

**Transcript Part 7 of 7 (final)**  
**‘Walking in Two Worlds: The WWI story of Ngarrindjeri Anzacs Cyril & Rufus Rigney’**  
**Episode 03 of the Schools Program podcast series for the**  
**Virtual War Memorial Australia**  
Megan Spencer © 2023

**Part 07 (duration 37:16)**

MEGAN SPENCER (narration): *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander listeners are advised that this podcast contains references to and the names and voices of people who have passed away.*

[MENIN GATE BUGLES & ANNOUNCEMENT]

*“Welcome to this daily ceremony. Please do not applaud during or after the ceremony. Thank you.”*

MEGAN SPENCER (narration): *2006 was the beginning of Connecting Spirits, a commemorative project that’s still going – and evolving – today.*

*Each time the groups visit, they always take the Ngarrindjeri flag and commemorate the Rigney brothers and Ngarrindjeri Anzacs.*

*As did Ngarrindjeri/Kaurna elder and ex-Army serviceman, Uncle Frank Lampard and his wife Sandy, when they went on Connecting Spirits.*

*This is Uncle Frank reading the Ode of Remembrance at the Menin Gate in Belgium in 2019. Julie Reece shared a video of it to Facebook.*

[ARCHIVAL VIDEO 2019]

*“They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.”*

(Audience): *“We will remember them”*

MEGAN SPENCER: *Uncle Frank told me reading the Ode there was one of the greatest things to ever have happened to him in his life.*

UNCLE FRANK LAMPARD: *...Under the Menin Gate. You can imagine how much of a huge privilege and honour that was.*

And you know, I guess, that evening, it all welled up inside of me, in terms of the reason I'd made the trip and the things that we'd been doing in commemorating each of them in locations where they were either interred in the cemetery.

And then to visit these huge memorials! And to see their names up there. It was, oh! It was just amazing.

MEGAN SPENCER: *So much work goes into Connecting Spirits and so much comes out of it.*

*In my chat with Julie Reece we talked a bit about how the Connecting Spirits project and subsequent tours, aim to deepen understanding of wartime history beyond the orthodoxy of the Anzac story.*

*Julie thinks knowing our history helps us understand the present.*

JULIE REECE: I think it is absolutely crucial: if we're going to have any legitimacy to really understanding our wartime history that we need to include all aspects of that. And I think the Indigenous component is an essential part of that.

If we're going to go on and somehow cope with our history, and deal with contemporary issues today, we need to know what our past has been.

And if we're going to continually 'bang on about Remembrance Day and ANZAC Day in schools and in public forum, and we just, you know, still have the same images without that critical version of that past... We need to look at it in total - in much the same way we need to look at the Chinese-Australians who, who went on and put on a uniform.

You know, one of the best snipers in Gallipoli was Billy Sing—You know, we have this anti-Chinese element in our history, yet, you know, he's part of that story too.

I mean, how do you actually accommodate that?

How does the Indigenous story be accommodated when at that time and beyond, unless we actually look at it and continue to focus as that complete story? It's much as the story of women in wartime and beyond?

I think we're getting better at it, but we're certainly not there.

MEGAN SPENCER: *Historian Rachel Caines also agrees that we need to look at the complete story of ANZAC – the total story of it. The truthful story of it.*

RACHEL CAINES: I think the legacy of these men and of their communities is about...

Yeah, I think it's this idea of Australian history includes our First Nations history. And it includes *all* of it, not just the bits that seemed nice to 'white Australia' at the time.

It's not about cherry picking the elements that fit in nicely and slotting them in as part of ANZAC and saying, *"Oh, yes and also there were Indigenous soldiers and they were treated nicely during the war. And nothing happened before or during or after the war, they were just there"*.

[AUDIO OF A CATAFALQUE PARTY]

RACHEL CAINES: I think for so long, that the legacy of the Ngarrindjeri Anzacs - of all of the First Nations ANZACs - was something that was really kept within their communities.

I think, you know, there's this sense of pride, but also of empowerment.

And I think, particularly for the First World War, that empowerment came at a really important time - and that that sense of some level of autonomy but also of doing something, of making that sacrifice for 'the country' and for 'Country'.

But that was a decision that was made by those men? It wasn't made by the government. And that idea more broadly, is a huge part of the Australian psyche because we never introduce conscription?

And so this idea of volunteerism and those who served and those who died, volunteering - to go and volunteer to make that sacrifice - is such a huge part of why ANZAC is so important.

And I think that gains an extra level of significance and power when you consider that First Nations Australians were so disempowered in 1914.

Were under so much pressure.

Um, men who, who came from mission stations - who came from reserves - who had their lives, so controlled. And whose families in the decades after would face the removal of their children, lack of voting rights, the continued oppressio.

And who still today face discrimination, systemic oppression and disadvantage.

And, and fighting and dying alongside other Australians and being remembered alongside other Australians in, you know, cemeteries across Western Europe - but also in Australia.

I think that's such an important lesson and legacy of equality.

And now that these legacies and these stories that have been so important to communities and to families; that they are now being played out in national touring exhibits, in speeches on ANZAC Day, even in local Anzac Day Services...

I think it's it's a really important part of Indigenous experiences - not being incorporated into the Australian narrative? But of us recognizing that the Australian narrative *includes* Indigenous experiences.

[AUDIO: "LEST WE FORGET"]

JULIE REECE: I think it's incumbent upon young people today to understand their wartime past, their current situation in terms of what happens in this country, in terms of our defence forces. And I think it's absolutely essential that that Indigenous story is part of that.

And to understand that, of those Indigenous soldiers who put on the uniform in previous wars, that theirs is a very special story. In terms of why they did that and how our country treated them after that period of time.

We can't understand that sense of exclusion unless we study our history. And we see what happened to those people in that time and what role they play today.

I get very worried about the lack of history being taught in schools, anyway. And I what I get also very worried about the superficiality, in particular, of how the ANZAC story and how wartime history is dealt with.

MEGAN SPENCER: *Outside of the Connecting Spirits project, Ngarrindjeri people have travelled to the battlefields and memorial sites of Europe, as well.*

*In 2013, Uncle Major 'Moogy' Sumner also paid his respects in person to Uncles Cyril and Rufus, in Belgium.*

*On a trip to France with a group that included his wife, cousin - world-renowned weaver, Ngarrindjeri elder Auntie Ellen Trevorrow - and his grandchildren, they all decided to visit Rufus's military grave in Harelbeke, "just down the road". The locals – which included the police poking their heads over the fence from next door – watched on.*

UNCLE MAJOR 'MOOGY' SUMNER: Yeah, so, we done the smoking ceremony. We had the boomerangs [clapping boomerangs], we done the smoking ceremony around his tombstone. And and we left some stuff there for him, feathers and flowers and different - different stuff from home and that, yeah. We left it on his grave.

But, even now, it made me feel that, it was an honour to go there, and to do that ceremony there on the footpath, there in the cemetery, and on that big cemetery [The Menin Gate]. It was an honour for me to do that.

So all of that - it was an honour to do that. It was an honour to to show people that these people that's got their names on the wall there: this is where they come from. This is the type of people they were! They were Ngarrindjeri's from the Coorong, from the Lakes - from the River Murray! That's the people that come over here as young men and died here!

We're here to honour their spirit in a way that no one else can honour them! By doing their dancing, and singing in their language!

It made me feel strong inside! The strength of knowing that I'm doing it for them. I'm doing it for our people! But also, I'm doing it for Australia.

MEGAN SPENCER: *Uncle Moogy told me that he wants to go back again one day.*

UNCLE MAJOR 'MOOGY' SUMNER: It's good to keep going back there because - it's not just for them, it's for us too! It's for us to honour them, us to know, and us to keep that connection with them. And us to educate our young people so that they don't forget that person that went over there to war.

That their names are not forgotten.

VICTOR KOOLMATRIE: Yeah - there was just nothing but heartache and love? Yeah! Like I did - I felt such connection to them. To tell you the truth, that kind of hurts now.

MEGAN SPENCER: *Here's Ngarrindjeri man Victor Koolmatric again.*

*He's 32 now, twice the age of when he went to Belgium with Connecting Spirits in 2006.*

*As Victor shares, being able to honour his uncles Cyril and Rufus through ceremony and commemoration - in person, and as a young person - gave him a powerful sense of connection and strength, which he carries with him to this day.*

VICTOR KOOLMATRIE: For me it's just power. I'm just connected to this stuff now. Like honestly? That trip, the commemorating...

Yeah, I can say: like it changed my life.

MEGAN SPENCER: How did it change your life Victor?

VICTOR KOOLMATRIE: It changed how I thought! The war was 'just the war' before. It was just something we we honoured. And then the next moment we're just picking up where we left off.

After that trip it was just like - it's just the way of thinking now. Those two are part of this massive, massive way of life of honouring them.

When I honour them, I'm honouring my ancestors. And I'm honouring, everyone that was a part of that war. Honouring all my ancestors. Yeah...

Now what I have to do is just keep this connection going. Like within my family and with anyone who who's willing to hear it as well. So...

After the after the trip it's just, yeah - it's like I was saying: taking care of your Country. Taking care of people. It's necessary. It's ideal. And this is what I feel for Connecting Spirits.

And now what I have to do is just, yeah, make it tradition.

Even though there's Remembrance Day... After the trip, my connection with them is tenfold stronger. I want that feeling to go on with my family for generations after that, like...

If I can do that? And make their sacrifices be felt the way that I felt? Then there's accomplishment again.

[SOUNDS OF A PELICAN IN THE WATER]

VICTOR KOOLMATRIE: Remembering is just our way of healing.

That's what we're all trying to do together, is just heal that great big wound.

MEGAN SPENCER: That loss?

VICTOR KOOLMATRIE: That loss.

[BAGPIPES LAMENT AUDIO]

MEGAN SPENCER: Young historian Rachel Caines isn't Ngarrindjeri or Indigenous but she did tell me that she also felt profoundly changed by learning of Cyril and Rufus Rigney's wartime story. She hasn't looked back.

RACHEL CAINES: And then when I was looking at service, and you know, looking at Cyril and Rufus... I still just feel such strong emotion talking about them. They hold such a soft place in my heart. A really special place. And I'm really glad that we're talking about them for this, because I just think that they were incredible young men.

And I think when we think about our First Nations soldiers, and those who died as individuals, I think that's where their power and their legacy really comes to the fore. And I think that's what's happening now, is we're moving beyond - we've recognized the 'homogenous' group. We've we've recognized and accepted that Indigenous Australians enlisted and served and died in the First World War. We know that now. Anyone who denies that it's, you know; we know that. That's a fact.

And I think now, where it comes in, and where their legacy will really shine, is knowing them as people. And their identities. And the people that their communities loved and continue to love.

I think that's the most powerful of all and that challenges this dominant, all-consuming vision of ANZAC and all of its jingoism and all of its exclusion and colonial White Australia underpinnings... Is when these men don't just become a 'percentage'. They become 1,108 individuals with faces and stories and people who loved them. And people who have never forgotten them.

You know, there's this idea that we - they're "the Forgotten Anzacs". No! No! The Ngarrindjeri people have never forgotten their men who died, ever!

So just because we've re-acknowledged their existence it doesn't make them forgotten. And I think, I don't - I don't think that they will be forgotten again.

And I think that's their legacy.

AUNTY VERNA KOOLMATRIE: Yeah, I am proud of my uncles' service. I'm proud that they were young men who knew that our country was at risk as other countries were at that time. That there was upheaval. And that it didn't mean that because it was happening on other shores it wasn't going to affect us. You know, this was about safeguarding family and Country.

But it was about being proud of who they are, and where they come from, and wanting to make sure that you know, we were able to continue living in peace.

[SOUNDS OF THE COORONG, BLACK SWANS]

MEGAN SPENCER (narration): *Listening to our speakers today and the amount of effort that they put into it... It strikes me that it's not simply about keeping commemoration alive - commemoration IS alive.*

*It's a living, breathing, dynamic process that's with us always. It has a pulse, a rhythm, a heartbeat and it continues to grow and change all the time. And with it the ANZAC story gets bigger, more inclusive and more exciting. Lest we forget.*

*As Aunt Verna shares with us, there are many layers to commemoration.*

AUNTY VERNA KOOLMATRIE: Yeah, it is, it's just - there's quite a few things involved in it.

It's remembering your loved ones to went to war. You know, for us it's Uncle Cyril and Uncle Rufus. For others it's their family member.

And, it's also too that *young people* continue to remember. That it's not just a story for 'old people', or a story that gets told and then forgotten. But that it's something that is - that was real, that happened?

And if each person looks at how it's affected their own life, you will be able to follow the thread, you know? You will hear the stories from your, whether it's your grandparent, or you know, your great-uncle or aunt, about something that changed for them, you know, so... Yeah, you can you can pull on that thread, and it's real.

But also too, then it's the service for the country. And then it's our Country - how our Country 'as a country' contributed to something that could have, you know, basically come back here onto our homeland!

So, you know, there's a lot of things involved in it. Because as you pay tribute what you're really saying is "*Thank you*". You know?

We say thank you to Cyril and Uncle Rufus, but we say thank you by extension to all the men who've served. You know?

It's saying "we acknowledge what you did and we haven't forgotten you". You know?



MEGAN SPENCER: And is that the legacy, do you think, of Cyril and Rufu in a sense? I know, they sacrificed their lives and there was so much loss that came from that. But is that a gift to us, I guess, in a sense?

AUNTY VERNA KOOLMATRIE: Yeah, well, I think Cyril and Rufus, you know - they did give their lives! And what we know is that *thousands* gave their lives, you know? And from all different countries?

And so that's not something that you sort of just, you know, pack up and put away! You know, you, you should remember that.

You should remember that - I think I said it before - it's not just the loss, it's the loss of what could have been. You know?

So many families changed. And you don't change just at that time, you change forever! You know, that's a continuing legacy for each family, who had their loved ones go and serve in the war.

And it doesn't matter what nationality, you know? To be honest with you - doesn't even matter what side! You know? It's changed lives! And that's something that we shouldn't forget.

If it does nothing but help us to remember the service that our loved ones gave, but also help us to remember not to maybe do some things again, you know?

[MUSIC]

MEGAN SPENCER (narration): *As Aunty Verna reminds us, commemoration teaches us much. It's timeless and a 'two-way' ceremony that helps us connect the present with the past. It brings peace to the departed and to those who practice it. Remembering well is about never forgetting – never leaving anyone out of the picture.*

*Commemoration is creative and continual. It takes different shapes and forms. The Connecting Spirits project is one example.*

*The giant Ngarrindjeri Anzacs mural in the town of Meningie on the shores of the Coorong, encapsulates this for me, too. I've spent a lot of time looking at it over the last few years. It's mesmerising. The men in it, standing proud and strong, stare back at me, unwavering. They feel very much alive.*

*This is their Country and I am a guest here.*

*They served for their Country and their community. They served for me too. I know their names and their stories. And I am changed by this.*

*About making the mural, at the time, street artist Hego said his goal was "to start a conversation amongst Australians about how we choose to recognise Aboriginal Australian experiences, not only in World War One, but across all of modern Australia's history."*

*Inspired by the his mural, the local RSL has installed a permanent mini-version of it in the Soldiers Memorial Park next door, allowing it to live on forever.*

[AUDIO OF CROWD SOUNDS]

MEGAN SPENCER: *Every Reconciliation Week a service is held at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander War Memorial on Kurna land in Adelaide next to the Torrens River.*

*Dedicated in 2013, it honours Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service people from all operations and services, and was the first of its kind in Australia.*

[AUDIO OF THE LAST POST BUGLE]

MEGAN SPENCER: *It was created to fill the lack of recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service in Australia. Led by Ngarrindjeri elder and Navy service woman, Aunty Marj Tripp AO, Uncle Frank Lampard was also on the committee which made this signifiant memorial happen.*

*And you can go there any time and see the names of not only the Rigney brothers and the other Ngarrindjeri Anzacs, but many other First Nations service people from the traditional lands of South Australia. Their names are etched in the tiles of a Dreaming path in the shape of a Rainbow Serpent. It's a beautiful place to remember and reflect for all who go there.*

*And as they have always done, the Ngarrindjeri community continues to honour their ancestor soldiers at Raukkan, at the Coorong and on Country – on ANZAC Day, on Remembrance Day and every day, by caring for community and caring for Country.*

UNCLE VICTOR WILSON: But we've got to remember these fellas, our old people and, yeah..

MEGAN SPENCER: And learn from them?

UNCLE VICTOR WILSON: And learn! [We're] saying – hey! Look after one another - share with one another! Speak up for another!

MEGAN SPENCER (narration): *Uncle Victor Wilson wrote a song about his grandfather Cyril and the Ngarrindjeri Anzacs' war service. His wife, Aunty Glenys Wilson, the granddaughter of another renowned Ngarrindjeri soldier, Uncle Roland Carter, kindly sang it to me for this podcast.*

*A prisoner-of-war of the Germans, her grandfather Roland returned home from the First World War to the community. With his renowned "wonderful singing voice", he was a soloist in Raukkan church the day the stained glass memorial windows were dedicated in 1925 for Rufus, for Cyril and the Ngarrindjeri Anzacs who fell in World War One.*

AUNTY GLENYS WILSON: This is a 'Tribute To the Anzacs'. That's the title of this song that my husband Victor Wilson wrote. And my name's Glenys, I'm his wife. And I'm going to sing the song. Alright, let's see how we go...

[AUNTY GLENYS SINGS 'TRIBUTE TO THE ANZACS' ACAPELLA]

*In nineteen-hundred and fourteen, Diggers answered the call.  
They signed up in the thousands, to fight in The Great War.  
They left their homes and families, to sail across the sea.  
They went to help their fellow man, fight for freedom and liberty.*

*Young Aussie soldiers, brave and bold were they, to land on those beaches surrounded by death and decay.*

*These blokes fought their hearts out and they done it night or day. And they earnt their place in history in a fair dinkum Aussie way.*

*Some of the men came from Raukkan, they were our very own. And we all love and respect them for what they have done.*

*For they went and fought in the worst war, the world has ever known. And a lot of them never came home, for they fell on those battlefields.*

*One was our Grandfather, he was among the many, who gave his life and service so the whole world may be free.*

*We all got our problems, but when things get really tough, I think we all should all remember what these ANZACS done for us.*

*Young Aussie soldiers, brave and bold were they, to land on those beaches surrounded by death and decay.*

*These blokes fought their hearts out, and they done it night or day.  
And they earned their place in history, in a fair dinkum Aussie way.*

[SOUNDS OF THE COORONG]

UNCLE VICTOR WILSON: This is the story of my grandfather, Private Cyril Rigney.

VICTOR KOOLMATRIE: This is the story of my uncle, Private Rufus Rigney.

MEGAN SPENCER (narration): *May we remember well, always.*

## **END CREDITS**

[ARCHIVAL AUDIO 2005 ANZAC CEREMONY AT THE COORONG]

MEGAN SPENCER (narration): Grateful thanks to the family members of Ngarrindjeri Anzacs, Uncles Cyril & Rufus Rigney, for sharing the story of their ancestors for this episode of the Virtual War Memorial Australia's Schools podcast, *Walking In Two Worlds*.

This podcast is dedicated to the Ngarrindjeri Anzacs and their families, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander service people and their families, who have served and sacrificed at home and overseas, past and present.

Production of this podcast has been made possible through a grant from the South Australian Department for Education.

Speaking today were:

The late Aunty Dr. Doreen Kartinyeri

Aunty Verna Koolmatrie

Victor Koolmatrie

Uncle Major 'Moogy' Sumner

Uncle Frank Lampard

Uncle Victor Wilson

Aunty Glenys Wilson

Julie Reece

Rachel Caines

Uncle Gary Oakley, and

Donna Handke (Mellors)

You also heard the voices of:

Heath Bigg, Colin Paterson and Neville Sloss

Grateful thanks for all of our speakers' deep insights and wise words, and for their support of this program.

*Walking In Two Worlds* was narrated and produced by me, Megan Spencer, for the Virtual War Memorial Australia.

It was written by Sophie Quick and Megan Spencer.  
Additional writing and research by David Rafferty.

Interviews, research, sound recording and sound mix by Megan Spencer.

Immersive audio field recordings on Ngarrindjeri Country by Khristos Nizamis (Hearing Beings).

ANZAC Weekend 2005 Coorong Ceremony and interviews recorded by Gary Juleff at Fleurieu Multimedia, and used with kind permission.

Grateful thanks to those who shared their music with us today:  
Ceremonial song and boomerangs by Uncle Major 'Moogy' Sumner and dancers with John Simpson on bagpipes, recorded by Gary Juleff, and used with kind permission.

'Tribute To The Anzacs' song was written by Uncle Victor Wilson and sung by Aunty Glenys Wilson. Also used with kind permission, thank you.

Ceremonial yidaki by Warlpiri man, Leading Aircraftman Brodie McIntyre, Royal Australian Air Force, from 'The Last Post Ceremony' at the Australian War Memorial, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2016, used with kind permission.

The orchestral music is by Christopher Latham and the composers and musicians of *The Diggers Requiem*, and *The Vietnam Requiem*, featuring Kalkadunga man William Barton on didgeridoo. Used with generous permission.

Song *Lost Soul* was written by Eric Bogle and used with kind permission, performed on the *Connecting Spirits: Songs of Remembrance* CD by Flo Bourke and Ngarrindjeri woman, Rita Lindsay. The album was co-produced by Gavin O'Loughlen.

Music is also by Cooperblack.  
Sound mastering is by Kris Keogh.

Archival sound of Connecting Spirits tours and the fundraiser video, courtesy of Julie Reece and used with kind permission.

Belgian news story audio courtesy of Focus-WTV News, regional television of West-Flanders, Belgium and used with kind permission.

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[MUSIC]

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This podcast was made on the lands of the Ngarrindjeri, Kurna, Peramangk, Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

My name's Megan Spencer and thank *you* for listening to this wartime story.

*End of Part 07 of transcript and program.*