daniel's stepmother, added.
Tuuriiki	"Hey there cuz, it's Tuuriiki, I seen what happened. Open up ay?" Inala opened the door and spilled into Tuurriiki's open arms. "There, there, bub."
Kyle	"Gotcha." Kyle jumped, screamed, and held his chest all at once. "Shit, Jimmy. How many times have I asked you not to do that?" Jimmy's bellowing laugh echoed up and down the river.
Gail	"I'd be happy with that," Daniel's birth mother, Gail said. "The more grandchildren the better. "I'll second that," Susan, Daniel's stepmother, added.
Katie	Katie kissed her mother goodbye. "You be careful down there, ay?" Gail said. "Those marches can attract all sorts of people. Good and bad." "Oh mum. I'm sixteen now. I can look after myself."

In the many novels by Aboriginal writers I have reviewed, all of them have a large cast of characters. This affirms to me the complexity of issues, themes and

storylines being addressed in these creative works and the need for a large array of characters to convey key messages and cultural meaning to the reader. In describing the characters in Consequence, I have broken them down into the categories of major, important, and minor.

Major characters

Daniel Donald is the central character in both the prequel novel, *Coincidence,* and sequel, *Consequence*. In *Coincidence* we follow 18-year-old Daniel's challenges and personal growth after discovering he is a 'stolen child.' *Consequence* is set eight years on from the prequel. Although he is mentally resilient with a strong sense of identity and purpose, Daniel eventually succumbs to the stress of circumstances that arise. After a long period of self-doubt and personal suffering, Daniel commences a path of recovery and growth that readies him for his final battle with Baatjay the evil snake. Much of Daniel's self-doubt and journey through depression is based on my personal experience. Key characteristics reflected in Daniel's character include honesty, humility, and loyalty.

Uncle Shakey is an Aboriginal Elder in his nineties who lives on his own in the desert. He first meets Daniel in the prequel novel *Coincidence*. In *Consequence*, Uncle Shakey continues his role as a high-level cultural knowledge owner and clever man committed to sharing his learning with Daniel. Uncle Shakey's character has been created from my personal experiences with senior cultural bosses over 20 years. Key characteristics reflected in his character include gentleness, humility, positivity, forgiveness, determination, purpose, wisdom, timelessness, and contentment.

Uncle Clarry is an Aboriginal man in his seventies living in a fictional town named Sturt in mid-Western New South Wales. He befriends Daniel very early in the prequel novel. Clarry is a close friend of Uncle Shakey so has spent much time 'out bush' but has also spent time in Sydney earlier in his life when he worked as a senior public servant. In this novel, he continues to be a mentor and friend that Daniel can always depend on in his times of doubt. Uncle Clarry's character is built upon my personal experiences with Elders over the past 20 years. Characteristics he embodies include caring and kindness, humility, big picture thinking, patience, calmness, humour, loyalty, and availability.

Jasmine is a new character. She is 22 years of age and has lived on the streets of Sydney for many years but now lives with Joshua who is mentally and physically abusive to her. This storyline aims to initiate important conversation points around respecting women, self-esteem, domestic violence, fear, healing and having the courage to make changes in one's life. Jasmine's story will hopefully inspire young woman to believe in themselves. Jasmine's character and some of the events that take place around her are based on research I have carried out with workers in the areas of homelessness, domestic violence, women's refuges and out of home care. Characteristics Jasmine embodies include resilience, openness, ability to grow and ability to rise to any occasion.

Wawaii is one of many different names given to the spirit entity sometimes called the 'rainbow serpent.' Other names used across the traditional continent include Kanmare, Andrenjinyi, Dhakkan, Kurreah, Wogal, Kajura, Wanamangura, Walu, Wollunqua and Numereji (Radcliffe-Brown 1926, pp. 19-25). Wawaii's character is developed from traditional stories that have been shared with me including the rainbow

serpent's role in maintaining harmony and balance with all living things on country and the rainbow serpent's role in carrying out punishment if Lore is broken. In the novel, there are several scenes where Wawaii enacts the consequences of contemporary society's lack of care for the land.

Baatjay is an evil spiritual being represented in the form of a snake. This character has been developed from a traditional story that has been shared with me about a bad snake consumed with self-interest and ego that is intent on biting people and injecting them with poison to create misery and trauma. Using fictional backstory, Baatjay's origins are explained including his life as a man, his migration from Australia, and his return to Australia once Lore was undermined by cultural genocide. Baatjay's commitment to creating pain and suffering to all things is tracked in real time in the novel leading eventually to the snake's showdown with Daniel and his sister at the end of the novel.

Inala was a 17-year-old living in the fictional town of Sturt when first introduced in the prequel novel where she first meets Daniel at Bondi Beach. In *Consequence,* Inala is now married to Daniel with a three-year-old child named Rosie. Inala's role is pivotal in four important storylines relating to motherhood, domestic violence, mental health, and lateral violence. It is hoped that Inala will be seen as a role model for younger readers given the value of mentors and role models in assisting youth at risk to develop improved self-esteem, self-worth, future aspirations, and a commitment to community responsibility (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 2011, pp.61-62). Inala's strength of character, strong sense of self, connection to culture, vulnerability, and willingness to reach out for help, will

hopefully help young women (and young men) more confidently navigate the path from young adult to new adult.

Important characters

Billy Williams and Jimmy Gordon are so connected that they are almost the one character. They are older Aboriginal men whose friendship and passion have enabled them to create a healing camp on a property in mid-Western New South Wales. The two men have almost completely different personalities but demonstrate how diversity can be a strength if people have a common vision or purpose. As the novel progresses, their property, Gulliwai Haven, becomes an important staging point for numerous scenes that reinforce key messages to the reader relating to domestic violence, the impacts of past government policies on Aboriginal people, the repercussions of not caring for the land, traditional land ownership rights versus mining company rights, and the consequences of ignoring the Lore. Both characters are amalgams of Aboriginal people I have met over my lifetime.

Minister Conard, the Minister for Energy and Environment is a crucial character in my desire to trigger reader reflection on the importance of caring for the environment and the impacts of global warming. The Minister's actions and words demonstrate that although governments are elected to govern a state or country (with an expectation they will focus on what is best for the population) they are primarily driven by popularity and opinion polls as expressed in an article by Cook (2018):

> Opinion polling has changed every liberal democracy by turning politics into a contest between two sales teams trying to synthesis a product they believe voters want and diluting what was once the key role of politicians: to provide leadership.

The Minister is driven by her need to stay in her position of power which means her high visibility and profile in a time where the voting public are concerned about electricity and electricity prices excites her. Her commitment to supporting fossil fuel energy sources including coal, oil and gas create points of tension throughout the novel. Her meeting with a group of Aboriginal Elders who plead with her to understand the importance of caring for Mother Earth is a commentary on how difficult it is for Aboriginal people to be heard in government circles. The quote below (Yunupingu 2009) reflects how many Aboriginal people feel about government. It is a long quotation, but an important and powerful one in terms of why I have undertaken this PhD:

> I look around me at the Yolngu world. I worry about the lives of the little ones that I see around me, including my own children — my youngest daughter is barely eight years old. I have more than a dozen grandchildren. I look back now on a lifetime of effort and I see that we have not moved very far at all. For all the talk, all the policy, all the events, all the media spectaculars and fine speeches, the gala dinners, what has been achieved? I have maintained the traditions, kept the law, performed my role — yet the Yolngu world is in crisis; we have stood still. I look around me and I feel the powerlessness of all our leaders. All around me are do-gooders and no-hopers — can I say this? *Whitefellas. Balanda.* They all seem to be one and the same sometimes: talking, talking, talking — smothering us — but with no vision to guide them; holding all the power, all the money, all the knowledge for what to do and how to work the white world. Only on the ceremonial ground do our leaders still lead — everywhere else we are simply paid lip service. Or bound up in red tape.
>
> And the 'gap' that politicians now talk of grows larger as we speak, as I talk: as the next session of parliament starts or as the next speech is given by the next politician, the gap gets wider. I don't think anyone except the few of us who have lived our lives in the Aboriginal world understand this task that is called 'closing the gap'.
>
> There is no one in power who has the experience to know these things. There is not one federal politician who has any idea about the enormity of the task. And how could they? Who in the senior levels of the commonwealth public service has lived through these things? Who in the parliament? No one speaks an Aboriginal language, let alone has the ability to sit with a young man or woman and share that person's experience and find out what is really in their heart. They have not raised these children in their arms, given them everything they have, cared for them, loved them, nurtured them. They have not had their land stolen, or their rights infringed, or their laws broken. They do not bury the dead as we bury our dead.

I have resisted the urge to trim down this quotation given that every word in it resonates in my spirit. My body has only been on this earth for 61 years, but my spirit has been here since the beginning. For tens of thousands of years, my spirit has been part of a

good story of relationships, abundance, fulfilment, and contentment. That story changed in 1788. I am personally in a privileged place, but my body and spirit are surrounded by stories of our people's pain and suffering. Endless stories of disadvantage and inequality due to assimilationist policies and practices developed and implemented by government. By not caring for their place and all things in their place, our leaders aren't upholding the responsibilities of the Lore. As implied by Grandfather Yunupingu, it is time politicians stop the talking, stop the lip service, and start to listen and understand the black way. I have no faith in government. That is why I have written this novel targeting young adults. I have hope that we are at the dawn of a new era. An era that sees a new generation of enlightened leaders that care for all people, for all things and for all country. From 1997-2013, I worked in the New South Wales public sector rising from a middle management role to being the most senior Aboriginal public servant in New South Wales. Minister Conard is a fictional character created from my many meetings and experiences with Ministers over the years.

Matt Lovett is a 30-something-year-old, ambitious corporate high-flier for Innovation Energy. Given his high-level skills in strategic communication, his role in transitioning Innovation Energy from coal to gas-based operations is pivotal to the storyline around corporate profit being generated at the expense of environmental wellbeing. This is demonstrated through scenes involving Matt and the company Board where the company's focus is on profitability and survival with little to no regard for the environment other than meeting regulatory requirements. Matt's positive interactions with Minister Conard enables him to convince the government to use their legislative authority to waive normal environmental and Aboriginal heritage planning requirements. This storyline provides insight into the mutually beneficial relationships

that can exist between politicians and influential companies and how these associations can corrupt ethical practice as suggested in a comment by Cameron Murray, Economist, University of Queensland (Aulby & Ogge 2016, p. iv.):

> In Greasing the Wheels, the ease at which money can buy privileged access to political decision makers in Queensland is put on display. In a series of case studies, we see how mining companies have been able to gain political favours from both major parties by taking advantage of relaxed rules around donation and gifts, cooling-off periods for senior public servants, and the regulation of lobbyists.

In *Consequence,* both Minister Conard and Matt Lovett are punished by the spirits for breaking the Lore. Matt Lovett's character is based on my experience working in the mining sector, my undergraduate studies in commerce, my time spent as a university lecturer in the field of economics and my experience in the public sector.

Joshua is in his mid-twenties and has a relationship with Jasmine. He has great affection for her. At the same time, there is an unsavoury side to him beyond the wit and charm that his social circle sees. Given Jasmine was homeless when he met her, Joshua sees himself as her saviour and Jasmine as his possession. He is prone to horrific bouts of temper and violence toward Jasmine. When Jasmine meets Inala, a friendship develops that gives Jasmine the courage to leave Joshua but he does not see the relationship as over. This character has been created based on my discussions with women who work with victims of domestic violence.

Katie, Daniel's sister, was eight years old when they first met in the prequel *Coincidence* where Katie is depicted as a very upbeat child who is very connected to the spirit world. In *Consequence,* Katie is now 16. Her strong belief in social justice and her positive approach to life's challenges, seek to show the reader the power of positive attitude. Katie's response to a tragic accident that befalls her during an Australia Day protest march provides a message that, although we might not be able to avoid a crisis,

we can choose how to respond to it. Katie's character aims to inspire. Her positive attitude to life is one that we can all learn from.

Minor characters

There are numerous minor characters throughout the novel. Even though their appearance in the novel is somewhat fleeting, these characters are critical for the conveyance of messages, themes, and allegories within the bigger story. The homeless characters, Frank, and Sandra, provide the reader with an opportunity to reflect on what it would be like to live on the streets, how easily it can happen, how privileged most of us are to have a roof over our head, and how we can be more inclusive in our day to day lives to those less fortunate than us. Frank and Sandra show us how being a good person isn't about material possessions, occupation, or appearance. Leo, the café owner showcases the power of kindness and sharing. The character of Rolly shows us that a positive experience can occur even in the darkest of times and how personal support can appear in the most unexpected of places. Dot, Harold, and Grace appear together in only one scene; however, their dinner conversation at Gulliwai Haven provides an important back story based on my Mum and Dad's lived experiences. The scene involving the Romano family characters seeks to show how the innocent can be affected by the anger of the spirit world as Wawaii punishes humans for not respecting and honouring their responsibilities to look after the land. A catastrophic bushfire that surrounds the Radcliffe family delivers a message about help coming from the unlikeliest of places. The chapter involving the bushfire also provides a backstory from the perspective of 'Wollambi,' an Aboriginal spirit to share knowledge on traditional Aboriginal cultural practices that cared for country. Julie Pierce is a school principal with a strong moral compass whose commitment to caring for her staff is compromised by the demands of

bureaucracy and systems that are all about accountability, mitigating risk and protecting government branding. There is a sadness in her interactions with Daniel that demonstrate how demotivating and destructive systems and policies can be to an individual who wants to make a difference.

There are several storylines in the novel relating to racism in the contemporary Australian environment including a scene involving the passing of an Elder. What happens to her family in a time of immense grief paints a graphic picture of how the negative effects of white privilege, stereotyping and racial profiling are ever present. Inala's flamboyant cousin, Tuuriiki, continues her role from *Coincidence* as an anchor of support and hope for friends. Tuuriiki's cheeky humour is reflective of the importance of humour in Aboriginal communities as a resistance to oppression, an expression of identity, a means of survival and a tool for healing (Hurley 2015). In stark contrast, Rex Thompson's character as the Innovation Energy Chief Geologist, is soulless and robotic. His interaction with Jimmy Gordon at Gulliwai Haven demonstrates his lack of desire to interact at a personal level and his total focus on his project deliverables. Thompson's disrespectful treatment of the skeletal remains of a man who had been buried for 10,000 years illustrates his lack of respect for culture and his lack of concern for the environment. Kyle and Daniel have been friends since early high school with Kyle's role in *Consequence,* that of an environmental scientist, providing a platform for the delivery of messages relating to the potential ramifications of global warming. Mick Saddler's character, that of an Aboriginal employee of Innovation Energy, seeks to show the reader the inner conflict Aboriginal people can face in trying to live in two worlds (Aboriginal and Western).

All the characters outlined above are pivotal in various storylines in the novel. They are a critical component of the architecture and structural integrity of the novel, as are my cultural responsibilities; the various settings that frame different parts of the narrative; the points of reflection that dictate the development of specific scenes, events, and character interactions; the way the story is narrated; and the various stylistic tools I have used to ensure the creative work is educative and entertaining. In Chapter Six, I will outline the issues and challenges I have encountered in the construction process.

Chapter Six

Issues and challenges

Throughout the creation of this thesis, several issues and challenges have arisen, each requiring considered thought and specific responses. Some were related to the Aboriginal context of the project, whilst some related to the creative practice of writing.

Flow

Before I commenced writing *Consequence,* it was important to review the creative work's architecture including identifying the overarching theme (caring for the environment and each other), points of reflection, settings, key characters, and character arcs. To develop the story arc, I wrote out numerous key events on post-it notes, attached them to a white board and moved them around until I had a sequence of potential storylines to guide me through the prospective steps of introduction, rising action, set back, turning point, climax, resolution, falling action and conclusion. I also conducted research on how experts and other authors plan their creative work. In doing this, I was somewhat surprised to find a connection to Stephen King's approach (2000, p. 128):

> … stories are found things, like fossils in the ground … stories are relics, part of an undiscovered pre-existing world. The writer's job is to use the tools in his or her toolbox to get as much of each one out of the ground intact as possible.

When I write, it is very much like I am trying to uncover something that is already there. Bringing these fossils out of the ground intact is a challenge but added to that is my habit of bringing them out of the ground in the wrong order. This means that the first draft of a book I create is invariably a jumble of events that have merit but don't flow as I would like (despite my best planning efforts). The first review/edit I conduct

of a first draft of a manuscript is therefore always a painstaking grind as every word, sentence, paragraph and even chapter is forensically assessed, re-arranged, and adjusted to facilitate flow. The development of this exegesis has not been any different. Even in the final stages of its completion, I have decided to move major 'chunks' of carefully constructed narrative around to facilitate greater flow of logic and ideas.

In writing *Consequence*, the first and second reviews of the manuscript involved me carrying out editing for more than 12 hours a day, 7 days a week for over a month. This cramming approach isn't my normal project management style outside the world of writing, but I find if I take long breaks, I forget key aspects of story and am unable to connect the dots and create the flow I desire. The first review and second reviews of *Consequence* led to the relocation of entire chapters, the merging of chapters, the movement of numerous paragraphs, rewrites of scenes and the deletion of tens of thousands of words. In my research on the writing process, I am heartened by the words attributed to Ernest Hemingway where he is thought to have said 'the first draft of anything is shit'.

To help me review the flow and logic of my writing, I created a table to chart each chapter's key events and key points of reflection (Appendix C). This storyboard enabled me to review the sequencing of events and chapters and was pivotal in me arriving at the final structure (organisation of scenes and events, character development and realisation of themes).

Verbosity

I tend to use more words than necessary to convey storylines. This again emphasises the importance of the review/edit process where I do my best to strip every sentence to its

cleanest components (Zinnser 1976 pp. 7-8). Upon the completion of my first review/edit of *Consequence* I deleted approximately 6,000 words. By the time I had finalised this work I have deleted approximately 30,000 words and reduced the number of chapters from 37 to 33.

My increased understanding of loaded noun phrases, the minimal use of adverbs, the prudent management of adjectives, and avoiding repetition, favourite words, purple patches and cliches compels me to review the prequel to this novel using the new skills this PhD has given me. In doing so, I expect that I will reduce the word count of *Coincidence* by a similar amount to *Consequence*.

Fitting so many complex Aboriginal experiences into one book

To answer the central question of this project, the novel incorporates narrative relating to a large range of social problems Aboriginal people experience in Australia today. Numerous characters, storylines and scenes have been created to achieve this aim. I have done my best to deliver them in a way that engages and informs without creating confusion or overwhelming the reader with too much information. The use of Indigenous realism throughout the novel aims to provide the reader with an imaginative escape from the dour reality of some of the scenes in addition to seeking to show the reader the beauty and application of Aboriginal spirituality in our daily lives. The messages contained within the scenes involving Aboriginal spirituality are intended to act as a point of contradiction for readers so they might reflect on western values, particularly with relation to life meaning and purpose.

Balancing the desire to educate with the need to entertain

For me, there is no point producing this work if I am not able to stimulate an educative reader experience. In most instances in the novel, the intended learning is embedded in the storyline in a way that cannot be seen. At times, however, I have developed items of narrative that are more obvious in their learning intent, usually by way of a lengthened conversation piece by a specific character. This has the potential to make a scene overtly didactic. Examples of this are where Kyle tells Daniel about the impacts of gas mining on the environment and where Daniel informs Minister Conard of the documented impacts of global warming on the planet. In my original manuscript, I directly quoted 'The Uluru Statement from the Heart*'* (Referendum Council 2017), however upon review, I decided that on balance, the quotation took more away from the flow than it added, and so made reference to the statement instead. In my desire to provide information that educates, I am aware of the need to maintain reader interest. This is an education versus entertainment balancing act that I have hopefully managed to accomplish.

Providing scenes and storylines that capture the hardships faced by Aboriginal people without being seen as negative or cynical

Reconciliation Australia (2019, p. 20) has found that 63% of Australians never or rarely socialise with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. This figure suggests that many Australians have a limited opportunity to gain insights and understanding of the lived experiences of Aboriginal people or their culture and values. As suggested by Luke Pearson (2016), this cannot be done without engaging with Aboriginal people:

> …if you want to have a deep and rich understanding of collective Indigenous experiences, cultures, philosophies, and sensibilities then it is impossible to do so without meaningful engagement and interactions with Indigenous peoples directly.

Engaging with an Aboriginal person and communities in a meaningful way is not a straight-forward process. There are cultural protocols to be followed and Aboriginal people don't necessarily have the time or desire to take time out from their busy lives to attend to the curiosity of an outsider. The novel aims to provide the reader with a basic understanding of Indigenous experiences, cultures, philosophies, and sensibilities. It is also hoped the novel motivates individuals to carry out further learning including exploring local perspectives with Aboriginal communities and Elders in an appropriate way. In doing this, individuals might find that Aboriginal people and communities are as diverse as any other part of the community, meaning that the opinions voiced by characters in *Consequence* don't necessarily reflect the view of every Aboriginal person they might meet. Understanding and embracing this diversity encourages debate. Respectful debate that welcomes difference of opinion can be a powerful mechanism to generate new perspectives on old problems, increasing unity and facilitating the healing journey this country must undertake. To create this safe space, I have had to give considerable thought to the messages I wanted to convey, particularly around difficult topics such as violence and racism. I don't want the reader to feel yelled at, even though this is sometimes the only way to be heard in an environment where the noise of dominant culture can be so pervasively loud. Yelling can be construed as hostile, cynical and adversarial which can create unsafe space and disengagement. In addition to being abusive, yelling changes the mind, brain, and body in a number of ways including increasing the activity of the emotional brain, increasing stress hormones in the blood stream, increasing muscular tension and more (Optimist Minds 2021). Creating a platform of sharing that can communicate truth without turning away the audience is a challenge, but one I have needed to consider deeply in the creation of this novel. It is

accepted that some of the opinions and commentary portrayed by characters in *Coincidence* might challenge some readers, but rather than disengage, it is hoped the reader will reflect on the content, reshape their views and be willing to explore areas of interest further. The Minister Conard character for instance, is intended to provoke a strong reaction in the reader in the hope that they will contemplate the construct of power and influence in Australian society, particularly with relation to the powerless. In a similar way, some of the views expressed by the Uncle Clarry and Jimmy Gordon characters have been positioned as potentially negative or cynical in order to challenge the reader to reflect on what he is saying and why.

The potential for lateral violence

Many people may not have heard the term lateral violence. It is a very sensitive issue and one I raise with a degree of hesitancy. Mick Gooda (2011, p.52), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, describes lateral violence as follows:

> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities face many challenges and sadly some of the divisive and damaging harms come from within our own communities. Ask any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person and they will tell you stories of back-stabbing, bullying and even physical violence perpetrated by community members against each other. When we already have so many odds stacked against us, it is tragic to see us inflict such destruction on ourselves.
>
> There is a name for this sort of behaviour: Lateral violence.

Throughout my life, I have been subjected to racism from non-Aboriginal people many times. Throughout my life I have also been subjected to lateral violence from my own people. It happened in my teenage years. It happened during my career in the government sector. It has happened since I became a Loreman and it has happened since I have become an author. I have been called an ‘uptown’, ‘a Johnny-come-lately’, ‘a weekend warrior’, ‘a coconut’ and ‘a lamington’ by my own people several times in my

life. Lateral violence has become a damaging norm in the lives of many of Aboriginal people as reflected in a comment from a colleague recently: ‘If you do anything good or for some reason people talk you up, then there are some of our mob who are just gonna go you. That’s just what happens’ (2021, pers. comm., July). The number of people that have targeted me is a minority; nevertheless, the hurt caused is very real and the likelihood of being targeted again through the creation of this novel and exegesis is a given. In writing this novel, I have needed to be prudent in identifying potential points of conjecture in order to minimise the potential for lateral violence. An example of this is in Chapter 20:

> I hear what you’re saying, but I’m sure these fullas are from different places. I don’t want to stir up any black politics.
>
> You’re sharing the big picture, bud, the values and stories that connect all of the tribal groups right across this land. I’ll talk to them about spending time with their Elders so they can get the local picture. That’s really important of course.”

I have been taught that in traditional times, all the tribal groups across the continent were connected through a common belief in the importance of caring for country and all things on country. How this was practiced at a local level, for example, language, story, art, dance, and song, was diverse. In modern day Australia, the common belief has been subsumed by the local practices, meaning that in many instances, talking about culture if you are standing in someone else’s country or place can lead to confrontation. The passage above captures Daniel’s concern about attracting animosity and Clarry’s approach to managing the potential for Daniel to be targeted (during the conduct of his workshop or some time down the track). This is a reality I face every time I talk about culture ‘off country’.

Assimilationist pressure to conform with mainstream, dominant culture structures

Since my first memory at primary school, I have felt the pressure to conform and fit in. In my new adult years, the trauma I felt in my adolescence had led me to try and be all things to all people at all times, contributing in a major way to my nervous breakdown. Since my recovery (and awakening) I continue to see the pervasive pressure on Aboriginal people to accommodate the demands of the dominant culture that surrounds me. The pressure to acculturate has not been absent in this project. When I tell a Dreamtime story to a group of people, I feel the freedom to deliver the narrative in the way our ancestors have done for tens of thousands of years. In writing this thesis, I have not felt this freedom, despite the extraordinary support I have received from my academic supervisors. As an Aboriginal author, I have also felt the pressure to conform to white literary practice, as captured in the quote in Chapter Five from Grossman. As an Aboriginal person, I know I am under the microscope of judgement every day. It is not a comfortable place to sit. As an Aboriginal Loreman, I am privileged to have been given knowledge that places me at a very senior level in the Aboriginal system of learning (equivalent to the highest level in the western academic structure) and yet, here I am, feeling I have to prove I am meritorious in a western system that requires me to follow somewhat prescriptive structures, meet standards and demonstrate competence in a value system that is not mine. The pressure to conform to western academic practice has been conflicting and challenging to say the least. There have been countless times in the development of this exegesis where I have felt dumb, stupid, overwhelmed and out of my depth. I find myself feeling like an outsider looking in, wanting acceptance but knowing that won't happen unless I embrace the western lens of scholarly conduct that I am forced to uphold if I want to be afforded the academic tick of approval. Although I

have always been confident my work will make an original contribution to a disciplinary field of knowledge and scholarship, and enhance my knowledge and skill and the ability to apply them independently, the pressure to demonstrate this in a way that accords with the Western world demands of the *Australian Qualifications Framework* (AQF n.d.) has been significant. Guntarik and Daley (2017, p. 413) provide insight into why I might feel this way:

> Postgraduate candidates are expected to situate their research in a distinct theoretical paradigm, and there may be problems for Indigenous candidates for several reasons. Some Indigenous candidates believe they are being asked to locate their research primarily in a context grounded in Western epistemological and pedagogical foundations because they are studying at Western institutions.

In the same way that creative writers and those running writing programs in universities may feel writing's identity as a research discipline as well as a creative practice is not adequately recognised in the Regulated Qualifications Framework, (Haseman 2007), I feel Aboriginal epistemology and pedagogy is not appropriately regarded in the western sanctum of academic recognition, as explained through an Indigenous PhD student 'Aunty Doris' (Guntarik and Daley 2017, p. 411):

> Aunty Doris commented on the relevance of providing citations to every knowledge claim Indigenous candidates make in their exegesis. She asked: 'How do I know what I know?' (personal communication 22 October 2015). The inference was that her knowledge had been passed down from her ancestors. This meant also that she may not always be able to provide exact citation in terms of who, when, and in what publication because the knowledge was passed on through oral history. As we will illustrate later in this article, Indigenous cultural practices can rely on alternative sources of legitimacy to validate knowledge claims.

I feel the 'Aunty Doris' quote raises important issues for Aboriginal higher degree students relating to the demonstration of scholarly merit.

Overcoming my feelings of marginalisation and building my capacity to walk in two worlds isn't a new way of thinking. In 1971, Dr HC Coombs, who was at the time, Chair of a newly created policy advisory body called The Commonwealth Council for Aboriginal Affairs (Rowse 2012, p. 61), stated that: 'Colonial authority would have to

make room for Aborigines different ways of making decisions, and Aboriginal people would have to draw on the customary political capacity in new ways'. The words of Dr Coombs are a pragmatic reflection of the road ahead that being one of mutual listening, learning, and understanding of different worldviews. This project has given me the opportunity to carry out adaptive, inclusive, and innovative work that will hopefully bring the two cultures closer together in a way that honours and respects both. By integrating cited conventional research sources such as articles, books and reports with family history, oral history and traditional cultural knowledge passed down to me, I have endeavoured to service both Western academic and Aboriginal cultural protocols. For me, this makes the challenge of placing myself under the western academic microscope, a worthwhile one.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

When I started this PhD, I knew I wanted to write a sequel to my novel *Coincidence*. I knew what I wanted to write about, but I wasn't sure how I would do this or why. The research I have conducted relating to the central problem this PhD addresses has given me profound insight into why I write:

> The impact of invasion and control of Aboriginal people (including the attempted annihilation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and practices) has accumulated across generations, leading to socioeconomic inequity that undermines the wellbeing of Aboriginal people, non-Aboriginal people, and the land itself.

The exegesis describes the genesis of the central problem through a review of the impact of colonialism on traditional Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. Since 1788, disease, massacres, dispossession, trauma, assimilation, and government policy have severely disrupted the complex systems that Aboriginal people followed for tens of thousands of years, creating inequity and disadvantage, disconnection and alienation, feelings of powerlessness, and the loss of hope for many Aboriginal people. The central problem is also viewed from a 'lived experience' perspective through my mother, father, and myself. The capture of these forensics provide insight into the numerous and pervasive chains to freedom of choice and wellbeing Aboriginal people are required to manage every day of their lives.

Identifying answers to the central question of this PhD further explains why I write:

> How can storytelling in the form of a novel targeting young adult readers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), balance the desire to educate and the need to entertain, in representing complex social, cultural and personal issues that face Aboriginal people today, and communicate the importance of culture and Lore in addressing these problems and creating a healing platform for all Australians?

I write in the hope that I can support a change process that enables Australia to become a mentally, emotionally, and culturally safer place for Aboriginal people and a nation where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can come together as one with increased respect for the world's oldest living culture. By using the power of story to generate increased understanding of Aboriginal culture and Lore, I aim to provide a stimulus for healing for all of us wishing to join hands on this collective journey.

In addition to providing me with insight on the 'why' I write, my reflection on the central question has also given me insight as to the 'how.' Research into the political and social contexts of current day Australia has been critical in this process. This research into secondary and archival resources (varied scholarly and media articles, governmental and other policy-oriented reports) has enabled me to document the historical developments, social issues, discourses, and debates relating to Aboriginal culture, identity, and wellbeing. This research, combined with cultural knowledge from my professional and personal experience, family history, biography, autobiography, and oral communications reinforces why I consider this creative project of value. My examination of novelistic form and technique and my awareness of the importance of story throughout the traditional history of Aboriginal people lead me to believe that a novel is the most appropriate form of creative practice in which to achieve the objectives of this project. By reviewing various Aboriginal authors and their respective styles, I have been able to explore the commonalities and differences in the way I write compared to others. My reading and research relating to the young adult audience, including content and style, has been particularly important and affirming. Understanding the importance of architecture in the construction of the narrative, including my responsibilities as a Loreman, setting, points of reflection, narration, style,

and characters has provided me with a writing compass to ensure storylines are focussed, engage a young adult audience, and relate to the challenges young adults face in their life. My cultural responsibilities as an Aboriginal person, father, uncle and Loreman are varied and involve numerous ethical issues. Developing a novel that targets a young adult audience whilst honouring cultural protocols and maintaining sacred boundaries has created challenges additional to those I have faced when writing in other contexts.

The process of developing this thesis has been a remarkably rewarding one, more so due to the issues and challenges I have faced and overcome relating to flow, verbosity, complexity, balancing education with entertainment, avoiding over negativity, lateral violence, and dominant culture. I am hoping my articulation of these challenges will help others to believe in their life purpose and maintain focus and effort when undertaking a task important to them. In addition to making me a better fictional author, the knowledge I have gained during the carriage of this project has provided me with, insights, information, reasoning, skills, and tools that I use outside the creative writing realm in my consultancy practice and in my non-fiction writing practice including the launch and various media interviews relating to my self-help book, *The Dreaming Path.* The interrelatedness of creative practice with other aspects of my life is therefore an unexpected bonus that informs consistency and continuity of the many and varied activities I perform as part of my responsibilities to my communities and future generations.

It is my belief that the analysis and rigour required in undertaking this PhD has enabled me to provide insights into the central problem, answer the central question, and address the project objectives. I hope, through the creative art of storytelling, I have

written a novel targeting a young adult audience (and relatable to a broader audience) that, through the generation of dramatic interest, tension, and character empathy, will contribute to a broader cultural and social understanding for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal readers that leads to a more culturally inclusive nation.

It has been a privilege to carry out this PhD project. I am excited and optimistic that this thesis will contribute to conversations that enable all of us in this country to achieve an improved state of unity, equity and wellbeing that will truly reflect the Gathang words, ‘marruma ginyaang ngurra ngarra’ (create a better place through knowing).

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Appendices

Appendix A

Conversation questions by chapter

Initially I contemplated whether these questions could be provided at the end of the novel, but after careful consideration, decided they would detract from its fictional intent. They are provided as part of the exegesis to demonstrate the relevance of chapters in terms of opening conversations on critical points relevant to the purpose of this work.

Chapter 1
What is the rate of homelessness in Australia?

What is domestic violence and who is most at risk?

Chapter 2
Why are refuges for women so important?

Why is our past so important? How can we use our past negative experiences in a positive way to guide our present?

Why is the circle such an important symbol for Aboriginal people?

What are your responsibilities at the moment and what are the consequences if you don't fulfil them?

Chapter 3
Why do Aboriginal people believe that animals are messengers?

Why does Clarry tell Daniel to focus on his child's birthday?

The story of the Mother being born is a Creation Story. What does this Creation Story teach you about Aboriginal ways of thinking?

What messages about society does the soccer game scene suggest?

What are the four spirits commenting on?

Chapter 4
Preparing a young person for a life of purpose, meaning and contentment is an important educational responsibility in Aboriginal society. What is the role of the school system in preparing a young person for an adult life of contentment?

To Aboriginal people, family and relationships are more important than wealth and power. How does this compare to the western dominant culture way of thinking?

Chapter 5
Why would an energy supply company choose to change to gas fired energy rather than green energy sources for future operations?

Why would a government Minister approve a major gas mining project given the current green energy debate?

Chapter 6
Why is a smoking ceremony so important to Aboriginal people?

Why did Batjay turn evil?

Why was Batay able to bite so many people and inject his poison? What was the result?

Chapter 7
Why does Clarry say “Best to be invisible?”

Chapter 8
Why is the rainbow serpent so important to Aboriginal people?

What is the symbolism of Wawaii being speared?

How does the message from the old man in the red head band relate to current day Australia?

Chapter 9
What does the term ‘sorry business’ refer to and why is it so important?

Why is it so important to live in the present moment?

What did Uncle Shakey mean by his message “Never be afraid of the ashes, because in the ashes, the spirit of the fire waits to rise again?”

Does the Prime Minister have the same responsibilities for people and country as traditional Aboriginal leaders do?

Chapter 10
What can we do if we are feeling angry?

What can we do when we feel overwhelmed by a storm in our life?

Chapter 11
Why are Jimmy and Billy such good friends when they are so opposite?

What would be the benefits of visiting a place like Gulliwai Haven?

Why would the river be in such a bad state environmentally?

Why does Jimmy say “But no point in being negative?”

What changes would the old spirit have seen over ten thousand years?

Why do Clarry and Jimmy torment the young people so much?

Chapter 12
Why are is the 'Global Warming/Green Energy' debate so important?

Why are jobs and the economy so important?

How can environmental and economic needs be met in a complementary way?

Why does Fiona say, "For personal gain, they are selling out on future generations?"

Chapter 13
Why was Jasmine attracted to Joshua?

Why might a three-month cultural experience appeal to Jasmine?

What clues are there as to Joshua's need to control and manipulate his partner?

Chapter 14
Discuss Inala's comment. "For Aboriginal people, our gut feel is our connection with our wise self. You see, our head is full of other people's thoughts and our heart can misguide us due to too much emotion."

During the evening, Grace and Harold share several stories about hardships they faced due to racism over the years. How does their story make you feel? What stands out about their story?

Chapter 15
Why would have Inala been taught "When a gunjii is in front of you, never make any sudden moves and never look angry. Don't give them an excuse."

Why does Rolly suggest surrender, hope, ignore and trust are such important words when facing a crisis?

Does Rolly's story move you? If so, why?

Chapter 16
How would you feel if you were Daniel standing outside the courtroom just after receiving the judge's verdict?

What are the symptoms of a panic attack and what can you do if you are having one?

What are the symptoms of depression and what can you do if you or someone else is exhibiting symptoms?

Chapter 17
Look up and read the Uluru Statement. What is your reaction to the words contained in it?

How might Aboriginal people have felt when the government rejected the Uluru Statement?

What do you think about Uncle Clarry's comment? "Young people are the ones who will bring about the change I reckon."

What do the phrases 'pay the rent,' and 'friends don't let friends celebrate genocide' mean to you?

Chapter 18
What were the old couple in the Emergency Room's comments about Aboriginal people based on?

Why were Gail and Katie's view of the walking frame so different?

Chapter 19
Why was Wawaii angry?

How did Wawaii show his anger?

Were Clauio's family deserving of the misfortune that happened to them?

Why does the media reporting on disasters?

Why do politicians visit communities that have suffered a disaster?

Chapter 20
What does Clarry mean when he says. "I guess I can start by saying that for thousands of years, our rite of passage into the adult world was going through initiation and Lore. These days, for many of our mob, our rite of passage is going through depression and a nervous breakdown?

Clarry says to Daniel. "The message is to you, from you, about you." What might the message be?

Why are Lore, ceremony, language, connection to the land and connection to family so important to an Aboriginal person?

What is assimilation and how has assimilation made it harder for Aboriginal people to practice traditional culture?

Chapter 21
What caused Joshua's accident?

Why is the call of a curlew so important to Aboriginal people?

Chapter 22

What does the term 'dispossession' mean and what has been the impact of dispossession on Aboriginal people?

What does Clarry mean when he says an Abocrat "talks the talk but don't walk the walk?"

Chapter 23
What is the importance of Uncle Shakey's comment, "Knowledge if not shared, is of no use to anyone?"

Uncle Clarry says. "Our old people say that we can't be healthy if the community and country aren't healthy." What needs to be done for all of us to be healthy?

Why was Dinigal angry?

Chapter 24
Why was Wollambi feeling so exhilerated?

How did Wawaii show his anger?

Why did Batjay start the fire?

What would have happened to the Radcliffe family if they had ignored Gabby's comments?

What insights into Aboriginal spirituality has this chapter given you?

Chapter 25
What does an Aboriginal person look like?

Why might the old men have avoided eye contact with the Minister when they met her?

Why would the Minister have felt uncomfortable in the meeting?

Why is Mother Earth so important to Aboriginal people?

What will happen if we don't take better care of the planet?

The Minister's assistant said. "The Minister is passionate about supporting Aboriginal people." How much knowledge does the Minister have regarding Aboriginal people?

Why didn't the old men get angry with the Minister?

What was the Minister's motivation in her life?

Chapter 26
Do you think Daniel made the right choice in quitting his job?

What can you learn from Katie's story so far?

What can you learn from Gail's story so far?

How common is racism in Australia?

Why does Tuuriiki suggest to Inala. "Stop trying to be on top of things all the time and accept that it's okay to be vulnerable?

What is a 'comeback boomerang' and why is it such an insulting term.

What creates happiness and wow important is money in achieving it?

Chapter 27
How is the land and nature seen in the capitalist way of thinking compared to the Aboriginal way of thinking?

How is traditional Aboriginal knowledge regarded compared to western scientific and academic knowledge?

What evidence is there that the earth is sick?

Can you think of examples where fish have risen to the surface, the land has burned, and the water temperature has risen?

Chapter 28
What is the difference between a 'Welcome to Country' and an 'Acknowledgement of Country?'

How does environmental legislation in Australia protect the environment from long term harm?

Chapter 29
Why is connectedness so important?

How would you feel if you were Daniel?

Chapter 30
Jimmy talks about living a good story. Imagine you are ninety years of age and have lived a good story. What does that story look like?

Why doesn't Jimmy tell the doctors he saw Uncle Shakey?

What could the geologist have done differently to create a positive relationship with Jimmy?

What is the difference between LORE and LAW?

What are the impacts of gas mining on the environment?

What role does the media have in protecting the environment?

There are many sacred stories contained in the landscape. What might be the story relating to the man, woman, and child?

Why did Wawaii destroy the helicopter?

Chapter 31
How would you feel working for a company like Innovation Energy?

Think about the racist words Mick Saddler had heard over the years to describe him. How would you feel if they were used to describe you? How would you feel if they were used to describe your mother or father?

What does Mick Saddler mean when he says. "The most damaging words are the words we say inside our head when we start to believe the bad things that are said about us?"

Why did Mick's workmates call him Blacky and why was it easier for him to not complain?

What do you think happened to Rex Thompson when he drove away from the riverbed and why?

Chapter 32

What have been the impacts of invasion on Aboriginal people?

Why is it important to have gratitude for what we have in our lives?

Why does Daniel show Batjay mercy?

Why does Batjay return to human form and say "Thank You."

Chapter 33

The Yurri gave Katie a message. 'Things are not what they seem.' What did the message refer to?

Why was the phone call from Jasmine to Inala, Leo, Sandra and Frank important?

What had Gail been praying for?

Appendix B

Background to the prequel novel *Coincidence*

The primary intention of the novel *Coincidence* is to provide an entertaining, educative, and strength-based experience that gives the reader insights on how they might use Aboriginal values and philosophy to help them navigate the life journey from teenager to young adult. Writing *Coincidence* was a very different experience to developing a non-fictional work. I found it tremendously rewarding. After completing it in April 2018, I felt an overwhelming need to write a sequel that focused on broader issues and a slightly older audience. As good fortune, coincidence or perhaps destiny would have it, at this time I was offered the opportunity to undertake a PhD in Creative Practice at University of New England. After commencing my PhD, my academic supervisors were gracious enough to read the *Coincidence* manuscript and give me critical feedback that enabled me to make refinements to it.

In early 2019, I forwarded the manuscript of *Coincidence* to Magabala Books, and was invited by them to apply for the Daisy Utemorrah Award, a national award open to Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander writers for a new unpublished manuscript of junior and Young Adult fiction. In June 2019, I was advised that the manuscript had been short listed for the above award.

Story synopsis

Daniel is 17 years of age, an adopted, only child living in Rose Bay and in Year 11 at prestigious Hilden Private School with his close friend Kyle. Daniel has been having a recurring dream for some time where an old Aboriginal man is telling him, ‘he must remember’. While body surfing at Bondi Beach, Daniel accidently collides into a 17-

year-old Aboriginal girl named Inala from a fictional town in Western NSW called Sturt. They become friends and, whilst visiting Inala, Daniel meets Aunty Betty who tells him he is Aboriginal. Daniel, who is aware that he was adopted, has a tense conversation with his mother, Susan, after which she confirms he wasn't born overseas and is in fact, Aboriginal. This is a catalyst for a journey of self-discovery where Daniel makes many trips to Western NSW where he spends time with Elders Uncle Clarry and Uncle Shakey. When he first meets Uncle Shakey, Daniel is shocked to discover he is the man who has been appearing in his dreams.

Through the profound stories and teaching of the old men, Daniel recognises the importance of traditional Aboriginal knowledge in the contemporary world. When returning from one of his many visits to Uncle Shakey's camp in the desert, Daniel discovers his mother has been in an accident and in hospital, he is told she is unlikely to live, but she is saved by Uncle Shakey and the little hairy men (Yurri). After this event, Susan changes from a person driven by western world values of power and success to a more caring person with an active interest in Aboriginal culture, people, and the social problems they face. She demonstrates her new worldview through her support for Daniel as he identifies ways to educate those around him about Aboriginal traditional and contemporary history. During this time, Daniel meets his birth mother Gail and establishes a strong relationship with her and his sister Katie.

The day after a major corroboree in Rose Bay organised by Daniel, Uncle Shakey gives Daniel a stone that Uncle Shakey says has been waiting for him for a very long time. It is a stone with a boomerang engraved in it (the same boomerang that is a birthmark on his foot) that relates to a prophecy that one day a child will be born who

will slay Baatjay the bad snake. The book finishes with Daniel seeing the old man in his dream and telling the old man, ‘he remembers’.

Concidence’s purpose

To provide:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers with an ability to reflect on their personal identity and to provide inspiration and insights on how to live a life of increased choice and wellbeing.
- Non-Aboriginal readers with a safe space to learn about traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture and values that wasn’t available when they were at school.
- Professional workers including teachers, social workers, and youth workers with conversation points to assist them in their work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.
- University students with insights that add to their learning experiences particularly in the areas of education, social work, and health.

Points of reflection covered

Aboriginal spirituality/Lore	Empowerment
Impacts of invasion	Importance of education
Family	Mental health
Choosing your battles	Relationships
Respecting women	Responsibility
The Stolen Generation	

Appendix C

Chapter storyboard

Chapter	Title	Storylines	Respecting the earth	Importance of family	Respecting women	Aboriginal spirituality	Mental health	Consequences	Listening
1	Out on the Street	Living on the street Jasmine assaulted by Joshua Leo's café Leo introduces Inala to Jasmine		✓	✓	✓			
2	A Time for Change	Inala and Jasmine talk in the park Jasmine's backstory Butterflies Jasmine tells Inala bad things happen to people who hurt her		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Messages	Tawny frogmouth out front Rosie's birthday Uncle Shakey tells story about respecting women Soccer vision Spirits warning	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
4	Down by the River	Daniel's love of teaching Backstory on Daniel finding out Inala was pregnant News of Inala's pregnancy travels		✓	✓	✓			✓
5	Schemes and Dreams	Matt Lovett in the Innovation Energy boardroom Minister Conard	✓					✓	

Chapter	Title	Storylines	Respecting the earth	Importance of family	Respecting women	Aboriginal spirituality	Mental health	Consequences	Listening
6	Out West	Daniel at Uncle Shakey's camp Daniel is confronted by Batjay Daniel is told the story of Batjay	✓	✓		✓			✓
7	Happy Hour	Mendalgah Pub Daniel and Clarry assaulted Daniel reports assault to police						✓	✓
8	An Unusual Encounter	Daniel has vision of Wawaii being speared Old spirit tells Daniel the prophecy is near Daniel wonders why him	✓			✓		✓	✓
9	Serious Business	Uncle Shakey passes on Sorry business with the old Loremen Old Loremen want to meet boss	✓			✓			✓
10	Storm Clouds	Police detective contacts Daniel Daniel has a sense that something's not right					✓		✓

Chapter	Title	Storylines	Respecting the earth	Importance of family	Respecting women	Aboriginal spirituality	Mental health	Consequences	Listening
11	Gulliwai Haven	Jimmy Gordon and Billy Williams introduced Backstory of Billy and Jimmy's friendship Kyle has concerns over health of land and river Jimmy connects with old spirit that has been buried at Gulliwai for 10,000 years Old spirit tells Jimmy to hold a corroboree	✓			✓		✓	
12	Standing Up	Minister addresses Better Futures Forum CEO Innovation Energy addresses forum Audience protests	✓					✓	
13	Monkey Business	Jasmine meets Joshua at Leos Backstory Jasmine meeting Joshua Jasmine tells Joshua she is doing a cultural camp			✓			✓	
14	Dinner Surprises	Inala drives Jasmine to Gulliwai Jasmine and Inala have dinner with Dot, Harold, and Grace Backstory of Harold and Grace Jasmine is welcomed by Grace as family		✓	✓				✓
15	A Stranger in the Night	Daniel arrested by police Inala visits Daniel in police custody Daniel meets Rolly Rolly's backstory Rolly calls Daniel 'boomerang man'		✓			✓		✓

Chapter	Title	Storylines	Respecting the earth	Importance of family	Respecting women	Aboriginal spirituality	Mental health	Consequences	Listening
16	Dark and Light	Daniel found guilty Daniel has panic attack in supermarket Daniel suffers from depression Daniel is visited by Batjay		✓		✓	✓		
17	Making a Statement	Backstory Uluru statement Katie excited about joining Canberra protest Daniel vision of little girl playing xylophone Katie injured at protest			✓	✓			
18	A Mother's Cry	Gail travels to hospital where Katie has surgery Racist old couple Gail's backstory including missing middle child Katie using a walking frame		✓			✓		
19	Weathering the Storm	Wawaii speaks to the Mother and is angry Cyclone Wawaii tells Byron he is sorry Aftermath of cyclone including media and politicians	✓	✓		✓		✓	
20	An Unexpected Visit	Daniel depressed Clarry takes Daniel to Gulliwai Haven Billy and Jimmy explain Gulliwai programs Daniel meets Jasmine Joshua arrives at Gulliwai Haven		✓			✓		✓

Chapter	Title	Storylines	Respecting the earth	Importance of family	Respecting women	Aboriginal spirituality	Mental health	Consequences	Listening
21	Road Trip	Backstory of Joshua driving to Gulliwai Haven Joshua arrives at Gulliwai and attacks Jasmine Jimmy and Billy backstory Joshua killed in car accident			✓	✓	✓	✓	
22	A Revealing Past	Jimmy and Billy backstory on how they got Gulliwai Rolly's secret discovered Joshua killed in car accident				✓		✓	✓
23	Good Spirits	Daniel and Clarry take students on a tour Batjay tries to attack students Daniel meets the old spirit 'Dinegal' Dinigal gives Daniel a message Fish kill	✓			✓		✓	✓
24	Wollambi	Wollambi and Guyal backstory Bushfire caused by Batjay Yurri and Wollambi save Radcliffe family	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
25	Different Lenses	Daniel and Elders meet with Minister Conard Daniel warns Minister that the Mother is sick Environmental data provided Minister Conard dies in her bed	✓			✓		✓	✓

Chapter	Title	Storylines	Respecting the earth	Importance of family	Respecting women	Aboriginal spirituality	Mental health	Consequences	Listening
26	Four Seasons in One Day	Daniel quits job Elder's funeral Uncle and family refused entry to RSL Inala is subjected to lateral violence Daniel wonders whether he is a 'comeback boomerang' Daniel tells Inala he has lost his job Daniel finds out Inala is pregnant		✓	✓		✓		✓
27	The Calling	An old spirit sings and says it is time Wawaii responds to the call	✓			✓		✓	✓
28	Rising Up	Matt reports to the board with a positive vision Matt advises of a tour of operations						✓	
29	Ready, Set	Daniel has a vision where he feels infinity Boomerang stone glows Daniel sees Batjay in vision Daniel asks for Katie's help Katie gives Daniel a necklace Katie passes on a message to Daniel that 'things are not what they seem'	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
30	Anger in the Air	Geologist Rex Thompson visits Gulliwai Jimmy backstory on being an angry young man Kyle talks to Daniel about the impacts of gas mining Innovation Energy helicopter tour Helicopter struck down by Wawaii	✓			✓	✓	✓	

Chapter	Title	Storylines	Respecting the earth	Importance of family	Respecting women	Aboriginal spirituality	Mental health	Consequences	Listening
31	Culture Buried	Innovation Energy drill rig accesses Gulliwai Haven Mick Saddler introduced Innovation Energy commences earthworks Dinegal's skeletal remains exhumed Rex Thompson throws Dinegal's remains in a creek A brown snake enters Rex Thompson's vehicle		✓		✓		✓	
32	The Power of Three	Mick Saddler meets with Clarry, Billy, Jimmy and Daniel Clarry and Daniel go to top of hill Daniel's spirit is taken underground Wawaii being attacked by Batjay Uncle Shakey visits Jasmine Daniel is bitten and dies Daniel sees a vision of a little girl Daniel returns to life The prophecy is fulfilled We learn Jasmine is Daniel's lost sister		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
33	A Mother's Prayer is Answered	Jasmine tells Leo, Frank and Sandra she has met her brother Daniel rings his mother Gail to introduce her to her daughter		✓			✓		