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## **Aboriginal stockwomen: their legacy in the Australian pastoral industry**

AUTHOR(S)

Tauri Simone

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**Aboriginal Stockwomen: Their Legacy in the Australian Pastoral  
Industry**

by

Tauri Simone

B.A. Honors

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University

December 2016



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## **ABSTRACT**

This research investigates the role Aboriginal women played in the establishment and continuation of the Australian pastoral industry and the integration of intellectual cultural knowledge. By starting with a historical description of the colonisation of specific areas of Australia and the foundations of the pastoral industry, I will address the gap that exists in current knowledge related to the vital role that Aboriginal women played in the pastoral industry. This challenges existing beliefs and accounts that Aboriginal women were merely servants or sexualised objects. I show their importance in the industry through their lived experiences and the exploration of the social stratum of Australian pastoral stations. This research will demonstrate the true value of Aboriginal women's involvement in the establishment and continuation of the pastoral industry in the specific regions of Australia from the 1860s and their ongoing legacy since that time. This time period has been chosen for analysis as this was approximately when frontiersmen started the push and establishment of the frontier with cattle.

The aim of this research is to build a research base for exploration into the phases in which Aboriginal women were melded into the Australian cattle industry. The historical time that I have chosen to start the research is a period when Indigenous people were not recording oral history in a western form of writing; thereby it has been an important aspect of this research to close the gap by accessing western literature, which has then been critically analysed alongside Indigenous oral history to ensure that a holistic approach was achieved. The methodology approach is vital

to this research as it analyses literature in a multi-layered way through the premise of my own lived experience as a Koa stockwoman. I call this the *multiple relational narratives* framework which also operates through *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* (researching back). It is through this approach that the agency of Aboriginal women's knowledge is respected and given voice. Here lies the significance of this research in the reconfiguration of historical attitudes, beliefs and accounts that are based on false representations that did not give these important women voice. It is our collective voice that is given integrity in this research.

The outcomes of this research demonstrate that a new way of reframing history can be created through ancient knowledges specifically pertaining to Aboriginal knowledges and worldviews. It is through this that I can demonstrate a re-writing of the vital role that Aboriginal women had and still have in the pastoral industry.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Aims and Background**

How does the research start? Right from the outset of this paper the questioning of method has been an internal battle because of the need to write within a western academic community whilst approaching the research from an Indigenous knowledge system. As I am writing from an Aboriginal perspective, the first protocols are to introduce myself, Who I am? Where am I from? Doing so connects me through people, place, and knowledge. Therefore, I am a Koa woman and my connections to Country are situated in and around Winton Queensland. I completed a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree at the Institute of Koorie Education Deakin University Australia which enabled me to set the foundations to pursue a higher degree by research relating to Aboriginal stockwomen and their legacy in the pastoral industry.

My experience with the cattle industry stems from living and working within the industry in various positions for eleven years on a number of stations (Australian pastoral property) in Queensland, Northern Territory, NSW, and Western Australia. I am currently living on a cattle station east of Wiluna Western Australia. In conducting this research I am not only the researcher, I am also the pupil to my Contributors and at the same time, a Contributor to developing an understanding of the social and cultural dynamics relating to the research topic. Sharing the story of my lived experience firstly through the use of an Aboriginal lens and secondly, through an anthropological lens provides an insight and grounding for the research

project and helps paint a picture of the current context of the pastoral industry. It is through this methodological approach, I provide the first significant original contribution to knowledge. Even though I did not grow up in the industry, my ease of adjustment to the industry comes from my spiritual connection to Country and the Ancestors and thus being able to navigate my way on the frontier. My spirituality is an important part of my everyday life and even an underlying factor in completing my research. A crucial element to conducting my research is the continuation of the sharing of knowledge through participation in yarning circles with my Elders and yarning with communities.

This research will explore three stages of Aboriginal women's involvement within the northern cattle industry. Firstly, it will examine how Aboriginal women were integrated into the industry by frontiersmen. Secondly, it considers how, over time, Aboriginal women's involvement shifted from integration to adaptation of cattle station dynamics with traditional Aboriginal values and practices. Thirdly, it will look at how Aboriginal women's participation within the Australian cattle industry has enabled facilitation of traditional Aboriginal cultural and social dynamics to evolve to present day, yet still keeping hold of core conceptualisations of their world view.

It should be noted that specific areas were chosen in relation to the method of open range grazing which was utilised to colonise the areas for pastoral stations. The areas selected were Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia. These areas have been chosen as the colonisation of these remote regions was significantly

different compared to that of the New South Wales, Victoria and South Australian regions. The major difference in the colonisation of the remote frontier was the geographical environment. This determined and shaped the growth of the pastoral industry within an environment which came with many a danger and loss of life on both sides of the initial and continual conflict. The geographical environment contributed to the compromise of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people's survival in the shifting cultural and social dynamics of the time. Furthermore, this research investigates political policies that were put into play by governments and pastoralists (owner of a pastoral station) in the initial push through the frontier in the hope of trying to eradicate or subdue Aboriginal people who were seen as a problem. This was specifically enforced by the Native Police. Further to this, the political policies of Assimilation and Protection are briefly examined in order to illustrate how Aboriginal people were to be affected by the implementation of these acts.

The geographical environment was a significant feature in the spatial progress of the pastoral industry across remote areas of Australia. The terrain was unrelenting, and more land was required for grazing and water was a major issue. The initial stocking of sheep contributed to the progress of the north. Gillian Colishaw's (2004) *Blackfellas, Whitefellas and the Hidden Injuries of Race* and Thalia Anthony's (2003) *Postcolonial Feudal Hauntings of Northern Australian Cattle Stations* were utilised as a comparison of colonisation procedures in the southern and northern regions. In contrast to the previous readings, Dawn May's (1994) *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry: Queensland from White Settlement to the Present* and Glen McLaren's (2000) *Big Mobs: the Story of Australian Cattlemen* are examined to show that the colonising of the frontier was significantly different because of its

geographical environment. To enable the progression of the pastoral industry other methods in stock management were needed in more remote areas. Open range grazing was the main method of stock management to be implemented and this method would function for well over a hundred years (McLaren 2000). It should be noted that this method is still used today on some large remote stations. The station that I am currently living and working on is using an open range grazing method due to its geographical terrain and size. Southern regions were settled firmly by Europeans, with the acquisition of smaller blocks of pastoral land made possible by the implementation of fenced boundaries (Colishaw 2004, p. 6). This research purports that the methods used on the remote frontier allowed for Aboriginal people to avoid contact with Europeans, if they should choose, for longer periods of time, but this also contributed to a longer period of violent battles on the frontier.

This research further argues that “open range grazing” enabled Aboriginal people to study the newcomers from a distance, allowing for the acquirement of new technologies and strategies in the handling of this foreign stock, which at that time were sheep until cattle were introduced in the 1880s. Henry Reynolds’ (2006) *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to The European Invasion of Australia* was utilised specifically for his perspective from the Aboriginal side of colonisation. In this examination, he argues that knowledge associated with traditional life and the environment, and acquisition of new technologies from Europeans allowed Aboriginal people to find and use varying new strategies in removing and acquiring stock from Europeans. Reynolds (2006) strongly argues that Aboriginal people had in existence, prior to the pastoral movement, similar methods for capturing and herding animals. This is an important point for this thesis to

consider because it shows that Aboriginal people had stock management strategies prior to being pushed into stock work with frontiersmen. This is also important as it hindered the push through the frontier, because Aboriginal people used these techniques in the “rustling” (the stealing of cattle) of stock as a means of resistance and retaliation against frontiersmen.

Furthermore, Reynolds (2006) argues that the continual degradation of land, water, and food sources, as well as disease and the breakdown of the Aboriginal cultural dynamics forced Aboriginal people to form relationships with Europeans. May (1994) additionally states that the northern region had proved to have low and slow occupation as few white men or women wanted to venture into the interior with the distance, isolation, poor working conditions, low wages and the fear of violence from Aboriginal people. European’s needs for a labour force in the north, lead to a forced symbiotic relationship between Europeans and Aboriginal people. As Aboriginal people wanted to keep connection with Country for cultural and spiritual reasons, they were forced to form this relationship with pastoralists and to live and work on pastoral stations. In exchange for their labour, they were given rations (supply of foods normally dry foods such as flour, sugar and tea), clothing and basic living accommodation in some instances.

Racial theories run through the heart of Australian frontier exploration and this research examines governmental implementation of legislations which would shape and change Aboriginal social dynamics. DECS (2010) *Timeline of Legislation Affecting Aboriginal People* and NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs (1998)

*From Protection to Segregation 1909-1939* are examined to show what the policies were and how they were to directly affect Aboriginal people. Further to this, I further examine May's (1994) *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry: Queensland from White Settlement to the Present* and also her book *From Bush to Station* (1983) as I draw upon for her considerable research and analysis of cattle station politics (the rules and hierarchy debates) and governmental policies which impacted on the cattle industry between 1860 and 1960.

Prior to any policies being implemented within the northern regions of Australia there was a formidable force that was in play. The native police. With the separation of New South Wales and Queensland came the introduction of the Queensland mounted native police. The native police was made up of a few European officers and a collection of Aboriginal men. The slaughter that was handed down by this force was brutally violent in most cases, no prisoners taken. The violence would last for approximately forty years, from 1860 to 1900. Josephine Flood's (2006) *The Original Australians – Story of the Aboriginal People* and Noel Loo's (1982) *Invasion and Resistance – Aboriginal-European Relations on the North Queensland Frontier 1861 – 1897*, explain that native police were initially used in the 'keeping out' of tribal Aboriginal people from pastoral stations. Most of these Aboriginal native police had, in some way or another, assimilated into white society. Flood states that the native police did move into the Northern Territory but this did not last long as the head European officer was charged with murder although acquitted and the force was disbanded and used merely for their skills in tracking (2006, p. 108). Further to this, Mary Anne Jebb's (2002) *Blood, Sweat and Welfare – A History of White Bosses and Aboriginal Pastoral Workers* is utilised to show that the native

police within Western Australia were as brutal and violent as the other states which employed the native police. Anthony (2003) provides evidence that pastoralists had full unhindered control regarding regulations of employment. After the government had implemented policies to control Aboriginal people, it was the joining of the police, native police and pastoralists that was to have a greater impact on the control of Aboriginal people in the remote northern region of the Country. Anthony (2003) discusses how there is a hierarchical system within the feudal system of governance and this system was notably embedded in the patriarch.

Existing literature on the “blurring of gender boundaries” within the pastoral industry has demonstrated how Aboriginal women existed in an inherently patriarchal culture, “the pastoral industry”, and that they have been under-represented and unacknowledged within Australian historical literature and research on cattle stations.

### **Approach**

This research will examine literature about Aboriginal women’s involvement in the cattle industry. The methodological objective for the research was to conduct culturally appropriate research and this was achieved by applying a five layered approach which I term *multiple relational narratives* framework. Within this framework the method of ‘*Collumbum Angk Yunkundun*’ (meaning go back to extract) as a form of content analysis, and further critical engagement, will be applied to draw content from existing historical literature. The application of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* has been through yarning with literature of various discourses from

historical literature based on the cattle industry, contemporary literature of cattle station dynamics, journals relating to land tenure systems, government correspondence and policies, the environment and literature grounded in Aboriginal cultural dynamics.

This research will be supplemented with insights into the cultural and social dynamics of the cattle industry drawn from accounts of women pastoralists from the past and present. It will be further supplemented with my accounts based on personal connections to Country and the land and experience acquired from eleven years spent living and working within rural remote Australia. I have spent five years in various areas of Queensland and the Northern Territory, two years on a New South Wales sheep and cattle station, a year and a half on a station in Condingup South East Western Australia, two years ten months at Emu Flat on the eastern goldfields of the Nullarbor in Western Australia and my current living and working space south east of Wiluna on the Northern Goldfields, Western Australia.

This research has also pursued culturally appropriate means in conducting new research with Aboriginal people and their conversations have been recorded by conducting fieldwork with Contributors relating to their lived experiences of cattle stations. I have identified people as Contributors to the research as opposed to “participants”. The information that is shared with me from Contributors is their intellectual knowledge and I have simply been the instrument to enable transmission of this knowledge from the oral to a written record. The execution of my fieldwork will be through “yarning” with Aboriginal women and or their descendants who have

and or are working within the cattle industry. This method of research is used as it is an important technique of passing on knowledge to others and will provide a holistic understanding of Aboriginal women's role within the cattle industry. It is important to conduct fieldwork and collect firsthand information from Aboriginal women due to the lack of balanced knowledge in existing literature. Further to this, the information will be lost if these women's stories are not collected soon. It is here that the research aims to fill the omission of knowledge regarding the role and significance Aboriginal women had/have in the pastoral movement.

Such an examination of Aboriginal women's role in the pastoral industry will help to overcome the lacuna in Australian colonial and historical writings in relation to Aboriginal women, and augment information about Aboriginal women's involvement within the cattle industry. The research within this area is important as it provides a voice and recognition to Aboriginal women who have been under-represented and under-acknowledged as stock workers within the pastoral industry. This research will provide a greater understanding of the cultural and historical foundations of the cattle industry and an insight into cross cultural relationships between the colonisers and the colonised.

The main question to be addressed in this research is: What contribution have Aboriginal stockwomen made to the pastoral industry since colonisation? In order to address this question, further questions arise:

- How did the pastoral industry in rural remote Australia emerge and progress after colonization?
- What is the history of the industry in terms of Aboriginal people and in particular women and the way in which they contributed to the industry?
- What is the role of Aboriginal women in the pastoral industry today?

This research is significant as it will be conducted by an Aboriginal researcher using Aboriginal approaches and perspectives to revisit and challenge accepted versions of history concerning the lives and contributions of Aboriginal women in rural remote regions of Australia since European colonisation. The significance also extends to giving voice to those who were previously silenced, which is, Aboriginal women. The other significance I am revealing is that the contribution of Aboriginal women to the industry was the fact that they were the industry.

### **Existing Literature**

Historical records relating to Aboriginal women as stockwomen has been a difficult aspect and limitation of the research and as such, utilisation of my method of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* has been an important tool in being able to create *multiple relational narratives* about their lived experiences as stockwomen. It is vital to question the historical assumptions, which place Aboriginal women in the position of passive victims to non-Indigenous men. Ann McGrath's (1988) *Born in the Cattle* was utilised for her ethnographic examination of Aboriginal people born within the cattle industry. McGrath's research covers many areas relating to the pastoral industry and provides detail of the involvement of Aboriginal women as

‘stockmen’ and not merely sex slaves for white men’s sexual gratification. McGrath reveals that Aboriginal women performed a significant portion of the work required to establish, construct and continue the functioning of a cattle station. In addition to this, McGrath shows that Aboriginal women who were engaged in a relationship with frontiersmen, whether forced or willing, in some cases, held on to traditional values, customs, beliefs and integrated new knowledge with the old. McGrath (1988) and Mary Ann Jebb (2002) were specifically examined for this research as they provide direct accounts of Aboriginal women who have now passed, and their lived experiences as stockwomen.

The literature currently available relating to the research has been taken in its context, the time period in which it was written, who the writer was and what the motive behind the writings may have been. Specific areas have been chosen in order to set the foundations and create a holistic analysis of the research topic and have been conducted through an Indigenous lens and it is through this lens that the critical analysis occurs.

### **Overview of Chapters**

Chapter Two discusses the approach taken in this research and relates to repositioning the lens of knowledge utilising Indigenous knowledge systems. It steps out the premises of Indigenous knowledge and this frames both content of information and the methods taken to conduct this research. The significance of this chapter is the way in which I demonstrate the importance of not only the “what” as in

content but also the “how” in the methodological approach to extract the content. This is where I discuss the inseparability of the “what” and the “how” in an Indigenous research space. This methodology chapter is vital to the research because:

- It is about positioning the research
- It is about positioning the researcher (insider/outsider)
- It frames how I extract information and data from literature, lived experience and introduces the *multiple relational narratives*.

What is vital about this chapter is that it needs to come first in the thesis as it sets up the precedence of how knowledge was gained through *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun*, yarning with literature, yarning circles and lived experience. This chapter also highlights the cultural protocols that I, as the researcher, must adhere to ensuring that the research is conducted in a culturally appropriate manner. It further emphasises the importance of the relational accountability that I must also adhere to in the transmission of this new knowledge between the Contributors and me. In an Indigenous research paradigm the ‘how’ is more important than the ‘what’. If information is obtained inappropriately, then it is unethical to use this information, as it disrespects the agency of knowledge. This chapter sets up the approach to the research and the significant contribution it makes to methodological approaches to research premised on lived experience.

Chapter Three provides the historical background of the pastoral industry, police and policies and the participation and significance of Aboriginal women within the industry. The investigation looks at the initial reactions to colonisation, by Aboriginal people, and how frontiersmen were confronted with resistance and retaliation in response to the push of the pastoral industry. Further to this, this section puts into perspective the establishment of the pastoral industry within Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia. It argues that within the pastoral industry, there has been a false assumption placed upon the participation and involvement of Aboriginal women. This research questions the historical assumptions that place Aboriginal women in the position of passive victims to non-Aboriginal men's needs. I demonstrate how Aboriginal women performed a significant portion of the work required to establish, construct and continue the functioning of a cattle station. Aboriginal women were to engage in a reciprocal relationship with pastoralists, which, in some cases, allowed them to hold on to traditional values/customs/beliefs as well as to integrate the new knowledge with the old that one would have acquired.

Additionally, this research argues that Aboriginal women were to be valuable assets to frontiersmen, not only in establishing a cattle station in unrelenting terrain but also in the day to day functioning and continuation of one of the largest economic forces within Australia. Further to this, to demonstrate the relationship that was to be formed between the two cultures, this research analysed the feudal system in the pastoral industry that was in existence and how this reciprocal relationship was negotiated. Reynolds has been utilised for his historical analysis of colonisation, with particular reference to the notion of dispossession and displacement of

Aboriginal people. In *Dispossession: Black Australians and White Invaders* (1989) Reynolds argues that the notion of dispossession and displacement were entrenched in the eugenics of 'Social Darwinism'. Reynolds (1989) states that "Aborigines were seen by many as being a lower link of a static chain of being...less evolved people, a relic of the childhood of the race preserved by Australia's isolation...doomed to die out...nothing could bend the laws of evolution" (1989, p. 114). I have drawn on Reynolds' (2006) *The Other Side of the Frontier* to show that Aboriginal people strategically planned, utilised and manipulated European colonisation tactics and techniques in the fight to retaliate and resist colonialism. Reynolds' research (2006) further investigates Aboriginal people's reactions and involvement to the onset of the pastoral industry.

Chapter Four provides the Aboriginal perspective to Country. As Chapter Two shows non-Indigenous perspectives of Land, this chapter explores the physical and metaphysical environments of Country. It explains how Aboriginal people were conducting agricultural endeavours prior to non-Indigenous colonisation. Exploring, the trade routes, which would later become the travelling stock routes of the Australian pastoral industry. This has been achieved with reference to Bill Gammage's (2011) *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines made Australia* and Bruce Pascoe's (2014) *Dark Emu: Black seeds agriculture or accident*. This is further illustrated from my own lived experiences and intellectual knowledge passed to me by my Elders and my connection to Country. Australian Aboriginal cultural and social dynamics are complex. Further to this, the research uses a combination of authors who have researched particular aspects of Aboriginal culture. Richard Broome (2002) in *Aboriginal Australians: Black responses to white dominance*

*1788-2001*, describes Aboriginal life prior to colonisation. He states that, Aboriginal people had a complex life system of interconnectedness with the environment which was physical and spiritual. Broome reiterates the importance of land and states that “the land not only gave life, it was life” (2001, p. 18). He further discusses the historical structure of Aboriginal cultural dynamics prior to colonisation, in specific, the multiplicity of tribes that existed. In doing this, he shows how tribes were divided into small clan groups which not only interconnected them to each other but to the environment and the animals within that geographical location. Josephine Flood (2006) in *The original Australians* also argues that prior to colonisation Aboriginal people had a complex cultural and social dynamic. Along with Broome (2001) and Flood (2006), Deborah Bird Rose’s (2000) *Dingo makes us human* explores the complexity of Aboriginal life systems, in particular, ‘The Dreaming’. The Dreaming is timeless as there is no beginning or end and it is forever evolving. Rose is utilised in this thesis to show that geographical location and what is present within that location determines the basis to ones Dreaming (Songlines), which in turn, then shapes the social dynamics. This thesis builds on the understanding that “Songlines” are a continual cycle of life determining the spiritual and economic functions of the tribe and was adapted from the old to the new world with the onset of the pastoral industry. The thesis also reveals the significance of women’s knowledge of “Songlines” and how they contributed to the industry.

Further to this, Ladislav Holy’s (1996) *Anthropological perspectives on kinship* and Jim Wafer’s (1982) *A simple introduction to central Australian kinship systems* have been utilised to illustrate the differing parts of Aboriginal knowledge and the way in which Aboriginal people constructed their world; in particular, that kinship was a

complex system which reinforced one's positioning and obligations within the group. This is to demonstrate the similarity of social constructs within Aboriginal cultural dynamics and cattle station dynamics, which enabled Aboriginal people to position themselves within the industry and the new world.

Chapter Five articulates this approach and the method taken to conduct the research by drawing on the stories of Aboriginal stockwomen. This is achieved by applying the *multiple relational narrative* framework utilising *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and "yarning with literature". This chapter first outlines the historical foundations to Aboriginal women as stock workers. This is achieved by my methodological approach of extracting the relational narratives of women in a whole range of literature that pertains to the industry itself. I do this through not only my Aboriginal lens, but through positioning my own lived experience as a Koa stockwoman. This is achieved by revealing and highlighting the performances that would have been undertaken by these women that is extracted from literature pertaining to the industry. This chapter further articulates the narrated stories collected from "yarning with literature" relating to women's voices that have contributed to this research. This chapter narrates the stories collected from contributors of research completed by Brian Clarke, Mary Anne Jebb, Dawn May, Ann McGrath, Morndi Munro, Noel Olive and Herb Wharton. It is this literature from which my methodological approach extends. It highlights the lived experiences of those who have participated within the pastoral industry. This material has been revisited and analysed and critiqued using an Aboriginal perspective and the same methods applied to the "yarning circles" I undertook for the research.

Chapter Six focuses on the collection of information which was achieved by the “yarning circles” with Contributors after relationships were formed. Within this chapter the research demonstrates that Aboriginal women were participating in various roles on cattle stations, highlighting that women were stock workers. Further to this, it reveals that Aboriginal women in a time of adversity and cultural change were able to continue practicing intellectual cultural knowledge due to the circumstance of being able to keep connections with Country. Contributors have also expressed new ways in which Aboriginal movement and functioning were able to manipulate this new industry that had been thrust upon them, in order to continue passing on knowledge from one generation to the next.

Further, this chapter relates to my own lived experiences of living and working within the pastoral industry for the last eleven years. An autoethnographic approach with an Aboriginal lens has been used to convey my experiences in various positions on cattle stations. Further to this, this chapter articulates the workings of cattle station life in the modern world with comparisons of my own lived experiences to the *multiple relational narratives* and experiences had by other Aboriginal women within the industry. It not only demonstrates the micro environment but also the macro environment of the pastoral industry. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the social stratum of the cattle industry through my lived experience and the symbiotic relationships that are an important part in the functionality of stations. As the research uses Indigenous knowledge systems as an underlying current, this chapter examines the pastoral industry from an Aboriginal anthropological perspective. This

section also illuminates the cultural obligations that were undertaken in order to achieve the research. Chapter five and six outlines that the Contributors lived experiences informed my lived experience and vice versa in the research and this is posited in the methodological approach of *multiple relational narratives*.

Chapter Six interweaves the reflections on the major findings and outcomes of this research and it demonstrates the relevance for revising and challenging misconceptions concerning the role of Aboriginal women in the pastoral industry from colonisation to the present day.

## CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY- MULTIPLE RELATIONAL NARRATIVES

### **Looking and Talking About Research**

This chapter outlines the methodological framework of the research. In this thesis, the methodology needs to come first as the methodology itself and the content of the research co-exist concurrently. In an Indigenous approach to research and view of the world, the way or how knowledge is acquired is at times more important than the knowledge itself. The approach undertaken for this research is from an Indigenous perspective conducted in a holistic manner. The ‘what’ and the ‘how’ are interwoven continually throughout the research by re-framing and decolonising non-Indigenous perspectives of historical and current situations. This chapter is a presentation of the methodological approach undertaken for the research.

The methodology I have constructed is premised on the idea of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* (as defined in the introduction) and lived experience. In application of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun*, lived experience arises into action and is premised in the real:

As a means for better engaging with the dynamic properties of space ... materialist methodologies. Materialist analyses seek to understand and describe the influence of lived experience, embodiment and daily practices on larger cultural structures, as well as the effect of culture on materiality. From this materialist

perspective, our physical environment acts upon us even as we act within and upon it. More simply, space is endlessly productive – it makes possible particular activities, encounters and ways of knowing (Kuntz cited in Savin-Baden & Major 2013, p. 310).

The two parts of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and lived experience are woven throughout the methodological framework. The framework operates across five layers. I called this “*multiple relational narratives*”.

- Firstly, I analyse literature pertaining to the pastoral industry through *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and by my own lived experience in the industry itself. Within the literature I am looking for and examining the instances where women played a significant role.
- Secondly, I critically investigate literature which is embedded in the ideologies of racial discourse through *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and my lived experience and positioning as an Aboriginal person.
- Thirdly, I respectfully engage and yarn with literature written for Aboriginal women. I respect the agency of this knowledge and I construct additional knowledge with this literature that contains interviews of women involved in the industry. I then combine this and engage with this through secondary interviews with the literature. I further engage with this literature by applying an Aboriginal lens and my own lived experience as a Koa stockwoman.

- The fourth layer is where I have created yarning circles with my Contributors. I respect the agency of knowledge created in these yarning circles which builds relational narratives between my Contributors and my own lived experience.
- Lastly, the fifth layer is premised on my own direct lived experience as a Koa stockwoman. This layer runs throughout the research and values the lived experience as knowledge agency of an Aboriginal world-view.

It is significant that the last two layers inform one another in a reciprocal way. My lived experience extracts and assists in forming the experiences of Aboriginal stockwomen of the past, and then their experiences inform and frame my own lived experience as a Koa stockwoman of the present. As discussed in the introduction, I reveal the gap in knowledge about Aboriginal stockwomen, but also, in concert, posit a new methodological approach of this multi-layered framework.

This has been created by means of an anthropological Aboriginal lens and has been conducted using various frameworks premised within the works of Margaret Kovach (2010) Lester-Irabinna Rigney (2001), Shawn Wilson (2008) in order to achieve a relational accountability to the Contributors and to my community. The research endeavours to reconfigure history (researching back) by highlighting the true participation and performance of Aboriginal women within the pastoral industry. This is a critical element to the research in order to unmask historical assumptions of Aboriginal women as passive victims of a patriarchal industry. By researching back I have applied the method of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* (go back to extract)

knowledge relating to the research topic, Aboriginal stockwomen. By using this framework and re-searching Australian historical writings relating to Aboriginal women with an Aboriginal lens, the research decolonises the assumptions placed upon women who have played a significant role within the establishment, continuation and legacy within the Australian pastoral industry. Researching with an Aboriginal lens allows for a different perspective and experience of the pastoral industry. This has also enabled Aboriginal women directly or indirectly to have their voices heard and from this acknowledgement and recognition can then be accredited to Aboriginal women and their families. Further to this, is the relational approach undertaken as an important element to the research.

Resituating all research as narrative, as opposed to characterizing narrative as one particular form of inquiry, provides a critical space for rethinking research beyond current dualisms and bifurcations that create boundaries that limit the capacity for dialogue across diverse epistemologies ... narrative is not a method, but rather a process of meaning and making that encompasses 3 major spheres of inquiry: the scientific (physical), the symbolic (human experience) and the sacred (metaphysical) (Hendry cited in Savin-Baden & Major 2013, p. 229).

This has been through the use of *multiple relational narratives* and relational knowledges within the methodological framework. By this I mean that I have firstly, re-searched back with *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and looked at the lived

experiences of Aboriginal stockwomen in existing literature. This is the first layer. From this I have interviewed Contributors about their own lived experience and relational narratives and finally given an account of my own lived experience. This approach overlaps with reframing through the premise of lived experience. This is the fourth layer and fifth layer interweaving with each other. It is here that the voices of Aboriginal stockwomen are privileged and given integrity (Rigney 1997). Achieving this is the voices and lived experiences of the Contributors and me. Lived experience and their relational narratives are at the core of the research and it is only through lived experience can relational knowledge and narratives come into play. Through my own lived experiences of the pastoral industry, Aboriginal women's experiences of the pastoral industry are able to be put into context of relational knowledges. There are key criteria that are applied to this engagement. What I am looking for is through the following three criteria:

- Synergies, relatedness and interconnectedness
- Multiple voices of Aboriginal women
- Contribution and performances of Aboriginal women

Coming into this research project I had determined the method of research that would be conducted from my own cultural awareness and position of what was considered an appropriate approach. From this point, it was a matter of looking at other researchers and investigating how they had approached Indigenous knowledge systems. Wilson's (2008) *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* and Jerome Alvin Hammersmith's (2007) *Converging Indigenous Knowledge Systems:*

*Implications for Tertiary Education* were accessed more as a guide/tool to conducting research from an Indigenous perspective. Specifically, the relational accountability I must take on as the researcher is that I must conduct research that is ethically and culturally appropriate to my Contributors. Wilson (2008) theorises various elements which aid in conducting appropriate research of Indigenous knowledge systems. A summary of this is provided below:

- Research is a continual relationship and this relationship is continued once the research ends.
- Indigenous research is from the inside to the out.
- Knowledge is a relationship shaped through experience of relationships.
- Knowledge is not owned.
- Research is a combination of beliefs and principles and is not deconstructive.
- Researcher and Contributors are both educator and pupil in an ongoing reciprocal relationship.
- Indigenous research must be ethical and moral. The researcher is accountable to its Contributors through relational accountability.

First and foremost, is my community, and then I consider the university. This means in the context of the above, that I have community obligations that I have to adhere to for my community and for Country.

Once taking on the role of storyteller I become responsible for the transmission of that story. In an Indigenous research paradigm the researcher and Contributors are both teachers and students in an ongoing reciprocal relationship. The knowledge my Contributors have is exchanged with my own knowledge and vice-versa in a continual cycle. It is here that knowledge has agency and this is respected. The research then becomes a Ceremony. Hammersmith (2007) theorises that in conducting research from an Indigenous perspective one must view it as ‘multiversity’, the acceptance of the existence of alternative knowledge systems. Further to this, Indigenous knowledge is distinct, knowing is relational and participatory. Therefore, I specifically investigated Hammersmith as it is essential to my own research that varying methods have been examined to complete the Indigenous circle of knowledge by:

Locating the discourse between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems in an abstract ‘ethical space’ between them can contribute to the identification of their complimentary diversities, converging them in creative interconnections in research, development and teaching relationships that also enable each system to preserve its own integrity (Hammersmith 2007, p. 223).

This enables a holistic approach to the research and further decolonises dominant historical knowledges, attitudes and beliefs relating to Aboriginal stockwomen.

Karen Martin's (2003) *Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being, and Ways of Doing: a theoretical framework and methods for Indigenous re-search and Indigenist research* and Lester-Irabinna Rigney's (2001) *A first perspective of Indigenous Australian participation in Science: Framing Indigenous research towards Indigenous Australian Intellectual Sovereignty* were utilised for their content relating specifically to the dynamics of conducting research within Australia with Indigenous peoples. Rigney's principles and rationale of Indigenous research are:

- **Resistance** as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research
- **Political integrity** in Indigenist research
- **Privileging Indigenous** voices in Indigenist research (Rigney 1997, p. 636)

This research incorporates further principles of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* (researching back), relational knowledge, relational narratives and experiential knowledges as discussed earlier across the multiple layers. Further to this, Bagele Chilisa (2012) *Indigenous Research Methods*, Margaret Kovach's (2010) *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Context* and Leslie Brown and Susan Strega (2005) *Research as Resistance: critical, indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches* were all examined and aided in reinforcing my own research dynamics on how to conduct and transmit my research information that is culturally appropriate for my people. Chilisa (2012) conveys ways in which research can be undertaken by Indigenous researchers, specifically for strategies of deconstructing western knowledge systems and methods and reconstructing with Indigenous knowledge and research methods. 'The researched are gatekeepers of their

Indigenous knowledge' (Chilisa 2012, p. 307). Further to this, Chilisa (2012) theorises a third space methodology, being the space in between involving a culture and integrative research framework. It is within this space, I present my *multiple relational narratives* framework.

In presenting an Aboriginal framework, we need to reconfigure how systems are viewed by dominant peoples and cultures. Historical orientations help to unmask the deep structures of the dominant view of the other. For Edward Said:

The orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also a place on Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of the deepest and most recurring images of the other (Said 1979, p. 1).

As we can see with Said, the other is seen in this unequal relationship, I am reconfiguring the 'other' by giving voice to myself and the Contributors and therefore Aboriginal stockwomen. As my own research incorporates lived experiences and an insider/outsider perspective with a personal narrative threaded throughout the research, Kovach (2010) was examined for her approach to Indigenous methodologies through the use of culturally specific methods: pan Indigenous methodologies fail due to the differing cultural dynamics from one area

to another. It is here that I contest the imagined view of the “other”. Furthermore, Kovach formulates that:

Stories are who we are. They are both method and meaning. Stories spring forth from a holistic epistemology and are the relational glue in a socially independent knowledge system (Kovach 2010, p. 108).

My approach to the research through *multiple relational narratives* is weaved throughout the research. Kovach, speaks of relational glue. For me the glue is narratives and these narratives are relational. They have their own agency. This further reinforces my own theories of holistic Indigenous research methods. By holistic Indigenous research I aim to critique existing historical literature through applying an Aboriginal lens to the way history has been written, largely by non-Aboriginal people. Applying an Aboriginal lens to western paradigms enables the unmasking of historical foundations, which at present are awash with patriarchal and non-Aboriginal social structures and dynamics, as illuminated through Said.

### **Yarning with Literature**

I conducted the research by incorporating and interweaving Intellectual Cultural Knowledge with Western Academic knowledge systems. This was achieved by investigating and examining existing historical records and then comparing situated lived experiences of my own and those experienced by Aboriginal women within the

Australian pastoral industry. In order to conduct culturally appropriate research, I applied an Aboriginal perspective in the transmission of knowledge and this was achieved through forming relational yarning with the literature prior to any form of extraction through my positioning as an Aboriginal person. This is the exchange between text written by others and myself. In addition, once relationships were formed respectfully with the text, the use of a type of yarning was applied as this is how Aboriginal people have exchanged knowledge and oral history passed down to the next generation (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010; Wilson 2008). It is here that knowledge has its own agency and it is through my positioning as an Aboriginal person and moreover an Aboriginal stockwoman that I engage and critically analyse this literature. Contributors to the research own the knowledge in a research paradigm. However, I have extended on this tradition by being an instrument in transcribing the oral knowledge to the written word and giving a voice to those who have been silenced. These relationships are an important aspect to the research as this enables Contributors to become part of the research and not be the researched. As discussed, this is why I have also used the word "Contributor" and "not participant". The research also uncovered situated lived experiences of Aboriginal stockwomen scattered within literature written by non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal authors in various fields such as pastoralists experiences, historical accounts, law, cultural studies, environmental and political. In order to conduct this in a culturally appropriate manner analysis of the secondary interviews contained in the literature was undertaken and I have applied the same questioning, morals and ethics to these. Following is the framing and outline of engagement applied to the secondary interviews in the literature. This literature included the works of Clark (1992), Jebb (2002), McGrath (1987), Munro (1996), Olive (1997) and Wharton (1994) and these

people conducted the original interviews with Aboriginal women. It is necessary to revisit these original interviews to go back and extract information of how these women engage with the industry and what their contribution is:

- What Country do you identify with?
- What is the age of the person?
- Where they were you born?
- What stations they worked on?
- Were other family members working on cattle stations?
- Was there movement to different stations?
- Were there any problems with Native Police?

### **Yarning Circles**

Whilst I conducted a type of ‘Yarning’ with the literature, providing critical engagement with the knowledge within the literature, I also validated knowledge and gave Indigenous integrity by conducting yarning circles with Contributors. Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng’andu’s (2010) *Yarning about Yarning as a Legitimate Method in Indigenous Research* and Valerie Rayleigh Yow’s (2005) *Recording Oral History: a Guide for Humanities and Social Sciences* were explored for their methods on conducting and recording of oral history amongst Indigenous peoples. As my own research incorporates the method of yarning and the recording of yarning, Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010) and Yow’s (2005) work provided examples of their own experiences of conducting yarning circles.

Furthermore, yarning circles are more than just storytelling as they are a formation of relationships that occur prior to yarning circles and continue after the research has been completed. Similar to Wilson's theorisation, they formulate the importance of relationality and indicate how using yarning as a method of research for Indigenous people can provide a more holistic understanding of the lived experiences of Contributors. This is not only vital to my research but also to an Indigenous methodological approach of *multiple relational narratives*.

It is commonly known that Indigenous people have been the most researched people in the world. However, research has been conducted from a Western scientific approach which created an imagined and misconstrued understanding of Intellectual Cultural Knowledge. This approach also enabled researchers to conduct research on Indigenous people which is not ethically, morally or culturally appropriate to its Indigenous participants and did not contribute to positive outcomes to those communities. Therefore, lived experience premised in the real with the application of yarning circles further continues Aboriginal ways of knowing through *multiple relational narratives* and creates relational knowledges.

### **Positioning Culture in Research**

Australia is the present home and refuge of creatures, often crude and quaint, that elsewhere have passed away and given place to higher

forms. This applies equally to the Aboriginal as to the platypus and the kangaroo. Just as the platypus, laying its eggs and feebly suckling its young, reveals a mammal in the making, so does the Aboriginal show us, at least in broad outline, what every man must have been like before he learned to read and write, domesticate animals, cultivate crops and use a metal tool. It has been possible to study in Australia human beings that still remain on the cultural level of men of the Stone Age (Oosterhout cited in Atwood, p. 1996).

Australian research relating to Aboriginal people from its research beginnings through colonisation has been based on the theoretical positions of non-Indigenous researchers. The above quote shows the mindset in the dark days of Australian research methods. Terms such as “the Aboriginal” objectified us in a positioning of “otherness”. However, as Aboriginal people have entered the field of research new ways have emerged with research being positioned and conveyed through an Aboriginal lens. This research is taking the position from an Indigenous knowledge systems perspective. Dennis Foley (2003, p. 46) articulates that consists of three elements: “The Physical World, the Human World, and the Sacred World” and it is the inter-relationship between these three elements that we can then engage in research through and Indigenous Knowledge standpoint. This approach is imperative in doing research involving Aboriginal people as Indigenous knowledge systems highlight the relational aspect of all knowledge production and are grounded in principles of political and cultural integrity. As discussed earlier, it is essential that Indigenous research is research conducted in a culturally appropriate manner “by Indigenous peoples for Indigenous peoples and in the interests of Indigenous

peoples” (Rigney 2001, p. 8). This research therefore, encompasses Indigenous knowledge systems and western paradigms to provide a holistic approach to the research. Taking this approach, the Aboriginal research method of yarning (Aboriginal approach to interviews) has been implemented alongside a qualitative approach of researching back through the use of content analysis of existing literature from a broad spectrum of existing discipline data bases.

### **Aboriginal and Culturally Appropriate research**

Aboriginal knowledge/research is circular, however, interpretations of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing has been based on non-Indigenous formulations of research which are linear and based on the individual (Wilson, 2009). For Aboriginal people:

Stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when you are lost you start to open up and listen (Tafoya 1995 cited in Wilson 2004, p. 10)

In an Aboriginal worldview, the brevity of listening is of utmost importance. It is like when I go out and sit on Country it is about listening and hearing. This is similar to *Dadirri*, (Ungunmerr-Baumann, 2002) which means the practice of deep listening,

quietness and still awareness. *Dadirri*, a Ngangikurungkurr word from Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann describes this deep listening. Listening is not just hearing with your ears, it is listening with the totality of the body. This is no different when I am performing yarning with literature by for example with Morndi Munro, I cannot just critically analyse it, I need to “Listen” to the agency of knowing from Morndi. Listening is about this type of hearing and is vital for the research. Physical face to face yarning circles trigger memory through listening and action, which enables knowledge to grow and therefore gives knowledge further “agency”. It is through “hearing” that an Indigenous ideology operates.

Within Aboriginal communities, knowledge is relationally formed through the experiential premise of relationships. A principal element of Aboriginal ways of research is relational accountability, once the researcher takes on the role of storyteller they become responsible for the transmission of that story (Martin 2003; Wilson, 2009). As stated, first and foremost is responsibility to the community. This facilitates an interweaving of bringing content and the methodology into the realm of the knowing, being and doing through an Aboriginal perspective. Firstly, I had to get the approval of my Elders and Community to conduct the research. Then I attended to my cultural obligations with my Elders to find willing Contributors for the research. My Elders were instrumental in enabling me to find my Contributors. This is discussed further below.

## **Knowledge and Yarning**

Where does one begin in the search of the following, what is knowledge and how do you validate it? With the means of communication changed and changing rapidly over the last decade, people can be bombarded with infinite amounts of information through the use of the internet. What one person may see as truth another may not, what is seen as protection of the physical world can mean destruction of the cosmological world to someone else. In saying this, is knowledge of the world a fabrication and merely a social construct which is historically, socially, culturally and or individually specific?

The concept of knowledge is complex and problematic, it is linked to ontology. The world is constructed of various different views of how humans interpret the world in which they exist. Tim Ingold (2000) discusses diverse ways in which humans from various geographical locations globally perceive their existence within the physical world. Ingold's *The Perception of The Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (2000) puts the concept of the environment into the simplest form if looking at it from a western point of view. The world is a globe or sphere which consists of land masses that are connected by water and that humans exist on the earth and that the globe is not a life world but a world apart from life (Ingold 2000, p. 209). Further to this, a second point of view provided by Ingold (2000) considers the perception taken in the 1500s where the world was seen as a sphere which consisted of fourteen concentric spheres and that man ascended to each level of the sphere which then bought comprehensive knowledge of the universe. The perception of the world as a sphere was from within, and the world as a globe was from without. It

was said that the spheres to ascension could not be seen as they were transparent therefore they were heard and referred to as the music of the spheres in which humans were at the centre. The world is culturally specific and historically situated.

Aboriginal people view the world as more than a physical natural environment, it is linked to the symbolic, iconic and indexical relationship. Relationships for the people are with the land, “Country”, and their cosmological association with the animate and inanimate physical environment in which they participate in an ongoing reciprocal relationship. For Koa people we continue this relationship through the use of Oral traditions, Ceremony and the continual relationship through the use of Songlines, the vibrational link within this cosmological relationship. A deeper definition of Songlines is provided in Chapter Four. Aboriginal perspectives of knowledge are grounded in Culture and knowledge is a means of sharing an understanding through experiences. Connection to Country and continuation of stories of place, aid in the healing of the emotional, physical and mental well-being. Country is Life and Life is Country.

However, knowledge and social control are constructed by political and economic forces which endeavour to determine the functionality of social and cultural dynamics. The lack of cultural understandings can be detrimental to the dynamics of cultures from dominant hegemonic external forces in trying to control their lived experiences of the world. Therefore, in questioning epistemology from an Aboriginal perspective:

Knowledge does not exist in and of itself, isolated from people. Rather, it is produced through the interactions of people, and as all people are socially located (in their race, gender, ability, class identities, and so on) with biases, privileges, and differing power relations, so too is the creation of knowledge socially located, socially constructed. Recognising that knowledge is socially constructed means understanding that knowledge doesn't exist 'out there' but is embedded in people and the power relations between us. It recognises that 'truth' is a verb; it is created, it is multiple: truth does not exist, it is made (Potts and Brown 2005, p. 261).

### **Knowledge is Relational and Premised on “Real” Lived Experience**

It is through the lived experiences of the world that we find meaning, understanding and our own knowledge. Yarning, as such, was a western colonial word which came from non-Aboriginal people observing how Aboriginal people passed knowledge on to others. Aboriginal people, in acquiring the English language, now use the word yarning as a valid term to define how Aboriginal people exchange/pass on knowledge.

As when a person undertakes yarning with thread, in weaving material into a cohesive material substance for example mats,

baskets, tapestries: so too is yarning in the transmission of knowledge from one person to another. Yarning is the relational interweaving of knowledge experienced through the use of the spoken word. It is a means of bringing someone to the brink of understanding from which they can then utilise through their own lived experiences to gain their own ways of knowing (Mace, 2012).

This is the fourth layer of the *multiple relational narratives* framework. The Aboriginal perspective is that ontological and epistemological understandings are intertwined and produce collective lived experience which is premised in the real. Aboriginal spirituality is the outward expression of Culture and the knowing that the physical and spiritual are intertwined in a circular relationship. As can be seen from Figure 1 from the Institute of Aboriginal Development all life is interconnected and inter-relational.

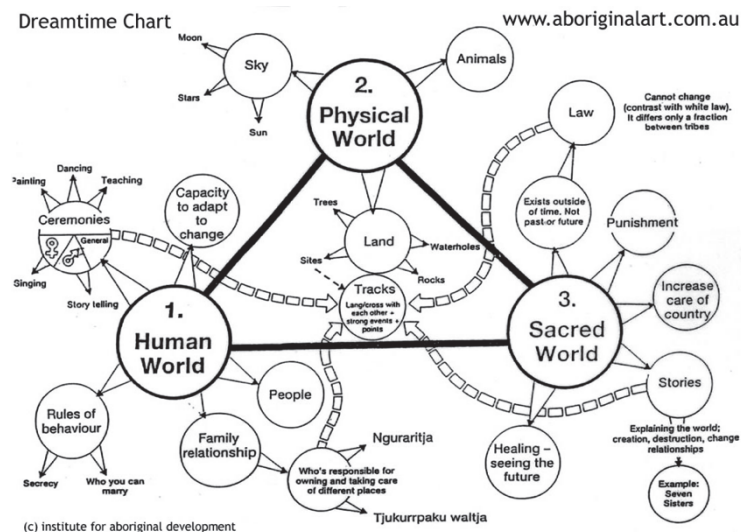


Figure 1: Institute of Aboriginal Development all life is interconnected and inter-related

Imperative to this research is the relationship based approach through the use of yarning which honours the cultural protocols in the exchange of knowledge and is conducive to carrying out this research within Aboriginal communities. Communication between people can take many forms from writing, dancing, to art in the conveyance of information. Oral traditions have been an integral part in the passing of knowledge from one generation to the next. It is a vital element to the research of the lived experiences of Aboriginal stockwomen and their legacy in the northern Australian pastoral industry to use the method of yarning as it enables the portraying of “lived experiences, feelings, thoughts and ideas” (Bessarab & Ng’andu 2010, p. 38). Furthermore, the process of yarning is more than just finding Contributors and sitting down and talking. It is about relationships. It is these relationships that enable voice.

### **Building Relationality**

Yarning, like narratives, and further like knowledge is relational. Prior to Contributors agreeing to participate I firstly formed a relationship base with them. This was carried out by attending community cultural obligations and or through my community Elder. In either case, my Elder or a community Elder was present with me to ensure that cultural protocols were adhered to. On meeting potential Contributors, introductions began with an explanation of who I am and where I am from in order to connect me through relationships either with people, places or knowledge. We built our relational narratives. Once the relationship is formed, yarning sessions could begin. In conducting yarning it has been carried out on the Country of Contributors and or pastoral stations. From time beginning, yarning has

been used in the passing of knowledge to the younger generation. This thereby makes it an important aspect for me as a researcher to continue using this method and to conduct the research in this way. In this research, yarning circles were conducted with the use of either a voice recorder or if the Contributor did not want to be recorded, through notes. A crucial element in the transmission of lived experiences is transcribing the notes in the Contributor's language and if I am unfamiliar with some of the language of the Contributors, my Elder who was accompanying me was utilised to ensure the correct transcription of notes. Due to the long distance between me and the Contributors, interviews were conducted using the telephone. Transcriptions were sent back to Contributors for validation and verification of their shared Intellectual Knowledge.

A particular impediment for my research was being unable to capture the true essence of lived experiences. The language, terminology and even the structural process of writing invokes tensions for articulating Aboriginal ways. How can the lived experiences of Aboriginal stockwomen and their legacy in the northern pastoral industry be written so that it does not come across as clinical? By clinical I mean that it lacks the true essence of personal lived experience. It is a tenuous space of "lived" experience and "learned" experience. The use of words from western philosophical traditions such as "epistemology", "methodology", "ontology" and "axiology" to portray Aboriginal ways of learning removes the true essence of Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing, seeing and being. From a personal positioning, I view these words as ones that are enablers for clinical writing and have their place in such a discourse. However, through my own lived experience, these words and their meanings are continually lived and are not necessary to be used as a descriptive

process through language. For me using such terminology takes away the spirit of Aboriginal inter-connectedness and situates Aboriginal ways into western knowledge systems. It is however, a tenuous space in which an Aboriginal worldview can reconfigure. This is a vital feature of this research project. As stated by Louis Botha:

Indigenous research methodologies can and should go beyond the current hermeneutic borders of conventional qualitative research to embrace more appropriate epistemological and axiological assumptions, it suggests a mixed method approach as a vehicle for doing so. The contention here is that, by combining current qualitative research practices with the specific aspirations of indigenous [sic] communities in a mixed method strategy, it may be possible to build appropriate theoretical tools and ethical practices for indigenous [sic] research (Botha 2011, p. 313)

Situating research within a paradigm is merely one of the many challenges Aboriginal researchers face when conducting research. As a researcher writing across sub-cultures, researching from an inside/outside perspective, these challenges have been accentuated. I am an insider/outsider writing about Aboriginal transformation (Aboriginal perspective) from the pastoral industry and on the other hand I am an insider/outsider writing about my participation in the sub-culture of pastoral industry (western perspective). If I had just been writing about pastoralism, the methodology may have formed more easily using western paradigms to ground

my research in a linear manner. However, as it is cross cultural, the paradigms become blurred and therefore intertwine. Botha states:

By bringing together diverse ways of knowing and doing at the pragmatic and local level of daily practice, it is possible to engage the tensions of divergent methodological stances (Botha 2011, p. 323).

Botha furthers this by quoting Green in that:

A mixed methods way of thinking seeks not so much convergence as insight; the point is not a well-fitting model or curve but rather the generation of important understandings and discernments through the juxtaposition of different lenses, perspectives, and stances; in a good mixed methods study, difference is constitutive and fundamentally generative (Greene cited in Botha 2011, p. 323).

To negate Western perspectives such as qualitative research methods would be arrogant and would detract from the way in which the world can be viewed from an Aboriginal perspective. In multiple mixed method approaches through western research methods and my positioning as an Aboriginal researcher is about the

repositioning of those methods through the process of yarning and utilising participant observation with critical engagement with literature but through an Indigenous framework which is premised on Rigney, Wilson and Kovach. As from my positioning as an Aboriginal woman this is really important in the approach to the research. Humans are unpredictable and conducting repetitive experiments premised within quantitative research methods with humans and data collection within this form lacks the true deeper holistic essence of what it means to be a human being. The methodological approaches, premised on qualitative research methods are more culturally appropriate for Aboriginal people. Humans are a living spirit that changes regularly through knowledge acquired and experiences experienced, and we all have our own ways of knowing, doing, being and seeing. In saying this, there are ways in which research with Aboriginal people should be conducted, just as there are ways in conducting research with non-Indigenous people. Within a university there are national protocols to which a researcher first needs to adhere prior to conducting research with humans. This includes research integrity training and human ethics testing along with submissions to the Deakin University Ethics Committee which are completed prior to any research conducted with humans. Further to this, there is the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (2012) which is addressed within the Ethics Committee application to ensure that researchers conduct research appropriately with Aboriginal people. For myself as a researcher I not only have to comply with the university and national protocols but also the protocols of my community prior to conducting research.

## **My Community Cultural Protocols**

As the research has been conducted from an Aboriginal perspective the depth of relationship building has been vital to conducting the research in a culturally appropriate manner. Within my community there are specific protocols that needed to be adhered to prior to establishing a rapport with Contributors. Yarning with my own community Elders was the first step that needed to be addressed. This step was necessary and instrumental to gain the required respect, responsibility, reciprocity and relational accountability. This first step was conducted in the style of a yarning circle where I sought permission from my community and Country Elders in order to conduct this research and my Elders in turn questioned:

- How are you going to conduct the research?
- How will our community benefit from this research?
- How will you interpret the information you obtain from Contributors?
- How you going to ensure you interpret information in a respectful and responsible way to our community?

(Mace. 2011)

From the questions then arose, how was I going to transfer this information in a way that reflected Aboriginal perspectives?

One of the main outcomes to the yarning circle is that during my research fieldwork I would need to have an Aboriginal Elder from community with me at all times to ensure that cultural protocols were honoured, due to the sensitive nature of the data being collected. Further to this, in order to conduct the research I first had to adhere to cultural obligations. Above and beyond my cultural obligations per usual was attending further gatherings in other areas with my Elder in order to build relationships with prospective Contributors prior to any yarning relating to the project. Once prospective Contributors were identified and a comfortable rapport established, then yarning could begin around the topic of research. This was always under the wise and watchful eyes of my accompanying Elders. This research is not only important in transmitting Aboriginal knowledge toward outcomes for the community but ultimately contributes to further establishing a knowledge base for the children of the future. The content of the research also is of equal value to the methodological approach. As discussed, it is not only the “what” but the “how”. This is also the relational importance of Aboriginal knowledges. This is another reason why this chapter preceded my analysis of literature, as a way of setting up the “how” so we can further articulate and understand the “what”. This dynamic of “how” and “what” can be demonstrated by Nigel Strauss (2016) in his paper *on Trauma, Culture and Resilience* (2016). In acknowledging adopting the “how” and “what” dynamic from an Indigenous perspective, Strauss learns and values the importance of an Indigenous approach. This is also further illuminated by Martin (2016) in *Methodology as Content: Indigenous Australian approaches to research through practice*. He states, ‘The methodological approaches to research are the content of the research and vice versa. They are inseparable in an Indigenous world-view’ (Martin 2016).

### ***Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* (Meaning, Go back to extract)**

With limited literature available that directly relates to Aboriginal stockwomen a broader route was taken. *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* has been an integral part for this research and in concert with lived experience sits across all layers of the *multiple relational narratives* framework. A major concern with researching back has been the dominant western theories that have contributed the forms of research literature available, which are awash with patriarchal social structures/dynamics. Government policies, laws relating to land tenure systems and historical foundations of the pastoral industry have been critiqued in a researching back process in order to unmask the historical foundations of the industry itself. In doing this, the research method of content analysis is utilised as a means to *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun*. I used content analysis for not only its importance in the social sciences but also as it enables the unpacking of the historical foundations of the industry. This enables the study of ‘beliefs, organisations, attitudes, and human relations’ (Woodrum cited in Neuman 2000) which contributes to a holistic approach to the research. The significance of using content analysis for part of this research is due to the fact that the establishment of the industry is of a time and space in the past and can only be examined through texts from secondary sources which relate to the cattle industry.

Further to this, due to the lack of information directly relating to Aboriginal women as stock workers in the establishment and continuation of the northern pastoral industry, I have had to infer information from these secondary sources. Hence, I have applied a deductive method of content analysis to collate and analyse current material available, and identified themes and patterns in the literature to infer my

conclusions in concert with my own lived experience, both as a Koa woman with connection to Country and as someone working in the industry. This researching back and lived experience is inter-woven through the methodological framework of *multiple relational narratives*.

### **Autoethnography**

One of the decisions that I battled with for quite a while in conducting the research was the implementing of the research method of autoethnography. I was dubious at first as to how this approach would enrich the research. However, as I formed relationships and spoke to Aboriginal people about the research topic I realised that to utilise autoethnography for the research would provide a holistic approach which would augment qualitative methods above and beyond that which is limited and linear by non-Indigenous methods of qualitative research. Autoethnography is:

An alternative, another perspective. It is research from the inside-out; providing an authoritative voice that offers insight into otherwise unknowable worlds (Houston 2007, p. 45).

Applying an autoethnographic method as an integral element to the research enabled the:

Opportunity to formulate knowledge of Indigenous peoples and experience from an Indigenous perspective, without intruding on the lives and experiences of others' (Houston 2007, p. 49).

As a researcher and my own years of experience as an Aboriginal woman in the contemporary cattle industry of northern Australia and participation within other states excluding Victoria and Tasmania, I considered it a valuable source of insight, to the workings of not only living and working in the cattle industry but also the hardships of inhabiting rural remote areas of Australia. It is here that my own lived experiences frame the research, as my own situated lived experience has an ontological relationship with the Contributors based on shared lived experience. This is where this autoethnography approach merges with yarning and this moves between layers four and five of the *multiple relational narratives* methodological framework. This continues the relational narratives whilst reconfiguring the hegemonic discourses of history. In positioning my lived experience in this way, I am an insider and outsider not only to the Aboriginal Contributors but also an insider and outsider as pastoral worker. Using autoethnography enables me as a researcher to put into context the lived experiences of people involved in the cattle industry today and adds content to the knowledge and experience of Aboriginal Contributors from the past and the present. It is here that the approach of autoethnography and yarning through the premise of my own lived experiences as well, contributes to interpreting the data of have collected from my Contributors. Autoethnographic research has been criticised since its inception into academia since the 1970s due to the closeness and supposed inability for researchers to be objective when conducting research in this manner:

The tension of insider/outsider dynamic will persist until Indigenous research frameworks have methodological space within academic research dialogue, policy and practice (Kovach 2010, p. 31).

It is within non-Indigenous communities that Indigenous researchers have had to work within. From my research and experience, all Indigenous researchers face this challenge when conducting any form of research. To reiterate Pan Indigenous methods are not a means of accepting Indigenous knowledge systems as Indigenous researchers come from all different backgrounds and distinct groups and areas and will have varying views on Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. It is due to these factors that research must be:

A product resulting from research using a tribal-centred knowledge. Indigenous methodology ought to have a strong narrative component as part of its method and presentation of findings (Kovach 2010, p. 35).

This is why my research has interwoven the “how” and the “what” and as a researcher I identify as the insider and outsider to the research. I am an insider because I identify as a Koa woman with connections to Country in the channel

Country of Queensland and I am an outsider as the Contributors connections to Country are not of the same geographical location as mine.

When using autoethnography as the basis to the pastoral industry it is a bit different. This is where I have interwoven autoethnography with observation whilst working in the pastoral industry. I have been an insider, in positions in the industry, where I was a paid employee and an outsider when in positions that had no remuneration. I have used this method to articulate the life systems of living and working within the cattle industry and reinforce and contextualise my Contributor's experiences. When researching the pastoral industry, it is through lived experience and the analysing and critiquing of what it means to live on a cattle station in some of the most isolated areas of Australia. I am an insider to the cattle industry and its performances. In the position of outsider, I am still able to participate with life on cattle stations but I am positioned differently on the social stratum of cattle stations. I believe this has given my research a way in which to be objective and critical of the lived experience of living and working within the cattle industry. This method of research also assists the reader to an insight of my own theories about knowledge and illuminates the lens in which I have conducted the research. Kovach (2010, p. 53) states that Susan Boyd, a critical researcher, points out that knowledge is power and the choosing of a methodology is a political act. This is why using an Indigenous methodology for the research is important to de-territorialise and re-territorialise the historical writings of the political agendas of the past. As with Rigney, this gives a voice and recognition to the silent black history about Aboriginal women not only within the Australian environment but to their positions and through the significant participation within the

Australian pastoral industry not as sex slaves but as strong hardworking and tough stockwomen.

In conducting the research I have continually utilised the “how” and the “what”. However, using this method is not performed in a singular linear manner. It is as in yarnning a continual thread of interweaving between the two. In saying this, my lived experience contributes to the “how” and the “what”, which enables the de-colonisation of non-Indigenous research of Aboriginal historical perspectives. Houston states:

The battle with colonial ideologies can only end in a victory for the Indigenous if we first make the colonial framework visible, then set about dismantling it and reconstruct epistemology, methodology and knowledge in our own image and our own terms (Houston 2007, p. 46).

Aboriginal women were displaced by western terms of women’s roles placing them as they would non-Indigenous positions of gender. Aboriginal women were therefore deemed passive objects existing for man’s pleasure. However, Aboriginal women’s roles were not passive but engendered active participants of community. Women passed the law, men enforced the laws.

My lived experience contributes to this research further by empowering within myself a reflection and a strong belonging and pride in my connections with Country. This research gives me voice. This sets a strong personal premise to this research. In days of the past, autoethnographic work was unethical and lacking in empowerment of those being studied. This is why to understand the “what” I must interweave the “how” throughout the research. I am the insider and outsider to the research. As a researcher I have chosen to transcribe it in a way that reflects and captures women’s lived experiences through oral traditions of storytelling. ‘Presenting data in this way allows readers to interpret the conversations from their own particular vantage points and take from the teachings what they need’ (Kovach 2010, p. 50).

Kovach cites Jean-Louis Ermine who suggests that ‘Indigenous knowledges are born of relational knowing, from both inner and outer space. The outer space is the physical world and inner space is where metaphysical knowing resides’ (Kovach 2010, p. 57). Continually throughout my research, respect for the Ancestors and the metaphysical knowing has played a major role in me conducting my research. Although I have endeavoured to adhere to this, there was one occasion in the research where I had a lapse in judgement, through the excitement and experience of the moment. On attending an event within my community with my Elders, I had got wrapped up in the moment of seeing my Elders and community members I had forgotten to speak to Country and the Ancestors on who I was and why I was there. That night I was overcome with the power of the Ancestors through an older man telling me that it was not my tent and I could not sleep there and was being hit on the head by him to the extent of bleeding. Shaken by the experience, upon waking early

from this message, I immediately sought the advice of my Elders who promptly asked if I had adhered to community protocols on arriving on site. Realising my mistake, I took actions to rectify the situation and performed the proper protocols of entering and staying on someone else's Country.

Further to this, another occasion arose where I needed to consider the cultural protocols of my Contributor. One of my Contributors had passed away and I had different family members wanting me to take different actions. One group wanted me to transmit the story and the other did not want this to happen. As relational accountability is an aspect of the research and my accountability to the community, unfortunately, the information will not be included in the research. As a researcher this was frustrating, however, it is important for the research to take this action. Keeping to the core element of the research and conduct it in a culturally appropriate manner. If I had included this data, I would have contradicted my Aboriginal lens and making the research culturally inappropriate and this falls back into the discourses of the past.

As with other researchers I have battled with how to incorporate a holistic epistemology into a research method. The research itself is governed by my own theories of knowledge through my own Spiritual beliefs, that which dominate how I am guided to conduct my research and re-searching in a culturally appropriate way. As stated, I am the student and the storyteller. My Contributors are my teachers through story which enables me to become the storyteller. By transcribing oral histories incorporating western knowledge I provide a complete holistic lens which

includes ‘religious teachings, metaphysical links, cultural insights, history, linguistic structures, literary and aesthetic form and Indigenous truths’ (Stevenson cited in Kovach 2010, p. 101).

Further to this, DeLeon states that:

Narratives allow us to move beyond statistics to capture the lived reality of experience that empirical science is unable to do. By allowing space for these counter-narratives to exist, they can be organized and disseminated to help better understand current social problems and realities (DeLeon 2010, p. 408).

This is the space where *multiple relational narratives* operate from and as the researcher am not only accountable to myself but accountable to my community. It is about knowing what intellectual knowledge is acceptable to pass on and share and what is not to be shared.

The methodological approach to the research is a vital part of the research as a whole. By operating through the *multiple relational narratives* framework, I establish *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and “lived experience” as the framework’s fundamental continual thread. By providing a critical analysis of literature through *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* with an Aboriginal and stockwoman’s lens, I can step

out a broad yet concise picture of the pastoralist industry. By establishing the *multiple relational narratives* framework, I provide analysis of the pastoral industry through historical accounts, policy pertaining to Aboriginal peoples and the influence of environments in order to set the scene. Further to this, when yarning with literature and by collecting the data with the Contributors, I concurrently analyse the data as I present it and keep it interwoven rather than as an objectified collection of data. The key to this research is that it is premised in the real, and it is in this, that we get to listen.

## CHAPTER THREE: COLLUMBUM ANGK YUNKUNDUN (RE- SEARCHING BACK)

We wrought with a will unceasing,  
We moulded, and fashioned, and planned  
And we fought with the black and we blazed the track  
That ye might inherit the land.

(Hudson 1908)

### **Historical Account: Setting the Scene**

In the above, we see that Hudson formulates the “struggle” that pastoralists encountered in the frontier movement. In this context and in this chapter, I attempt to reveal how this struggle was constructed in order to give a historical account of the industry and its foundations in Australia. I do this by analysing existing literature pertaining to the pastoral industry, policy pertaining to Aboriginal peoples and my knowledge of these through my lived experience and lens as someone in the industry itself. This is the first layer of the methodological approach and framework to this research. In the colonisation of Australia, Aboriginal people and pastoralists were to use both psychological and physical warfare. The Frontier Wars were brutal and violence was rampant on both sides. Aboriginal people had no intention to move on to new Country, for cultural reasons, and because of their deep connection to Country. This forced Aboriginal people who wanted to keep their connection to

Country, to have contact with pastoralists (Bunbury 2002; McGrath 1987). On the whole, contact with colonisers brought with it positive benefits by way of new knowledge, technologies and material commodities such as clothing, tin and various foods. This contact would also bring negative impacts such as policy and legislation, alcohol, opium, tobacco and disease, loss of connection, removal from Country and loss of spirituality. These factors contributed to the restructuring of Aboriginal cultural and social dynamics.

The geographical locations in this research are significant and have been specifically chosen because of the high Aboriginal population in these areas and further remote and isolated environments. The pastoral frontier of Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia experienced a considerably slower and different form of colonisation compared to the southern areas of Australia. This was because the overall economic driving force was to be determined by the difficult environment (Broome 2001; May 1994; McLaren 2000). Settlers in search of viable portions of land would have to endure many a hardship in order to establish a cattle station. Pastoralists would determine early on that, within these regions, substantially larger blocks of land were needed for grazing. This was to be influential in the method of grazing chosen to be carried out and the form of colonisation that took place. By the 1860s the pastoral industry was well on the way to being established in north Queensland and eventually pushing on through the harsh inaccessible terrain of the Gulf Savannah. The Northern Territory's pastoral establishment would soon follow and this would occur around the 1880s. The pastoral push into the northern part of Western Australia, and specifically, the Kimberley region, would initially be attempted around the 1880s, but the terrain and Aboriginal resistance were to be

significant factors in the first push (Broome 2001; May 1994; McLaren 2000). The pastoral industry, however, would not start to gather any ground in the Kimberley region until around 1903 with another intense settlement around the 1920s (Jebb 2002, p. 1). See Figure 2 for directional push of the pastoral industry.



Figure 2: Directional push of the pastoral industry across Australia, Simone 2012, private collection

The environment was a significant aspect in the spatial progress of the pastoral industry across the locations stated previously. Besides the heat and humidity and the harsh unrelenting terrain, more land was needed for grazing and water was a major concern. These factors were also influential in the method of grazing that was to occur for well over a hundred years in the Australian pastoral industry. In New South Wales, rural remote areas were settled firmly by Europeans and with the acquisition of smaller blocks for stations, colonisers were able to fence boundaries, name things such as waters, paddocks and properties, also marking the place with artefacts (Colishaw 2004, p. 6). Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia on the other hand, had to be settled with open plan grazing, which is a cattle station that does not have fencing to mark boundaries due to costs and the environmental terrain (Bunbury 2002; McLaren 2000). The method of open plan grazing that had to be utilised for such a long period of time on the Australian frontier, contributed to a longer period where Aboriginal people were able to avoid contact with non-Aboriginal people. However, this contributed to an extended period of violent battles on the frontier. The Australian Frontier Wars would last for decades contributing to substantial deaths of both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people and in particular Aboriginal men.

The initial establishment of the pastoral industry was fraught with difficulties which slowed the colonising process. Unfamiliar with the environment, pastoralists had tried to stock the north as they had the south, with the use of sheep. In the 1860s the majority of stock on stations in southern parts of Australia was that of sheep, so it was logical that sheep were used to try and stock the top half of Australia. However, in the first ten years, pastoralists were faced with significant losses of stock from

Aboriginal raids on flocks for food sources, retaliation and resistance to acquisition of tribal land and destruction of Aboriginal sacred sites, and it had also become obvious by this time that the environment in certain areas was not suitable for sheep. Footrot, fluke, lungworm, spear-grass and blowflies were to have devastating effects on flocks. It was hence decided that cattle would be used, as cattle were relatively cheaper to manage, more mobile and hardier for the environmental conditions in more isolated areas of the Country (May 1994; McLaren 2001). McLaren states that:

Much of the country so readily taken up, often at ruinous expense proved unsuitable for sheep. Problems encountered included losses to native dogs, low breeding rates in the Kimberley's and Northern Territory, the cost of freighting wool, the inherent unthriftiness of some of the country, and the difficulty and expense of obtaining shearers and shepherds in isolated and dangerous areas (McLaren 2001, p. 25).

There were other significant factors in the slow progress of the pastoral industry, and the eventual use of cattle. Prices were low on wool and the distances to move stock took up to nine months or more, with stock having to come from the Darling Downs in the southeast of Queensland. This impacted on the sheep industry heavily forcing runs (narrow paddock used in mustering of cattle to move cattle from one point of a station to another) to become abandoned, and decreasing the progress of the frontier. Another factor which impacted on the push across the frontier was the economic

sector. Lease rents were being increased and the banks were not willing to invest in the more isolated and remote areas of Australia. It was not until 1874, when gold was discovered in Palmer River in Maytown North Queensland, that the pastoral industry received its second wind with population increases and subsequent increases in the demand for beef. Victorians were also to take up the plight to invest and stock the north with cattle in place of sheep (Bunbury 2002; May 1994; McLaren 2001). Although the majority of the north would eventually be stocked with cattle, a few sheep stations would remain.

The establishment of the pastoral industry was low and slow in the more rural remote areas due to environmental terrain and the open plan grazing, which was needed. However, both of these factors would allow Aboriginal people the option to study pastoralists from a distance. Observations from a distance helped Aboriginal people acquire new technologies and strategies using the pastoralists' methods of stock management, which in turn, would advance the efficiency of the Aboriginal stockperson. Knowledge associated with traditional life and the environment, and acquisition of the new technologies from pastoralists such as cutting-out of sheep and various strategies for removing sheep from flocks were acquired by Aboriginal people and used in the rustling of sheep, with shepherds being none the wiser that stock were missing (Broome 2001; Reynolds 2006). This would all further the effectiveness of Aboriginal stock people as they were incorporated into the pastoral industry.

Further to this, as cattle were introduced new strategies were adopted and utilised by Aboriginal people in the handling of cattle which obviously posed a slightly different problem to start with than sheep. Cattle were ‘...larger, faster and more aggressive...and much harder to kill’ (Reynolds 2006, p. 166). Settlers within the region have stated that they had come across cattle with thirty spears in them and were still alive. Traditional weapons such as spears with either wood or stone were inefficient in the killing of cattle as Aboriginal people were soon to discover, and this is possibly a factor in the use of iron for spear tips (Reynolds 2006, p. 166). In addition, the capturing of larger animals was met with other challenges and strategies. Reynolds (2006, p. 162) notes a significant overlapping in methods of the hunter and the herdsman. Those that lived with tribes for a time noted that prior to and after contact, Aboriginal people used a rudimentary stock yard (enclosure used to hold animals) made from various materials such as sticks, logs, boughs and bushes. These yards were used to catch larger prey such as kangaroos, emus, wallabies and eventually for the use of holding cattle and sheep (Bunbury 2002; Reynolds 2006). Reynolds states that:

Giles referred to what he termed dilapidated old yards, where the blacks had formerly yarded emu or wallaby; K.L Parker observed that the Euahlayi tribe made bush yards and caught emus in them. Buckley recalled that the clans he had lived with pursued kangaroos in order to hunt them into corners like flocks of sheep. Writing of north-western Queensland Roth noted that local Aborigines mustered emus like cattle driving them into nets and palisades (Reynolds 2006, p. 162).

Thus it can be said, that Aboriginal people learnt how to manage and acquire skills necessary of cattle management prior to contact with their colonisers.

### **Pastoralists**

The de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation of land and the Aboriginal cultural and social dynamics were unsurmountable. Tribal Country was now bound by this foreign entity of fencing and enforced and enclosed boundaries, which conflicted with Aboriginal ways of living on Country. Aboriginal peoples' socialisation processes are different to that of Western capitalist structures, and in this instance that of the pastoralists. Within the majority of Aboriginal cultures throughout the world, existence is not based on material possessions (Flood 2006; Geddes 1994; Sahlins 1974). The most important concerns are that of food, shelter, clothing, hope and that of belonging, primarily to create a balance between the resources available and the needs of the people. Pastoralists on the other hand, were interested in the acquisition of land for means of production and capital gain and in some cases at any cost. An Aboriginal perspective of Land/Country is a vital element and interconnected with life and the sustainability of life through a continual reciprocal relationship between people and Country.

This form of colonisation by the acquisition of land, forced Aboriginal life systems to be thrown into the wheels of chaos/conflict not only from the newcomers and their life systems, material commodities and stock, but there was also inner chaos/conflict

within tribes between the young and the old in relation to traditional systems of authority (Reynolds 2001). Inhibited by taboos embedded in Cultural Lore/Laws from within their cultural and social dynamics, the young could see change with such things as new foods and challenges such as riding of horses, amongst other things. The Elders of the tribe tried hard to maintain traditional cultural practices but because young men and women were not fully initiated, they were not firmly attached with the community mores. At this stage their authority within the tribe was challenged but on some occasions was strengthened by violent clashes with pastoralists (Reynolds 2006, p. 133-134). As human beings, most of us have a sense of curiosity when it comes to the observation of the “other” (Said 1978; Sarukkai 1997). Aboriginal people viewed the white newcomers as “the other” as they were outside of Aboriginal social life. However, unlike Occidental views of “the other” as “colonised inferiors”, Aboriginal people viewed these white “others” in different ways. Aboriginal curiosity was a reaction to these strange newcomers and their foreign animals. Although it is rude in Aboriginal cultures to be overtly curious, these strange white “others” could not be accounted for with Aboriginal cultural dynamics, thus negating the fact that one was being rude (Prentis 2009, p. 45). Aboriginal people would have taken what was referred to by A.P. Elkin (cited in Prentis 2009, p. 45) as a tentative approach, defined as watching the white “other” and then slowly introducing themselves to the newcomers in small groups probably men and eventually larger groups until the whole tribe was introduced. This response to the push of the pastoral industry was significant as it aided in the acquirement of knowledge from a distance and a slower integration into the pastoral industry in contrast to that of southern states.

In the period between 1860 and the early 1900s the frontier was in a continual cycle of change, with periods of conflict and resistance and then periods of relative peace. These circumstances would vary from area to area. Initially in the pastoral push for land, pastoralists were trying to keep Aboriginal people out of their stations (Jebb 2002; May 1994). This would have been instrumental in the majority of violence which was to occur for such a long period on the frontier. The frontier was to become a place of great conflict not only externally, but one of personal internal conflict for the colonisers. The overall environment was one steeped in paternalistic racial ideologies as Europeans were under the impression that Aboriginal people were inferior, nomadic and had no sense of permanent working structures or systems. The frontier was brutal, if the environment didn't kill you, frontier violence/resistance possibly would. Contrary to some beliefs, Aboriginal people had not been passive victims of colonisation, and had retaliated and resisted the acquisition of tribal land and the destruction of Aboriginal sacred sites (Prentis 2009; Reynolds 2006). While violence was evident, it was not inevitable, as there were those who sought peaceful transactions with the local Aboriginal people (Prentis 2009). However, there were very few white men that wanted to venture into the interior with the distance, isolation, poor working conditions, low wages and the fear of violence from the Aboriginal people (May 1994, p. 34). Pastoralists had to reconcile with themselves as to the means in which they would proceed. Also the economic production of cattle stations was extremely low at this point in time.

In the colonisation of the south-eastern states, colonists preferred to forcibly remove Aboriginal people from their land as they were deemed unviable and were not fit for the workforce, due to the perpetuation of racial theories of them being the inferior

(Anthony 2003). The continual degradation of land, water, food sources, disease and the breakdown of Aboriginal cultural dynamics (Broome 2001; May 1994; Reynolds 2006) and pastoralists need for a labour force in isolated and remote areas lead to a symbiotic relationship between the colonisers and Aboriginal people, even though the employer was getting the better deal. The need for labour, forced stations for their own survival to let in Aboriginal people for work purposes (May 1994; Reynolds 2006). This varied from station to station. When Aboriginal people were let in to stations and they had belonged to that area, ceremonial practices were able to be continued and they were less likely to go ‘wandering off’ and not return. Where Aboriginal people were dislocated from tribal land, further displacement and dislocation of cultural and spiritual practices were diminished.

With the breakdown of cultural and social dynamics came the destruction of ‘traditional values of responsibility’ (Perkins cited in, Flood 2006, p. 257) and in turn, a lot of Aboriginal people were thrown into the throngs of the welfare dependency cycle. Aboriginal people had to contend with pastoralists and their means of pacification or clearing out (process of removing Aboriginal people from an area which was wanted for building a station). However, with the low employment rates for rural remote Australia eventually pastoralist’s started “letting in” (where Aboriginal people were allowed onto stations) Aboriginal people to become part of the workforce. Aboriginal people then had to contend with political agendas. The controlling governing bodies during the 1860s and to the present have implemented various acts which are meant to either protect (which was rarely done), to “civilise”, to provide general supervision and health care or removal of Aboriginal people to various locations (which were normally not their tribal lands). These

policies included ones such as the Aborigines Protection Act 1886 (Western Australia), the Aboriginal Protection and the Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Queensland), the Aboriginal Ordinance 1911 and the Aboriginal Ordinance 1918. The residing state also determined the amount of restrictions put on Aboriginal people and it was said that Queensland and Western Australia had the strictest enforcement of policies (Jebb 2002; May 1987). The racial tension is still very evident within Western Australia and from my lived experience, not much has changed in the last hundred plus years of colonisation of the west.

### **Policies, Acts and Legislation**

The period between 1855 and the 1960s was to be known as the Protection and Assimilation era, with various acts and policies implemented which were ostensibly meant to protect Aboriginal people throughout Australia. The Assimilation Act of 1937 states:

The destiny of the natives of Aboriginal origin but not of the full blood lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth, and it therefore recommends that all effort should be directed to that end. ... efforts by all State authorities should be directed towards the education of children of mixed blood at white standards, and their subsequent employment under the same conditions as whites with a view to taking their place in

the white community on an equal footing with the whites  
(Commonwealth of Australia 1937).

The notion of protection is dubious across all of Australia. Protection from whom and what! Assimilation was about the ironic protection from ourselves and the ideology of eugenics, which aimed at improving the genetic composition of humans. However, the isolation of pastoral stations in Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia makes this notion of protection contentious. Isolated large and vast pastoral holdings were under the control of pastoralists' who then had full control of Aboriginal people and station owners and managers wielded an unbridled power over their work and conditions (Anthony 2003, p. 287). This unrestrained power reinforced their superior dominance through fear over Aboriginal people who resided on cattle stations.

The period between the 1860s and the 1960s is considered by Anthony (2003) as a time of *The Feudal Hauntings of the Northern Cattle Industry*. The feudal ideology was common practice in the north and was legitimated by the Crown with the use of a tenure graded system, which allowed for the exploitation of Aboriginal people based on coexisting land rights as a means of extracting wide scale Aboriginal labour force needed in the North from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s (Anthony 2003). Some Aboriginal people were willing to work on stations for white bosses. However, due to government policies at the time, eventually most Aboriginal people, both young and old were forced into station life, missions or fringe camps. Young girls and boys were eagerly welcomed as they were able to be trained on the politics

of living and working on a cattle station with relative ease and the young were eager to learn (Bunbury 2002; Reynolds 2006). Similarly, pastoralists had to live conflicting lives because on the one hand, the rule of the land was based on racial paternalistic ideologies and practices, and on the other hand, in order to survive the harsh unrelenting terrain of the remote areas they had to rely on Aboriginal people to sustain the running of stations (Broome 2001; Jebb 2002; May 1994; McLaren 2001; Prentis 2009; Reynolds 2006). It is here that the objective of this research culminates and posits that Aboriginal people, especially women, made a significant contribution to the pastoral industry. The so called “superior” (whitefella) was useless in the frontier without the help of the so called “inferior” (blackfella). Stan Bischoff a station owner was to write that:

The aboriginal [sic] are the best and smartest cattlemen I ever saw. There isn't a white man who will ever come up to them, especially in the scrub. I was never in the same class as those aboriginals [sic] (McLaren 2001, p. 53).

Around the 1930s the government had changed its policies to form legislations which were set up to assimilate and integrate Aboriginal people into the ideal of an Australian white society (Bleakley 1929; Broome 2001; McGrath 1987). Aboriginal people were given no rights and not viewed as citizens and it was not until 1962 that the Commonwealth changed the Electoral law to include Aboriginal Adults and in 1967 Aboriginal people were to be counted as citizens (DECS Curriculum Services n.d.). Although Aboriginal people were restricted and controlled by these various

acts, for those that were in more rural remote areas, where the acts were hard to enforce and where the demand for stock workers was high, Aboriginal people were able to stay on stations as groups, as it was in the frontiersman's best interest to provide food, clothing and protection in exchange for work on the station. Pastoral stations were to take on the whole group from young to old, with the young being welcomed as they were able to be trained early on the politics of living and working on a station.

The harsh reality was that during this period there were not too many choices available to Aboriginal people as they were still not classed as citizens. Many Aboriginal people that lived in the remote interior were to be housed on pastoral stations and in exchange for their labour they were given rations, clothing and the basics in living. There is still in existence today a form of the rationing system. On the corporate owned cattle stations that I have lived and worked on there was a ration system for clothing, tobacco, personal items and other essentials booked during the month and taken from employees pay on payday. It should be noted that most Aboriginal people that were to earn any money as pastoral workers were to have their money put into a 'government trust' or were charged such exorbitant prices for products that they would normally continue to be in debt to the owner at the end of the month.

## The “Police”



Figure 3: The Native Police, Staheli ND

An additional significant factor with the more remote and distant regions in colonisation was the fact that the only people that ventured out into the remote interior were pastoralists, police and native police, who in due time formed an alliance for their own governance. Criminal justice was in most cases meted out by pastoralists. Anthony states:

Violence on the northern frontier cultivated an atmosphere of fear and terror...the culture of violent excesses and the use of local action rather than the judiciary reinforced European superiority on the Aboriginal imagination (Anthony 2003, p. 285).

Even after the government had implemented policies to “protect” and assimilate Aboriginal people, it was the joining of the police, native police and pastoralists that was to have a greater impact on the control of Aboriginal people in the remote regions of the Country.

Prior to any policies being implemented within the remote and distant regions of Australia there was already a formidable force in play in the region, that of the native police. With the separation of New South Wales and Queensland in 1859 came the introduction of the Queensland mounted native police. The native police were made up of a few European officers and a collection of Aboriginal men. The slaughter that was handed down by this force was brutally violent. The violence would last for approximately forty years, from 1860 to the 1900s. Flood (2006) and Loo (1982) reiterate that it was with the force of the native police that pastoralists would employ in the keeping out of tribal Aboriginal people from pastoral stations. In the pastoral station movement within Western Australia around the early 1900s Jebb states that:

The police and stockmen who came into the country in this period were on the periphery of pastoral settlement. They came with guns and few stores or items for exchange, preoccupied with reducing the capabilities of Indigenous people to hinder or threaten future pastoral occupation ...Unfortunately dispersals and violent confrontations between Aboriginal people and police

and stockmen continued into the 1920's in the northern ranges ...  
(Jebb 2002, p. 36).

In Western Australia those employed by police were known as trackers. However, their role was the same as the Native police and that was to pursue Aboriginal people that were seen to be a nuisance to the progress of the pastoral industry. In most cases Aboriginal native police/trackers had in some way or another “assimilated” into white society. There are many cases where Aboriginal trackers retaliated against this imposed system.

Aboriginal people in some ways had formed alliances with the new comers firstly in New South Wales with the first policing body, the Border Police (Elder 2003, p. 147). Aboriginal men were enticed into joining the police force with the opportunity to acquire new technologies and materials and in return hunt down those who were seen to be a nuisance in the push for colonisation. In encouraging Aboriginal men to participate in the police force Elder (2003) states that:

The method was to flatter Aboriginal men by providing them with a horse, local women, plenty of booze, an attractive blue and white uniform, blankets and a double-barrelled carbine and pistols and, in return, ask them to track and kill Aboriginal people with whom they had neither kinship nor allegiance (Elder 2003, p. 147).

Although Aboriginal men were somewhat manipulated into joining the police force, it became a violent and feared group of men who wreaked havoc on the new frontier. As the boundaries of governance moved with the population growth, so too did the violence meted out on the frontier. Bruce Elder comments that William Forster on addressing the 1858 Select committee on Native Police stated that:

Enterprising men, induced by the large profit or appearance of profit held out in undertakings of the kind, will always go beyond any protection the Government can give them; and, in that case, murders will be committed by the natives, and upon the natives, in spite of any force you can organise (Elder 2003, p. 149).

It was these enterprising men who had become a powerful group in forcing the government's decisions. The frontiersmen or as Elder (2003) puts it 'these were the glory boys' had no intention of conciliation with the traditional people as they wanted a police force to mete out the justice they believed was acceptable; even to the extent of total outright slaughter of innocent people. Elder's (2003) *Blood on the Wattle* outlines several massacres that were to occur on the frontier and the genocide of the traditional people of an area. I feel it necessary for the research to highlight the psychological mindset of the period. The following are extracts from Elders text:

The journal of James Warman, 1846

Nothing gives the Native Police so much pleasure as shooting and tomahawking the defenceless savages (Elder 2003, p. 147).

Reverend William Yate, 1835

They were nothing better than dogs, and ... it was no more harm to shoot them than it would be to shoot a dog when he barked at you (Elder 2003, p. 1).

A Tasmanian settler, 1827

For every man they murder, hunt them down and drop ten of them. This is our specific – try it! (Elder 2003, p. 29)

William Cox, landowner, 1824

The best thing that can be done is to shoot all the blacks and manure the ground with their carcasses (Elder 2003, p. 49).

A letter in the Australian, 18 December 1838

I look on the blacks as a set of monkeys [sic], and the earlier they are exterminated from the face of the earth the better. I would

never consent to hang a white man for a black one (Elder 2003, p. 83).

David MacDonald in Gum Boughs and Wattle Bloom

We are indeed a civilizing race ... when we came here, the aborigines covered these wide plains in thousands. Where are they today? We have 'civilized' them – they are dead (Elder 2003, p. 216).

These are just a few of the attitudes that were circulating the frontier and perpetuating fear and violence among the colonies, especially those that were distributed through the use of the media. Perpetuating the internal conflict, pastoralists endured in having to hire the Aboriginal women and people in performing stock work. Elder, Reynolds, Loos, Roberts, Connor, Jebb, Bird Rose and many others have contributed to the scholarly work in revealing the many massacres that have occurred on the frontier exposing the ignored existence of the frontier wars.

Violence it is argued did not just accompany colonial practices and imperatives by virtue of some historical accident. Rather it was structurally implied in the very activities of contact and negotiation that established colonial occupation and hegemony... (Banivanua-mar 2005, p. 305).

The Native Police were the militia of the frontier.

Jonathan Richards has undertaken extensive archival research into the Queensland Native Police and exposes the reality of the force. Richards book *The Secret War: a true history of Queensland's native police* (2008) not only provides the facts of police undertakings but highlights the conflicting sides of two law systems and the military dimension of the Native Police Force itself. Richards (2008) also states that it is impossible to collect everything from archival material as killings went unrecorded or had limited investigations and expresses the need and importance of the role that oral history from Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants within the period plays.

The archival material doesn't tell us everything. The destruction of evidence was clearly a hallmark of the Native Police force. ... In the absence of reliable data, and with only limited investigations into Native Police killings, we can turn to other sources, settler and Indigenous, oral and written. We should not expect to find exact numbers here, but there are references to attacks that should be taken seriously because they are often our only way of gaining access to the traumatic experiences on the other side of the frontier. Further, Aboriginal accounts have always been presented in oral forms. Another good reason for

listening to oral evidence is, as historian Tom Griffith reminds us, the fact that oral sources of history are often regarded by residents as ‘the pre-eminent means of access to the local past’ in many rural communities (Richards 2008, p. 41)

Like Elder, Richards (2008) draws attention to the fact that some colonists were wanting, through their own racial arrogance, to exterminate “ALL” Aboriginal people. The colony was sure on its way to achieving this outcome as there were no reprisals for those who did discriminately kill innocent people. However, circumstances changed and Elder (2003) reveals that in order to stem the flow of fear and violence new laws were drawn and non-Indigenous people who killed Indigenous people would hang for it. As can be seen in Figure 4 both parties would suffer the same consequences for murder.



Figure 4: Hanging Poster, Convict Creations ND

This however, did not stem the flow of indiscriminate murders and genocide and its affects were the opposite. There became a silence of deeds and a manipulation of words on reports such as “dispersed” instead of “killed”, and those who participated knew the consequences of their actions if they did tell. Richards (2008), Elder (2003) and Reynolds (2006) all reiterate that police and pastoralists were a law unto themselves and the tyranny of distances aided them in their endeavours of clearing the land. It is significant to note that Aboriginal people, especially women were at the mercy of pastoralists if they were to survive.

Native police played a major role in the frontier of Western Australia, however, Jebb (2002) shows that the violence meted out by the colonisers within Western Australia was as brutal and violent as the other states that employed the use of native police. In Western Australia it was the pastoralists in their initial push for land that would be a devastating force for Aboriginal people long into the 1920s. Jebb (2002) states that pastoralists such as ‘Billy Skinner, Dick Sullivan, Jack Connaughton, Jack Dale, Jack Gallagher, Scotty Sadler, Jack Carey and Harry Bannon’ (Jebb 2002, p. 38-101) were all instrumental in the violence that was to occur within the northern regions of the Kimberley’s around Mount Hart, Mount House, Isdell River and Mount Barnett. Jebb (2002) stated that some of these pastoralists were known to even kill trusted workers. “Jack Carey shot three trusted workers for leaving a gate open on a goat yard” (Jebb 2002, p. 121). Aboriginal people would resort to living on cattle stations for protection from both police and native police, however some pastoralist used this power as a means to controlling those who lived within the station

community. Pastoralists, police and native police used the psychological premise of fear through violence to reinforce their dominance over Aboriginal people, and in particular Aboriginal women. Thus the native police played a major role in the justice meted out and in the process of colonisation. A detailed discussion of their role goes beyond the purview of this thesis and is only briefly mentioned here to illustrate the reactions of pastoralists and retaliation to Aboriginal resistance and the psychological and physical atmosphere that was inherent in the colonisation of the Australian frontier.

### **Subjugating Aboriginal Women**

Despite the existence of a feudal system and a great many injustices that occurred on the frontier, there is also the undeniable back breaking work which was performed by Aboriginal people in the pastoral industry and in particular Aboriginal women. The exploration of Aboriginal women's work within the cattle industry lies in the social dynamics of the industry itself. Cattle stations are and have been very much a male dominated industry and regarded as not for the weak. The land is tough and those who traverse it are seen as being just as tough. Aboriginal women were of such high order and value to pastoralists as they were normally familiar with the area and the bridging of two cultures complemented each other's purposes.

Aboriginal women became a significant force in the establishment and continuation of the pastoral industry. However Aboriginal women's social dynamics were to be impacted enormously by white pastoralists. The frontier was undesirable to most

white women and statistics show that in the early period of settlement in the Northern Territory alone, non-Aboriginal men outnumbered non-Aboriginal women five to one (McGrath 1987). Pastoralists had to rely on Aboriginal women and these women soon showed their worth in such hostile and forced situations. McGrath highlights the psychological atmosphere in stating:

Black Velvet was the term used to describe Aboriginal women with whom white men had sexual intercourse. Aboriginal women's 'availability', their willingness to perform arduous work, and the advantage of using them in the dual role of worker and sexual partner made them an extremely valuable asset for white men – especially those bushmen who were away from the eyes of white society. And, as Russel Ward argued in *The Australian Legend*, black women may have helped keep homosexuality out of mateship (McGrath 1987, p. 68).

My research into the industry (Goodall 1995; Jebb 2002; May 1994; McGrath 1987; Pettman 1992; Reynolds 2006) and Aboriginal history shows that the pastoralists used Aboriginal women as prostitutes, and as prostitutes, white men felt this negated any responsibility towards the women and any offspring that may have been sired. Women were to be used for the establishment of the station homestead (residence of owner or manager) and its upkeep with the fulfilment of domestic servitude. In support of this, research in the industry from Jebb, May, McGrath, Pettman and Reynolds demonstrates the reliance that pastoralists had on Aboriginal women. It

has been said, that pastoralists had taken Aboriginal women as intimate partners, if this was the case it was normally hidden for fear of retribution from other whites, and it was rumoured that many station managers were using Aboriginal women to breed their own station workers due to the lack of stock workers available in rural remote areas (Broome 2001; Jebb 2002; McGrath 1987). Aboriginal women had to rely on the pastoralists for their protection and endure many an injustice in order to survive as the consequences for running away could mean capture and death by the native police force and or the pastoralists.

With Aboriginal men's numbers on the decline those left had to make hard decisions for the survival of the tribe. One of the ways in which the men did this was by relinquishing their rights to promised wives and offering them to the white newcomers. Sometimes this was done in the hope that the newcomer would obtain a sense of belonging/connection to the Country and the tribe. Aboriginal women, through their dealings with the pastoralists and any other white men, were able to wield a certain amount of control over their life as well as control over men. However, it should be noted that over time Aboriginal women "were viewed by policy-makers as the main obstacle to desired progress" (McGrath 1987, p. 50) which then spurred policy-makers to implement various acts in order to restrict their participation, and further acts for the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their mothers were implemented. These included the Aboriginal Protection Act 1869, the Aborigines Act 1905 and the Aborigines Act 1911. McGrath states that, 'coloured children were' regarded as 'the fruit of the greatest social evil – miscegenation' (McGrath 1987, p. 94). Ironically it was these unions, that ensured

the survival of pastoralists and the pastoral industry and turned it into what it is today, one of the biggest economic driving forces of rural remote Australia.

During the early 1900s colonial powers started to realise that Aboriginal women in remote areas wielded more control than was desired by the colony. With the fear of miscegenation a major concern, between 1900 and the 1940s, new legislation was introduced at different times across Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia relating to the employment of Aboriginal women. The first policy being that women could not be dressed in men's clothing, and the second being that Aboriginal or part Aboriginal women could not be employed by single white pastoralists unless she was married and her husband employed (McGrath 1987). However, for obvious reasons this was not strictly enforceable and women were employed as stock workers, quite often being disguised as men or dummy husbands employed.

### **Pastoralism 1930s onwards**

Between 1860 and 1930 Aboriginal people had been a thorn in the side of the government, and around the 1930s Australia in itself was changing and the government could longer work on the premise that Aboriginal people would die out. With Aboriginal women taking up the role of stockwomen and station workers, a solid ground had been set for the foundations of the cattle industry. Around the 1930s the “what to do with Aboriginal people attitude” had pointedly altered and it was seen as “The Aboriginal Problem”. There was also a term “The Slow Death on

the Dying Pillow”. This was to mean that Aboriginal peoples were a weak race and would eventually die out. So why not help the process through assimilation. Depending on who you are the era of the late 1800s to the 1930s was viewed in different ways. Some call it the protection era and others have viewed it as the segregation era. By the 1930s, whichever view you consider protection/segregation of Aboriginal people, was in full swing and the pastoral industry had played an important role in the aid of the implementation of protecting or segregating Aboriginal people. Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia were slower in the implementation of the political policies for protection/segregation.

However, by the 1930s missions, ration stations and cattle stations were all well and truly part of the process. Pastoralists were to not only take on those who they would use for labour but would take in whole kinship groups or people who had belonged to the Country on which they now sought to make a living from. This had benefited pastoralists due to the fact that the industry was still slow and undesirable by those who lived on the coast. Media perpetuation of the violence and the fears of the unknown frontier were all contributing factors.

Many researchers have hinted at the idea that pastoralists were breeding their own stock team/station workers. With the role of women in the early foundations of the industry around the 1930s, an influx of information/research coming from western academic literature relating to Aboriginal stockmen started to evolve. This could be seen as a sign that pastoralists were breeding their own stock teams. In my research I am continually confronted with the facts that by the 1930s Aboriginal stockmen were

a significant part of the cattle industry. Had these Aboriginal stockmen, which had now become highly visible in cattle management, been the offspring of Aboriginal women who had been stockwomen, drovers (person who moves cattle for long distances across country) stationhands (general term for a worker on stations) not just domestics. An important factor to consider in taking such a point of view is the social and cultural dynamic of cattle stations.

Above and beyond the social stratum are the social foundations of the cattle industry itself. The cattle industry is its own community/sub-culture within the Australian environment and not much has changed since its foundations and establishment. Those who participate play many and varied roles in the functioning of a cattle station. From my own lived experiences within the industry one must be a jack of all trades. Living and working on the frontier is significantly centred on self-sufficiency and improvisation. Being part of the cattle station means that when problems arise, everyone must do their part. Just because you might be a stockwoman or stationhand does not mean this is the only role that you will be expected to undertake. There are many other areas which need to be considered, the most important is that of the constant supply of food and water for both members of the station and for stock and other animals. There is a range of other functions that need to be performed but beyond this is the general running of the station in other areas. There is the constant yard building/maintenance, fence building (which in some areas did not begin until the 1980s. The station I lived and worked on at Emu Flat has no cattle fences to aid in the management of cattle) and or repairs, road building and continual maintenance, tending of gardens, the care and welfare of animals such as goats, sheep, chickens, geese or pigs, the killing of goats or on some occasions cattle for food and the tanning of the skins. Research conducted by Jebb (2002) McGrath

(1987) Reynolds (2006) and others all show that Aboriginal women would participate in all aspects of station life. From my research at the Queensland State Archives Aboriginal women were still a significant part in the functioning of cattle stations. The 1930s also saw the onset of World War II and effects from the depression would both impact on the industry which allowed for the continual need and reliance of Aboriginal men and women in the functioning of the pastoral industry.

In terms of the advancements in technology for cattle stations, this had still not reached its full potential at this stage with most stations in the northern areas still using open range grazing methods and heavily relying on the Aboriginal workforce. However, there were small advancements in the north during the 1950s and 1960s although major impacts to the industry would not occur until the strike of workers on Wave Hill station in the 1960s with the Gurindji people of the Northern Territory walking off the job to fight for the rights to equal pay and land rights. It is important to note, that this was not the first strike and resistance to low wages within the industry. Against the law of Aboriginal Acts which were in place at the time and lead by Nyamal man Clancy McKenna, Nyangumarta man Dooley Bin Bin, Nyamal man Peter Kangkushot and Don McLeod on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1946 Aboriginal pastoral station workers in the Pilbara, Western Australia, walked off the job to strike for a pay increase, better living conditions and the lack of rights to their freedoms. At the time they were getting 10 shillings a week and were supplied with blankets and food rations. It must be noted that during the 1940s, the Pilbara region was suffering a major drought which had seen the closing down and pastoralists walking off the land and abandoning stations. This would also impact on Aboriginal people who had

relied on the industry for food and work because they had been dispossessed from tribal lands and the desecration of waterholes and the impacts the industry had had on the natural food source for the people of the area. Even though this strike was of people who worked in the sheep industry it is highlighted here to show that Aboriginal people were twenty years before the famous Wave Hill strike, resisting the use of themselves as a forced labour force in the pastoral industry and seeking the rights to be entitled to the same wages and treatment as those of non-Aboriginal people. The strike lasted three years and Aboriginal workers won and were to be given better pay conditions; at the time it was seen as the longest strike in Australian history. However, twenty years later the Gurindji people would walk off and the Wave Hill strike would become the longest strike, lasting nine years. The Wave Hill strike was to impact not only Vestys pastoral ventures but would be more far reaching throughout the industry itself. The impacts would be relatively positive for the Gurindji people as they were given back part of their traditional lands and endeavoured to start their own cattle station. However, it had been a long hard struggle to get to this point for the Gurindji people, enduring eighty years of abuse, paternal control and racial genocide at the hands of brutal pastoral men and governments. The Wave Hill strike though would have further far reaching affects than just on the Gurindji people; it would change the pastoral industry and push other Aboriginal people on other stations into the welfare dependency cycle. Pastoralists altered cattle management strategies in order to eliminate the need for a large workforce. Horses were exchanged for motorbikes and helicopters, and droving was slowly waning as road-trains became the new means of transporting cattle to market.

With minimal documentation remaining or just never in existence, gauging the full involvement of Aboriginal women as stockwomen and station workers between 1860 and onwards can be achieved through the lived experiences of those who participated. It can also be gauged through the lived experiences of the legacy of these women and their family members who went on to transform and integrate the cattle industry into Aboriginal life systems and cultural practices.

### **The Geographical Environment**

In light of the holistic approach that I am taking with my research I feel it is important to outline the core element in cattle management. As with Aboriginal life systems and the geographical environment, so too is this geographical environment a core element in station life. This section examines the geographical environment from non-Indigenous perspectives. Furthermore, it looks at floods and droughts, the natural and man induced weather impacts and the main ingredient, water. Further to this, the research explores the implementation of stock routes/long paddock (track that a drover used to drive cattle to a select point) across the landscape. This section acknowledges the environmental components that can make or break the functioning of a cattle station and how pastoralists are at the mercy of the weather constantly.

When pastoralists/colonisers came to the frontier, the environment was one of the major factors that would determine how a pastoral station was set up and how it would be a functioning entity. The environment was not only the geographical terrain in which it was to be set but also the weather and the sources of water that

were needed to enable a station to function to the best of its ability. In the early periods of Queensland's colonisation, drovers were moving cattle from the southern areas north and have given great descriptions of what they experienced on the frontier. Lamonds (1986) *Tales of the overland* provides an insight into pastoralist's perceptions of environment stating:

The Country that we were travelling through now near the Thompson and Barcoo rivers and with Mitchell grass and Mulga ridges, is some of the finest in Australia. There was plenty of gum timber in belts across the Country, grass and water were plentiful, also top feed. The emu apple is very like a quandong, with the same foliage. Cattle are very fond of it. I noticed plenty of gydia timber. It is the best fencing timber in this part of Queensland (Lamond 1986, p. 11)

Pastoralists were elated in seeing the opportunity for good cattle runs. Leading the way in the push across the frontier was Nat Buchanan, one of Australia's finest drovers who walked cattle for thousands of kilometres and eventually founded Wave Hill Station. Buchanan's son would join him in the 1870s and went on to describe the frontier of the Victoria River area as follows:

A bountiful, basaltic basin, now depasturing the immense herds of Victoria River Downs and Wave Hill Stations. Two hundred

thousand head of cattle breed and fatten in this spacious volcanic valley, a picture of pastoral productivity unsurpassed in Australia. Mounting the high stony but grassy bluffs which face the river, the traveller confronts a panorama of parklike beauty. The downs and open plains are dotted with nutwood, wild orange and bloodwood trees, with coolabah on the creeks, while a thick coat of Flinders and other grasses stretches out in sunlit splendour to the shimmering heat-haze of the cloudless far horizon. The river with its long reaches of deep water beside sylvan-shaded flats in which the dark green foliage of the fig tree contrasts charmingly with the red blooms of the coral tree and the white flowers of the cork acacia, further manifests the beauty and opulence of the pastoral prospect (Barker 1966, p. 40).

Victoria River Downs Station and Wave Hill would become two of the largest cattle properties within the Northern Territory. Both these stations would take up vast quantities of land in their pursuit for productive and profitable pastoral stations. Further to this, Victoria River Downs and Wave Hill both had Aboriginal participants who aided in keeping the station running at little or no recompense and Wave Hill would be the pivotal station that would eventually lead to Aboriginal people of the station to strike for better pay and conditions as discussed (Bunbury 2002).

When we look at a map of Australia today it can be broken up into its various states, however, when looking at it from a geographical perspective Australia can be broken up in various ways. Firstly it can be divided into specific areas, a northern area which is anything above the tropic of Capricorn and the southern area below this line. Secondly, urban areas and remote areas, when looking at it in this way remote Australia actually takes up 86% of the Australian landscape with a population of 2.7% residing within this vast area (Leigo et al 2012, p. 1).

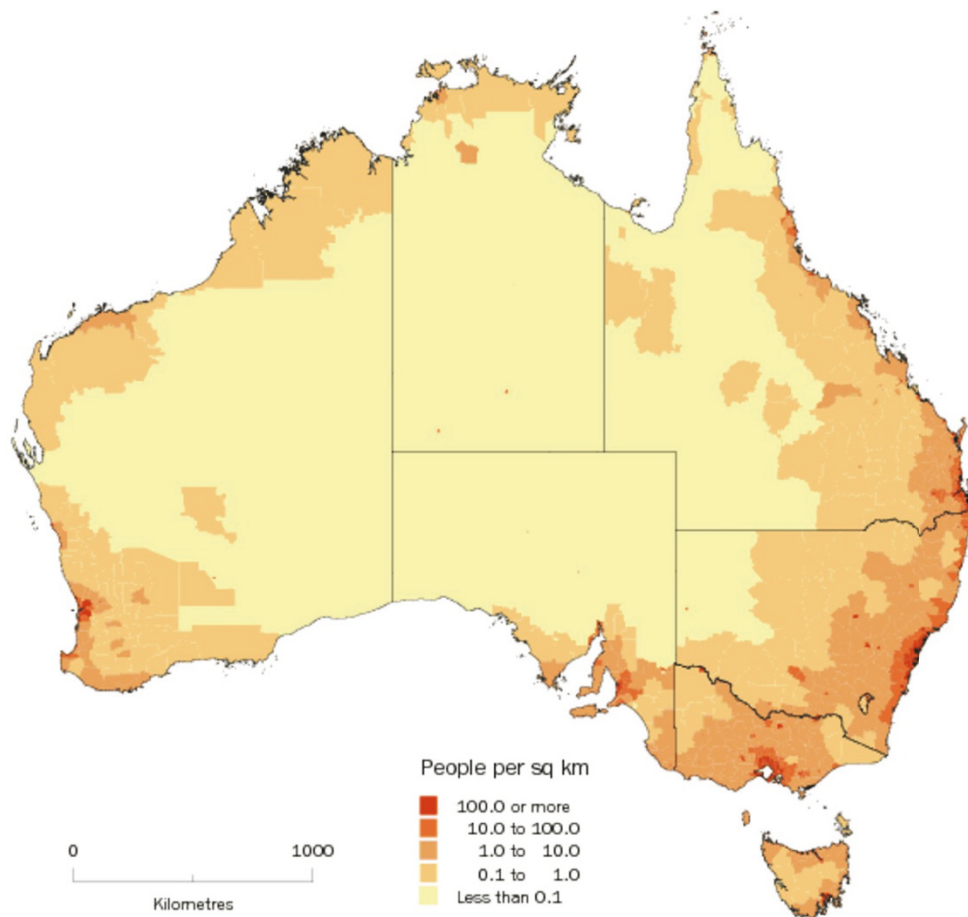


Figure 5: Australian Map showing Regional versus Rural areas, Casanovas et al 2012

The northern area of Australia is commonly known as the tropics and is controlled by two seasons a year, the dry season which is from approximately February through to November and the wet season which is from around November to February. With climatic changes happening throughout the world these periods can have small variants in time. The dry season was the period in which pastoralists would have to complete major works for the station such as mustering (the herding of cattle for the purposes of counting and or processing) and improvements although homestead and shed work could be completed during the wet season in preparation for the dry season's working period. The wet season was not a financially productive period in the industry in relation to cattle. Rivers rise, cutting off stations and making them inaccessible and a considerable issue is the black soil which further hinders the movement across the station in the wet season.

In my time in the industry and the stations I have lived on, the owner/manager would let go of most workers and only a skeleton crew would be kept on hand, some may return the next season, sometimes not. This was also relevant for Aboriginal people who worked the dry season on stations as they would leave the station during the wet season period to perform ceremonies or care for sacred sites or even catch up with other family members. I have been fortunate enough to be in a position where I was one of the few staff that was kept on the station during these periods and was able to experience the wet season to its full extent. Although my time was a hundred years after early pastoralists, the experience of the wet season would have been relatively the same. As the year progressed to the later months the temperatures would start to rise, this is commonly known as the build up to the wet season and is normally experienced between October and December. The first of the rains would normally

occur around late December. During this period the maintenance of stock becomes fairly intense as the waters in dams start to dry up and the ground feed starts to die and dry up as well. One of the main jobs during this period relating to cattle is mustering in order to destock the property (if possible) this was done due to the effects of water drying up and around the dams would become boggy due to the soil that existed within the tropical regions, which is known as black soil. A constant job that I participated in during this period was the checking of dams for cattle which would become bogged in the edging of the dam waters. When working on a property that is 1.25 million acres one cannot get to all the waters in one day and on many an occasion the cattle may have been there for longer than a day and the most humane action was to shoot the cattle. This is not a job for the faint hearted.

For early pastoralists the climate would have had great impacts on their health and well-being, with most coming from countries that were considered of temperate weather. The tropics and northern areas of Australia are pleasant during the middle of the year with temperatures ranging from 20 to 30 degrees. However, when the build up to the wet season begins normally around October, the temperatures slowly start to rise into the 40s and even 50s and the humidity becomes extreme. People's coping skills start to become affected, especially if one is not acclimatised. Insects also increase over this period adding to the uncomfortable conditions. Famous overlander Durack recalls an account in the Gulf of Carpentaria's wet season stating:

For four months the steaming wet held the gulf Country in the grip of bog and 'bankers'.... Tempers grew frayed and personal

idiosyncrasies strained taut nerves to breaking point. It was little wonder that seasoned drovers became known as men of few words and iron self-discipline (O'Neil 1974, p. 240).

In other remote areas of Australia the weather is considered a dry heat where in the summer temperatures can rise to high 40s, although I've experienced 54 degree heat while in western New South Wales and that was in the shade. These varying weather conditions not only affect people and the way in which they handle thermal comfort but also the way in which they need to manage stock and water within these areas. My lived experiences on stations in relation to the environmental weather and geographical terrain spans across four states being – Queensland, Northern Territory, New South Wales and Western Australia. I further elaborate on my lived experience in Chapter Six.

Queensland is actually divided up into nine major regions: South East Queensland, Darling Downs, Central, South West, North West, Central West, South West, Northern and Far North.

The geographical terrains of these nine regions include tropical islands, sandy beaches, and flat river plains known as the channel Country, rough elevated terrain, dry deserts and rich grasslands. Archival material of Lawn Hill Station provides a valuable description of the environmental terrain, which is present across the station. The station at the time of the map being drawn was 1952 square kilometres and

consisted of Coolibah plains, dark soil, black soil, open red soil flats, whitewood plains, gum trees, snappy gum trees, bloodwood trees and wattle trees. The station also consisted of a variety of grasses, ranging from spear star grass, spinifex, Mitchell grass, Flinders blue and other grasses. Also within the station were areas of hard gritty ironstone, poor sandy areas, a poor stoney [sic] ridge, low scrub, silver box, bauhinia and turpentine. As seen in Figure 6 the physical environment of Lawn Hill Station is diverse.



Figure 6: Lawn Hill Map Queensland State Archives, 25999

This also shows why it was that more land was needed in the establishment of stations as not all of the land was suitable for the management of stock.

As with Queensland, the Northern Territory's geographical environment is made of up various environments and regions, ranging from desert to tropical. There are three regions that exist within the Territory, the commonly known Red Centre is desert area. The Top End is tropical and monsoonal, the middle ground which covers the Barkly Tablelands area is known as the breezy savannah. I have traversed a considerable area of the territory, however the main area where I participated in station life was on the edge of the Simpson Desert. The area although on the edge of one of Australia's large desert regions is considerably timbered and consists of small ridges and rocky outcrops. Mitchell grass was the dominant grass within this area. Winter mornings were bitterly cold, however by around ten o'clock one would be peeling the layers of jumpers off that you had to wear at first light. Summer was a very dry heat. Water was and would have been a major concern for early pastoralists within this area. Having lived on the edge of the Simpson Desert on a station, the only water sources that I experienced was collected in dams or drawn from bores (underground water source. Waters for cattle were normally set up close to a bore) that were sunk across the property making cattle management easier to perform. There was a river system which was dry while I was there and there were considerable remnants of the inland sea that once divided Australia.

Western Australia although being the biggest land mass of Australia is only broken up into four regions being: the Kimberley, the Gascoyne and Pilbara, the Southwest

and the Central and Goldfields regions. The Kimberley is very much like the tropical areas of the Northern Territory and Queensland, with a dry season and a wet season and the temperatures also ranging from moderate dry seasons to hot humid and monsoonal wet seasons. The landscape is made up of dry red sand of the lower Kimberley to sandstone escarpments, pandanus, Savannah vegetation, hummock, tussock and bunch grasslands and grassy areas with only isolated clumps of trees, shrub land, woodlands, riverine forest, mangrove, rain forests and paperbark swamps. A frontiersman, Will McLarty relaying comments about the Kimberley's stated that:

Early reports of its fertility and abundance had deceived many that pioneering settlement would be a simple matter here. Terms of land tenure were more severe than were warranted for a remote and lonely land of long, dry winters and wet tropical summers (O'Neil 1974, p. 213).

The land is harsh and unrelenting and the weather dominates the dynamics.

In navigating across the various states I would have to say that Western Australia has been one of the biggest changes I have experienced. I have lived in the Esperance coastal region and the Goldfields regions and although Esperance comes under the region of the Goldfields, the geographical terrain is significantly different from one area to the other. It should be noted that the Goldfields covers an area of 2.2 million

square kilometres. The Esperance coastal region experiences high rainfall and cold winds which come off the southern ocean. The soil is very sandy and lacking in a lot of nutrients hence the area uses a considerable amount of chemicals in fertilisation of the soil to enable vegetation growth. The Goldfields is made up of salt lakes, small hilly outcrops and the majority of vegetation is that of Salmon Gums, blue bush and salt bush with various grasses present across the region. The station at Emu Flat is situated on the outskirts of the spinifex range and the Victorian Desert. Even though Nullarbor means null trees, I myself would beg to question this statement as the Goldfields is far from null of anything other than water. In early days, pastoralists would have had a difficult time in this area until they were able to set up any form of water catchment system. Aboriginal people were able to traverse this Country with ease, knowing the Songlines which enabled the acquirement of water through the digging of wells. See Figure 7.



Figure 7: A waterhole that has been dug out, Lowe et al 2009, p. 85

The property at Emu Flat where I lived and worked also had a gnamma hole on it which would have provided water for Aboriginal people at certain times of the year.

Besides the geographical terrain a major concern for pastoralists since their foundations in Australia has been the constant battle between floods and droughts, which both impact heavily on stock management. These weather conditions had a domino effect on all those who participated within the pastoral industry, especially in the areas of employment and economics. Even though for a considerable time Aboriginal people were not paid their rightful wages, these weather circumstances could still impact on their lives in ways that there was no work and they were forced into missions or reserves. Because of the impact of colonisation, Aboriginal people could not navigate Country and weather like they did previously.

### **Floods and Droughts**

Weather is a significant factor in the management of pastoral stations and Australia can go from one extreme to the other with both droughts and floods having devastating effects. You are in a continual battle with the environmental elements. For this research, the Bureau of Meteorology (hereafter BOM) has been examined into the various periods of droughts and major floods that occurred across pastoral areas. Further to this my own lived experiences of living with, and in, extreme weather conditions can shed a light on the not only physical element but the psychological element of living rural remote and in specific on pastoral stations.

In the northern tropical areas of Australia natural flooding is a common yearly occurrence, however, the degree to which the area floods vary. For the tropical areas, it is not the overall rainfall for the year that has major impacts to the industry but the period between October and March when the monsoonal rains fall. They not only fill rivers, creeks and water channels but extensive areas of grazing land. However, it should be noted that due to the lack of rain during the remaining months of the year if the monsoonal rains don't arrive, devastating impacts occur in these areas due to the fact that grasses and cattle feed die off, forcing pastoralists to re-strategise. The rains or lack thereof are a major importance to the following year's stocking capabilities.

Although the way of navigating Country and weather patterns shifted dramatically through colonisation, seasonal periods would also benefit Aboriginal people in their movements and participation in the industry, restructuring their ceremonial periods to coincide with the wet season when pastoralists allowed the majority of their workers to leave the station to attend to family and ceremonial business. It would come to be known as 'walkabout'. It should be noted that over the years the interpretation of walkabout was used in various contexts. In general terms, it was seen as a derogatory phrase meaning Aboriginal people would just walk off the job and all the pastoralists would know is they have walked off. Through *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun*, it has been clarified that 'walkabout' was used when talking about the Aboriginal people leaving the station for the wet season (Clark 1992; Munro 1996; Olive 1997). The term had also been defined as a significant ritual for young males

in various parts of Australia. The BOM has extensive records of rainfall dating back to the 1890s in some areas, enabling evaluation and analyse rainfall data. As this data is extensive and covers hundreds of readings for various areas, a select few stations have been chosen to offer an insight into the challenges arising from drought and flood impacts.

Monthly Rainfall (millimetres)

ANTHONY LAGOON

Station Number: 015081 · State: NT · Opened: 1963 · Status: Open · Latitude: 17.98°S · Longitude: 135.53°E · Elevation: 213 m

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
1899										17.7	28.7	37.0	
1900	59.7	0.0	17.8	0.0	31.5	16.7	50.8	0.0	25.4	0.0	19.1	0.0	221.0
1901	15.2	180.3	310.1	23.3	0.0	0.0	2.5	0.0	7.4	0.0	0.0	57.2	596.0
1902	85.4	45.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.4	88.9	245.4
1903	16.1	82.9	109.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	35.6	128.6	372.9
1904	195.8	289.6	136.7	0.0	56.9	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.6	5.6	173.7	883.9
1905	104.1	32.5	4.3	0.0	0.0	20.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	63.5	228.3
1906	5.1	22.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.8	50.8	20.3	67.2	217.1
1907	82.5	234.3	6.4	0.0	14.0	7.6	0.0	0.0	7.6	0.0	0.0	139.7	492.1
1908	101.7	138.5	120.6	60.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.4	25.7	458.8
1909	53.4	36.3	137.6	7.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	56.9	0.0	1.0	37.4	5.9	335.9
1910	114.3	157.6	4.0	44.9	0.0	19.1	10.9	0.0	0.0	16.4	66.2	168.3	601.7
1911	31.7	68.9	5.8	49.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.6	5.8	71.1	46.5	301.7
1912	90.3	132.1	21.1	0.0	0.0	29.0	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.8	19.1	297.7
1913	188.1	89.0	43.0	0.0	0.0	12.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.6	10.6	124.4	489.4
1914	169.5	34.0	2.0	4.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.5	35.0	191.5	441.6
1915	124.4	94.5	16.2	2.5	6.6	0.0	3.0	0.0	7.6	31.7	31.2	74.8	392.5
1916	97.1	39.9	50.8	0.0	37.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.1	81.2	233.5	545.4
1917	253.7	124.2	32.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.4	0.0	167.5	172.1	761.4
1918	191.4	345.7	6.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.1	3.6	555.6
1919	209.5	310.7	11.5	23.7	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.5	1.8	22.8	593.3
1920	302.8	39.6	14.5	18.0	18.7	1.0	26.9	0.0	32.7	20.8	158.0	210.8	843.8
1921	320.2	132.1	114.9	0.0	8.7	19.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.9	32.9	32.7	670.0
1922	83.8	243.5	55.1	7.6	41.4	8.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.2	36.3	84.9	577.4
1923	41.2	18.4	0.0	0.0	14.7	49.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.9	1.8	68.1	206.2
1924	82.5	162.0	38.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.1	33.0	334.7
1925	211.6	96.2	16.8	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	43.6	6.4	378.2
1926	198.1	18.0	52.1	25.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.2	0.0	0.0	29.2	333.0
1927				0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0			17.0	30.0	
1928	53.6	33.2	86.9	6.8	3.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.1	14.4	65.9	272.2
1929	146.6	18.2	156.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	43.7	19.1	384.1
1930	94.0	278.1	302.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	93.5	15.3	127.0	910.2
1931	84.2	0.0	64.2	78.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.4	0.0	50.9	0.0	284.5
1932	20.4	101.7	99.1	0.0	25.9	7.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	30.7	26.2	130.7	442.3
1933	67.6	185.9	104.3	141.3	21.6	82.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	32.3	203.8	838.8
1934	73.7	68.0	52.8	116.8	0.0	1.0	18.3	0.0	0.5	8.2	21.6	0.8	361.7
1935	92.2	28.9	64.6	0.0	2.8	42.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	18.8	251.0
1936	23.3	188.5	61.4	9.6	64.4	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.9	6.3	36.2	401.9
1937	206.6	86.6	57.5	0.0	0.0	12.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.8	19.5	37.7	424.1
1938	54.0	73.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.3	39.7	0.0	0.0	6.1	45.9	3.6	239.3
1939	228.3	91.2	59.0	1.5	0.0	5.9	4.1	1.5	7.6	28.4	39.1	30.3	496.9
1940	176.6	165.1	23.4	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.9	28.4	401.2
1941	279.4	24.2	275.7	32.0	18.5	68.8	0.0						
1942	97.0	44.2	20.8	10.7	12.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	35.3	29.9	106.6	357.7
1943	28.4	134.7	0.0	18.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5	1.3	1.3	3.3	191.3
1944	43.7	174.5	228.7	17.6	33.3	100.9	48.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	30.3	79.5	757.0
1945	92.0	103.1	46.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.4	0.0	0.5	0.0	22.6	160.2	431.3
1946	68.1	237.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	53.7	20.3	379.8

Quality control: 12.3 Done & acceptable, 12.3 Not completed or unknown



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Table 1: Monthly Rainfall Anthony Lagoon

Monthly Rainfall (millimetres)

LAWN HILL

Station Number: 029031 - State: QLD - Opened: 1889 - Status: Open - Latitude: 18.58°S - Longitude: 138.58°E - Elevation: 70 m

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
1889	38.4	46.3	15.0	91.4				0.0	10.9	54.1	82.8	152.4	
1890	255.8	120.6	101.2	93.6				0.0	36.3	41.4	6.6	17.8	
1891	350.1	639.3	65.0	33.8	37.4	112.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	41.1	3.8	8.1	1290.7
1892	82.4	38.1	66.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.1	44.3	33.5	25.3	298.0
1893	69.6	53.8	68.1	6.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.3	19.1	14.7	84.3	9.7	346.2
1894	339.9	173.2	118.1	36.6	0.0	48.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.4	4.3	56.4	783.2
1895	302.0	265.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	29.7	0.0	0.0	0.8	59.2	67.3	724.2
1896	154.2	197.4	43.4	33.0	0.0	0.0	31.2	0.0	0.0	18.3	89.9	47.2	614.6
1897	302.0	136.1	11.9	0.0	0.0	31.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	34.0	7.6	76.7	600.1
1898	8.4	39.4	43.4	10.7	0.0	8.4	0.0	0.0	2.5	2.3	8.4	73.7	197.2
1899	143.0	57.9	168.4	11.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.5	8.6	408.1
1900	73.9	57.9	37.8	0.0	3.3	6.1	55.4	0.0	5.6	0.0	11.9	83.8	335.7
1901	25.4	164.1	276.4	70.6	13.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	14.7	8.9	9.4	584.7
1902	53.1	75.9	31.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.8	22.9	202.2
1903	49.3	30.7	212.1	93.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.4	14.5	89.4	77.2	576.8
1904	129.5	364.5	117.3	0.0	56.6	6.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	57.4	13.2	88.9	833.5
1905	22.1	84.8	14.2	7.6	81.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	23.1	237.1
1906	37.6	65.5	43.9	2.5	0.0	5.6	0.0	0.0	8.9	1.3	51.6	82.6	299.5
1907	196.9	85.6	0.0	10.9	10.2	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	53.1	51.1	379.5	788.6
1908	124.0	60.7	35.8	47.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.0	72.1	190.0	547.4
1909	45.0	58.7	327.4	7.9	6.6	4.6	0.0	10.2	0.0	15.2	38.1	106.7	620.4
1910	104.1	221.2	115.1	68.8	0.0	9.7	0.0	0.0	5.8	21.1	65.3	115.1	726.2
1911	358.4	16.3	138.7	42.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.0	166.1	51.8	777.8
1912	44.7	131.3	80.0	0.0	0.0	21.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	47.7	148.4	475.0
1913	60.0	71.8	94.3	0.0	0.0	33.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.1	1.8	47.6	317.1
1914	112.6	55.0	164.1	11.4	0.0	6.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.3	92.7	78.8	540.3
1915	71.1	0.0	14.5	0.0	11.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	28.2	4.6	182.7	313.8
1916	123.4	69.6	71.2	0.0	13.7	0.0	0.0	2.8	0.0	38.1	59.9	179.0	557.7
1917	24.9	122.0	52.7	0.0	22.9	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.0	20.6	0.0	199.4	444.3
1918	364.5	305.6	20.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	0.0	105.7	13.2	811.8
1919	298.7	154.9	0.0	14.7	10.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1	0.0	34.5	522.1
1920	522.2	84.1	0.0	19.0	0.0	0.0	26.6	0.0	5.8	27.5	82.3	95.0	862.5
1921	185.1	127.1	146.1	20.1	0.0	12.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	29.5	44.5	69.7	634.5
1922	117.1	170.1	22.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	61.7	32.6	86.6	490.4
1923	80.7	13.4	63.8	31.5	25.4	24.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.7	36.1	63.9	349.6
1924	224.1	197.1	34.8	17.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.6	0.0	49.3	39.6	86.9	671.0
1925	117.1	73.2	431.9	6.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	66.8	36.8	732.7
1926	207.5	17.8	33.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	54.6	27.9	341.3
1927	143.3	179.3	47.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.9	8.3	34.4	419.4
1928	65.3	30.7	454.6	11.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	22.7	587.7
1929	274.5	26.4	128.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.1	18.0	469.8
1930	281.8	218.3	64.8	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	157.2	22.9	51.5	798.5
1931	157.2	1.8	32.0	54.6	0.0	3.6	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	55.1	15.5	321.1
1932	9.1	8.7	141.9	3.6	29.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.9	65.0	284.6
1933	45.7	133.6	35.1	10.2	0.0	56.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	34.5	76.5	392.5
1934	142.5	87.7	6.9	5.4	0.5	13.0	10.7	0.0	0.0	15.8	0.8	0.8	284.1
1935	288.8	60.0	38.3	0.0	7.6	125.7	0.0	0.0	5.1	13.6	9.6	0.0	548.7
1936	67.2	136.1	249.6	0.0	47.3	8.4	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.3	1.3	155.5	667.5

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Table 2: Monthly Rainfall Lawn Hill

Monthly Rainfall (millimetres)

YEEDA

Station Number: 003026 · State: WA · Opened: 1890 · Status: Open · Latitude: 17.62°S · Longitude: 123.65°E · Elevation: 5 m

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
1890	188.7	205.5	22.4	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.8	163.6	599.0
1891	106.4	60.7	23.6	24.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.0	18.0	249.3
1892	65.5	202.9	165.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	43.7	84.8	562.3
1893	232.2	47.8	86.6	13.7	67.8	22.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	43.7	84.8	599.5
1894	34.8	218.2	81.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30.5	7.1	22.9	394.5
1895	154.9	166.1	33.3	0.0	99.1	20.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	70.6	544.3
1896	255.5	405.1	106.7	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	38.9	808.7
1897	49.8	80.8	15.7	0.0	0.0	6.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.9	44.5	81.5	286.1
1898	96.5	190.8	77.5	24.1	3.8	52.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	151.4	743.0	1339.2
1899	199.9	214.1	265.7	18.3	0.0	11.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.0	122.7	848.1
1900	58.7	57.9	236.5	17.8	11.7	15.7	10.2	0.0	6.4	0.0	11.7	22.6	449.2
1901	94.2	130.0	135.1	0.0	0.0	41.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	97.3	93.7	591.7
1902	195.8	162.8	25.4	0.0	0.0	16.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	59.4	12.7	472.4	944.8
1903	130.0	109.5	55.9	136.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	124.0	556.1
1904	198.4	61.7	89.7	206.8	0.0	14.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.1	19.6	31.0	627.0
1905	138.4	95.5	14.0	8.1	13.7	11.4	6.6	12.2	23.1	0.0	18.3	30.5	371.8
1906	81.0	69.9	3.3	41.4	0.0	0.0	11.2	6.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	668.0	880.9
1907	396.9	118.9	177.3	0.0	24.4	16.5	6.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	107.7	848.1
1908	53.5	94.1	232.2	140.5	17.8	3.8	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.8	143.0	722.0
1909	93.6	98.0	25.9	106.7	6.4	12.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	74.1	77.5	494.9
1910	68.6	166.9	26.5	95.7	1.3	0.0	0.0	5.1	0.0	3.0	206.2	6.4	579.7
1911	155.7	38.0	63.5	71.2	1.3	25.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.4	65.6	427.1
1912	143.0	153.6	277.0	24.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.0	50.6	662.6
1913	168.0	50.2	196.2	5.1	7.6	0.0	10.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	87.7	527.7
1914	292.9	38.6	103.9	35.8	99.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.4	98.0	123.3	803.7
1915	317.3	103.8	6.6	0.0	76.2	76.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.9	44.4	646.6
1916	210.2	77.1	442.7	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.9	53.1	56.2	850.5
1917	841.5	58.8	90.0	37.6	11.2	11.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	31.2	234.2	1315.9
1918	169.1	90.4	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.5	308.9
1919	86.2	207.8	50.0	17.0	20.3	0.0	0.0	32.6	0.0	0.0	13.7	169.7	597.3
1920	187.1	71.9	132.9	79.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.6	11.4	0.0	74.5	194.1	759.0
1921	43.7	198.1	162.4	0.0	20.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.9	51.5	483.2
1922	20.1	179.9	36.8	0.0	0.0	6.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.0	63.9	322.8
1923	84.8	68.6	133.1	29.5	13.4	62.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	391.4
1924	62.5	37.1	12.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.8	50.0	176.6
1925	99.3	113.6	183.1	10.2	0.0	0.0	8.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.3	47.5	481.4
1926	330.7	105.8	114.0	274.3	10.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.6	21.5	361.7	1226.0
1927	217.9	204.5	83.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.7	36.8	552.5
1928	85.6	115.2	180.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	24.7	0.0	0.0
1929	112.3	168.2	183.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	49.8	513.5
1930	57.9	193.9	56.2	16.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.4	291.8	628.0
1931	422.7	3.3	48.8	23.4	128.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	626.2
1932	238.8	341.1	32.0	2.5	20.1	25.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	102.6	762.8
1933	84.4	60.4	270.5	41.9	24.2	0.0	0.0	5.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	108.5	595.7
1934	113.4	99.3	168.4	30.1	0.0	4.3	44.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.9	468.6
1935	63.2	43.5	297.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	405.7
1936	106.4	105.5	26.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	29.5	267.5
1937	431.0	69.2	35.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	90.1	626.1

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Table 3: Monthly Rainfall Yeeda

As can be seen from the data in table 1, 2 and 3 vast quantities of water could fall within a small period of time or there could be long spells between rains that have significant impacts, therefore adding to the pressures of stock management. Pastoralists were unfamiliar and I believe in the early years, unprepared for what the geographical environment would become during times of floods. It is commented by Barker (1966) that a pastoralist by the name of Bob Gray of Hughenden Queensland stated:

Bad droughts were common but he had bad floods too. The father of them all he writes of in 1870: For ten consecutive days it rained, blew with hurricane force (wrecked Townsville). The Flinders River was miles wide. Some men came in later and said they had been living six weeks in a tree, the Country being under water on each side of them as far as the eye could see (Barker 1966, p. 66).

When living in Normanton Queensland I was to experience the full force of the weather and the flooding of the Flinders River. On this station I was in the position of being the caretaker for the outstation (section of a run remote from head station. An outstation would in most cases have its own manager or head stockman). The outstation was located two kilometres from the Flinders River and sixty kilometres away from the main station, so we had to be self-sufficient. As the water rose I was slowly cut off and eventually surrounded on all four sides by crocodile infested waters. The only way in or out was by helicopter. Fortunately enough for me I

knew the wet season was coming and I ensured there were enough stores in order to make it through the wet season, making a 1000 kilometre round trip to get groceries once a month, prior to flooding. This flood which occurred at the end of 2008 would restrict me to the house for nine weeks. The area is black soil, so even after the water had resided we had to wait for the road which had become a river to dry in order to even consider trying to venture the road. I am fortunate enough that I live in the contemporary modern cattle industry and had the opportunity to over a period of time to gather and stock stores. However, those residing in area which would have been prone to flooding would not have had the same opportunities. Barker (1966) goes on to state further that Mr Bob Gray commented:

My friend, E. D. Donkin, who had Tara Station down the Flinders, informed me that for a fortnight he was imprisoned with two other men in the roof of his house, during which period they had only a small quantity of flour to mix with the muddy water flowing beneath them. He assured me that his horses stood in water for the whole of this period and the hair came off their bodies. Later he found a shepherd in a Bauhinia tree, and all this man had had to eat during the time was a dead fowl that happened to be washed into the tree (Barker 1966, p. 66).

These were the harsh realities of the time. Further to this, it is not only the abundance of water that is thrust upon one all at once, it is the after effects of the flood that are devastating to the psyche. Not only would they have been stranded for

lengthy periods of time, but there would have been significant stock losses during those periods. We lost over well over a thousand head of cattle the year of the flood. We also suffered the effects of the lack of water prior to the flood, losing hundreds of cattle to the heat, lack of water and lack of feed. It seems that the industry can hit you with blow after blow. One minute no water, next minute too much, just no middle ground.

In considering the floods and the hardships that would have hindered pastoralists, there is the other end of the scale where pastoralists suffered great losses through the years of drought. One of the hardest issues for urban people to comprehend is the devastating effects that occur due to drought. In the early days, with only ground water small creeks or river systems to rely on, maintaining constant supply would have been difficult. New South Wales, Queensland and parts of South Australia and the Northern Territory were found to have access to what is known as the Great Artesian Basin and under natural pressure water is pushed to the surface and allowed to flow into drains or creeks in order to water stock (Department of the Environment 2016). Some areas had natural occurring pressure outlets where other stations had the added expense of drilling and this could range in price depending on how deep one had to dig to obtain the water.

The pastoral industry's colonisation of the land had been showing the impacts of mismanagement by government bodies, and the great artesian basin is a prime example of that. Pastoralists were using natural water pressure outlets to water stock. Property water pressure outlets run into long bore drains and then water was directed

to where it was needed. The temperature of water coming out of the drain was around 82 degrees and you could scold a pig in it. It is said that 98% of the water was lost through soakage and evaporation and only 2% of the flow was used by the stock. Bore drains created further environmental impacts as they aided in the spread of the noxious weeds. They planted prickly acacia along the edges of the bore drain, and it flourished with the water supply from the drain. In cases where pastoralists were not able to draw from a natural source bores were sunk. In 1999 the government started a subsidy program which aided pastoralists to cap their bores. Instead of working with the land, pastoralists worked against it. In 2015 a record 80% of Queensland was declared in drought. And as stated in the BOM (2015) droughts are not an uncommon occurrence within the interior parts of Australia. This is where Aboriginal women would have had an advantage as they knew the climatic cycles of their Country and were able to navigate their way in order to obtain foods that would have been available at the time. This is another demonstration of Aboriginal women utilising their knowledge to advance the industry. Pastoralists would not have survived the stresses of rural remote Australia with their lack of knowledge of the natural food and water sources if not for the Aboriginal people who aided them. Long Michael Durack and Tom Kilfoyle on stopping at the Roper Depot on their way to the Kimberley's came across a group of Aboriginal women. It was said that:

Two or three of these wore moleskin trousers and shirts and carried themselves with an air of importance. The newcomers learned that they were attached to various overland droving

parties and were reputed to be splendid horsewomen (O'Neil 1974, p. 244).

It was also recounted that a lounge would remark “You’re in the land of Black Velvet now ... Unless you go round to Darwin you’ll not find a white woman in the north between Burketown and Broome” (O’Neil 1974, p. 244).

The problem with the majority of the geographical terrain of Australia is that if it was defined only by ‘low rainfall, inland Australia would be in almost perpetual drought’ (BOM 2015). The BOM (2015) classifies drought as “a prolonged, abnormally dry period when the amount of available water is insufficient to meet our normal use”. For the purposes of this research drought has been taken in the context of rainfall totals which impact on the means to strategising stock management. When the first stock movements traversed the Country there were accessible natural water sources for the people of the area. However, with the continual growth and push of the frontier and the colonisation of the natural world, water sources were severely impacted or were simply undrinkable. A stockman travelling the overland commented:

I went three miles out of my road to Georges Camp water hole to give my horse a drink, which he wanted badly, as we had done a lot of work since the morning and he seemed tired. I got to the camp just as a mob of cattle were going out, the water was as

thick as pea soup. The horse tried to sip it but could not (Lamond 1986, p. 14).

It should be noted that it was not only pastoralists who would have suffered. The cattle that they were trying to stock the north with were not suitable to the climatic conditions or the infestation of cattle ticks that would eventually come to light. New cattle were introduced in the 1950s and cattle tick dipping became compulsory in the movement of stock. This was not the only setback for the newcomers, and yet another was to comment about the terrain between Rocklands Station and Camooweal that:

The Country won't hold water for any time after rain; it is all hills and spiky spinifex, scarcely any grass; and the surface, where not consisting of stones, turns to dust when any stock walk over it (Barker 1966, p. 34).

In using the definition of drought stated by the BOM, for the purposes of this research, pastoralists would have struggled in the establishment of stations. In my experience with strategising for cattle management in the contemporary industry water, or the lack there of is still a major issue to be contended with. When I lived at Emu Flat I also undertook the role of the ROT (Remote Observation Terminal) person. As the ROT person I am in charge of monitoring and collecting the rainfall and reporting daily and monthly rain totals to the Bureau of Meteorology. This

provides me with the data and research on the changes to the geographical environment and enables an understanding to climatic impacts that also impact on station life. The station I was on at Emu Flat Western Australia was under threat of water shortages in areas due to the lack of summer rains in 2015. We have experienced random sporadic showers during this period, but this will only bring up small amounts of feed for a small period of time. As of the 18 August 2015 and until leaving this property on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016, the latest significant rainfall we have had at the homestead was 23rd January 2014. During that period there has been 71 days of rain totalling 364.5 millilitres of rain and the homestead paddock is starting to show the effects of this impact. With the front dam already a slushy mud puddle and two cattle fatalities to the bog, the house dams are extremely low and one is completely dry and has been exposed to the sun and now is covered in large cracks from the shrinking soil. As water is low and I question the wastage of watering the grass. Emu Flat consists of a series of salt lakes and only a few contain water, a very large gnamma hole which is now known as Berry Swamp, spinifex, mulga, gums, and an enormous landscape of blue bush and salt bush. Sandalwood is found sporadically in certain areas but sandalwood farming of yesteryear and consistent poaching over the years has severely impacted new growth. Our only source of water is rainfall as no bores are able to be sunk due to the salty content of the water basin.

The long paddocks are the travelling stock routes that overlanders and drovers drove cattle to market or new opportunities. While I was living on a station in Louth, New South Wales the area had been drought declared for ten years. The land was dry and the temperatures were in the extreme and water becoming scarce and stock starting to

suffer, doing everything we can to alleviate the problem. However, sometimes in this position one has to deal with the hard issues and there is nothing more devastating to the psyche than to watch stock perish with no means to help them other than to shoot them.

Drovers venturing into the remote frontier on their search for greener pastures were faced with the unpredictability and unfamiliar weather conditions and one drover stated that:

The whole of the outback, that is, west of the dividing range of Queensland and New South Wales and north of Goyder's line in South Australia, and from there right across to the north-west coast and south-west farming areas, the rainfall varies so much that stations and drovers never know what to be prepared for. The feed in all this dry, sweet area might be green for an average of only three months in a year. That is merely a wild and unreliable guess, but weather conditions keep on defying all attempts at estimating what to expect (Barker 1966, p. 65-66).

Never a truer statement was made. In my experience, guessing is the best you can do when it comes to predicting the weather and a means to strategise for the year when it comes to stock management. As I live on stations which take up vast quantities of land for example, living on an area over 1 million acres, I have been able to

experience the difficulties of the weather which contribute to the management of stock and feed. With some cattle paddocks over hundred kilometres from the house, rain falling at the homestead does not necessarily mean that the paddocks at the other end of the property have even received a drop of water. This in turn leads to the lack of feed in areas.

A big part of stock management is land care management and ensuring that stock are not able to flog out paddocks, and the constant moving of cattle to ensure that paddocks remain viable for seasons to come. When a property is stocked with sheep, sheep will normally start near to waters (normally a dam) and work their way out and in doing this they not only eat the grasses but rip the foliage out from the roots which in the long term leads to flogged out paddocks. When stocking with cattle, cattle only eat the top off the foliage and will walk out from waters especially if there has been rain as new pick comes up. It is still necessary to rotate cattle or there will be devastating and long term effects to land viability. One of the biggest issues pastoralists would have faced in their initial push was containing the stock within an area especially with the unpredictability of the weather. At the Emu Flat station the method of open range grazing stock management techniques and intermittent rains over the last twelve months has enabled me to witness cattle that have walked for kilometres, obviously in search of the sweet grass. Not long after arriving at Emu Flat my neighbours' cattle walked over seventy kilometres in one day, which led to us having to join with the neighbours to muster them up as they were now mixed up with our cattle. These would have been big issues that new pastoralists would have had to deal with and also contributed to cattle duffing (Cattle duffing is the term used for the stealing of cattle). Water is just one of the many issues that arose in

establishing and continuing the progress of cattle management. One of the key elements to cattle management was and is a means of getting stock to market. In the early days this was a difficult task as there were great distances having to be traversed in order to get cattle to market. A solution to the problem was the formation of stock routes/long paddocks.

### **Routes**

Once the geographical environment was captured, stock and people were crossing the Country on routes and paths to stations and pastures. These first movements of people were commonly known as the Overlanders. With stations established, a significant aspect once stocked and operating is being able to move stock to market. In early days cattle would be taken by drovers across vast distances, leading to the construction of the Travelling Stock Routes (hereafter, TSR) or as is more commonly referred to in the industry as the long paddock. As can be seen in Figure 8, the Queensland landscape was to become an extensive network of stock routes, all states eventually had a network of travelling stock routes.

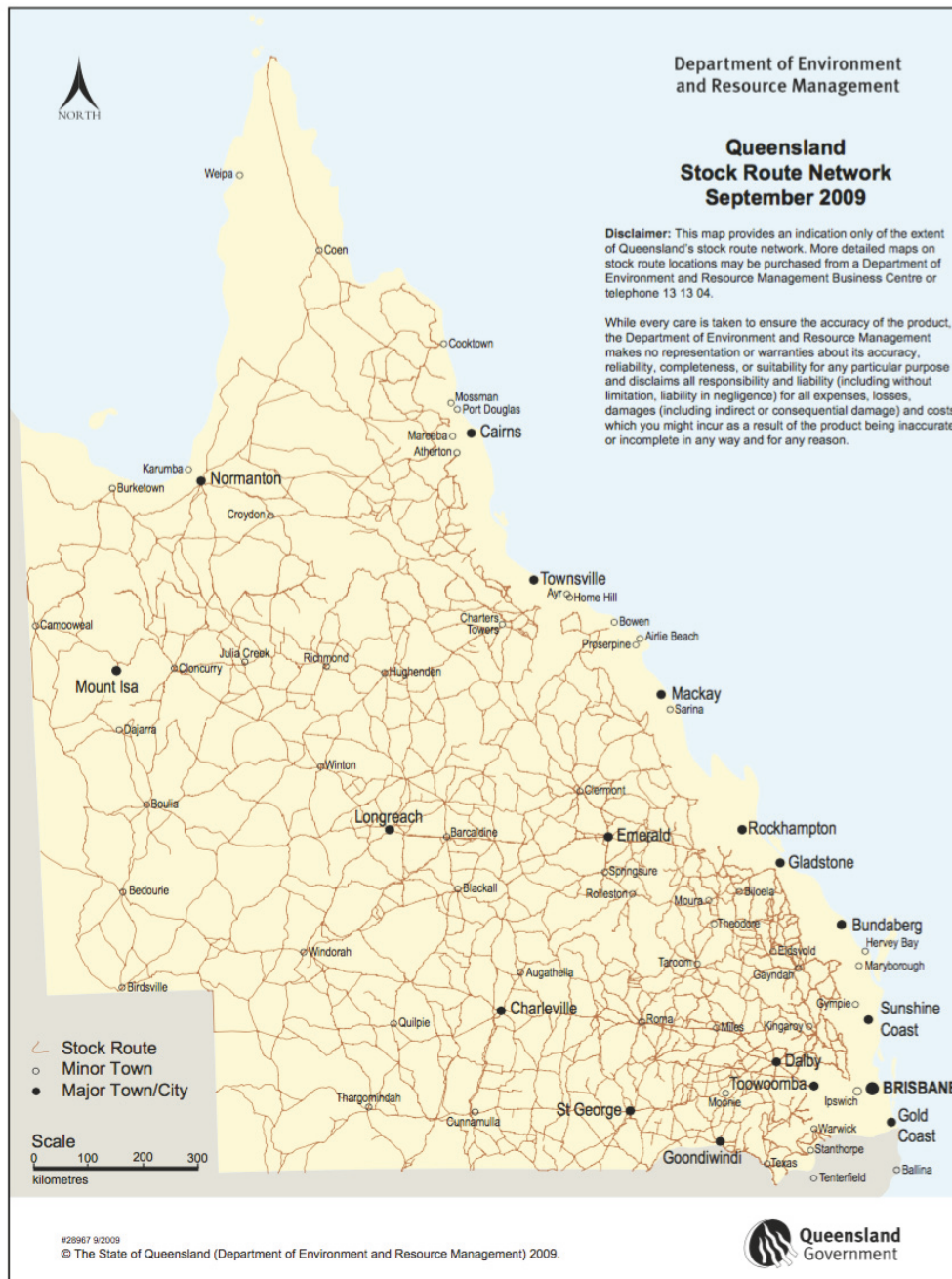


Figure 8: Queensland Stock Routes, Queensland Government 2009

A popular 4wd trip nowadays is the Canning Stock Route of Western Australia and the Birdsville track of Queensland. A historically known track for its hardships and difficulty of crossing, is the Murrniji stock route in the Northern Territory, it is only a small run of

240 kilometres – but of all the hard stock routes in Australia it gained one of the fiercest reputations, and became known to early drovers as the ‘Death Track’ or the ‘Suicide Track’ (Lewis 2007, p. 1-2).

Lives were lost in search of a stock route through and it was not until the aid of the local people that the Murrniji track would come to fruition. It should be noted that this is the Country of the Mudbura people. Originally the track would be navigated and crossed by the Overlander John McDouall Stuart. However, Stuart would make several attempts at making the crossing only to fail because of the natural environment of the area. George Farwell describes the Murrniji as follows:

No one who has not seen the bullwaddi [sic] can appreciate its savage nature. It spreads its many upward-growing limbs very close to the ground, and is so tough you can never bend it, and can break it only when it is close to dying. Its branches have spikes like iron that cut deep into flesh and can impale a beast

rash enough to collide with it at speed. It is not a tree, but something out of a medieval torture chamber! Ask any drover who has had to ride after cattle that have rushed through that scrub, and his descriptions will be rather more exhaustive and lurid than this. The lancewood, despite its name, is not so aggressive. It is a thin, straight-growing acacia, almost as slender as a tribesman's spear, but again it grows so thickly as to make the passage of a mob of cattle difficult (Lewis 2007, p. 4).

Besides the harshness of the environmental terrain the weather had major impacts on the functionality of the Murrniji. Located just above the desert Country of the Northern Territory and the coastal monsoonal tropics, the Murrniji was a place of uncertainty when it came to reliable sources of water. This was a significant factor in Stuart's attempts at crossing the route. It was only through Stuart following the foot tracks of the Aboriginal people that he found water sources. The following is an excerpt from Stuart's diary on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1862:

Struck a native track, followed it, running nearly north-west, until nearly 3 o'clock p.m. when we came upon a small water hole or opening in the middle of a small plain, which seems to have been dug by the natives, and is now full of rain water. This is apparently the water that the natives pointed to, for their tracks are coming into it from every direction (Lewis 2007, p. 17).

The Murrnji would eventually have bores, windmills, wells, tanks and troughs installed, however, government inaction had become a frustration of pastoralists wanting to use the route to move stock. The weather was unpredictable, making the water unreliable and the narrow laneway made the journey arduous and long. If a drover had to go around the Murrnji the long way it would add near 400 kilometres to the overall distance that stock would have to be driven (Lewis 2007, p. 53). The route became significant to overlanders, pastoralists and prospectors around 1883 trying to cross from Queensland to Western Australia. In 1895 talks began about water and infrastructure be put in place along various stock routes across the Country the Northern Territory.

My research indicates though that it was never a matter of the viability of the route, but more so the delay and constant need for governments wanting reports that lead to inaction of improvements to the stock route. The following timeline outlines the years spent trying to acquire proper infrastructure to the Murrnji stock route.

1895 – requests start for Murrnji stock route to have proper wells and water installed.

1899 – M.P. Durack offers to sink wells at his expense.

1902 – G. Sabine proposed wells should be sunk.

1904 – Water problems were highlighted with dry stages of 192 kilometres by drovers.

1905 – Tom Cahill manager of Wave Hill writes to Government Resident about problems on the stock route faced by drovers.

1905-1906 Murrnaji stock route closed due to no wet season.

1907 – Government Resident, Herbert's annual report recommends wells be sunk.

1908 – Government Resident, Herbert once again calls for improvements to the stock route.

1909 – Government Resident, Herbert reports approved contract for sinking bore at Anthony's Lagoon, 200 klms east of the Murrnaji.

1911 – Separation of South Australia and the Northern Territory. Survey begins by Captain H.V. Barclay, a surveyor, explorer and civil engineer. Recommending three bores be sunk.

1913 – Surveyor A.B. Scandrett to carry out Trigonometric and topographical survey, completed in 1914. Scandrett finds Aboriginal well.

1916 – Vestey's who bought Wave Hill from Nat Buchanan adds his requests to the government for improvements to water on the Murrnaji stock route.

1917 – Contract given to a Mr Gorey to sink bores rather than wells after recommendations by Captain Barclay. Gorey completes bores, but they are not equipped.

1918 – Government calls for Tenders to drill and equip 8 bores on the Murrnaji and the Barkly stockroutes.

1919 – S.T. ‘Territory’ Peacock awarded contract.

1920 – Inspection of the stock route once again, remaining sites selected and marked.

1921 – S.T. Peacock starts work on the first Murrnaji bores.

1924 – S.T. Peacock completes last bore.

(Lewis 2007, p. 51-60)

Twenty nine years would pass before the completion of the wells along the Murrnaji stock route. However, this would not be the end to the hardships crossing the Murrnaji. Once wells, bores windmills or any other infrastructure had been put in place the upkeep of the route was less than maintained. Both distance and need for water or the lack of it on the track further impacted on pastoralist’s economic viability of moving stock to market or station. An important aspect to note is that the Murrnaji stock route was a main stock route for Victoria River Downs Station and Wave Hill Station, both of which had high populations of Aboriginal people working them as stock workers. As discussed previously, the Gurindji people would fight the Australian government for equal rights and equal wages and for their Land rights.

This was a win for the Gurindji people but as the ripples in a pool move outwards, so too did the effects of the strike. Many of the stock routes that Aboriginal women had been able to travel droving (the movement of cattle over long distances) cattle were phasing out with the coming of technology that would replace and aid in minimisation of workers needed for pastoral stations, black or white.

The equal wages for Aboriginal people was a significant factor that would lead to the downfall and use of stock routes and the end of full-time droving on the routes. In more remote areas however, droving was impacted only when the accessibility of trucks was easy. This meant that droving would still be a significant part of the industry to many areas right up until the 1980s when it started to decline in its functional use for the industry. The station in Normanton and the one in the Northern Territory that I lived and worked on both were still droving up until the 1980s. Although many TSR's became unused due to the introduction of road-trains, caused by the long drought in Queensland as of 2013, droving has re-emerged, with drovers walking the stock routes/long paddocks to better feed and in some cases as far as New South Wales. In non-Indigenous interpretations, these pastoralists performed amazing feats, in times that were full of hatred, adversity, uncertainty and "kill or be killed" mentality in crossing the tyranny of distance in search of new opportunities. These non-Indigenous settlers, explorers and pastoralists, would later be immortalised in folk songs and bush ballads and later become the core ingredient to non-Indigenous national identity. People like Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson in early times and in the mid-1900s the Bushwhackers were just a few who would memorialise these Overlanders and their feats driving cattle across Australia. In this imagined national identity, Aboriginal stockwomen were not only competing with

this nationalism but also competed with the hierarchal structures within the pastoral industry. Although their intellectual knowledge of Country was valued, their position on stations still came under the unwritten structured social stratum of cattle station life.

### **Social Stratum**

People who live on cattle stations do it for more than money, it's the land. Similar to cultures around the world there is a structured social stratum in the pastoral industry, commonly referred to as station politics. This section describes the pastoral industry's working structure and outlines the hierarchical line of authority and the symbolic mirror image of this hierarchy in the physical construct of the station community. This is to show how the construct of the station was a further means of maintaining dominance and control over the Aboriginal labour force situated on the station. Further, this section will show that while women on stations were dominated, it was the environment that posed the most significant hardship for pastoralists, and it was through the knowledge of the environment that Aboriginal women were able reverse power relations with a dominant people. It was Aboriginal women's knowledge and skills in tracking, obtaining food and water and general navigation across the harsh terrain which was invaluable to the colonisation of the frontier and to pastoralist's survival. It was this contribution that makes their role significant to the pastoral industry.

The pastoral industry was steeped in paternalism (May 1983; McGrath 1987; Strang 2001) and the physical environment and building structure was a symbolic image of the hierarchal line of authority. McGrath states that:

‘Quieting down’ and ‘taming’ processes aimed to achieve a subservient, docile and obedient workforce... paternalism grew out of a need to control the workforce, and was accepted by both master and servants. For managers and lessees, it helped justify the appropriation of black labour. For Aborigines, it was a promise of protection for themselves and their community, allowing them to stay on their traditional lands. It encouraged the acceptance of class relations of patronage and dependence, with all their material and psychological implications (McGrath 1987, p. 98-99).

Workers, in most cases, were housed, clothed and fed better than non-employed Aboriginal people who would reside on the station. For those outside the fence, it was a psychological battle. They were normally the elderly and invalids of the tribe who could not work which also meant that they were unable to hunt/gather to survive. Broome (2001) states, that managers would use rations such as food, clothing and other commodities as a means of blackmailing Aboriginal workers to perform on stations and this in-turn reinforced their dominance.

The hierarchical order of authority was such that the head of this structure was the Authority/Law, and position was held by the owner. If the owner was away or not present on the station this authority would fall to the manager. The manager always answered to the owner whether present or not. The head stockman (leading stockman/woman on a station) answered to the manager. The manager was then the authority over the workers. All stock workers answered to the head stockman, with one stock worker being an off-sider/foreman for the head stockman. The only other person who would normally have direct contact with the owner/manager was the cook. The cook was outside the hierarchal structure. For example, as a rule on stations, even to this day is “don’t upset the cook”. Stock workers, although working as a team, also had a hierarchy amongst them. As Strang (2001) observes, workers needed to earn their place in the group through experience and this was achieved by participating in performances. As stockworkers gained experience, one also gained positioning. To illustrate, when Aboriginal women had brought cattle in to be drafted (process of sorting cattle into specific groups), there would be specific positions within and outside the yards in which women were placed according to experience and or position within the group. The more experienced would be closer to the crush (box located at the end of a race which contains cattle so it can be restrained) and the head bail (mechanical device used to restrain cattle so it can be processed) and the least experienced would normally be at the receiving yard. However, each station would have had its own specific team hierarchy determined not only by experience but by skill as well.

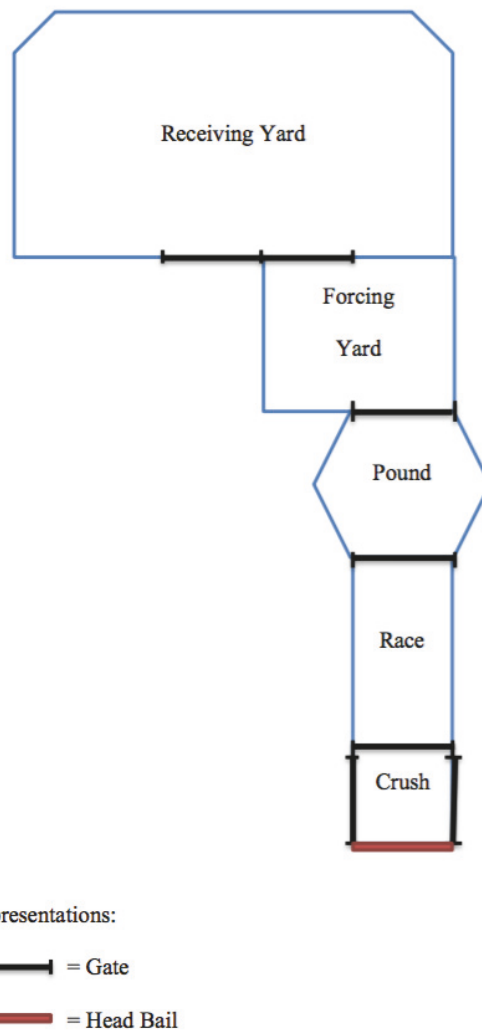


Figure 9: Basic Description of Yards Used in Processing of Cattle, Simone 2012, private collection

The pastoral industry was, with its limits, a way in which Aboriginal women had a certain amount of freedom and were able to integrate the old with the new. Aboriginal women's Cultural practices were forever changed and their role in Aboriginal culture would change considerably once they had taken to the cattle industry. The cattle industry came with its own set of social mores, values and

hierarchies which were readily accepted by Aboriginal women as they were similar to their own traditional values. For instance, single males were housed separately from the women, those who worked were housed near the homestead and the elderly or sick and those who couldn't work were camped outside the boundary of the homestead, in what was to be known in some cases, as blacks camps (May 1994). On some stations all Aboriginal people camped together (out of sight from the homestead). Most stations consisted of an area which was known as bush black's camps. The majority of stations in rural remote Australia had bush black's camps and they were tolerated, as long as they did not kill cattle or interfere with station life. Members in the camp would normally be relatives and or other clan members of workers on the station, and pastoralists would use these camps to acquire new workers when needed (Jebb 2002; May 1994). Work was also based on groupings of people with women normally working in groups together. However, it was due to women's changing roles that their positioning in Aboriginal culture changed due to women taking on a greater employment on stations, their performances from their traditional cultural practices were diminished (Broome 2001) with women relying on their European bosses.

Dominance was psychological as well as physical and constant. The construction of the primary ground for the head station (centre point of station community) was to reinforce the ideological order of authority. The first homesteads in the north were rough and ready, consisting of normally one hut with a dirt floor and a door only and a separate building which was the kitchen and dining, normally just a thatched roof construction (McGrath 1987; McLaren 2001). The single hut was intended for housing of the stores and the pastoralist for protection from attacks from Aboriginal

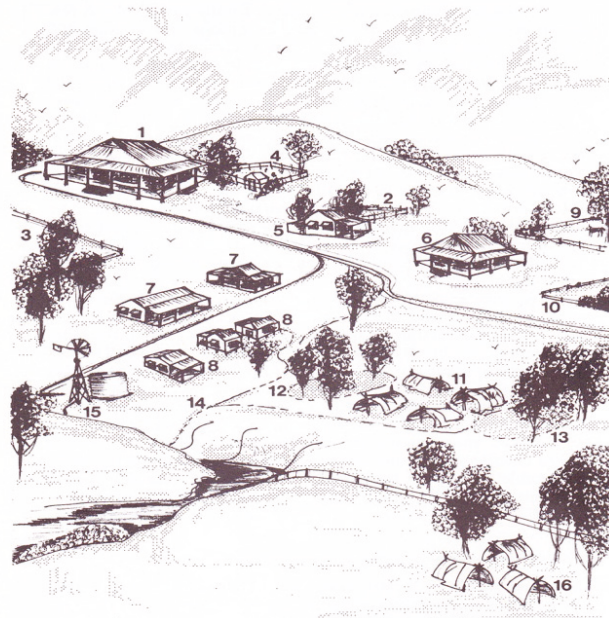
retaliation and resistance. As the station became established more permanent structures were built and boundaries were implemented and stations came to resemble small communities (McGrath 1987). The size of the station would also determine how many outstations would be constructed on the property, which could be anything from one to four; for example, Victoria River Downs Northern Territory had four outstations. Outstations were normally occupied by a head stockman and his Aboriginal workers (McGrath 1987). See Figure 10 Of Victoria River Downs Big House. Big house or Government house, as they were commonly known, means owner or manager's residence on the station.



Figure 10: Victoria River Downs Big House, National Archives of Australia, Smith M4435

Head stations were strategically placed on properties and were to become fully self-contained with power and water, and were the beating heart of the station. Each station would vary in what was constructed on the station, however, the boundaries in asserting authority remained consistent. To demonstrate, McGrath (1987) describes a company owned station as consisting of a main house which was occupied by the owner/manager, a detached kitchen with dining room which also consisted of a store room and sleeping quarters for the cook and a meat house close to the kitchen. Most stations would have a “chook house” and vegetable garden and these would be located close to the kitchen. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers were housed separately. Single non-Aboriginal men housed together and Aboriginal stock workers housed accordingly, with women and men separate. Aboriginal domestics, station staff and dependents were all housed separately from stock workers, and then would have separate women’s and men’s areas. There would then be sheds for wagons and equipment, sometimes a blacksmith’s shed and saddlery, horse and cattle branding yards situated close to the head station. The head station area, except horse and cattle yards, would then be fenced, and in most cases the main house would have a fence around it, reinforcing authority. “Black’s camps” were located outside the fence and consisted of non-employed Aboriginal people. Rations were given which would consist of tea, sugar, flour, tobacco, clothing and blankets and as policies came in for Aboriginal people to be moved to institutions or missions, in more isolated remote areas, a considerable number of cattle stations became ration stations for Aboriginal people to acquire these commodities (Jebb 2002; May 1994; McGrath 1987). However, Bleakley’s report (1929) stated, that although stations were to provide proper housing for Aboriginal workers, it was found that the more remote stations consisted of native camps which were not suitable or sanitary and

were normally constructed from scrap material, tin cans, cloth which were either given or salvaged. A station assigned an area where all Aboriginal people were to live and was placed at a distance from the “big house”. See Figure 11.



Idealised station layout. 1 Main homestead; 2 Vegetable garden; 3 Paddock; 4 Chook pen; 5 Blacks' kitchen; 6 Houseworkers' accommodation; 7 White employees' accommodation; 8 Stockboys' accommodation; 9 Horse paddock; 10 Goat paddock; 11 Station employees and dependants' camp; 12 Aboriginal women's area; 13 Aboriginal men's area; 14 Foot tracks; 15 Water supply; 16 Blacks' camp for non-employed Aborigines—outside station fence.

Figure 11: Idealised Station, McGrath 1987, p. 28

In contrast to this, the “battlers” or “little men” (meaning, owner who struggled to maintain a station), as they were known, had their station constructions much simpler. The head station would have a big house (which wasn't necessarily large in size) a kitchen, stores, shed, a set of yards, and there was normally no fencing as seen in Figure 12 (Bleakley 1929; Harney 1990; McGrath 1987).



Figure 12: Beetaloo Station, National Archives of Australia, Smith M4435

The hierarchal line of authority at the head station was ‘bosses, jackaroos, men and blacks’ (Harney 1990, p. 22). However, when out on muster, yarding (to put cattle in a secured yard for processing purposes) or droving, the social stratum was blurred and all ate and slept out on open ground. This is still the social stratum today on most stations when out on stock camp.

Harney (1990) and Broome (2001) assert that there was a rigid racial class system that ruled the land. This racial class system was reinforced even for meals and there was specific bells used in calling workers to meals and select areas were assigned for eating of meals. The owner/manager would eat in the government house (owners/managers home, also known as the big house), white workers were to eat at the kitchen and Aboriginal stock workers would eat at the wood-heap (Bleakley

1929; Harney 1990). For meals Harney (1990) states that specific bells were used to signify that the meal was ready “a tinkling bell for the government house, a horse bell for the kitchen men, and a triangle for the blacks on the wood-heaps” (Harney 1990, p. 22). It was a constant reminder to Aboriginal workers about the line of authority and that they were at the bottom of this hierarchal structure. Broome (2001) argues that language was a further area in which dominance was reinforced. Pidgin English was used and those who lacked language were confined to menial tasks. Pastoralists did not educate, or refused to educate, Aboriginal children as they believed that this made them “cheeky” and they were only going to be menial labour workers and would have no need for education (Broome 2001, p. 136). A major approach in reinforcing dominance over the Aboriginal stock worker was through the use of the native police. Native police had been used to capture runaway workers, where the runaway would be returned to the station and some form of punishment would ensue. This was not only to ensure that this behaviour was not repeated but that it was also as a warning to other workers. Reynolds (2000) asserts that pastoralists referred to their Aboriginal workers as “my or our niggers”. Aboriginal workers on cattle stations were seen as commodities and the personal property of pastoralists.

There was one thing however, that pastoralists could not dominate in the remote parts of Australia and that was the environment. This is where Aboriginal women dominated. Aboriginal women’s knowledge of Country and seasons was invaluable as the lifestyle of the cattle station allowed for women to hold on to traditional values and practices, such as, tracking, bush-tucker, language and ceremonies. This enabled the continual transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next. Prior to

colonisation some Aboriginal tribes had been semi-nomadic and moved with the season and food sources. Knowledge of Country and animal behaviour was instilled at an early age for children, and this carried over into station life with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. It was the responsibility of the Aboriginal women who worked the homestead to care and teach the pastoralists children. Aboriginal women in caring for the children on the station would teach the children (black and white) various aspects of bush life, hunting, games and language. This was possible as women were able to wander the station (when not working) to forage for food, hunt or perform necessary cultural and social practices with relatively no interference from the cocky (another name for the owner or manager) (May 1983; McGrath 1987; Reynolds 2006). Mary Yunduin, Amy Laurie who performed the job of droving and many unidentified women who were drovers had more opportunities to continue their traditional life practices than those who resided on stations full time, which will be demonstrated in Chapter Five. These women were travelling long distances sometimes not on their tribal Country but their skills in tracking and skills in acquiring water and food were what sustained the droving team on their journey. If it had not been for these women's skills, pastoralists would not have survived.

This chapter has set the foundations to the Australian pastoral industry for this research. It has shown the form of colonisation and dominance that was meted out by the colonisers. This chapter also illustrated the perspective view that pastoralists/frontiersmen/explorers had in controlling not only Aboriginal people, but in particular, Aboriginal women. It also explained the environmental landscape from a non-Indigenous perspective. Further to this, it demonstrated the challenges that pastoralists faced in navigating through the new geographical terrain and weather

conditions that are present within the Australian environment and complexity of this environment. Furthermore, this chapter illustrated the social stratum of living and working on cattle stations. I also revealed how within the social stratum, the environment dominated regardless of race and gender. Therefore, any person with knowledge of the environment was not only useful, but obtained a powerful position in the overall structure. This was to be Aboriginal women.

## CHAPTER FOUR: COUNTRY, SONGLINES AND INTER- CONNECTEDNESS

Whilst exploring the pastoralist's view of land, environment and Aboriginal women's status within this, it is now vital to explore and present an alternative perspective through an Aboriginal lens and framework. In an Aboriginal worldview, and Aboriginal society Aboriginal women play a majorly important role by the fact that they have a closer connection to nature because of childbirth, and they can create life, because of this most Aboriginal societies are matrilineal. This chapter endeavours to explore the Cultural understandings of Aboriginal perceptions of Country in order to further build the evidence of Aboriginal stockwomen making a significant contribution to the pastoral industry. It considers the cultural and social dynamics and the complexity of the many different Aboriginal collectives that exists within Australia. This chapter further explores the way in which Aboriginal people see Country and this is approached through the third layer of the *multiple relational narratives* methodological framework. It is here that I yarn with literature, respecting the agency of that knowledge, whilst at the same time integrating my own intellectual cultural knowledge of Country and lived experience of being on Country. Agency is the movement of knowledge by itself. Knowledge perpetuates knowledge and agency, knowledge has subjectivity, knowledge is like a person, knowledge is like Country, knowledge is to be respected, knowledge going around a room through yarning grows in on itself. This is the Knowing, the Being, the Doing and the Seeing. Further to the above, this chapter looks at the agricultural aspects of Aboriginal Australians prior to non-Indigenous colonisation and how Aboriginal trade routes existed long before the Travelling Stock Routes. I do this in order to

overturn historical perceptions about Aboriginal people's agricultural relationship to Country. It is from these trade routes and the premise of Aboriginal agriculture that colonisers, pastoralists and cattle moved across the country.

### **Cultural Structures**

Central to the oral traditions and of major significance, Aboriginal peoples' life systems and cultural dynamics were based on Creation stories (commonly named the Dreamtime and The Dreaming) and these could have slight differences from one area to another. In portraying Aboriginal Creation stories non-Aboriginal people have named this creation spirit "the Rainbow Serpent", however, this is debatable for Guwa people, as there is no word for Rainbow in the Guwa language. Guwa people know this powerful Creation energy as the "Snake of Many Colours" and is called "Gularu". The geographical location and what was present within that location, would determine the basis to the Creation stories of the area and this in turn shaped one's social dynamics (Broome, 2001; Rose, 2000).

In the Dreamtime when the great ancestors [sic] had roamed the earth, they were human, animal and bird at one and the same time: all natural things were in unity. The ancestors still existed in the here and the now. Their life-creating powers were as great as before ... the lives of the Aborigines were shaped by their Dreamtime stories which were both an explanation of how the

world came to be, and how people must conduct their behaviour and social relations (Broome, 2001:19).

Aboriginal Country consists of various environments and diverse groups, from salt water people, desert people, fresh water people, rainforest people, island people and so on. The Creation stories are a continual cycle of life in terms of the spiritual and economic functions of the tribe. Everything that existed was and is interrelated and connected “the land not only gave life, it was life” (Broome, 2001:18). Auntie Patsy Cameron (2016) reiterates this in saying that “Culture is Life and Life is Culture”. Culture represents the outward expression of Spirituality. Thus the continuation of this life system was carried out by using the “Songlines” and is seen in the form of ceremonies, song, dance, phonetic and petrographic writings, sacred scrolls (paintings) and narratives imbued with intellectual cultural knowledge. The Songlines are timeless as there is no beginning or end and they are forever evolving from the effects of the present (Flood, 2006; McGrath, 1991). Songlines are a view of the world that is made up of a musical composition. Our role is to travel these lines and “Sing” them into our and Country’s collective memory. This intellectual cultural knowledge and way of, knowing, doing, being and seeing has been continued into contemporary Aboriginal cultural beliefs.

Social dynamics are strong among Aboriginal people and significant emphasis is placed upon group membership. First and foremost, is the interconnectedness with one another in emotional and spiritual bonds which ensure that no individual can consider him or herself an independent, isolated entity, living only for himself/herself

to the exclusion of his/her fellow community members. A person is still an individual but has very strong community ties and is subsumed in the group (Geddes, 1994). There is also a strong interconnectedness between the individual/group and the land, a spiritual connection. This connection is premised on agency and Country has the same agency as people and it is the interconnectedness of this agency which forms this spiritual connection. Spiritual connection is a complex system which it can be defined in other ways and is a spiritual link with life. Aboriginal peoples' major social concerns were that of food, shelter, clothing, hope and that of belonging. This is to create a balance between resources available and the needs of the people. Land was the central connection for all Aboriginal life systems, it not only linked people to Country, it was Lore/Law, and governs the kinship and totemic systems. It is the same interconnectedness that is paralleled in the *multiple relational narratives* methodological framework and approach to this research, which further illuminates the "what" and the "how" as discussed in Chapter Two.

A principal factor in the social structure of Aboriginal people was that of kinship. Kinship was a complex system which reinforced ones positioning and obligations within the group. Unlike western systems of kinship where one's mother's or father's siblings were labelled aunt or uncle. Within Aboriginal culture one's mothers' sister/s were also considered and served the function of mother as too with one's fathers' brother/s being known as father. On the whole, the entire group was considered to be family (Broome, 2001; Holy, 1996; Prentis, 2009; Rose, 2000; Wafer, 1982). Grandparents were an integral part in the teaching of grandchildren to the social requirements for the group. The kinship system was a very complex structure of relatedness beyond that of the immediate family and was a form of law

for marriage as well as to determine specific codes of behaviour from within the group as to the way in which one should conduct oneself (Broome, 2001; Flood, 2006; Holy, 1996; Prentis, 2009). The kinship system made sure that laws pertaining to being free of the knowledge of one's close kinfolk were not broken. Beyond this Pan Indigenous view of Aboriginal people is the core elements of an ancient truth which has been carried forward from generation to generation. In an Aboriginal society and kinship system these were the obligations and rules that governed genders, men had their roles and women had their roles and sometimes these roles could intertwine and at other times they would be separate. In an Aboriginal worldview, the role of women was vital to the sustenance of culture. Roles were not premised on inequality.

Contention runs high as to the “the reliability and interpretations of Aboriginal oral traditions” (Prentis, 2009:21). In saying this, history has proven that Australian Aboriginal people have had cultural continuation for at least 50,000 years (Prentis, 2009: Broome, 2001). This in itself gives credibility to the cultural function of oral traditions which have passed from generation to generation and so on. One must be mindful that history is written by the victors/colonisers and as such Aboriginal history is white in origin (Prentis, 2009:21). Keeping this in mind, in the past Aboriginal oral traditions have been collected and interpreted by non-Aboriginal people making it difficult to authenticate. This is why it is important for Aboriginal people to conduct research for Aboriginal people. This also further postulates Rigney's argument for the political integrity for the Indigenist research. The dynamic of “history” and its interpretation has negated Aboriginal beliefs that we come from this land. When looking at cultures with oral traditions, there usually

exists some story about migration into that Country. For example, Maori peoples have traditional stories about migration into New Zealand. In Aboriginal Australia, there are no stories that speak about migrating to Australia. Therefore, our traditions go beyond the notion of 50,000 years.

*Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* uncovers significant quantities of research conducted on and about Aboriginal people and this approach has been conducted through a Pan Indigenous lens in the interpretation and transmission of the intellectual knowledge garnered. As discussed in Chapter Two, the engagement has been through trying to draw parallels between synergies, voice and contribution. In saying this, a general overview of Aboriginal nations prior to colonisation would read as: Cultural continuation for at least 50,000 years, consisting of approximately 500-600 different languages and cultural groups (Broome, 2001; Prentis 2009). Areas of land were considered to belong to certain tribes and tribes were then made up of small clan groups within that area who were interconnected with each other, the environment, the animals and we belonged to Country (Broome, 2001; Flood, 2006; Prentis, 2009). Tribal groups were a central point of continual care and continuity of a particular area and everything that existed within it.

### **Intellectual Cultural Knowledge**

Intellectual cultural knowledge has been achieved through the cultural function of oral traditions which were passed from one generation to the next and so on. Fully

initiated men/women were the carriers/custodians/communicators of knowledge for ones' tribe.

In any exploration of Aboriginal women and the impacts that they had within the pastoral industry, it is important to understand the depth of intellectual cultural knowledge and dynamics that existed prior to colonial contact. This research places a strong emphasis on the environment as it is fundamental to Aboriginal Intellectual Knowledge and it is central to pastoral management. For Aboriginal people the environment is a part of the reciprocal relationship that occurs between the animate and inanimate of life; it is not separate from life but part of it. However, it should be noted that many stockmen have a connection with the land, not in the same ways as Aboriginal people but it is a connection and their life.

Common knowledge is that Aboriginal people when referring to the environment refer to it as "Country". The relationship with the environment however, has a deeper connection for Aboriginal people as it is seen as a part of the people rather than a commodity. As discussed, it is the agency of people and Country that connects continual relationality. As with yarning circles being transmitted in a circular relationship, the relationship with the environment is seen as circular and the life school for intellectual cultural knowledge. Country is so much more than something to be utilised for profit. Country is not an object, it is a living subject (Martin, 2013). I am a Koa woman and my connections are in Central Western Queensland in the channel Country, this also connects me to the Lai Lai Dreaming of Kati Thanda commonly known as Lake Eyre. This is because Koa Country is

situated in the channels that when the rains fall they fill the channels which eventually run down to the Kati Thanda.

Country is an abundance of knowledge and is a place of learning through lived experience and it is a place to be respected. Intellectual knowledge passed to me by my Elders explains Guwa Country's Creation story. As stated, Guwa Country is located in south Central Queensland, and our creation story is based on:

Two Eagle Hawk brothers who were fighting over a fire stick, they flew high into the sky, both were reluctant to let go of the stick until finally it burned too short to hold without burning themselves, finally having to release the stick, it fell to earth and all the land below burnt for miles and miles. This is why Guwa Country is so flat with short twisted trees and the horizon visible in all directions (Mace, 2015).

This is an example of how the agency of a narrative demonstrates its relationality to Country.

Beyond connections to one's own Country are the connections that existed between people along the paths and trade routes that weaved across Pamanyungan (Name of Australia prior to colonisation, told to me by my Elder Auntie Minnie Mace). Long

before stock routes, roads and highways that were built by non-Indigenous people, there existed an extensive system of paths and trade routes that connected Aboriginal people for various different purposes. Seasons were a dominating factor in Aboriginal dynamics and all life is interconnected with the cycles of the seasons. One must be in balance with Country in order to observe, read and respect Country. This begins with the transmission of intellectual cultural knowledge.

In an Aboriginal society, education is an important part of life and every person would be educated. Education was specific to the individual, although certain ceremonies were carried out at certain ages. For example, a girl's rite of passage to womanhood. Individuals were taught what their strength was for this life's journey, as not everyone would be a gatherer, hunter, weaver, healer or storyteller. If you were good at weaving then this is where your education would lie, however, everyone, learnt how to live in a reciprocal relationship with the Country. As discussed in Chapter Two in context of being in and outside of the pastoral industry, and an Aboriginal researcher with an insider/outsider lens, I am able to impart some of Guwa people's intellectual cultural knowledge relating to the interconnectedness and relationality of knowledge passed onto me from Auntie Minnie Mace. This knowledge is of extreme importance:

Aboriginal people of Pamanyungan recognised the four primary forces and represented them with animals. Our concept of the primary forces are: Earth-Water-Air-Spirit. Earth was represented by an animal, Water by a fish or reptile, Air by a bird

and Spirit by a nocturnal creature such as a possum. Baiame was recognised as Ben-Ewa (overall) his four brothers each took on the aspect of one of the primary forces, each having a Totem which represented one of the elements.

Karora – Earth – Bandicoot

Mungan-Ngour – Water – Giant Goanna

Bunjil – Air – Eagle Hawk

Norralie – Spirit – Possum

The formation of the primary forces then are: Matter-Liquid-Gases-Energies. This becomes a matter of fact when we realise that we have to: Eat-Drink-Breath-Sleep, in order to continually put these elements into ourselves.

This can then be broken down even further:

Touch-Emotion-Conscience-Ego

Spring-Winter-Autumn-Summer

Sprouting-Rain-Wind-Heat

Carbon-Hydrogen-Oxygen-Helium

In earlier times, a tribe consisted of four major families, each having its own Totem (or family symbol) for example: Kangaroo Rat (Earth), Snake (Water), Mopoke (Air), Honey-Bee (Spirit).

After a while a caste system (or class system) developed. The lowest caste being the Earth totems, with the highest caste being the Spirit totems, however, each caste contributed in its own way to the survival of the tribe (Mace, 2016).

This is the continuation of relationality. Knowledge, with its agency is relational and in this is constant movement. Like yarning, stories within stories, knowledge can move across itself and back again. During this process knowledge is cumulative. First is knowledge, once you have knowledge you can either do nothing or you can act upon it, this in turn gives you Experience and Awareness, and Wisdom is your payment for this. This is also your knowledge. How this is related to Aboriginal stockwomen? This is the centre of being and from this point experience comes into play. Aboriginal women knew the intellectual knowledge relating to Country. The seasons, what kunga (food) and kamu (water) are available in various areas at various times of the year. How to observe and read the land. How to observe and read animal behaviour. It is important to note that the connection with Country is reciprocal, so it is more than just knowing Country. Does Country know you? In all accounts of relationality, Country knows you.

Tracking is an important skill and was learnt when very little. My daughter Nakara is now nine years old, but as soon as she was walking and outside we observed and read different tracks in the dirt, listened to the different noises and tried to identify them. To give you an example, Nakara and I have been observing the behaviours of the Kilawurru (galah) in the area. Over the approximately three years that we lived

at Emu Flat we made observations of the Kilawurru. Around November and December, the adult Kilawurru bring their babies to a tree in our yard. They are left there all day with the parents only coming back occasionally to feed them, until such times as they just don't come back at all. The Kilawurru are in the tree for about six to eight weeks, and very noisy I might add. This year 2016 quite a few of the Kilawurru young stayed around the house. This is due to the fact that they have worked out that they could get seed from when I feed the chickens, geese and parrots that I had to look after. In times when kilawurru would have been a kunga source for this area, this is important knowledge to acquire.

On pastoral stations it is an important asset for you to be able read the landscape and the environment and an important part of being able to muster cattle across vast quantities of Country. This is why Aboriginal women were able to become exceptional stockwomen. They could read the Country, they knew the cycles of the seasons, they knew where the kamu was, plants and animals helped in the identification of certain times for kunga and the kamu. This also helped with trying to keep pastoralists away from sacred sites. It is deeper than just that though. It is the knowing that if there is something that can kill you, poison you or make you ill, there is a tree or a plant or medicine within that Country close by that will have the cure. As the research shows, it was through the significant help that was given by Aboriginal women that a lot of pastoralists, especially drovers, were able to survive the harshness of Pamanyungan. Aboriginal women supplemented the non-Indigenous food supplies with native kunga. All women who are in this research are knowledgeable in the collection of kunga. Kunga is also used for trading. Numerous trade routes and paths existed linking people and knowledge throughout

Pamanyungan. If the Country was not treated with respect it would become sick and if Country is sick, then the people who inhabit it also become sick. Continuing the reciprocal relationship with Country ensured the survival of everything.

Aboriginal life systems embodied the art of agriculture. Country determined what was sown and cultivated. Pamanyungan was not a totally dense bushland and consisted of many different environments which were shown in Chapter Three. These environments didn't just flourish on their own, people had to work them. Grasses were planted and sowed in areas where for example matyumpa (kangaroo), yakanya (wallaby) or other grass eating animals lived. This was to control the behaviour of animals which were a part of the diet for the people of that area. Fire burning was used to control growth of certain vegetation within areas of Country. Fish traps were a common tool for catching fish in river systems. Gnamma holes were an important source of kamu and other wells were built in areas where kamu was not always abundant. For example, on the Canning stock route non-Indigenous wells were sunk in close proximity to existing Indigenous kamu wells.

As a Koa woman my perceptions of the environment differ to the pastoralists who de-territorialised Aboriginal people by weakening our ties between people and Country and re-territorialised the land for the use of pastoral management. Pastoralists perceptions of Country was that they saw an untouched landscape that could be productive in cattle or stock management. Beyond the visual of the landscape though is an element of the source of life. When looking at Country specifically Guwa Country, I see more than makaru (coolabah tree), pinpirri (gum

tree), kangkaparri (wild plum) or yaku (grass). I see Country, I hear Country, I feel Country, I smell Country, I know Country. I know Country and Country knows me. Country is also a place for nourishment and health. It is an abundance of kunga and medicine. Wild orange is edible, nardoo seed is used as a flour to make dough, once the toxins have been washed out of the seed. Waterlilies are used as a food source and all of the plant is edible. Bloodwood trees is where honey is gathered from the flowers and the roots of the tree are used for a kamu source in times of drought and also used for medicinal purposes. Parrku red pinpirri (river red gum tree) are used for the collection of grubs and makaru (coolabah) trees were also an emergency kamu source. Seeds were eaten and grubs collected from the trunks and the inner bark was also used for medicinal purposes. Mitchell yaku (grass) is ground into a paste and cooked and eaten. The rock fig is eaten either raw or dried and ground into a paste, then eaten with honey or water. The ruby saltbush produces an edible red berry and wild tomato and potato are a staple dry season kunga.

Acacia and wattle gum are edible, pigweed roots, stems and leaves are eaten, splitjack has edible fruit, conkerberry, the fruit is edible and the milky sap is used for medicinal purposes, Gumbi Gumbi is brewed and used as a medicinal tea. Kamu sources were also an abundance of kunga, consisting of a partapulu (yellow belly fish), palpi (fish), pirinu/munti (lobster), kunaru (crab) and thukapa (mussels). There are many kunga sources which can be utilised from Pamanyungan's landscape. However, when I was living and working at Emu Flat Western Australia lacked a high presence of kunga. Mining has taken over the land and it has been disrespected and the consequence for this is the lack of kamu and kunga. Quondong and sandalwood are just two trees which have been observed by me as being harvested to

the extent that the landscape is now only sporadically sown with these sources. It should be noted that sandalwood was an important commodity for Aboriginal people as it was used in ceremonies in the past and is still used today. When I had ceremony out at Gumminguru, which I discuss in chapter six, I bought with me sandalwood from the property which was used for the smoking ceremony. On my arrival to live at Emu Flat, one of the first observations I made was the lack of native wildlife. There was the odd kangaroo or emu and the bird life was fairly sporadic also. I believe that this is also due to the impacts of mining within the area. Wild dogs are a serious issue to the native wildlife and rabbits are abundant. At this time, the gardens were just alive, although, after several months of hard work it was back to a healthy state where it attracted the local wildlife and various species of birds visited the gardens, especially on very hot days, due to the yard having one of the few water sources available in the area. Next to the station I was on at Emu Flat is an Aboriginal community. It was originally on the right hand side of the road as you travel east, it would later be moved to the left hand side of the road because the water source dried up. I was to witness the demise of this community due to the mining and political agendas currently in play, creating further problems to an already disadvantaged and displaced group of people. In a news article by the ABC Geoffrey Stokes an Indigenous pastor states he:

Has grave concerns for the people that used to call Coonana home. He blames the government for what's happened in the community, saying they want to commence mining in the area.  
(Horsley, 2013)

On consideration of Aboriginal perspectives of the environment, it was not only the animals that were introduced that wreaked havoc on the natural environment. Introduced plant species have aided in the downfall of native species and bush foods throughout Pamanyungan. Native flora and fauna have been severely unbalanced and decimated due to the introduction of imported species. One of the impacts that can be seen today is with the necessary performance of weed control on pastoral stations. This has been caused by non-Indigenous people not understanding how the bush operated and wanted to put something “pretty” in their gardens. They never thought of the impact and rapid growth and invasion of these plants and the damage they would cause. I have spent many hours in Northern Australia while working on stations, walking down sandy creek beds, steaming hot because of the humidity, mosquitoes eating you alive, just so I could spray noxious weeds. The station at Emu Flat worked a bit differently. We used a boom spray when we could, otherwise hand held pumps to poison, thorn apple, Bathurst burr and horehound. Once sprayed it takes around about fourteen to twenty one days for the weeds to die, when they have died, we then go back with a fire fighting machine and burn the plants to stop the spread of the seed. Although I’m not too sure how productive this actually is, I haven’t really seen it make a great impact, and the problem is because the station is channel country if the neighbours or properties further out don’t spray and burn when the rains come it just all washes onto the station again; stock also help spread it, especially sheep. Non-Aboriginal Scientists are now looking at Pamanyungan’s natural plant species for use in caring for Country, food sources and even the making of medicinal products.

Aboriginal people have wrongly been accused over the years as not having an agricultural system but observations have shown that it is more a misunderstanding of Aboriginal agriculture interpretations. This can be seen in the way non-Indigenous people cultivate the land via placing boundaries and fencing around crops or paddocks, Country is treated as an object to be manipulated. Aboriginal people didn't have a need for fencing off food sources and some cultivation was done in order to entice native animals to the area, which in turn was a further food source for the people. First explorers described the people as primitive and having had a lack of outside influences in the form of agriculture. However, this can be contended. There has been communication with the world "through New Guinea via Torres Strait and Cape York" (Gerritsen, 2008:3). Agriculture wasn't about putting up boundaries but utilising the land and its resources in an effective and productive manner. Lt George Grey in his exploration of Western Australia observed:

And as we wound along the native path my wonder augmented; the path increased in breadth and its beaten appearance, whilst along the side of it we found frequent wells, some of which were ten and twelve feet [3-4m] deep, and were altogether executed in a superior manner. We now crossed the dry bed of a stream, and from that emerged upon a tract of light fertile soil quite overrun with warren pants ... [the yam plant – *Dioscorea hastifolia*], the root of which is a favourite article of food with the natives. This was the first time we had seen this plant on our journey, and now for three and a half consecutive miles [5.6kms] traversed a piece of land, literally perforated with holes the natives made to dig this root; ... more had been done to secure a provision

from the ground by hard manual labour than I could believe it in the power of uncivilised man to accomplish. (Gerritsen, 2008:33)

Littered with underlying tones of racism, however, it was observed and acknowledged that Aboriginal people did have an agricultural system functioning within Pamanyungan. It was just a matter on what and how agriculture was interpreted and the actions that enabled the cultivation of plants throughout the Country. Further evidence was seen of community structures by a Captain Stokes who slept in a wigwam which he had commented that it was of superior structure (Gerritsen, 2008:33). The desert people of the Great Sandy Desert however, were nomadic due to the environmental topography of the area. Their water and food sources were very much reliant on the seasons and the weather. The underlying factor to this cultivation and land management centred on the spiritual aspects of Aboriginal life systems. It was the relational premise we had with Country that dictated our movements with it. This is why Aboriginal women as stockworkers were able to navigate their way across Country when droving or moving cattle because of this interconnectedness and knowledge of Country and this is a major contribution to the industry. As this research is about revealing these experiences, this is quite significant to this research trajectory and the industry itself.

### **Songlines**

Culture is the outward expression of our spirituality:

The Dreaming taught why the world must be maintained; the land taught how. One made land care compulsory, the other made it rewarding. One was spiritual and universal, the other practical and local. Songlines distributed land spiritually; 'Country' distributed it geographically. Everyone had a Country: narrowly defined, land, water and their sites and knowledge ... (Gammage, 2011:139).

The following has been relayed to me in an interview with my Elder Auntie Minnie Mace and which is of vital importance to Guwa people and an explanation of Songlines:

The universe breaths in and out, like the tides, ebbs and flows. So you have all these spirals. When people used to read the land, they would be able to tell by looking at the branches of trees of where water was, like water divining. It can also be done by using the Songlines. This is known as the Harmonic grid. Wawawi is the divine life-force and divine intelligence all comes down through this life-force. This is all connected with the Songlines, like we are all connected to the Songlines by the vibrational cord, which is known as the Silver Cord. When the Songlines cross, twelve of them in one place this is where the vortexes are, leading to the higher level to a higher or lower degree. You would have to be there in order to know what

strength this frequency was. When you see a tree with a twisted trunk this is because those lines cross where the tree is growing and has caused the trunk to twist. In our Ancient Ceremony sites, you always had an old twisted trunk in the middle of the Ceremony ground. So when you get the old fella's doing the initiations you got one on each Songline and as they enter the circle they would sound the bullroarers, it was a vibrational frequency which pierces the dimension to alert the Ancestors that ceremony was going down and then during the ceremony when they turned their minds to something that made their hair stand up or give them an electrical current running through them they would discharge energy from their spirit, it would run down the Songlines to the centre of the circle. By sounding the bullroarer they've created the vibrational frequency to put the Ancestors on standby for Ceremony and they would project an image of themselves from the higher dimension into this dimension, like a television set would project a cricket game in the West Indies while it's being played. So too they would project an image of themselves for a split second to show these young initiates that there is no death because they have witnessed and experienced someone from beyond this level and therefore their courage would never desert them because they knew there was no death from experience, it was divine belief and they had experienced it (Mace, 2014).

Each collective of people were responsible for the continual maintenance of the Songlines in their specific regions. However, this did not mean that it was owned as it is a continual process of ensuring that the environment was cared for in order to pass on to future generations. For example, the Great Sandy Desert people would have been unable to maintain consecutive years of food sources or water sources had they not been nomadic. Being nomadic also educated the people on where water and food sources could be found in the various seasons, just like the observation I have made relating to the kilawurru. Country:

Is and was knowledge. Knowledge is Country-specific, and virtually the whole body of knowledge for any given Country is related to the generation of life in and around that Country. (Rose cited in Gammage, 2011:146)

Songlines are an important aspect of maintaining Country, as it is through the knowledge passed down from the Ancestors that it is to be respected and maintained. Acknowledgement of those who have come before us and who guide us in the present. Some say that the Songlines are broken, however, my Custodians of knowledge have taught me that they are not broken, they have just not been sung, meaning, that the sacred songs that were sung on those Songlines have not been able to be performed and maintained which has aided in the gaps on the Songlines. Figure 13 illustrates the extensive complexity of the Songlines on Pamanyungan and each of these Songlines has and was maintained by those who performed the reciprocal relationship with Country.

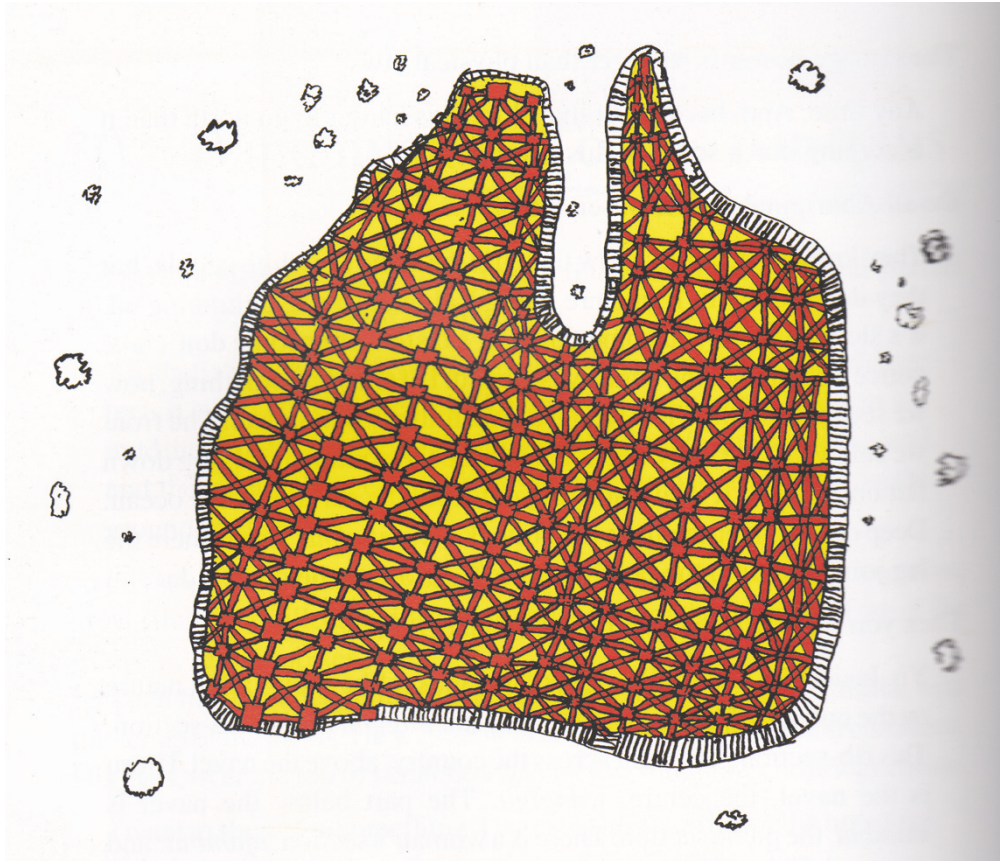


Figure 13: Songlines, Mowaljarlai et al 2001, p. 192

When people look after Country, Country looks after people. In January this year at the Glasshouse Mountains on the Sunshine Coast, a sacred ceremony was arranged and performed. This ceremony was to sing the Songlines and start the healing of this sacred land. There was also a ceremony held a few weeks after this on the Murray River in Yorta Yorta Country. Although some Aboriginal people live within urban centres the core element to our sense of being is still the interconnectedness of Country, Self and Community and this must be maintained by community obligations in its continued progression. It is the youth of the future that will need this Country and it is through the passing of knowledge and knowing of the land, the

environment and the spiritual aspects of our culture that we will be able to continue the passing of this knowledge.

### **Aboriginal Agriculture**

Aboriginal women on cattle stations would have had their own knowledge and knowing of Country. When times were tough they could provide food sources and this is particularly apparent for the women who were drovers. As droving could take several months, food sources would have become short and running low and sometimes droving teams would only have flour, salt, lard and tea. In these instances, johnny cakes would have been made. These are commonly known amongst many Aboriginal people as fried scones. As this was not a stable diet for long periods of time, Aboriginal women were skilled in finding sources of kunga (food) and kamu (water) at least enabling the stock team to have nutritional sustenance. The education for the sourcing of kunga are as follows:

Child is taught from a holistic point of view, and the example used is a tree. He/she is taught everything there is to know about the existence of that tree. When it blooms, the insects that live in its branches and bark, the birds and animals that use that type of tree only for food and shelter, what certain parts of the tree can be used (food or healing). The he or she is taught about the surrounding vegetation, landscape, geology and climate. (Gammage, 2011:145)

As can be seen in the stories provided by this research, Aboriginal women had an extensive knowledge of Country and land and that it did not stop to be an important part of life even with the introduction of the pastoral industry. It can also be seen that in some cases Aboriginal women were instrumental in educating non-Indigenous children on the environment, sources of kunga and kamu. Education continued to be in the knowledge of culture and not formalised western education, which has enabled the continuation of the passing of knowledge. An example of this type of practice based knowledge transfer is fire burning. In the north of Pamanyungan and in parts of Western Pamanyungan, fire burning was a necessary part of maintaining and caring for Country and this is a practice that is being used still to this day.

Aboriginal people were familiar with the mustering of animals and it wasn't in the mustering of cattle or sheep but that of the native wildlife of the area. I assert that it is because of the prior knowledge of animal behaviour and methods to maintain muster or capture native animals that Aboriginal women and people were able to integrate the pastoral industry into Aboriginal cultural lifestyles. Research has uncovered instances in diaries by pastoralists, frontiersmen, surveyors and explorers of witnessing Aboriginal people performing agricultural activities and the presence of building constructions which aided in this system.

James Dawson, and Robinson, mention game drives or 'grand battues' where people were engaged in driving game across a 32

kilometre front to a dispatch point ... Colonists witnessed these nets used in combination with kilometres of brush fences in large-scale trapping and battue operations. (Pascoe, 2014:42)

As stated previously, rudimentary stock yards were used to catch larger prey such as kangaroos and emus and were made from sticks, logs, boughs and bushes and as the colonists moved in these yards were later used for the holding of cattle or sheep. Gammage (2011) also comments on the use of nets used in the herding and yarding of native animals.

As discussed in context of the pastoral industry, weather had a major impact on the pastoral industry. However, women's knowledge of Country and land enabled their presence in the industry to be vital. When looking at the land of Pamanyungan, a vast quantity of the interior is considered arid. Within these areas kamu was not available at natural lakes, creeks or river systems as a constant. Trees and underground wells were needed to sustain the people for short periods of time. Within the more northern areas, although natural water systems existed they could be miles apart. There are areas which rely on the wet season to replenish systems for various time periods throughout the year, some lasting longer than others. Aboriginal seasons were another aspect of Aboriginal life systems that were not recognised. My research has revealed in various areas that Aboriginal people charted different seasonal calendars. The Walmajarri people of the Fitzroy Valley in the Kimberley's use a three season cycle; Parranga (hot weather time), Yitilal (raining time) and Makurra (cold weather time) (Nuggent et al, 2011).

As can be seen by the following table, Aboriginal seasonal calendars show some having three seasons, some six or seven, or even as many as thirteen as in the Ngan'gi peoples.

		Indigenous Australian Seasons		
Month	European Seasons	Miriwoong calendar	Nyoongar calendar	D'harawal calendar
DEC	Summer	Nyinggiyi-mageny (wet weather time)	Birak, (dry and hot)	Parra'dowee, (warm and wet)
JAN				Burrin, (hot and dry)
FEB				Bunuru, (hottest)
MAR	Autumn	Warnka-mageny (cold weather time)	Bjeran, (cool begins)	Marrai'gang, (wet becoming cooler)
APR				
MAY				
JUN	Winter		Makuru, (coldest, wettest)	Burrugin, (cold, short days)
JUL				
AUG				
SEP	Spring	Barndenyiriny (hot weather time)	Kambarang, (long dry periods)	Djilba, (wet days and cool nights)
OCT				Wiritjiribin, (cold and windy)
NOV				Ngoonungi, (cool, getting warmer)
				Parra'dowee, (warm and wet)

Table 4: Indigenous Australian Seasons

The seasonal cycle recorded on the calendar closely follows the cycle of native annual speargrass (*Sarga intrans*), with many of the thirteen seasons identified and named according to speargrass life stages. For example, the season known as “Wurr wirribem dudutyamu” occurs when speargrass seed heads are swollen and are hanging heavily. The term “taddo” refers to the sounds of the

seed heads knocking together as they start to open up, and indicates that the rainy season is nearing its end.

[http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/climate\\_culture/Indig\\_seasons.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/climate_culture/Indig_seasons.shtml) accessed  
17/03/2016

As can be seen from the above table of three different Aboriginal tribes and areas, seasonal calendars were different. Miriwoong people had three seasons compared to D'harawal people having six seasons. Aboriginal women would have extensive knowledge of the seasons and what food sources were available at certain periods of the year. The signs could be the flowering of specific plant which signalled that there was, for example, a certain fish that was most abundant to catch. This intellectual knowledge that Aboriginal women knew of the seasons was of great significance and benefit to the pastoral industry, as they knew the signs of when the rains were coming, where to find kamu and possible kunga sources. This knowledge also enabled the protection of sacred sites that Aboriginal people were trying to protect. By knowing the kamu and kunga of the area they could navigate pastoralists away from sacred water holes for other water sources, however, it must be noted that this wasn't always possible and many sacred sites have been desecrated across Pamanyungan.

### **Trade Routes**

Pamanyungan's landscape was misconstrued as an untamed wilderness to be tamed by non-Aboriginal people. Pamanyungan is a sacred land caressed by the Songlines

and the trade routes of Aboriginal people. The relationship that Aboriginal people had with Country was foreign to those from an industrialised capitalist society, and as such the stereotyped Aboriginal people as the noble savage, because of this unique social and cultural dynamic. Aboriginal people didn't live on Pamanyungan, they lived in a reciprocal relationship with it, and the geographical environment is a fundamental element of the cultural and social well-being of Aboriginal people. As discussed, for Aboriginal people, Country is kin, Country is a living subject (Martin 2103) as opposed to an innate object. The geographical environment was abundant with fauna and flora, medicines, and the Spirituality of the people was imprinted in the essence of the earth and seen in the outward expression of culture. Paintings were not seen as art, they were the sacred scrolls of the Ancestors and the counsels from which cultural dynamics were expressed and used in educating the younger members. Like Country as a living subject, art was performative and relational. (Martin, 2013) Songlines and trade routes were paths to ceremonies, knowledge exchange, marriages, and family connections, sourcing of new materials and settling of disputes in a truly democratic system. A well-known ceremony still present today is the Bunya Festival in Queensland, which people from all over Pamanyungan have and still attend. Although the festival has changed in dynamics and is attended by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, the spiritual nucleus has remained the same. It is a meeting place, it is ceremony and it is imbued with understanding and exchange of knowledge.

Intellectual cultural knowledge was shared and assistance given by Aboriginal people and in particular by women to the pastoralists/overlanders, colonisers, Anthropologists, government bodies, and scientists in their search for prosperity and

new beginnings of what they saw as a new world. Major veins that run through the very essence of Pamanyungan are the Songlines and trade routes. These too would be de-territorialised and re-territorialised by the newcomers and eventually some would be acquisitioned by government and pastoralists/overlanders and transformed into what are now the travelling stock routes or as it is commonly known in the industry, the Long Paddock. As the industry grew and the demand to move cattle to markets, the stock routes would become a bustling highway, Durack states that:

A birds-eye view of the continent in the middle of 1883 ... would have shown thin trails of stock converging on the big northern rivers from east to west. ... Meanwhile, droving parties with thousands of cattle were making from Queensland and New South Wales for scattered destinations in the Territory and Kimberley. (O'Neil, 1974:227)

Aboriginal women would become a significant feature of the travelling stock routes. Their knowledge of the land was accepted as a valuable asset to have when overlanding the Country.

This chapter has expounded the cultural and social structures of Aboriginal peoples within Australia. It has shown that geographical location is a core element to the cultural and social reciprocal relationship that exists amongst the many different collective groups that exist on Country. Further to this, it has shown the way in

which intellectual cultural knowledge is relational and has agency in itself. This chapter further demonstrated the differing view of Aboriginal women relating to Seeing Country and interconnectedness of people, Country and Songlines and how it is constructed in a continual relationship. This chapter has illustrated that Aboriginal women had innate knowledge of Country relating seasons which is inter-related to the sourcing of kamu and kunga and when sources were available within certain areas. Furthermore, this chapter has demonstrated that Aboriginal women were participating in an Aboriginal agricultural system prior to non-Aboriginal agricultural industries. I also revealed that Australia consisted of Songlines and trade routes which aided in the movement of people and knowledge. Therefore, this interconnectedness of people and Country was an integral part of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, doing and seeing and this was achieved through the relationship between people, Country and Songlines. Aboriginal women's knowledge was a valuable asset in agricultural practices which then aided non-Aboriginal people in the construction of their way of agricultural production in a new environment.

## CHAPTER FIVE: PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Aboriginal women's Intellectual Cultural Knowledge, which included Songlines and connection to Country, influenced the pastoral industry and its establishment in various ways. This also comprised of Aboriginal women's knowledge of trade routes which in effect, had a significant impact on the travelling stock routes of the cattle industry.

This chapter attempts to continue this path through the methodological framework of *multiple relational narratives*. It does so in the following way. Firstly, I build the historical foundations of Aboriginal women as stockworkers by *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and my lived experience as an Aboriginal stockwoman. I extracted information out of historical writings and merged them with my own lived experience and knowledge to formulate narratives about Aboriginal stockwomen and their performances. Secondly, I yarn with literature pertaining to Aboriginal women and I respect the agency of this knowledge as some of these are written through the authors conducting interviews with Aboriginal women. It is through the movement between *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and lived experience that I approached the literature. It is within this dynamic that the key technique of yarning with literature is constructed on interconnecting what I analyse in the reading in concert with my own experience. This differs from a scholarly literature review as this type of analysis is premised on "learned" experience. Yarning with literature is grounded on "lived" experience. In this instance, this lived experience is from being an Aboriginal person and more specifically an Aboriginal woman in the pastoral

industry. It is the movement between yarning with literature through lived experience and analysis of literature in a scholarly way that forms this chapter.

### **Building the Foundations: Aboriginal Stock Women 1860-1930**

There is documentation, although only limited, regarding the participation and experiences of Aboriginal women as stock workers. In examining the literature, through *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun*, of Broome (2002), Jebb (2002), May (1994) and McGrath (1987), I revealed that Aboriginal people were the main workers on cattle stations in the rural and remote areas of Australia. Research (Broome 2002; Jebb 2002; May 1994; McGrath 1987) indicates that Aboriginal people were the main workers on cattle stations in the rural and remote areas of Australia. Since a considerable amount of Aboriginal men were decimated by the continual violence on the frontier (Flood 2006; Jebb 2002), Aboriginal women performed the duties needed for the establishment and continuation of the pastoral frontier. Aboriginal women have been noted as carrying out all aspects of stock work even to the extent of rising to the position of head stockman. Aboriginal women were seen as excellent trackers of stock, food and water sources, especially if the women were from the area. It has been documented that within Queensland, Northern Territory and North Western Australia most pastoralists were employing mainly females for all aspects of stock and station work (Jebb 2002; May 1983; McGrath 1987).

No official records have been kept, however, and we have to rely on pastoralists' accounts, "a renowned cattleman of the north west, Matt Savage, claimed that during

the 1910's 50 per cent of stockriders in the Kimberley's were women recruited or 'snaffled' from local 'tribes' (McGrath 1987, p. 50). Therefore, in this chapter, I investigate and present examples of Aboriginal stockwomen and examine their role in the pastoral industry. By exploring these examples, I link what specific jobs Aboriginal stockwomen would need to undertake and perform. This clearly articulates what would have been their reality in the pastoral industry. The initial examples used are sourced through limited, but existing literature, where I have used *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* in order to reconfigure understanding of these roles in a relational way. By doing so, I demonstrate their strong involvement in the establishment of the pastoral industry and therefore re-write and reconfigure the histories pertaining to these astounding women.

In contrast to the majority of historical writings (Goodall 1995; Pettman 1992), that Aboriginal women served merely in the role as domestics or for sexual purposes, this thesis contends that their occupation had a wider range. It has been difficult to ascertain the identity of individual women who have played a major role within the industry, with only scant writings about their performances. McGrath's (1987) and Broome's (2002) writings show that Aboriginal women had to complete a range of jobs in the establishment and continuation of the pastoral industry, such as yard building, fence building and or repairs, road building and homestead building. Once built, there was continual maintenance, tending of gardens, the care and welfare of animals such as goats, chickens or pigs, the killing of goats or on some occasions cattle for food and the tanning of the skins. Aboriginal women would participate in all aspects of station life. They would even be left to care for non-Aboriginal children and in a few documented cases (Jebb 2002; McGrath 1987). Aboriginal

stock women on the station were considered such proficient horse riders that they were held in high regard and left with the charge of teaching the cocky's (owner/managers) kids to ride (McGrath 1987). Across the northern frontier Aboriginal women would accompany pastoralists on the long journeys that were needed to obtain stocks or to visit one of their other stations as seen in Figure 14.



Figure 14: Man with Aboriginal women broken down, McGrath 1987, p. 87

It was to some degree to ensure the safety if a stockman/frontiersman took with him his Aboriginal women/companions/workers (McGrath 1987). In her work, May (1994) highlights that in the north of Queensland, Aboriginal women were trained as stockriders. May's (1994) and Reynolds' (2000) writings show, there were two known Aboriginal women in the 1880s in Queensland, one by the name of "Kitty" from Beaudesert and "Dinah" from Granada station who were both known to perform the role of head stockwoman. Jebb (2002) and McGrath (1987) also state

that women across the Northern Territory and the north of Western Australia were trained as stock workers. See Figure 15.



Figure 15: Photo from Alexandria Dows Station of five women, Broome 2001, p. 132

There exists a photo of an unidentified Aboriginal woman, as seen in Figure 16 who was said to have been trained by Fred Potts and she worked with Weeda Munro.



Figure 16: Unidentified Aboriginal Stockwoman, Jebb 2002, p. 182

However, any information relating to performance and skills has not been ascertained at this stage. I will discuss Weeda Munro (Nyanulla) in more detail later in this chapter. See Figure 17.



Figure 17: Weeda, Rosie and Mary, Jebb 2001, p. 181

Stock work is hard, physically and mentally, on the toughest of men and would have been trying work for these women. Stock work is clear-cut. Firstly you round up cattle into a mob (collective group of cattle), draft (process of sorting cattle into specific groups), process (earmark, tag, castrate if male and vaccinate), then turn off (cattle that is to leave the station either to another property or for sale) or turn out (cattle that is put back out to pasture on a station after drafting process). It's the stock and the terrain that are unpredictable, simple but dirty, difficult and more often than not it can be dangerous work.

Other examples of Aboriginal women as stockworkers include, Lawn Hill station in the Gulf Country of north Queensland and bordering on the Northern Territory, which was run by thirteen Aboriginal women, who performed all duties pertaining to management of stock (May 1994, p. 51). This team of Aboriginal stock women would have had a head stockwoman, so it can be assumed that one of the Aboriginal women would have been the head stockman. This group of women would have to perform a considerable amount of work as a team to keep the station running.

One of the most significant parts of a stock team is the horse plant (team of working horses), which some of these women would have maintained. Horse plants would consist of several horses depending on the period of time the team was going to be away and the number of riders in the team. Horses also had their specific jobs. There were ones that were good night watch horses (horses used on a muster

specifically for watching cattle at night), good scrub runners (experienced stockwoman who would ride through heavy scrub to catch and rope wild cattle that could not be mustered), tailers, good cutters (person who cuts out cattle) or pack horses (horse used to carry supplies). The women would have to break all the horses in, which sometimes made days in the saddle dangerous when on musters or runs, as they would not know what horse they might ride, as some horses were only given a day of breaking before being used for work (McGrath 1987, p. 51). Later in the season more time was sometimes put aside for horse-breaking and this would depend on the amount of stock and the amount of workers to complete all work that was needed (McLaren 2001). Some stations were fortunate enough to have wild brumbies (wild horses) roaming their land which provided stations with horses. A horse muster would be undertaken and time would have been spent breaking in the brumbies and other horses. This would have given Aboriginal women the opportunity to enrich their horsemanship skills, and enabled Aboriginal women, to become excellent horse riders, making them more efficient stock workers.

By operating through *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and through the lens of my lived experience (Forrest 1984; Jebb 2002; McGrath 1987) I have revealed that women who performed stock work had not in all cases been limited to the station. Droving was a big part of the northern cattle industry and Aboriginal women were to participate in the long arduous task. Similar to stock workers, information relating to women's performances as drovers is limited. For example, little is known about Mary Yunduin (or Yundebun) other than that Mary had worked for many years in the Northern Territory as well as Western Australia as a drover, horse-tailer (someone

who manages the horses and chooses the stock camp. A key member of the mustering and droving camp and a first class bush person.



Figure 18: Mary Yundin, McGrath 1987

The horse-tailer also took care of the day to day management of the cattle on the droving run (McGrath 1987, p. 51). Droving across the north was usually seasonal contract work and was considered difficult and dangerous, especially for a woman. However, Aboriginal women drovers were highly respected in their knowledge of the land and acquisition of water, and this made them excellent trackers, well suited to the tedious task of stock work (May 1983; McGrath 1987). Aboriginal women were also able to supplement the teams' food rations for the journey in the gathering

and/or hunting of “bush tucker”. The starting location of the drove would determine the amount of time it would take to drive cattle to a point of sale, bullock depot (station consisting of only bullocks) or breeder station (station specifically for breeding only). Australian cattlemen and Aboriginal women would be on route for several months across constant changing environments and weather conditions (McLaren 2001). On top of that, there was also the risk of being attacked while traversing other tribes’ Country.

Other examples include that of Amy Laurie, who was born in 1913 and though her mother was from the Ord River and her father from Hermannsburg, Amy was born on Kirkimbie station in the Northern Territory, which at that time was leased by a white drover by the name of Jim McDonald.



Figure 19: Amy Laurie, McGrath 1987

Jim McDonald raised Amy and when she became a teenager she worked in the stock yards with other Aboriginal men performing the duties of general stock work. Amy later married Alec Smith, and once married they went to work as drovers. Amy performed the same duties as the male drovers when it came to working with bullocks (male cattle which has been castrated and is over two years old and a dressed weight of over two hundred and twenty-five kilograms). It has been said that Amy reminisced: “All the women from every station went droving. Women like it, liked to be alone, droving” (McGrath 1987, p. 51). Amy later had a child, and had to stop droving for a while. However, Amy’s involvement in the industry would not end with the birth of her child as she would later work at Spring Creek station in Western Australia, as a stock worker and salt-carter. Later in her life, Amy took a position as a house worker at Rosewood Station in the Northern Territory (McGrath 1987, p. 51).

By writing through the premise of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun*, my own lived experience as a stockwoman and the *multiple relational narratives* framework, I have revealed the following in literature of McGrath. Another Aboriginal woman by the name of Bett Bett (Dolly Bonson) from Bonrook station in the Northern Territory, in the late 1910s was to become a leading stock woman. Bett Bett performed all the duties which came with the running of cattle from mustering, tailing, checking for stray cattle in neighbouring stations, the acquirement of cattle for kills as well as the management of other staff situated on the station. Bett Bett came to be an asset to the station as a skilled and trusted worker (McGrath 1987, p.

50). Bett Bett would become known to the wider public from Jeannie Gunn and the movie, *We of the never never* (1982). On most cattle stations I worked on, there was a permanent job available as a boundary rider (person employed to check the boundary of property to ensure cattle were within the station and later when fencing was erected to check and fix fences, now commonly referred to as bore runner). As Bett Bett was known to check for stray cattle it can be assumed that she performed the duty of a boundary rider and this would have entailed the following. Bett Bett would ensure cattle were within property boundaries, which was quite difficult with no fencing, and there was always the chance that one could be accused of cattle stealing. Cattle stealing, at the time of open plan grazing was a major problem in the north.

As a boundary rider she would have been gone for several days sometimes months due to the vast amount of land that needed constant checking (McGrath 1987; McLaren 2001). Other jobs would have been performed by Bett Bett while riding the boundary, such as checking waters to ensure that there were no cattle bogged or dead in these waters. This was a constant problem just prior to the wet season when water is low. Bett Bett and other Aboriginal women who performed this job would have been able to perform cultural obligations as they traversed the station boundaries. As stations erected external fencing and internal paddock fencing, boundary riders would also have checked these on their ride.

Through the use of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* the research has found further evidence of women who performed and participated within the pastoral industry.

Bill Harney, who owned Seven Emus station which is located on the Savannah Way in the Gulf of Carpentaria Northern Territory, employed women as stock workers. Bill Harney became a significant figure in outback Australia, taking on various jobs throughout his life, which all related to working with or in the pastoral industry. Harney was a drover, went to war, joined the ranks of the battler/little men (owner who struggled to maintain a station) when he and his partner bought Seven Emus station. Harney was jailed for cattle stealing. However, he was acquitted three months later in a Darwin court and he then became a trepanger (person who dives for sea cucumber) and sold his share of Seven Emus. Harney later married Linda, an Aboriginal girl from a mission in the Gulf and they had two children, who unfortunately all passed away, at different times, early in their lives. Later in life Harney became a Protector for Aborigines (1940 until 1948), after which he then became the first ranger for Uluru (Ayers Rock). Harney had spent several years of his life living and learning from Aboriginal people and went on to write about Aboriginal Lore and legend (Kennedy 2006).

McGrath (1987) states that when Harney was the owner of Seven Emus Station he employed Aboriginal stock workers and one of those workers was a lady known as “Taylor”, who would accompany him when needing to find cattle which had strayed or were storm chasing (cattle that follow a storm for the green pasture and water). She shared half the work load and half the night watch. Harney found Taylor’s knowledge of tracking valuable in the search for stray cattle, and her knowledge of the environment and traditional foods was an asset. Taylor was able to acquire wild game and wild fruits which aided in times when they were away from the homestead performing stock work. Harney had commented that Taylor was “a representative

type of Aboriginal woman who helped to make this land what it is today” (Harney 1990; McGrath 1987). This was uncovered by the combination of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and the premise of my own lived experience. It is through this relationality that I extract and support this information as relayed through Harney. Harney (1990) recalls an old yard builder who worked with him on Seven Emus by the name of “Old Lobbe” and Old Lobbe was the father of an Aboriginal stock girl by the name of “Bonny”. He describes an incident where they were out searching for stock (storm chasing), when the mob was found, things didn’t go to plan and the stock camp was rushed by a mob of wild cattle. One stockman fired into the mob which sent stock riders running for horses and cattle “going hell west and crooked”, all riders mounting to chase. On catching a beast himself, Harney looked behind and Bonny was already on the ground tossing a wild bull into the dust (Harney 1990, p. 62), no easy task for anyone. It can be assumed from this, and through my own knowledge and experiences, that Bonny was a proficient rider, bull catcher/scrub runner and overall experienced stock woman. It is here that I make this assessment based on my own experience of bull catching and scrub running.

Across the north of Western Australia, in the Kimberleys, Scotty Salmond owned different stations and acquired and used Aboriginal women in establishing and maintaining the stations. Two women who were to aid Salmond were Susie Umungul and Rosie Mamangulya, who became stock women, and prior to this had aided in building the first huts (small building, normally built from trees with an ant bed floor) in the early 1920s (Jebb 2002, p. 124). The women played a significant role also by providing for the rest of their tribes who would be protected and provided with rations from their “white master”. Susie was known as the master’s

wife and both women were to aid with tracking and obtaining workers. An Aboriginal woman by the name of Maggie Ghi was captured and bought in from the bush to the station by Rose and Jack Campbell. She became a wife but also was to be trained for use as a stock worker and a domestic (Jebb 2002, p. 125-6).

*Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* (Jebb 2002; May 1994; McGrath 1987) shows that although many Aboriginal people were to live on stations, a certain amount of tolerance was given by pastoralists for Aboriginal bush camps (camp of Aboriginal people who do not work on the station but reside somewhere within the confines of the station boundary) as well. This tolerance was beneficial to pastoralists, who on reports of police coming for inspections would send the women off to the camps with rations to hide for a few days, and when it was clear, the women would return to the station (Jebb 2002, p. 127). It is apparent that Aboriginal women in the north of Western Australia and in particular over the King Leopold Ranges, were taken by force at a substantial cost to Aboriginal life systems. This may be the case and women seemed to have been forced into service by white managers. However, this does not take away from the fact that these women played a significant role in the establishment and maintenance of the cattle property, in particular performing men's work.

Jebb (2002) states that Scotty Sadler had been a prominent figure within the colonisation of the King Leopold Ranges and also had an Aboriginal wife by the name of "Coombilya" or "Coomie". Coombilya performed various stock work duties and work requirements of establishing the industry. She cooked, tailed horses

(to follow at the rear of the mob), participated in musters, castrations of young bulls also known as marking, roping, cutting out (to separate select cattle from the mob) of stock, dehorning or branding (registered mark which is burnt into cattle hide to show ownership) and she also aided in establishing the homestead (or as it was then a hut) by digging post holes and carting stones, water or sand. This showed that “there was no marked gender division of labour” (Jebb 2002, p. 93). Coombilya was such a trusted and valued stock worker that she even assisted neighbouring properties with stock work when needed.

One Aboriginal woman who traversed the northern frontier, and was known as one of the best stock workers was Maudie Moore from Dunham River station (now Doon Doon Station) in Western Australia.



Figure 20: Maudie Moore, McGrath 1987

Maudie was “a very proficient rider, she became expert at mustering, chasing cattle and throwing bullocks” (McGrath 1987, p. 52). Maudie was to become a head stockman. Maudie’s skills as a horsewoman were such that she was to even teach the manager’s children to ride. Maudie herself remained childless and had only a limited knowledge of traditional culture. This was due to the fact that Maudie was seen as such a valuable asset to the station that she was prevented from leaving the station when the other Aboriginal men, women and children went on seasonal leave or what would become commonly known as walkabout. Leave from stations for a certain period of time each year was common practise on the majority of northern stations (McGrath 1987, p. 52, 66). In an industry dominated by patriarchal principles, Maudie and the many other Aboriginal women who participated in the establishment and continuation of the industry had blurred the boundaries of gender and had been able to work their way up the hierarchal system of the station and were held in high regard for it.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the northern frontier was controlled by nature and the geographical environment, which meant that the cattle industry only had a certain amount of time to complete the necessary tasks for the season. The first task for the main stock team was to ensure all necessary equipment was prepared for the muster, and in preparation horses were “shod, saddles, bridles, ropes, hobbles and bells were repaired or replaced, and provisions packed ready in saddle bags” (McLaren 2001). It can be assumed that the Aboriginal stock women on Lawn Hill Station performed this task. Cattle stations in the northern regions were wholly controlled by their

geographical environment with the dry season normally from around February to the end of November, in which all work was conducted relating to stock management. The wet season was a period in which maintenance could be performed by those who did not go walkabout.

One of the main jobs that Aboriginal women stock workers did participate in was the constant mustering of cattle. Although mustering and the other tasks are relatively straight-forward, every station has its own methods for mustering, droving, bull catching, scrub running and horse-breaking. Within this research, this only allows for a broad description of the various tasks women would have performed, mainly because different stations would have their own methods and rules for stock management. With open plan grazing being implemented there was a range of methods in which women could carry out the task of mustering, such as a normal muster (described below) and other methods such as scrub mustering, moonlighting (a method used to muster scrub cattle that come out into open country to feed at night) and trapping, which only started to occur once permanent yards had been erected. However, moonlighting was a relatively short-lived method and had all but died out by 1910 (McLaren 2001, p. 53).

Through yarning with literature, I extracted that, Kitty, Dinah and Maudie were all considered head stock women and one of their main performances would have been the management of the stock team on musters. Mustering is not nine to five work, as it is constant and tedious. The days are long, hot, humid and dirty and because there is no going home for dinner during a muster and these women would have had to

camp at the yards until muster was completed. The mustering team consisted of a head stockman, foreman, horse-tailer, camp cook and stock riders. The women involved in mustering, such as those mentioned above would have had to leave in the early morning in order to set up camp near a main watering hole. Once camp was established the women would move out to a set point and then circle round pushing all cattle into possibly an open plain. This would be early morning when cattle would normally come in to drink. In some cases coachers (quiet, well-handled cattle used as decoys in musters to aid in controlling wild cattle) were left to graze in the open plain, as they acted as a decoy for wild cattle (McLaren 2001, p. 33). The women would then move amongst scrub and trees from where cattle are then driven into an open flat. From here cattle are herded into one big mob, one rider at the front known as a point ride (stockwoman who would ride at the right or left at the lead of a travelling mob in order to move cattle in a desired direction). Another woman would then be set in the lead (the head of a travelling mob of cattle) then one flank rider (person who rides on either the left or right of a mob of cattle during mustering and or the droving process) down either wing (the side) of the mob and then one or two riders at the rear tailing. Bett Bett, Mary Yunduin and Coombilya were all known tailers. These are wild cattle and not handled very often, or if they have been handled it was to be branded or marked in some way. Keeping wild cattle together was rather difficult with constant attempts to escape and if this occurred one or two women would quickly ride after it in order to push it back to the mob. The other stock women would keep the rest of the mob moving until they reached camp.

The distance of the yards (if any), determined the time taken to drive cattle from the main camp to the yards. Stock camps would be set up at various points for the night

and the stock women would have worked in shifts during the night to ensure cattle did not stray or try to escape and upset the whole mob. Once cattle were in the yards they were drafted into various groups, bullocks and fat cattle were normally turned off and yarded until the arrival of the drover. The rest were drafted into weaners (a calf between six – twelve months old no longer feeding from its mother), steers (young castrated male cattle under two hundred and twenty five kilograms), heifers (young female calf) and breeders (female cattle of breeding age) depending on what was required (McLaren 2001; Strang 2001). Prior to yards being erected on stations open bronco branding (method of branding using the bronco panel) was the method used for the purposes of drafting, branding, dehorning and marking. In this case, some of the stock women would have had to hold the mob while other stock women cut out a beast to be processed, which was done by broncoing (is the roping of cattle which is then dragged out of the mob to be processed) the beast. Once the beast was roped, it was then pulled to the ground by pulling it off balance by the tail and it was quickly tethered to the bronco panel (used prior to fencing to tether cattle so it could be processed), one woman would have had to try and pin the beasts shoulder down while another would grab its back leg, which would then be pulled backwards disabling the beast from being able to get up. This would all happen very quickly and there was no room for error. Once the beast was under control branding, marking, dehorning would be completed the same as in a normal muster with yards. This had obviously become an easier process once yards were erected as instead of having to be tethered, cattle were pushed up a race which is wide enough for a beast to move through but not that wide that they would be able to turn in, this then lead to a crush and head bail.

While some of the women would be performing the yard work, other stock women would have been sent out to catch any rogue cattle (cattle that has eluded trapping and musters and has never been handled or had contact with humans), known as scrub runners/dashers and bull catchers (McLaren 2001). This was highly dangerous work entailing a good rider and horse. As an example, Maudie was known as a bull catcher and her performance would have been as such, that Maudie would have to firstly find and run down cattle. Maudie would then have grabbed it by the tail or knocked it off balance with the horse. After this, then she would dismount rather quickly in order to tie the beast up before it had a chance to attack. It could then be a few days before the coachers (quiet, well-handled cattle used as decoys in musters to aid in controlling wild cattle) would then move in and pick up cattle that had been tied up and bring back to the mob. Once all unmarked cattle were processed, cattle were sometimes let out into a holding paddock for a few days and then driven back to a distant paddock for grazing until the next muster.

Due to the environmental terrain of the north, the records of stock were and are difficult to estimate, as clear cut musters are difficult to perform (McLaren 2001). In attempts to acquire better estimates, some stations would conduct a bangtail muster (this is a muster organised to count cattle on large unfenced stations), every few years (McLaren 2001). The station I am on now bangtail musters regularly as we use the mustering method of trapping. Stockwomen would ride among cattle cutting hair on each tail square to mark the beast so it will not be counted twice at a later muster. As Aboriginal stock women were involved in all other muster activities there is nothing to say that they did not participate in the bangtail muster as well.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the monsoonal rains known as the wet season of the north meant that work on stations was seasonal for the majority of people. This work suited Aboriginal women as they were able to restructure their cultural obligations in a way that the ceremonies and rituals that were needed to be performed were all done in the wet season. They were also in some cases able to keep pastoralists away from sacred watering holes by showing alternative sources. Station life had aided, if only in a limited capacity, a continuation of traditional cultural practices. Aboriginal women were able to work on the stations but at the same time had some time to perform traditional means of living, which was then able to supplement the lack of rations given out at stations (May 1994; McGrath 1987). Aboriginal women's knowledge of the environment aided stock workers while out on stock camps. As discussed, Aboriginal women brought with them, knowledge from traditional practices in the collection of foods to supplement the camps rations. They also brought extensive skills which were highly effective within the pastoral industry. This was because the Australian environment provided everything that was needed for these women to be able to supplement rations for both stock camps and station camps, as there was enough natural vegetative resources "bush tucker" such as fruits, vegetables, "sugar bags" and seeds for bread-making (Broome 2001; Flood 2006). In addition, women's understanding of animal behaviour contributed to the collection of meats also such as goanna, wallaby and fish (Harney 1990). Had Aboriginal women not been able to supplement rations at stations or stock camps then the pastoral industry would not be what it is today; one of the largest land holding industries in Australia. Whilst we have discussed the limited information about the role and performances of Aboriginal stockwomen in existing literature, through the

process of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* in concert with my lived experience, we now move to individual lived experiences of Aboriginal stockwomen.

The following lived experiences of Aboriginal stockwomen comes from applying the *multiple relational framework* and yarning with literature to Herb Wharton's book *Cattle camp: Murrie Drivers and their stories*. Herb Wharton is an Aboriginal stockman who left school at the age of twelve to become a drover and later in life wrote poetry, short stories and books. It is said that Herb saw Queensland from the back of a horse and performed other duties such as being a fencer, horse trainer and rodeo rider. Yarning with the literature established in concert with my lived experience established the lived experiences of three Aboriginal women who were stockwomen. *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* has identified these three women as Ruby De Satge and Peggy and Alice Gorrige and these Aboriginal women have contributed to the hard labour of the Australian pastoral industry. First, is the lived experience of Ruby De Satge.

## Ruby De Satge



Figure 21: Ruby De Satge, Wharton 1994

There has been a false representation of the true role that Aboriginal women have participated in throughout the pastoral industry in Australia. Firstly, I identify these women and secondly I give acknowledgement to them and one such woman who lived the experience of performing the many roles needed when living and working in the industry is Ruby De Satge.

Ruby de Satge was born at a small town in far western Queensland called Urandangi which sits on the Georgina River. It is unclear how old Ruby was at the time of the

yarning as Herb states “she don’t know when – or refused to tell me how old she was – but I soon realised that a life of hard work had not stifled her laughter or goodwill” (Wharton 1994, p. 46). Herb’s first meeting with Ruby took place thirty years prior to him yarning with her about her story. They met on an outstation called Carandotta, where Ruby was employed to be the camp cook and the only woman for the mustering camp and Herb was a stockman. Herb describes Ruby’s story as one of “musterers and drovers’ cook, boundary rider, housemaid, fencer and Jill of all trades in the bush” (Wharton 1994, p. 49). Ruby, on her journeys had seen a vast amount of the Australian outback on horseback from the Northern Territory to Queensland and down into New South Wales travelling the stock routes. It seems at the time of yarning with Herb the effects of the hard life of a stockwoman had taken its toll on her body, with a troublesome shoulder from horse falls and partly curled fingers from the back breaking work of digging post holes in black soil among the many other jobs she would have performed. Ruby at the time had the aid of a stick to walk, which is just another reminder of the broken bones from the hard labour that the pastoral industry requires of a person. Ruby’s story is a combination of the joys of being on the land, as she states she didn’t like housework or town, and the injustices that were to befall countless numbers of Aboriginal families. She never acquired an education as this was not something pastoralists cared to instil within their Aboriginal workers, it was more important that they learn to ride so as to become a functioning part of the industry. Ruby reminisces of a time when she and others were told to go bring in the hobbled horses, they bought in one mob and when asked by her:

Old grandfather “where them horses then?” they told him “oh they off on the other track”, and away we’d go riding past the lost horses, looking for kangaroo and emus – we’d chase them flat-out and off they would race, twisting and turning, trying to escape us half wild Aboriginal kids riding our horses bareback, whooping and yackeyeing after them (Wharton 1994, p. 52).

For Ruby this was her schoolroom. As a child, her family moved around a lot until settling in Dajarra in 1938. Ruby’s first job was as a housemaid scrubbing floors for a local store, which she didn’t like, so when offered a job droving Ruby accepted. It is unclear how long Ruby worked with this droving team and she soon started working with another drover after having problems with as she calls him “a real jackaroo” (Wharton 1994, p. 54). This was the start of Ruby’s life on and with the land droving. One amazing fact that I have found of Ruby’s is at a time in 1943, when Aboriginal people did not even have any rights or were even counted in the national caucus, Ruby “realising the importance of getting a fair wage for a fair day’s work, bought her first union ticket – it cost ten bob. With this, plus her willingness to speak out, she ensured that she received a decent wage” (Wharton 1994, p. 54). Droving trips were of great distances. One trip that Ruby drove cattle was from Victoria River Downs in the Northern Territory to Walgra station which is in the Boulia area in Queensland, the main stock route in the territory which Ruby travelled, was a long arduous journey along the Murrniji stock route which from all accounts of the track was a tough track due to the narrow road, thick scrub and long distances between watering points (Lewis 2007). Although I have not drove cattle on the Murrniji, I have had to drive cattle across vast distances of Country through

thick scrub which is not an easy task. It is through this relational experience that I can extract from Lewis what Ruby's experience was.

Ruby was employed by the Sowden family for this long droving trip and other trips she would take with, sometimes mustering and other time's, the camp cook. Ruby's adventures took her far and wide and even down into New South Wales to Bourke, Warren and even Sydney. The stock routes in Queensland and the Territory were long and far and it could be days before you would see anyone. However, Ruby commented that while in New South Wales "you was never out of sight of houses or people" (Wharton 1994, p. 61). One thing about being out on the stock routes is the versatility that one must have in being able to perform all parts required to ensure the drove is successful. Ruby reminisces about the good times of being out on the stock routes and cattle camps. However, there were bad times as well. She recalls the attitude of "white" bosses towards Aboriginal stockworkers and the way they were spoken to and treated. One such occasion she recalls is a "whitefella" who was employed to cook for the Aboriginal workers. After spending hours in the saddle he would call them over yelling "come and get it you black so and so's!" (Wharton 1994, p. 56) and would have not even cooked their meat or food or would just give them flour for johnnie cakes and they would have to do it themselves. Ruby had noticed potatoes and onions going to waste and not used. Ruby called them over to her camp and gave them a cooked meal but never offered the white cook even a cup of tea, which is customary in the bush. She also tells of how he told her that the manager wouldn't be happy with the way she treated the Aboriginal people commenting to her "Well, the boss don't like your sort of blacks talking to them – you learn them about money, you learn them about food and wages and stuff ...

putting silly ideas into their heads. You learning them bad habits” (Wharton 1994, p. 57). This was not an uncommon theme in the times, education was not something pastoralists needed, able bodied workers were. Ruby’s lived experiences are just one of the many unrecognised, unrepresented and under-acknowledged women’s contributions to the Australian pastoral industry that I have extracted through yarning with literature juxtaposed with my own lived experience. It is these experiences that challenge accepted versions of history in terms of the lives and contribution Aboriginal stockwomen had on the pastoral industry.

### **Alice and Peggy Gorringe**



Figure 22: Alice Gorringe,  
Wharton 1994

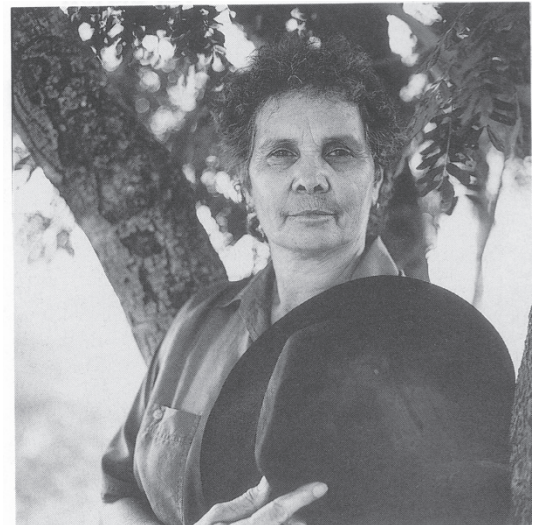


Figure 23: Peggy Gorringe  
Wharton 1994

Herb Wharton was fortunate enough to tell another story of the adventurous life of two Aboriginal sisters, Alice and Peggy Gorringe. As with many other stories of Aboriginal life on the frontier Alice and Peggy Gorringe’s story is one of privations, heartache and trepidation but it is also a story of love, delight and triumph. Alice and

Peggy's family story starts in New South Wales under the fear of the government man coming to take away the children. Their mother worked for pittance to survive the times, however, the demoralising life of the mission was forever on the minds of the Gorrings, so with the help of a sympathetic white man, the family escaped New South Wales and made the arduous journey to Queensland. Peggy was born in Cunnamulla in the 1930s and Alice was just a toddler at the time (Wharton 1994, p. 116). However, Alice and Peggy's parents would eventually separate and their mother would meet a stockman called Bill in Broken Hill who would eventually be a significant figure in their lives, moving to live with him in the channel Country at Arrabury Station (Wharton 1994, p. 117). The journey north to Queensland from Broken Hill was taken by mail truck by their mother and the kids which was filled with rations, mail and all sorts of supplies. The road was dusty but Alice recalls when it rained and the road turned to mud and they were forced to camp for a few days. The trip in the end, taking over a week, ultimately joined Bill on Arrabury Station (Wharton 1994, p. 118). Their family would become quite large over the years, with four more brothers and two more sisters joining the already five children of the family (Wharton 1994, p. 118). Alice recalls that all the kids were treated the same, even to the extent that they would all get floggings at the same time. Her perception was that her mother probably believed it would save time. Alice and her siblings looked after each other and remain strong (Wharton 1994, p. 119).

Life on Arrabury Station was a good life as there was plenty of food and they had the freedom of being on Country. Maybe not their own but the strong affiliations that comes with being on land. They learnt to find bush tucker and were instilled with the knowledge of the land and taboo's associated with the area. In particular they were

told of this old tree that they were not to go near and even to the extent not to look at it. Peggy goes on to tell that they were told that before they came to Arrabury Station that a woman had died as she had broken taboo and sat under the tree (Wharton 1994, p. 119). The girls enjoyed riding the horses and for years they would see the old Aboriginal man who would ensure that they stayed away from that tree and even after his passing the girls would see him, believing he was there watching over them (Wharton 1994, p. 119).

As for many other girls and boys cattle and the riding of horses would be a significant part of their lives, all learning to ride from a young age. This would have given them a great deal more freedom than those stuck in mission life, and they would have the chance to learn intellectual knowledge of life on Country. Their dad owned a mob of horses and they spent their lives breaking in horses and even rounding up the wild brumbies that roamed the Country. The girls would have many a fall from a horse but nothing real serious. Peggy comments that her mum must have had a terrible life worrying about the kids and horses and the falls they would have (Wharton 1994, p. 120). Survival on the land is not always just about food and water, you cannot just call up someone to come and fix things for you. A big part of life on stations is what is known as bush mechanics and Alice recalls her and her brothers first lesson on bush mechanics. On stations all over the Country kids learn to drive long before they can get a licence. Alice and Peggy and the rest of the family kids were no different. Alice tells of how she and her brother John were not quite tall enough to reach the clutch to change gears and how one would press the clutch while the other would steer and they were forever in trouble for riding the clutch.

You'll break the bloody axle! Bill would yell. One day, four miles from home, the axle did break and they had to walk home. Next day, they were taken back to the broken-down Land Rover in the station truck. "Here's a spare axle," Bill told them. "You jack up the chassis, undo the nuts and bolts, then pull out the old axle, and put this one in. 'You'll need these spanners.'" Then he walked away to a shady tree boiled the billy and rested until they had completed the task (Wharton 1994, p. 121).

This lesson was to be one of many they would learn in order to live on the land, you break it you fix it! As horses were a big part of the girls lives they learnt to make ropes and canterline saddles. Alice doesn't believe they had a hard life but had a lucky life on the land (Wharton 1994, p. 121). In my analysis of this literature, I found that there were rare instances like this that revealed the role that Aboriginal women played in the pastoral industry.

Eventually the family moved to Windorah, when the girls were in their teens, and this is where they used to all go on droving trips and travelling the Country in a horse-drawn wagon. This is also when the girls learnt how to manage cattle from mustering to drafting in order to get the mob ready for droving (Wharton 1994, p. 123). The girls recall both enjoying their days chasing cattle and the excitement of the chase. When the family moved to Windorah, Peggy went to school although

Alice commented, however, that life as a bush child was “short on schooling and long on working, from sunrise to sunset every day of the year” (Wharton 1994, p. 124). When not in school especially during the holidays the whole family would go droving across the channel Country. Bill had become a full time drover by this time and Alice states that she was the horse-tailer for the majority of the trips. Alice didn’t attend school like Peggy, and her classroom was the stock-route (Wharton 1994, p. 126). Peggy and Alice recall a time droving and an old Aboriginal stockman showing them a cave with a hidden entrance that only a child would fit through. The girls entered the cave only to find a hidden chamber that:

they could only describe as an ancient conference room, with what appeared to be man-made ledges for seating cut into the rock all around the cave wall ... they saw another larger passage leading off to the left just as the old man had described, to a bigger cave – and beyond that, he had told them, was a third cave in which lay the treasure of that ancient Aboriginal kingdom (Wharton, 1994:129).

The girls often wondered about the mystery of the cave but never felt the need to seek out the treasures of what was inside. This is one of many hidden treasures the girls would have come across on the journey across the vast landscape of the droving stock-routes.

Droving the Country was full of adventures for the girls, with nights of startled horses from birds and the chase to bring them all back to the camp (and it was no surprise to the girls that this occurred near the mysterious cave) to the chase of wild dogs to earn a quid. Alice recalls a trip with her brother John when they chased and scalped wild dogs and got quite a few, only to return home to find their dad was not impressed as they had knocked the horses up a lot (Wharton 194, p. 134). Dog chasing in those years was done by traps and sometimes poison, although the introduction of 10-80 poison was to see the demise of a lot of dogger's with the rise in cattle prices and the scalp price of a wild dog a pittance, stockman didn't see the need to control the feral pests. Alice states that feral pests such as pigs, foxes, goats and cats were lower at the time as goannas and crows thrived, but today the feral animals have decimated native animals and birds (Wharton 1994, p. 134). It was through understanding of Country and the entities within it, that an Aboriginal stockwoman such as Alice would be able to determine the abundance of native animals. It is through the relational yarning with this literature and my own lived experience that we see a significant change in Country today in terms of the amount of feral pests as compared to native animals.

Many droving trips were taken by the girls, one trip out to western Queensland to Yaraka, which was the end of the railway head, to Naryilco Station, some six hundred kilometres as the crow flies. Naryilco Station was "in the furthest corner of south-west Queensland, where the borders of South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland meet. (As someone once remarked, the state borders always meet there, but very few people do. This is true even today)" (Wharton 1994, p. 135). Other droving trips would see them venture to various places such as the Barcoo River,

Bourke in New South Wales and even from Durham Downs to Cockburn in South Australia, one year spending Christmas in Tibooburra and a time spent at the bush races in Milparinka (Wharton 1994, p. 138). Most of the sister's droving was throughout the channel Country of Queensland. Peggy recollects that there was one horrific night that she will never forget. They were droving cattle from Waverney:

I was watching the cattle this night, and they suddenly took off, rushing straight towards me – it was all mulga and timber close by. As I tried to get out of their path the horse I was on fell. I thought of those cowboy movies, with cattle stampeding through everything in their way and I began to think, “This is it. The end.” ... The nighthorse managed to regain his feet and stood for a while, and I grabbed the bridle reins and remounted. By then the herd had passed on either side of us – all you could hear was the cracking of the mulga branches and the thunder of galloping hooves. I was really shaken (Wharton 1994, p. 138-139).

It is apparent that this is the worst drove that the girls experienced with the constant rushing of cattle from the start to the finish of the drove and they seemed relieved at the end of it.

Alice and Peggy were Jills of all trades, fixing fences, cutting posts, mustering horses and branding them, fixing saddles and horse equipment. The girls recall a time when

they were out with Bill cutting posts and they met some New Australians. One of the men wanted the girls' axes and the girls were protesting for them to get their bloody own. It was only when Bill intervened to tell them that they didn't want take their axes they were just trying to help as they were not used to seeing women do that sort of work before (Wharton 1994, p. 140). Both Alice and Peggy were familiar with survival on the lonely stock-routes but say they never went hungry, bush tucker was abundant from "wild spinach, crowfoot, pea bush, and we used to cook pigweed in the campfire ashes" (Wharton 1994, p. 142) witchetty grubs were also eaten. Similar to today fresh fruit and vegetables were scarce unless you were near a town and Johnnie cakes were for many the only thing one would have to eat. Johnnie cakes are flour salt and warm water and once combined fried in a little beef fat. Not something everyone enjoys but in the dusty outback with nothing else beggars can't be choosers. Johnnie cakes became a norm amongst many Aboriginal people. When I go home johnnie cakes are something that we will have although now days other foods can be added, such as banana. Depending on the area as well, johnnie cakes have been called fried scones. On the station that I worked in the Northern Territory, when out on long droves salted meat and tin foods were regular meals. They also experienced the harsh realities of bush life from floods and the lush growth that was sure to follow and the long torment of droughts. The environment had and still has a dramatic effect on the industry and lived experience of people.

Both sisters would marry. Alice married Bill Fortune where she went on to work at the Cloncurry Shire Council but has since retired. Peggy married Kevin McKellar who had a droving plant (outfit of horses and any other equipment that is needed when on muster or droving) and continued to go droving and fencing in the outback.

Peggy was later to separate from her husband and now lives in Mount Isa. Life was not easy, but it was adventurous and filled with knowledge of traversing the landscape and Intellectual Cultural knowledge that enabled them to live in the way they did. Both Peggy and Alice are again just two of the few women who were equals to any stockman of the frontier and are underrepresented and unacknowledged for the strength and resilience of Aboriginal women in a time of adversity. This is yet another demonstration of the false assumption about the role of Aboriginal women in the industry that the research reconfigures.

In the following sections, where possible, Aboriginal women are referred to by how they identify themselves. This is by identifying them by their Tribal name. For example, the first Contributors of the research will be identified as Yamatji women. This is also because Aboriginal is a western term that was applied to Aboriginal people as a collective group by the colonisers of Australia.

### **Yamatji Stockwomen of the Gascoyne**

Back in 1986 the Mungullah Aboriginal Community were given a grant through the Arts council to research their history and oral traditions. The Mungullah ultimately asked Bryan Clark who is an artist, writer and photographer from Carnarvon Western Australia to undertake this project in assistance with the community to complete the research (Clark 1992, p. vi). Ernie Bridge, J.P., M.L.A (Former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Western Australia commented that:

His commitment to ensuring that the human side of Aboriginal history is recorded accurately and with compassion is admirable. Bryan Clark's dedication to the project mirrors Aboriginal interest in ensuring that our past is not lost forever (Clark 1992, p. iv)

From the research undertaken by Clark, this research has applied *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and the *multiple relational narratives* framework to extract the stories of five Yamatji stockwomen from the Gascoyne region. I have done this through analysing the literature whilst bringing in my lived experience in the analysis in order to create relational narratives that demonstrated the contribution that these women made to the pastoral industry.

The Gascoyne region is made up of eleven tribal groups – Jinigudira, Talandji, Buruna, Baijunga, Targari, Maia, Malga Ru, Mandi, Inggarda, Tedei and Wadjari, however, as a collective group they are Yamatji. Each of the tribal groupings as in any other tribal group within Pamanyungan consisted of clans (skin groupings) within those groups. For example, Mandi skin groups were Boorong, Banaka, Kaimera and Paljeri (Clark 1992, p. ix). The Gascoyne is on the western central coast of Western Australia and Clark (1992) states that it covers an area of around 37,500 square kilometres. As colonialists, frontiersmen and surveyors moved in, Yamatji people's lives would dramatically change from their free and happy lifestyle to one of servitude imbued with fear, violence and injustices. However, amongst the atmosphere and change a strong resilient people emerged in a new lifestyle which

came with pastoralism. In researching several stories from the area from both men and women, constant themes arise out of these hardships and change of lifestyle. There are those who witnessed the early days of extraction of wild Yamatji's to the two prison islands which were set up, Bernier and Dorre Island (Clark 1992, p. xii). These islands were set up as places to send people who were sick with leprosy or other diseases and those who were seen as trouble makers. It is apparent though, from the recollections of lived experiences of those involved that many men women and children who were chained around the neck and on most occasions dragged behind a wagon, would not make it to that destination and were killed on the way (Clark 1992).

Afghan cameleers had a strong presence in the area, and one cameleer who the Yamatji recall is a man called Shinko who used to travel around the stations and sell clothes to the station people. The Yamatji remark that the Afghan's normally stuck to themselves but were good to them (Clark 1992). A Yamatji woman by the name of Jane Winder stated:

the "Afghans were good to us. They used to kill a bullock every six months for charity and we would go down to their camp and help ourselves. That was their religion. They also gave us johnny cakes" (Clarke 1992, p. 129).

On the other hand, as in Queensland the police were to invoke a constant fear into the people and as such working with pastoralists, they were a law unto themselves and the abuses that occurred were horrendous (Anthony 2003; Clark 1992; Jebb 2002). In Clark's (1992) interviews with the Yamatji several contributors commented about pastoralists flogging workers with stockwhips if they turned up late for work or back chatted, however, contributors also commented that if they didn't do as they were told the older Yamatji would give you a flogging. A theme that was consistent was that in those days they had respect, something that they felt was lacking with the younger generations today. Aboriginal people were stuck between the new imposed laws of newcomers and the laws of intellectual cultural laws. Clark (1992) notes that this is more evident for women, especially with laws relating to promised wives and marriage.

### **Dolly Bidgiemia**

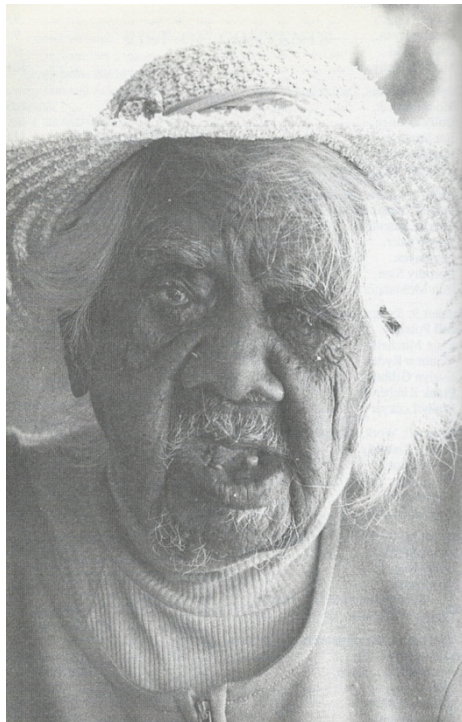


Figure 24: Dolly Bidgiemia, Clark 1992, p. xv111

*Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* of this area has revealed that the majority of Aboriginal people worked on cattle/sheep stations participating in all aspects of pastoral management and amongst them were Yamatji women who were stock workers. Clark (1992) states that Dolly Bidgiemia who he terms the “Grand old lady of the Gascoyne” was said to have been one hundred and sixteen years old at the time of the interviews in 1986, however, it was unclear exactly how old she actually was. Dolly would have witnessed the onset of the pastoral and mining push of the area and observed the de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation of her Country. Dolly stated that she used to go mustering with the boys, although it was seen as the wrong thing to do, she goes on to say that Mrs (Elizabeth) Collins would turn a blind eye. Dolly conveys this as a good time in her life (Clark 1992, p. 1). In her younger days she worked on Dairy Creek Station, Dalgety Downs, Glenburg Station and other stations within that area, originally travelling around on a wagon pulled by camels, however, in the 1920s she acquired an old model T Ford and it was said she only knew one speed, flat out (Clark 1992, p. 1-2) Dolly had a strong connection with Country and even in her old age and living in a pensioner hostel she preferred to be outside in nature (Clark 1992, p. 3). Clark (1992) states that Dolly was asked about corroborees, however, she commented that it was secret and no more was said about. Clark (1992) also notes that Dolly was a mother to over thirty children who were unwanted by their parents. Unfortunately Dolly was clouded by forgetfulness at the time of the interviews and has since passed and taking with her, I believe, an amazing story of history, survival, strength and reliance of a time of historical adversity.

## Helen Hayes

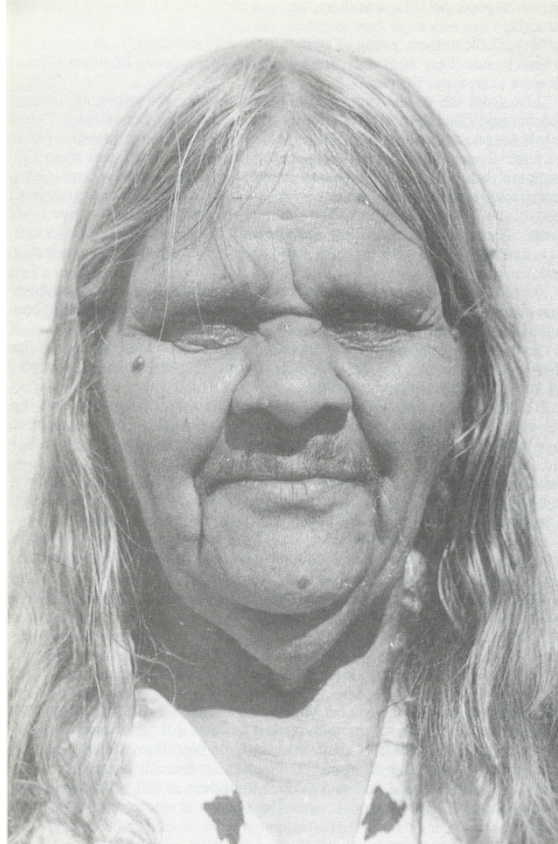


Figure 25: Helen Hayes, Clark 1992, p. 8

Helen Hayes believes that she was born around 1924, in the bush at Mt Stuart Station (Clark 1992, p. 7). The majority of her life was spent living in the hard bush camps. Helen comments that she is Talandji (Clark 1992, p. 9). Helen worked in various positions on stations. In her younger years she lived on Nanutarra Station where she did housework and commented that she got no money for this and that she was paid with clothes from the stores. When she was grown she moved from here (Clarke 1992, p. 9). This was common practice at the time. Helen remarks to Clark (1992) that her first husband died and that she got another husband on Winning Station and that she never had any children. Helen states that “On that station we used to go

down and help the fellas at the (stock) yard. We had to work really hard. Not like this day (today's) young girls. They don't know station work. We had to work like a man" (Clark 1992, p. 9). It is here that we see her interaction with the pastoral industry. Helen asserts that she was not told of tribal stuff, however, she was taught about acquiring bush tucker. Fortunate enough to have been taught this Helen explains the performance of acquiring "gungulla" (wild potato). They also used to get wild onion.

The old people used to find them with a crowbar. They used to hit the ground and listen to the noise. Then they'd say, 'It's down here' and they'd dig up that potato, a long one. ... Sometime we used to get that wild onion in the ground. Them old people used to make damper (bush bread) from that (Clark 1992, p. 9).

Further to this, Helen discloses to Clarke (1992) that when people got sores that a medicine was made from gum leaves. Inadvertently, we can see that Helen did learn from her traditions. This is something that I have also experienced and been taught from my elders. The gum leaves are boiled up and then you wash yourself with the mixture. Although Helen never had any formal western education, her life was full of intellectual cultural knowledge and believed her life although hard was a happy one.

## Lucy Clarke



Figure 26: Lucy Clarke, Clark 1992, p. 40

*Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and my *multiple relational narratives* approach revealed that another Yamatji woman who would participate within the pastoral industry and perform the role of stockwoman was Lucy Clarke. Lucy is another who is unable to tell you exactly how old she is but did inform Clark (1992) that it was in the year of the First World War, this would have made her around seventy two years old at the time of the interviews. Unfortunately, Lucy's mum passed giving birth to her and it is believed that she was born on the Murchison stock route. Here she was found by a Mr McGuinness who was a policeman in Wiluna, he took her home and raised her until her teens (Clark 1992, p. 39).

During Lucy's teenage years Mr McGuinness had decided to return to England, however, Lucy's Uncle, Jimmy Dingo arrived and proclaimed that Lucy would not be taken to England and he took her away to the bush with him (Clark 1992, p. 39). Lucy had not had much experience of bush life up until this period as her formative years were spent with white people and the long treacherous journey she was about to undertake would have been an eye-opening experience for her. Starting from Wiluna the route would head in the direction of Boolardie Station, Lucy and Jimmy travelled hundreds of miles until reaching Mt Narrier Station (Clark 1992, p. 41). It is unclear as to how many years Lucy spent doing stock work but her life was spent working the pastoral stations of Yamatji Country and it was here at Mt Narrier Station that Lucy was first introduced to working with stock. Clark (1992) states, that Lucy and her Uncle Jimmy were met at Mt Narrier Station by a large mob of Yamatji people and were fed by them wild potatoes and helped to recover from the long arduous journey. Once fit, Lucy was put straight to work mustering up the sheep for the shearers. Lucy voices to Clark (1992) that she also doubled as a cook and kitchen hand and was not paid for this work. On one occasion she was so tired from the rigors of work that she fell asleep and knocked a pile of dishes over and the missus rushed in and berated and beat her. Lucy goes on to explain that an older Yamatji woman told her that when the boss returned, he would probably flog her as well (Clark 1992, p. 41). Life would have been hard for Lucy especially trying to adapt to this new world that she had been thrown into and this experience was to enable Lucy to become the strong Yamatji woman that she would grow into later in life. Clark (1992) notes that this experience had frightened Lucy and she jumped on a mail truck and ran away as the truck was going to Malgoo. Lucy comments that:

Nobody looked after me, she remembers. I looked after myself. I milked the cow. Got three buckets of milk. Then I had breakfast when I finished. Then I went back and drained the milk, strained out the cream and all that. For her trouble, Lucy only received food and some clothing in return never money (Clark 1992, p. 41).

As stated earlier, a cultural law that was adhered to as much as possible in the growing melting pot of the pastoral industry and the lack of female companions amongst white frontiersmen was the laws relating to promised wives. Lucy was to adhere with this law and at the age of fifteen married a middle-aged man who she was promised to.

I just went to him, she said. I was told he was mine. I just grabbed my swag and went over to his camp. I had good life then. I used to go out and get kangaroo, boil it, cook it up. He (the husband) used to stay home, very quiet. I had four kids. I lost my daughter and an older son. I've only got two boys now (Clark 1992, p. 41).

There is uncertainty in Lucy's movements between various stations of the area, however, she raised a pastoralist's son, Peter Robinson, who it was said had a

stronger connection to Lucy than he did his own family. Clark (1992) comments that Lucy taught Peter how to find kangaroo and go fishing and that he would on his Marron station build Lucy in her old age, a house which she lives in sometimes.

It was revealed from yarning with the literature that Lucy was transient and worked on several stations in the area for no money. Lucy was a strong resilient Yamatji woman and it was revealed in the literature that later in life she was to confront the manager in relation to the lack of fair pay for fair labour. This is yet another demonstration of the strength that Aboriginal stockwomen displayed in this era, which refuses the notion that they were passive and merely subjugated. Lucy states that on confronting the manager she said,

Now I've been working for you hard all my life. All the time.  
It's about time you fellas paid. They got a big shock when I said that. Sometimes after that he'd give me one hundred dollars. It helped clothe the kids. They were running around everywhere in rubbish clothes. Them (European) mob used me up. I know that now (Clark 1992, p. 41).

Lucy is just one of many who were to participate in the establishment and foundations of the pastoral industry of Australia with little or no recompense, however, it is anticipated that this research will give Lucy and many others the

recognition and acknowledgement deserved for their performance in the pastoral industry.

### **Dolly Boonga**



Figure 27: Dolly Boonga, Clark 1992, p. 108

Clark (1992) refers to the next Contributor as Dolly Boonga. “I come from the wild Country” (Clark 1992, p. 109) Dolly unfortunately is another who is unsure of her age, believing she is about sixty or seventy years old, however she does know that her tribal group is that of the Indjibandi and her Indjibandi name is Mundyay. (Clark

1992, p. 109). In her early life she would encounter the segregation of white and black people on stations. As stated in Chapter Three, in context of the social stratum, Aboriginal people were not allowed to eat inside and were given meals which would normally be eaten on the wood heap or at their camp. Dolly recalled this as an experience she witnessed and adhered to as a young child. Dolly, like Lucy was to observe the law of promised wife and in her years of puberty she was “given away”, however Dolly was displeased with this arrangement, but accepted her parents’ decision as it would not have been in her best interest to challenge her parents’ decisions (Clark 1992, p. 109). Dolly states to Clark (1992) that her husband took her to Murrimumg Station in Western Australia, although she was unhappy with the arranged marriage, she says her husband was a kind man, he was not rough with her, he was deaf also and that it was husband that taught her how to ride and from this she would go on to muster cattle. Dolly asserts that “I was doing a man’s job then” (Clark 1992, p. 109). It can be assumed that this meant station work in the industry at the time. It is unclear from the research as to Dolly’s husband’s name or how long she was with him for but he passed away and Dolly was to travel to Onslow and gain employment as a stationhand. It is assumed from the interviews with Clark that this station in Onslow was a sheep station as Dolly commented that she ‘used to muster sheep. Go out. Still riding a horse and help the missus in the house when I got nothing to do’ (Clark 1992, p. 109). As with Lucy, Dolly seemed to be able to move between the various stations of the area as she comments to Clark (1992) that she went to Nanutarra Station where she was musterer’s camp cook. As for Lyndon Station, I am unsure of her position here, Gnoraloo Station where she worked with the shearers and Mulloo Downs and various other stations in that area. The interviews are ambiguous to certain information, at some stage Dolly must have had

an accident or the like as she was to comment that after Mulloo Downs she was unable to work because her knee went on her. Dolly was to mention that:

Of all the privations endured by the young bush woman, she now rates “cooking” as the most unpleasant occupation of them all. She says Sometimes I had to cook for the musterers. Big mob. That was hard. That was my really hardest job, I reckon. That was worse then [sic] being a stockman. When I was doing that (stock work), that was hard, too. I used to get chucked off the horse and hurt all my bones. But I never broke one (Clark 1992, p. 109).

Her life would have been a hard life. However, it was a combination of the unfamiliar new and influences of the old intertwined with it. Further to this, Dolly as a young child was shown and learnt about bush tucker and intellectual cultural knowledge in the form of corroborees performed by Yamaṭji. She acquired the knowledge from the old people of what food she was and was not allowed to eat and she was also taught how to cook emu and kangaroo (Clark 1992, p. 110). These would have been invaluable lessons of intellectual cultural knowledge and would have aided her in her transient life of the pastoral industry as a stockwoman. Dolly goes on to recollect that:

Them old Yamatji showed us ... all the different seeds you can eat, all the different tuckers. We used to watch them do it. They showed us the bush potatoes, how to dig it up and cook it. And the bush honey... you look out for the little honey bees. White fellas got big bees. We got little ones. If we find them, we know they got honey there (Clark 1992, p. 110).

As the times were changing in the area and most Aboriginal people were working on stations a considerable amount of cultural knowledge faded to the wayside. Dolly, however, states that they used to have corroboree regularly and that she also participated in corroborees when she was little and that they were still performing corroborees at Onslow at the time of the interviews. She states:

They teaching the kids, like they teached us in the olden time. I could still teach the young girl to put on corroboree dance, but they all shy. They all been to school now. They think about the “Wadjalla” (European) dance all the time. That’s sad, isn’t it? (Clark 1992, p. 110).

In the interview with Clark (1992) he asks Dolly about the present and what she feels of the generation now and she says she feels saddened by the way grog has taken over and states “they are really going down-hill. It’s not like before. The big trouble is grog. It’s really got them. That’s all in their mind, nothing else. We are losing a

lot of our young people just through that grog” (Clark 1992, p. 110). It is apparent from Dolly’s story that she had hard life along with many others but viewed her years as a stockwoman as good times. She considers that she was fortunate in her life that she was able to enjoy the intellectual cultural knowledge of her people and is another woman who should be recognised as aiding in the establishment and continuation of the pastoral industry.

### **Marie Edney**

It is apparent from the research and the *multiple relational narratives* approach that Yamatji women were a significant factor in the pastoral industry. Starting life on Bidgiemia Station, Marie Edney was born in 1927, her mother was Nanawurra or the white name she was given was Kitty and her father’s name was Jumbo (Clark 1992, p. 114). Marie would have the lived experience of participating in the pastoral push of Western Australia and as such I have identified her as a stockwoman and one who performed the job of men. Marie’s life was one which was experienced with a foot in two cultures, experiencing intellectual cultural knowledge from her Elders as well as new ways of living in the new world that had been thrust upon the Yamatji people. It must be noted that Clark (1992) also states the Marie would see the harsh realities of colonisation from frontiersmen and the police and witnessed Yamatji people being taken away in chains to prison.

Life was hard for all at this time and there was no permanent water system at the house and Marie recalls a time when water was carried in buckets on yokes to the

homestead (Clark 1992). Marie's life was a transient life moving from station to station, from the lived experiences of so many recalled from this time it is evident that this was a normal part of living on the pastoral station of the area (Clark 1992; Jebb 2002). Moving from Bidgiemia, Marie recalls going to Eudamullah Station, however, she states to Clark (1992) that it wasn't a trip that was easily undertaken and the family lost its camel cart at Lyons River and their belongings were then packed onto a horse and they then walked all the way to Mt Sandiman Station. The family would stay at Eudamullah for approximately three years. It is uncertain as to what Marie's lived experiences are on Eudamullah. The family moved then to Minnie Creek Station which was across the river and it was here that Marie remembers witnessing the performance of corroborees and fighting undertaken with spears. The fighting with spears was normally completed once one of the participants was speared and as such injured, it was not a fight to kill (Clark 1992, p. 115). Marie remembers a time when "We used to catch camels. We'd tie them up with a rope around the leg for a couple of days. Then we put a wood peg in his nose, and a winker (a leather eyepatch sewn to the side of the halter that prevents the animal from seeing something on either side). Their names were Bluey, George and Curley" (Clark 1992, p. 115). At this time on the frontier, cars were not around and camels were noticeable features of the environment. It is this type of knowledge and information that informs us of the detailed participation and performance that Marie had in the pastoral industry.

I have not ascertained how long Marie was to be at Minnie Creek station, however, when Marie was a teenager the family moved once again to Gifford Creek Station. It was here that Marie would witness her own mother in the performance of a

stockwoman where she would muster cattle. This would have been such a significant influence in Marie's life. Clark (1992) states that the mustering would take a couple of months and that Nanawurra (Kitty) not only worked stock but was the mustering camp cook for around twenty stockworkers. The station I am on now, we are currently mustering and it has taken us two weeks so far and we will probably be mustering for another two weeks. Even though we are using a helicopter and mustering buggies, bikes and traps and it is still going to take us as long as it did Marie to complete the task. This is due to the vast quantity of land and the type of environment that we must cover to muster the cattle. They were paid for this work about "30 bob" (This equates to 1 pound 50 or \$2.44 Australian dollars) a week. Marie would traverse the Country once more moving as she says "back to Mangaroon Station" (Clark 1992, p. 115), it is uncertain of her performance here as she has not mentioned the station prior to this comment. She does however, comment to Clark (1992) that there was a lot of Yamatji people here and that she only stayed here for six months before going to Cobra Station. From the comments made by Marie to Clark (1992) Marie was a paid stockwoman and was given ten pounds a week when she helped with mustering.

Through the premise of *multiple relational narratives*, I reveal a consistent theme of performance in the collective interviews taken by Clark (1992) and this was the period of time when station workers would go to the holiday camp. Marie recalls:

We travelled night time from Gifford Creek to the meeting camp  
in a covered wagon, just like the cowboys. We had two lamps on

the side. We travelled at night because that was the coolest time  
(Clark 1992, p. 115).

From this it can be assessed that holiday camp time was around the wet season period due to high temperatures of the day. Clark (1992) notes that at holiday camps, intellectual cultural traditions were performed with Corroborees, dance, singing, and lessons to the younger ones. After her time at the holiday camp Marie would return to Cobra station and it is unclear how long she would stay here as Clark (1992) states that Marie left here to go to Mt Phillip Station for mustering. It was here that Marie would meet her husband Jim Edney. As strict marriage laws were still practiced once Marie met with Jim she was then not allowed to be with him for two years, however, she did see him once a year at the holiday camp (Clark 1992, p. 115). She would continue to work within the industry and during this time went back to Bidgiemia, however Clark (1992) states that Marie would once again return to Mt Phillip Station where she would unfortunately lose her mother. On her mother's passing she was now responsible for her younger brother and sister and would become their main caregiver.

Marie and Jim were eventually married. Upon marriage Marie and Jim went to Mt Augustus Station and it is here that Marie says, "I started doing cattle work again, jumping off, tie 'em up, throwing bulls – the lot. When I wasn't working I had nine children" (Clark 1992, p. 117). For many Aboriginal women hospitals were not something they desired to visit when having their babies, and as stated earlier, their

babies were born in the bush with the aid of other women. Marie was no different and she had her children out in the bush. Marie comments that:

When we had babies, it was all done in the bush. Other women helped us. They knew about bush medicines. They smoked the woman using wattle bush. We had a magic fella who used to give us something to stop us from having babies. If we had baby, and we didn't have any milk (in the breast), we'd rub the nipple with poo from a bird's nest and that'd make milk come (Clark 1992, p. 117).

Marie was fortunate enough to participate and learn about her people's intellectual traditions, however, Marie states to Clark (1992) that she did not get initiated and that when initiations were to be performed, men went their way and women went theirs. Marie goes on to say that she was able to witness the old people perform them:

When they cut them, they rubbed on charcoal to heal it. They didn't have any sort of ceremony when they buried the dead ones. They just wrapped them up in a blanket (Clark 1992, p. 117).

It is obvious from the research and recollections of Marie's life that even though she experienced the cruelty of a new world that her life was rich with Yamatji intellectual traditions. Marie was a strong resilient woman who blurred the gender boundaries of the pastoral industry and performed the hard labour of men as a stockwoman.

It should be noted that the Yamatji people like so many others of the frontier would lose many loved ones to a state of great dangers and distress from the newcomers. This was through warfare, disease and cruelty dealt out by police and pastoralists. However, on my search I found strong resilient Aboriginal stockwomen who held pride in their lived experiences as stockwomen which was rich with their original cultural dynamics. The research also revealed how a collective group, the Yamatji people, under extreme conditions and adversity held strong to their intellectual cultural traditions. Further evidence, that Aboriginal women became significant participants in the pastoral industry performing many roles. The research recognises and acknowledges that they were stockwomen, traversed the Country, learnt Culture and showed great strength and resilience at a time of great adversity.

### **Karijini Stockwomen**

Survival for Aboriginal people of the West Pilbara has demanded an unrelenting struggle against domination by mainstream

society and their marginalisation by the welfare state. (Olive 1997, p. 15)

*Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* unveils the colonisation of Country by pastoralism and mining and through *multiple relational narratives* and extracts the lived experiences of the Karijini stockwomen. Sitting above the Gascoyne River and below the De Grey River is the Pilbara. De-territorialised and re-territorialised from the onset of pastoralism and mining and the same old story for Aboriginal people, cultural and social dynamics altered by newcomers who sought their fortunes on the frontier. Forced into a new world of structured work for little or no recompense, Aboriginal people were to enable the foundations and establishments of the numerous pastoral stations that would develop. Yarning with literature has revealed that whole family groupings would take on the positions of station workers (Clark 1992; Jebb 2002; McGrath 1987; Olive 1997). As I yarned with the literature for stories of Aboriginal stockwomen, I found that those who would become stockwomen in most cases were born on the station and that both their father and mother were workers on pastoral properties, learning the social stratum and dynamics of station life from birth. The new world of the pastoral station saw the breakdown of aspects of intellectual knowledge, however, a reshaping of cultural dynamics emerged allowing the continuation of intellectual cultural knowledge to be practiced. Ceremonies were adjusted to fit in to when station workers were sent from the stations to what is called “holiday camps”. As discussed, it was at these camps that knowledge relating to food sources was continual with Elders teaching the young what was able to be eaten and what was not. This shows a continuation of cultural practices and connection to Country that were not completely lost to the new world.

Noel Olive has been fortunate enough to aid in the facilitation of the Aboriginal voices of the west Pilbara. Once himself a drover and later in life becoming a lawyer and aiding with Aboriginal deaths in custody, he was a coordinator for the Karijini Aboriginal Corporation (Olive 1997, p. 2). Olive interviewed and collated the stories of the “Karijini Mirlimirli” meaning “writings of the Karijini people” (Olive 1997, p. 11). By yarning with Olive’s (1997) research it can be ascertained that stations were dominated by family groupings of workers, although women worked, in most cases only the male was given any money and women were paid in rations of food and clothing. In exploration for stories of Aboriginal stockwomen I have extracted three women’s stories from Olive’s (1997) interviews about their lived experiences of pastoral stations that consisted of intellectual cultural knowledge, performances as stockwomen and station life.

### **Jukari Parker**

As has been put forward throughout this research through the multiple narratives framework and my own lived experiences women perform and or performed a range of roles on stations. They could be a cook and housemaid one moment and a stockwoman the next. As a participant myself in the industry, I have had to perform various roles in a day, from cooking for the mustering crew and tending the garden to having to get in the yards to move cattle around from the muster that had taken place. Jukari Parker is a woman who would partake in the many roles of station life in the west Pilbara. Jukari was born on Sherlock Station. Her Aboriginal name is Yaba, her birth date is unknown, she is a Ngarluma woman and her tribal area is around

Roebourne and her skin group is Banaka (Olive 1997, p. 41). Jukari explains that “all of my education was in the bush, learning the culture and how to survive in the bush” (Olive 1997, p. 45). Olive (1997) comments that Jukari would in her teen years move with her family to Croydon Station and this is where Jukari started her working role in the industry. She started out by helping her mother with housework and cleaning. Olive (1997) states, that Jukari remarks, only her father was paid any money and that her mother was given clothing. She also goes on to comment that there were many Aboriginal people on stations and that others would come at holiday time, where dancing and performances for ceremonies took place.

Following cultural traditions of her people, Jukari explains to Olive (1997) that she was a promised wife to a man from Mount Florence station named Richard and that she would eventually leave Croydon Station and move to Mount Florence Station. As with the cultural protocols of marriage Jukari was visited by her promised husband for about a year prior to her moving with him to Mount Florence Station (Olive 1997, p. 42). Jukari explains to Olive (1997) that at this time, she was 16 years old and could not ride a horse and this was to later change and she would become a proficient rider. When Jukari first started work at Mount Florence she was helping in the homestead setting tables and Richard was a stationhand, she was not paid for this work, however, Richard was (Olive 1997, p. 42). As stated earlier, Jukari eventually learnt to ride and she went on to perform mustering of cattle and commented that she “went out all the time with the men” (Olive 1997, p. 42). Olive (1997) states, that Jukari would visit Mulga Downs Station and that this station was a place where Aboriginal people would meet up to perform ceremonies and initiations.

This is where she met Herbert, who became her second partner, and who she would go on to have five children with.

Jukari remarks to Olive (1997) that like many Aboriginal women her children were not born in the hospital but on Country. Two were born in the bush and three were born on Mulga Downs Station, where she now lived and worked with Herbert. She would eventually leave Mulga Downs station and took up a fencing contract at Marillana station and on finishing this contract they would go on to take up another fencing contract at Roy Hill Station (Olive 1997, p. 44). Jukari explains to Olive (1997) the hard labour required to perform fencing especially where they were out in the desert Country, having to carry water with them and only being able to work in the early morning and late afternoons due to the extreme heat. Jukari and Herbert would go on to perform fencing work at Ashburton Downs Station and the last fencing job was undertaken on Wyloo Station (Olive 1997, p. 44).

As with many Aboriginal workers moving from station to station was a common practice and Jukari moved to various stations participating in various roles. She also worked on Boolaloo Station, Mount Stuart and Nanutarra Station where she comments that she mustered (Olive 1997, p. 44). Jukari was no different to the hundreds of Aboriginal people living on stations at the time and would experience the harsh ways of frontiersmen and the racial divisions that occurred. Commenting that rations were given through a window and would have to be eaten on the wood heap, even if you had been the one to cook the meal, she states “at Mount Florence Station we were treated not like humans” (Olive 1997, p. 44). However, Olive

(1997) notes that when on Nanutarra Station she was fortunate enough to have a little house and her own kitchen where she was able to cook and get her own rations. Jukari's life was full of intellectual cultural knowledge and practices; she was able to keep her connections with Country and participate with others in the cultural knowledge that she had been taught, and at a time of great adversity for her own people performed the role of a proficient cattle woman as well as performing the many roles that women take on when living and working on stations.

Intellectual cultural knowledge is alive and thrives in the Pilbara region. Bush tucker was taught to the young, ceremonies were still performed, although adjusted to fit with station work times and Aboriginal people walked in two worlds.

**Mabel Tommy**



Figure 28: Mabel Tommy, Olive 1997, p. 52

A beautiful montage of yellow spinifex, red soil, white snappy gums, hauntingly beautiful low hills and mystic gorges. It is an arid Country, ever changing from harsh reds and yellows to soft blues and greens, under the commanding influence of the sun, which at times can be merciless. (Olive 1997, p. 11)

This is Mabel Tommy's Country and the land which she would walk and learn from during her life. Mabel Tommy is a woman who grew up in two worlds and took on the role of being a stockwoman and working on pastoral stations of the Pilbara living a rich life filled with intellectual cultural knowledge. Mabel was born in 1927 at Jirrirdinku, Mount Brockman Station, she is a Yinhawangka woman and her skin group is Banaka (Olive 1997, p. 52). Mabel comes from a line of ancestors rich with knowledge and her grandfather Bundaliny was a respected man of his tribe and known as a "great hunter". On his passing he was honoured and given the right to be buried in burdangka (buriel tree). His father was Wirndawari who died of misery after being taken in chains to Rottneest Island (Olive 1997, p. 54).

Mabel witnessed the harsh reality of this new world that had been thrust upon her people, however, still managed to walk between the two worlds. The first part of Mabel's story is about her connection to Country and culture. From the age of six Mabel walked the Country with her grandmother, the wife of Bundaliny (Olive 1997, p. 53). These walks would take more than a day and they would walk from Murimamba to Wakulanha (rocky spring) then to Mirwida down then from here to Rocklea, camping out and learning from the land (Olive 1997, p. 53). Mabel's other

siblings chose to go with their father but Mabel loved walking and learning from the grandmothers as they taught her intellectual cultural knowledge. As with the other women's stories I have portrayed, Mabel was educated about bush tucker foods. Olive (1997) states that Mabel would collect Kajawari, a fruit similar to an orange, jilbuukarri (passionfruit), jibulyu (similar to gooseberries which were found in the spinifex) and burdarbu (comparable to a mulberry). She also learnt about the collection of jandaru (bush honey).

Both Mabel's parents were station workers and worked on various stations around their tribal lands. When her parents would have holidays, Mabel remarked to Olive (1997) that she would go with them and that this was normally done around the start of the wet season. From my yarning with literature it can be ascertained that holiday times had become an important aspect of changing cultural dynamics which enable the continuation of intellectual cultural performances. Mabel remarks to Olive (1997) that Hamersley station and Murimamba had large groups of Aboriginal people and cultural practices were undertaken such as corroborees and dancing. Olive (1997) goes on to state that there is an area near Hamersley Gorge which was Wirlumarra (law ground), as cultural dynamics were impacted by the now working year of stations, ceremonies for law were also adjusted and only when there were adequate boys would law ceremonies take place, being that of holiday times. Mabel provides valuable insights into her tribal knowledge and the cultural protocols through her lived experiences and how adaptation was the key to living in the new world. Cultural life was transformed from the impact of the new world dynamics however, cultural protocols were adhered to and adjusted accordingly. All of Mabel's brothers would go through ceremony. Olive (1997) states that in relation to

cultural protocol, law ceremony can be conducted on either the father or the mother's tribal lands and both parents made the decision as to where law would take place. Women were seen as important members of the tribal grouping as women are known as the starters.

Around the 1950s, Aboriginal children in Western Australia were forced to go to government schools and as such prior to this a combination of station and cultural dynamics were the means to preparation for life's journey. My *multiple relational narratives* approach establishes that, educating Aboriginal people was not on the agenda for pastoralists, and as such, this benefited Aboriginal people, enabling the adaptation to the new station dynamics and the ability to impart intellectual cultural knowledge to the next generation. Mabel comments that:

there was no school out in the bush and I and all of my family never went to school. I grew up running around in the bush. And when it was time the elders trained me to be a dancer. We learned corroboree at our Aboriginal school of life, and the songs (Olive 1997, p. 55).

Mabel goes on to convey to Olive (1997) that her uncle William Jiyalong was known as a singer and that he would make up songs about what he would see and the new areas he travelled too and dances would be made to suit the story of the song. Mabel comments:

There was a song about this man who couldn't be still. He was always moving around, one minute going through the bush, the next up the rocks and then down again. He was everywhere. The story was good, and funny. But so was the dance, with the dancer jumping all over the place (Olive 1997, p. 56).

Songs are an important aspect for intellectual cultural knowledge and Mabel remarks to Olive (1997) that it was through song that she is able to know the names of the whitefella's who came to the Pilbara long before she was born.

As previously discussed, an important aspect of cultural protocol is the promised wife laws. Mabel was to adhere to this law and from a young age her grandmothers watched over her making sure that she did not engage in inappropriate behaviours with young boys (Olive 1997, p. 56). In her younger years prior to leaving to live with Kunkurmardi, her grandmothers were there to instruct her on the laws of being a promised wife and Mabel comments to Olive (1997) that even though she wasn't keen on the idea of marrying an older man she was well aware that punishment would follow if she did not adhere to the laws. Mabel's promised husband Kunkurmardi (Old Tommy) was at the time of their union about fifty years old. It would be fair to say though from the next insight into Mabel's life with Kunkurmardi that he enabled her to acquire the necessary skills to be a stockwoman.

Mabel was only about thirteen years old at the time she left to live with Kunkurmardi and went bush up around the Turee Creek area. Although she was scared, she grew to have affection for her husband and remarks that he was a good man (Olive 1997, p. 57). It is ascertained from Olive's (1997) interview that Kunkurmardi was a well-respected man with pastoralists of the area and worked on various stations, such as, Turee Creek, Ashburton Downs, Hamersley, Bellary and Rocklea Station. The first station that Mabel would work on was Ashburton Downs. She comments that this is where she learnt to muster sheep and also how to count as she was required to count the sheep that would be bought into the yards (Olive 1997, p. 59). The mustering of sheep was Mabel's first introduction to stock work. However, she would perform the duty of mustering camp cook and station cook also. Mabel would have four children, a set of twins, Julie and Roy and then Nancy and Moira with Kunkurmardi. All of Mabel's children were required to attend school (Olive 1997, p. 58). By this time Kunkurmardi was getting old and moved to Onslow to be near the kids and Mabel remained out on the station, with the kids coming to visit her on the holidays (Olive 1997, p. 59).

Mabel would eventually leave Ashburton Downs Station and continued a life on various stations, Mulgal, Mount Vernon, and Yarraloola station. Mabel would go on to work with cattle, chasing wild bulls. Mabel remarks to Olive (1997) that she had a good reputation with the stations and they would ask her to cook for the mustering camp and to go on musters. For Mabel to perform both of these duties would have been hard work, mustering is dirty and dangerous work and to have to cook on top of that would be tiring. Muster camp cook sounds easy enough but it in itself is a tiring job, having to get up early to start the fire, cook the breakfast, arrange lunch and then

to prepare the fire and cook the evening meal. So to also go out and help muster while cooking shows that Mabel had strength of endurance and adaptability. Mabel hasn't given any details of any specific experiences with cattle like being run up a fence, charged at or being knocked off her horse, but as someone from the industry myself, it would be fair to assume that she too would have had a few run ins with the wild cattle. Mabel did also work for a short time in town at a hostel, although she never liked being in town and eventually left and it was at this time that she went to work on Yarraloola Station. She also separated from Kunkurmardi leaving on good terms as he was quite old by now and Mabel met and then lived with Algie Patterson for twelve years at the time of the interview (Olive 1997). Mabel's story augments the representation of Aboriginal women as stockwomen and the transmission of intellectual cultural knowledge that she acquired on her journey. She showed the ability to not only work with wild stock but also that for those who lived on pastoral stations intellectual cultural knowledge allowed for the continuation of connection to Country and culture.

### **Bonny Tucker**



Figure 29: Bonny Tucker, Olive 1997, p. 102

My yarning with literature uncovered the last story of an Aboriginal stockwoman of the Pilbara to be Bonny Tucker. Born Bonny McKenna, Bonny's date of birth is unknown, she was born on Bonny Downs Station, her tribal group is Punjima and her skin group is Karimarra (Olive 1997, p. 102). Olive (1997) states Bonny's father is Snake McKenna and he is a Kartujarra man, his traditional lands were in the area of Nullagine and Jigalong.

My mother was Fanny McKenna ...my mother's name was Kijiyamba, the white people named her Jonah. She is a Nyiyaparli and married a Punjima man, same as me, see (Olive 1997, p. 102).

As with the other stories which have been uncovered, Bonny's life was a combination of learning and applying Aboriginal intellectual knowledge and experiencing pastoral dynamics. Bonny stated to Olive (1997) that she did want to go to school, but due to the fear of the Native Welfare her parents didn't feel it was a wise decision that she attend. This would be a fear that was perpetuated for Bonny and her husband when they had their children that the Native Welfare could take their children (Olive 1997, p. 104). Bonny, however, remarks "Native Welfare were only looking for mardamarda kids, not full bloods" (Olive 1997, p. 102). Bonny's family had integrated the new world into traditional intellectual dynamics and were strict with the upbringing of Bonny that she must follow Aboriginal law. The other

women's stories uncovered it was the grandmothers who taught the children, however, Bonny's education in intellectual cultural knowledge was given by her mother (Olive 1997). Bonny tells Olive (1997) how she learnt about bush tucker, skin groups and the laws of her tribal groupings, she was also brought up with the knowledge that she would be a promised wife. Bonny would marry Percy Tucker and this was performed in the Aboriginal way, however, Bonny and Percy would eventually marry in the white-man's way (Olive 1997). Girls were normally sent to live with their promised husbands when they were in their teens, however, Olive (1997) states, it wasn't until Bonny was about twenty-six years old that she would take on the role as a promised wife. Unfortunately Percy would die from asbestos poisoning, which was becoming a common occurrence for Aboriginal people due to the mining of asbestos at Wittenoom (Olive 1997). Further to this, *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* also indicates that Bonny would attend ceremonies as she comments to Olive (1997) that there was a big ceremonial ground at Shaw River where everybody would meet to catch up with what was going on around the place and that they would stay there for around two months for these meetings. It can be inferred from *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* for women's stories that this would have been a time for corroborees and law business and the period of time which Bonny indicates they would be away at these meetings would have occurred around the wet season.

Bonny's life as a stockwoman began from an early age. Both her parents were stock workers and from the information drawn from *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun*, Bonny's mother was a stockwoman and passed the knowledge and skills on to Bonny. Her family's base, as Bonny states to Olive (1997) was Bamboo Springs Station, and it was here that she would learn the dynamics of station life. Bonny also

states that there were big mobs of Aboriginal people at this station. Bonny's early experiences of station life were varied and while her mother would be doing the cooking, Bonny worked "in the house, set the tables for the boss was dishes, sweeping, make the beds, washing clothes, ironing" (Olive 1997, p. 103). With Bonny's father and mother both being stock workers, Bonny's experiences were not in the house alone and she would work with stock and this began when she was just small. Bonny recalls:

My mother reared me on a horse. When she used to ride a horse I would ride up behind her clutching her around the waist. And she loved riding and would often go chasing the cattle with me up behind her. I would have been about seven (Olive 1997, p. 103).

As Bonny's parents were stock workers it was inevitable that the Bonny would be required to work as a stock worker also. She commented to Olive (1997) that the boss would ask her on occasions if she wanted to go mustering and she didn't hesitate as she loved to ride horses. Looking at the situation of the area being able to go mustering would have bought a sense of freedom from station life. I relish in the chance to go mustering, the emotional well-being of being on Country and the freedoms from the "big house" chores. Also it would have been a way in which Bonny was able to learn intellectual cultural knowledge such as bush tucker etc. In relation to wages being paid Bonny's parents were paid about ten pounds, however,

Bonny was not paid a wage and was paid with “soap, dress, blankets, cool drink in tins, and condensed milk” (Olive 1997, p. 103).

Bonny’s life, like many Aboriginal people of the area, was a transient lifestyle moving to various stations in the area. She would move from Bamboo Downs Station to Mulga Downs Station once she was married to Percy. Percy worked for Tsakolas trucking asbestos and Bonny remained on Mulga Downs living in a bough shed out in the bush, however, she was to work on this station at the main house and was also able to go out mustering and was the musterer’s camp cook (Olive 1997, p. 104). Percy eventually left Tsakolas and became a dogger and Bonny would accompany him on the trips to perform this job. Travelling from Roy Hill station, Noreena Downs Station, Balfour Downs, Ethel Creek and then back to Marble Bay, they would then go to Corunna Downs Station back to Hillside and then down to Cowra out-station. Bonny comments that this would take about six weeks (Olive 1997, p. 105). The industry today is still very transient and this can be seen from lived experiences of the number of stations that I have been on. Moving from station to station though has bought me new knowledge from having to get to know Country.

Even though there were strict political policies in place and the fear of Native Police or Welfare, it is inferred from *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* that within this area there was a certain freedom that was experienced by Aboriginal people being able to move from one station to another and living a life in the bush learning intellectual cultural knowledge. Bonny talks of her experiences of being a stockwoman as being

able to ride horses and go mustering with either sheep or cattle, and there is no mention of specific experiences of days working with the cattle. Once again, like Mabel it can be assumed from my own experiences in the industry that there would have been some wild and hairy experiences in performing the duties of a stockwoman. Bonny's life is rich with intellectual cultural knowledge and the experiences of aiding in the continuation of the pastoral industry in the west. Sharing Bonny's story enables the acknowledgement and recognition for the role that she has played in the Australian pastoral industry.

### **Kimberley Stockwomen**

The heat at the end of the dry is oppressive and debilitating. For weeks the clouds of the approaching north-west monsoon appear, only to evaporate, bringing lightning and an occasional shower but no relief. Then come the big cloud formations, taking on the form of the Wandjina, and the rains pour down. The land and, with it, man and its animals are revitalized (Crawford 1981, p. 26).

The geographical location of the Kimberley's is influenced by environmental factors of the dry season and then the onset of the wet season. All life that resides within its boundaries is controlled by the land and the environmental determinants. Aboriginal people of the Kimberley have managed their intellectual cultural knowledge based on

Spiritual connections to land and their environment for tens of thousands of years. In the mid to late 1800s their world would be impacted by the new and their way of life would change forever. As has been discussed continually throughout this research, the strength and resilience of Aboriginal people would prevail and they would adapt and integrate the new world that was thrust upon them into their cultural and social dynamics. The Kimberley region was to be no different. Using the method of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and the *multiple relational narratives* framework, the stories of three Aboriginal stockwomen have been drawn from historical writings by Morndi (Billy Munro) a Merarra man. The major difference between these women's experience to my own, would be how we were all introduced to the pastoral industry. Furthermore, their experiences converse with my own which demonstrates that these experiences are continually relational.

Originally Mary Ann Jebb had ventured to the Kimberley region to document the move off stations by Aboriginal people. She was introduced to Morndi in the prospect of obtaining required information (Munro 1996, p. 155). Jebb cited in Munro (1996) was informed by Morndi that it would be better for him to pass on his knowledge and author the histories, so with Jebb's help Morndi articulated his knowledge of station life with the input from four other Contributors. Two of these contributors were Aboriginal stockwomen, Daisy Angajit and Weeda Nyanulla as mentioned in Chapter Three.

The extraction of information from Morndi's writings has been a difficult process due to the manner in which it was originally written. The historical perspective of

lived experiences provided by Morndi and the other Contributors has been conducted using an Indigenous lens through and by my positioning as a Koa stockwoman. In particular, Indigenous stories are circular and drawing information from these stories has been a complex issue, as they do not exist in a linear manner. They are intertwined and within stories there are other stories. In order to contextualise the stories I have needed to read and re-search various parts about Contributors in order to articulate the stories in a manner where the true essence remains intact. This is achieved by yarning with the literature through the *multiple relational narratives* framework.

### **Nurguworla**

Morndi Munro was a Law man and a head stockman for many of the stations within the area and well respected. His parents were stock workers and Munro (1996) comments that his parents worked for the early day's men. From the transmission of Morndi's knowledge it has been ascertained that Morndi's mother Nurguworla (Mary Anne) was a stockwoman and was still working as a stockwoman while heavily pregnant with Morndi. In order to ascertain Nurguworla's experience as a stock woman I used the method of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* to draw from Morndi's information the knowledge of his mother's lived experiences as a stockwoman and her intellectual cultural knowledge. It is here that we reveal the data contained in Morndi's writings. Firstly, Morndi's birthdate is debatable due to the lack of records that were kept in relation to Aboriginal people's birthdates. After deliberation with others and experiences it was ascertained by Jebb and people of his community that Morndi was about eighty years old in 1991, putting the time of his

birth around 1911. It is unclear as to how old Nurguworla was at his birth. Morndi shares his knowledge of the day his mother gave birth. Nurguworla and Linyit (Billy Munro) Morndi's father were working a stock camp between Kimberley Downs and Napier Stations (Munro 1996, p. 3). Heavily pregnant Nurguworla was still expected to work however she did ride in the wagon out to the yards. Munro (1996) explains how the girls were working the cattle just outside the yards getting them ready to move up to be branded. Nurguworla was at the yards preparing for the cattle. Nurguworla had to keep the fire going for the branding iron and then aided the other stockman when the iron was needed. Nurguworla while performing her duty suddenly felt ill and knew that it was her baby's time. Munro (1996) comments that Nurguworla told the manager that the baby was coming and then off she went with an old woman to where the bauhinia tree is in the paddock and this is where Morndi was born, as Morndi calls it "raw in the bush. I was born amongst the cattle in a dusty yard" (Munro 1996, p. 3-4). As has been shown from the Karijini and Yammitji people it was common practice for women to have their babies in the bush. Nurguworla would stay at the stock camp for about four days before she was sent back to the station with Linyit where she was to rest up for a while (Munro 1996, p. 4). Nurguworla and the grandmothers were Morndi's first teachers in intellectual cultural knowledge.

It is apparent that in Western Australia Aboriginal people, although under many policies and laws were able to continue to practice their intellectual cultural knowledge and that it was merely a matter of adjustment to allow for the cattle industry. Cattle work in the dry season and ceremonies carried out in the wet season. Morndi's education started as a little fella, watching his mother's every move. He

watched as she showed him where to get sugarbag and how to get it and how to dig inyanayi (yams) (Munro 1996). When Morndi was bigger, his dad took him to show him how to hunt and taught him laws relating to food distribution. Nurguworla would teach Morndi how to hunt the waters for various foods such as fish, turtle, duck and water lillies (Munro 1996, p. 9). Nurguworla, while working as a stockwoman between Kimberley Downs and Napier Stations, was able to teach Morndi all that he needed to know about the land, bush tucker and the knowledge of laws that were her place to pass on. Munro (1996) states that Nurguworla also taught him how to ride a horse and that right from when he was little she would carry him on a horse. Nurguworla would have been an experienced horse woman to be able to carry out this performance. It was Morndi's grandmother who taught him the laws about girls until he was at an age where he was sent to live with Kundi (which is someone who trains someone else discipline and how to control oneself). Munro (1996) states, that his grandmother was also a station worker. Morndi's transcribing of his knowledge goes into extensive detail relating to the continuation of the generational passing of knowledge from one person to another. It also highlights the Laws and shows how strong and resilient the tribes were. Further to this, it shows that the Aboriginal people integrated the cattle industry into their Cultural way of life, adjusting ceremonial performances to different times, in order to continue their Spiritual obligations, rather than just being absorbed into the new world of cattle life that had been abruptly thrust upon them.

## Daisy Angajit and Weeda Nyanulla



Figure 30: Daisy Angajit

Munro 1996



Figure 31: Weeda Nyanulla (Munro)

Munro 1996

Due to the inter-connectedness of Daisy Angajit and Weeda Nyanulla's lived experiences as stockwomen, I will keep true to their transmission of their stories to Morndi and collate their stories as intertwined experiences. Daisy Angajit is Ngarinyin, and was the first wife of Morndi. However, she comments that when she married a different man she then started to speak Bunuba (Munro 1996, p. 99). For the purposes of this research, the relationship and inter-connectedness between Morndi, Daisy and Weeda is highlighted in order to show how their lives and stories interweave and this created a complexity in extracting information about them. As stated, Daisy was the first wife to Morndi and Weeda would become Morndi's wife. Weeda was a promise wife also, although her promised husband got sick with leprosy and was sent to Darwin. Morndi fell in love with Weeda and took her as his

wife. This caused drama's amongst the people as he had done it the wrong way. There was a fight between Morndi and Weeda's husband where they used spears and in the end Morndi gave Weeda's husband presents and he was then able to marry Weeda. Daisy was away at the time with a bladder sickness and on her return found out about Weeda and Morndi and a fight was then had between Weeda and Daisy. Morndi's brother then decided that Morndi had two wives and he wanted one, Morndi was in love with Weeda, so he gave away Daisy to his brother. Daisy didn't stay long with him and eventually married a Bunaba man Bob. Daisy and Weeda were inter-connected with each other as they were sisters under the law from both being the wife of Morndi and their relationship and inter-connectedness would continue for their entire lives.

Daisy grew up around the stations of the Kimberley's and learnt both intellectual cultural knowledge and pastoral knowledge. Her experience with horses began at an early age and she learnt to ride when she was a young girl, first starting off with a donkey, as her step father drove a donkey team (Munro 1996, p. 102). Frightened at first, Daisy soon learnt to ride and would over time be given a mule and then finally a horse to ride, becoming a proficient horsewoman.

Weeda Nyanulla is Mundangarri from her mother's side and Wundigul from her father's side. Weeda's brother was killed in a riding accident, so the responsibility of caring for her father's Country became her responsibility. However, once she became married to Morndi, he would undertake the care for any sites that were men's business. Weeda like Daisy grew up on horses with her mum Manuworla and her

father Wundigul (Long Paddy or Police Paddy) carrying her around on a horse right from a young age (Munro 1996, p. 59). Weeda in her younger years witnessed many of the atrocities of the frontier and witnessed her father being sent to jail and then would not see him again until he was an old man. Jebb (2002) and Munro (1996) comment that Long Paddy had been arrested for shooting two men, however, Jebb further states, it was a white pastoralist Fred Potts who gave Long Paddy the rifle to carry out this task. Fred Potts would lose his permit for being able to employ Aboriginal people (Jebb 2002, p. 169).

Further to this, it is said by Jebb (2002) that Weeda, her sisters and other women were trained in stock work techniques and methods by Fred Potts. It has been difficult to piece the pieces together for Weeda in relation to part of her earlier years and believe this is due to the heartache and adversities that Weeda would experience. Munro (1996) states that Weeda when in her teens was a wife to a white pastoralist and that she had a child to this man, but like so many Aboriginal women her baby was taken away and she never saw the child again. Through using *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* for the research, I have only been able to ascertain that the father was a young white man at Mount Hart station. I have extracted this information from a combination of McGrath's (1987) and Munro's (1996) literature when I have yarned with the literature.

Weeda's life as a stockwoman was full of wild adventures in working with cattle and as with many of the men and women of the time they were known as "born in the cattle". An impediment to the research relating to Morndi, Weeda and Daisy is the

time period when certain events occurred. This has been because the research conducted by Morndi is in a circular manner, therefore, the research is only able to highlight the lived experiences as they have been expressed by the Morndi, Weeda and Daisy. Weeda comments to Munro (1996) that she was riding for a Billy Chalmers and a person named Edgar who owned Mount Hart Station and that it was Frank Gardiner who was the manager. She goes on to state that her sisters helped her to learn how to ride properly. At the time Weeda was working with Gardiner, she comments that there wasn't much cattle at the time, however, there were buffalo and that they would go out and get buffalo. The buffalo was then used to obtain the horns and make greenhide hobble straps out of the skin (Munro 1996, p. 104). From this it can be ascertained that it was around the early 1900s as the cattle movement into the Kimberley's occurred around this time. Gardiner would eventually become sick and while Weeda was taking him to the hospital he died at Myall's bore leaving Weeda the task of having to get the hospital nurse. After this occurred Weeda was taken to Bungarun for blood tests where she was given a clean bill of health and sent on her way. However, Weeda comments to Munro (1996) that she stayed at the native hospital for a while hand sewing blankets. My research has been unable to ascertain how long Weeda would stay at the hospital making blankets. Weeda goes on to remark that Jack Lee from Kimberley Downs Station came in to the hospital and asked her if she was ready to go. Weeda knew Lee as she had worked for him prior to this riding and cooking damper. On Kimberley Downs, Weeda worked as a stockwoman and comments that when she was working here it was at a time when she was still with her promised husband. Weeda further states that while she was on Kimberley Downs Station that she worked with Lulu and Dinah, they all rode on the station, although Dinah only rode sometimes and mainly drove the cart. While here

Weeda and the others would traverse the station to various paddocks in order to muster cattle. One such time, Weeda comments to Munro (1996) that they had to ride down to:

Richardson bore and then down to the police camp. From there, we went to Munjawilla and started the muster. We moved right through Marawon and Jimbalora. I was riding and those two girls were cooking and carting water. First mob ate dinner, then the other mob, then dinner for gardia (whiteman). We were branding for two days at Munjawilla, then back to the police camp and Raralji. Cutting out calves and putting bullocks in Kimberley Downs bullock paddock. We might be gone for one month in the bush. From there we stopped at the station (Munro 1996, p. 105).

Munro (1996) comments that Weeda stated that this experience occurred while with her first husband and that he was a bad man as he used to hit her and that she left him. Weeda's lived experience demonstrates that she was a significant participant and performer as a stockwoman within the cattle industry of Western Australia. It is through searching the relevant literature and data through *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* that we see the role that Weeda played in the pastoral industry.

Daisy's promised husband hit her and she comments to Munro (1996) that he hit her and that this was the time that Weeda arrived with Lee to Kimberley Downs. Weeda goes on to comment that she was on her horse and that she was yelling to Daisy to hit him. It is here that we experience Weeda on her "horse", revealing that she was involved in the industry. Analysing the literature also reveals the resilience of these women at a time of violence not only against women, but Aboriginal women in particular. Daisy then goes on to say that she was too young at the time to know about hitting properly. It should be noted that this fighting was part of their intellectual cultural knowledge in dealing with grievances. Weeda states to Munro (1996) that she had learnt to fight when she was young and that when fighting that you did not hit on the body or side of the head that you only hit on the top of the head.

From my research it is hard to ascertain how long Weeda and Daisy stayed at Kimberley Downs as Weeda then goes on to state to Munro (1996) that she had a fight with a girl and that at this time her and Daisy were now on Napier. It was here on Napier that Weeda and Morndi fell in love. This is also where Morndi and his brother had words about Morndi having two women and which one was he going to give to him. This is when Daisy then became the wife of Morndi's brother. Daisy goes on to comment that she was actually away at the time when this occurred and on her return she and Weeda had a fight, although she comments that it wasn't a proper fight just a cat fight. As stated earlier, Daisy did not stay with Morndi's brother and eventually married a man named Bob. At this time of the yarning, Weeda states to Munro (1996) that after the incident with the brother that she went off mustering around Konkurra way. Daisy and Morndi's brother left together and

were then working looking after racehorses around the Fitzroy Crossing and Derby area. After this, Daisy had been dissatisfied with the relationship and left Morndi's brother and went to work on Kimberley Downs for a Ned Delower (Munro 1996, p. 107). Daisy also comments to Munro (1996) that there was now old people camped at the station. When Colin Mildenhall took over as manager Daisy had a disagreement with the missus and left Kimberley Downs and went to work in the stock camp for Dumpy Jones. Here Daisy worked with Dumpy's missus driving the cart and riding horses and Daisy stayed with Dumpy's stock camp for two years and then moved to Brooking Spring. Daisy's experience demonstrates that she was a significant participant within the industry. From the research and my own experiences, language from area to area can change. In Western Australia where I am now, if you were a stock worker you were known as a rider. From this, I have ascertained that within the yarning with literature when referring to riding horses, this meant that they were performing stock work. Although the industry has moved forward and uses, helicopters, motorbikes and or buggies in mustering of cattle, numerous stations are still using or are going back to using horses to perform the task of mustering. This is for various reasons. In some cases it is because of the environment and others it is because it is seen as a means of stress less cattle management.

From yarning with literature, *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* further revealed that Daisy met her husband Bob when she was at Brooking Spring (Munro 1996, p. 108). Daisy notes to Munro (1996) that she and Bob did the same work while at Brooking Spring which was collecting firewood for the kitchen and stock work. It is here that we can reveal that this "same" work was pastoral or station work. Daisy goes on

further to say that she taught Bob how to cook. Both Daisy and Bob move to Leopold Station and continuing the task of cooking, from here Daisy comments to Munro (1996) that they then moved to Bedford Downs and then onto Landsdowne. While at Landsdowne they did not participate in any stock work. After a holiday time period Daisy and Bob did not return to Landsdowne, they went to work on Tableland where they worked for two years (Munro 1996, p. 108). The research was unable to ascertain where Weeda and Morndi were at this time.

The yarning with literature continues with Daisy, and as with other stations I have discussed, holiday time was a big part of cattle station life. Daisy remarks to Munro (1996) that she and Bob walked off to participate in holiday time and moved out to the bush camp for this period. As the research has shown from other voices, an important part of holiday time was the continuation of intellectual cultural knowledge. Daisy was no different. Daisy comments to Munro (1996) that on the way to bush camp they would catch fish, gather bush tucker and one particular point Daisy makes is about how to find green ant as once you obtain them they are crushed and made into ice-cream (Munro 1996, p. 113).

Weeda also converses with Munro (1996) about her experiences with intellectual cultural knowledge. She talks of catching kangaroos, crocodiles, turtle, goanna, quiet black snake, grubs, sugarbag, plum, water tucker and lilies (Munro 1996, p. 113). Weeda and Daisy both comment that they participated in going to bush camps at holiday time, although not specifically mentioned in the yarning's by either women, it can be ascertained that they would have participated in some way or

another in various ceremonies. This can be ascertained as the research has revealed that Aboriginal people had adjusted their time of ceremonies to occur with holiday time. Weeda and Daisy also hold strong connections to their own Songlines and Weeda does comment to Munro (1996) as stated earlier, that she was custodian of her father's Country and that Morndi would take over the role once they married. To further strengthen their connections to Country Morndi converses that "Weeda and me are married properly. Not that certificate way, we are kangaroo marriage in that way" (Munro 1996, p. 110). Although all were thrown into an unstable world, connections to Country and intellectual knowledge were continued and remain strong. The yarning now ends directly with Daisy and Weeda, however, there is interwoven within Morndi's story snippets of the lived experiences of both Daisy and Weeda.

With Morndi is Campbell Allenbar who is also a stockman of the Kimberley's and while yarning with Munro about learning to ride horses he states that "Girls learning how to ride too. ... We had a cook girl every time. And girls for tailing bullocks too" (Munro 1996, p. 58-59). Re-iterating the research that Aboriginal women were blurring the gender boundaries and were a significant figure within the cattle industry as stockwomen. Morndi was a respected stock worker throughout the Kimberley region and was in charge of his own team of stockworkers. As Weeda was his wife, she participated with Morndi as a stockwoman. Munro (1996) states that while they were in the muster camps there were lots of women there riding. He furthers this, by relaying an occasion when he asked Weeda to retrieve a runaway bull.

I'd get Weeda to go and take that bullock and shoulder him back to the mob. Weeda used to ride up to the beast, get off her horse and throw the bullock. Tie his legs with her neck strap, get a saw and cut his horns off. Then jump on her horse and shoulder him back, bumping him with her horse (Munro 1996, p. 119).

This is an amazing feat for anyone to perform and just adds to the admiration I have for these earlier Aboriginal stockwomen. As someone who has had to work with cattle, this is not something that I would attempt to perform in today's contemporary cattle industry.

Morndi continues the yarn and names four other women Eileen, Bella, Molly and Agnes who he says were also stockwomen (Munro 1996, p. 119). Confirmation, that many women participated within the cattle industry and played a significant role in the establishment and continuation of the pastoral industry.

Through the utilisation of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and the *multiple relational narrative* framework the research has identified that Daisy, Weeda, Nurguworla and Morndi were all significant figures in the pastoral industry along with their families and kin. All portrayed a strength and resilience in a time of great change, adversity and oppression. This allowed for the continuation of intellectual cultural knowledge, connection to Country and today the integration of the pastoral industry into their cultural dynamics. Kimberley Downs and Leopold Station are today owned by the

traditional owners of the area and aid in the self-determination and the social and emotional well-being of the community. This challenges the accepted versions of history concerning the lives and contributions of Aboriginal women in the pastoral industry as passive victims. Aboriginal women were stockwomen and blurred the gender boundaries and were significant participants in the establishment and continuation of the pastoral industry since colonisation.

This chapter has demonstrated through the *multiple relational narratives* framework and the utilisation of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun*, yarning with literature and my own lived experience premised in the real and the in depth participation and performance of Aboriginal stockwomen drawn from various discourses and literature. It has revealed that Aboriginal women were blurring the gender boundaries and performed the role of stockworkers in a patriarchal and paternalistic industry. It has further demonstrated the individual lived experiences of several Aboriginal women as stockwomen and how they aided in the establishment and continuation of the Australian pastoral industry. Further to this, it has established that Aboriginal women who were stockwomen were able to continue with their education and transmission of intellectual cultural knowledge after colonisation and the introduction of a new social and cultural dynamic, the pastoral industry.

## CHAPTER SIX: RELATIONAL NARRATIVES AND EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

Chapter Five was an elaboration on the information I obtained from *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun* and the *multiple relational narratives* framework in the yarning with literature. In doing so, we interacted with these important narratives of Aboriginal stockwomen. Extending on this yarning I now move into the next phase of the research. In order to continue the *multiple relational narratives* methodology, in this chapter, I present the yarning circles I conducted with Aboriginal Contributors and interact with these. This is achieved by presenting the yarning's from the Contributors in italics and then having my critical and relational response in regular text. It was important to interact and interpret the data from the Contributors with my own lived experience and critical analysis concurrently as this reflects a more relational and interweaving approach. In this chapter, I also reveal the experiential knowledge through my own lived experience and narratives and interact with my own narratives in a similar way. The italic text in this specific section relays my yarning and narrative and the regular text is my interaction with it. This is similar to the notion of insider/outsider as discussed earlier in this thesis. As discussed through Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010), yarning presents lived experiences and with this presentation, we illuminate and privilege Indigenous voices (Rigney 1997) in the research. This chapter is also significant in terms of presenting knowledge in relation of direct knowledge from the lived experiences of the Contributors and direct knowledge from my own lived experience. It is here that the basis of *multiple relational narratives* methodology is formed, through the relationality of the different positions of experience.

The following are the yarning circles conducted for the research. By doing so, I demonstrate the continuity of Aboriginal lived experience as continued knowledge production. My Elder Auntie Minnie aided in the finding of Contributors. Once Contributors were identified, I spent the next twelve months forming relationships with them through informal yarning. Within in the following narratives I have included other information that is not about the industry and specifically about these women being stock workers. This is important as these narratives build who they are and contribute to the relationships that were built and provide a deeper understanding of their contribution. The following narratives of Auntie Marj and Grannie Winnie Cobbo, Auntie Honor and myself need to be taken in the context of how we all came to participate within the Cattle industry. Auntie Marj's lived experience comes from being born into the cattle industry and as will be demonstrated within her narrative this was just how life was. Auntie Honor's performance and participation as a stockwoman is due to her forced labour in the industry and the control of her life through the political policies in play at the time. Lastly, my lived experience as a Koa stockwoman comes from my spiritual connection to Country and through the guidance of my Ancestors to be where I am living and working on Country and within the cattle industry.

Firstly, I will discuss the *relational narratives* of Auntie Marj and Grannie Winnie Cobbo. For this, I go back to the three criteria as mentioned in Chapter Two, synergies, relatedness and interconnectedness, multiple voices and contribution and performance. I am researching through this lens as I interact with the yarning and

the agency of their knowledge. The way I can find these three criteria is because of my own lived experiences within the industry. Their story (narrative) is relational to my story (narrative) and it is relational to relational to the industry and essentially it is relational to Country because this is the premise of Aboriginal society and my lived experience becomes the relational glue. It is important that my lived experience becomes the relational glue, ultimately this is where I get the chance to bring out the relational voices these are the voices of Aboriginal stockwomen and I am one of those. This is the political integrity of the research. I will demonstrate that they were not only significant participants within the industry. I will ascertain that they were able to continue the transmission of intellectual cultural knowledge through lived experience, manipulate, and manoeuvre within the dominating political atmosphere that was in force at the time.

### **Auntie Marj and Grannie Winnie Cobbo**



Figure 32: Auntie Marj, Simone 2015, private collection

Auntie Marj born 1946 and Grannie Winifred Cobbo born 1890 died 1989. Auntie Marj states:

*She would have had to have been in her 60s, when I came to live with her because she died at ninety-nine, although she wanted to live till she was a hundred. I come from a big family of fourteen children all up but four of them passed away.*

Following is a list of Auntie Marj's brothers and sisters:

Pauline - Born 1936

Gary - Born 1937 held Australasian Welter weight division boxing title

Kevin John - Born 1939

Lola - Born 1941

Kenny died at age six years from meningitis (1944)

Gregory - Born 1947 (Died at birth)

Gordon - Born 1948

Victor - Born 1950

Lenard - Born 1951

Judy - Born 1952

Geoffrey - Born 1953

Hazel - Born 1954

Clive - Born 1957

Auntie Marj continues:

*My brother died from meningitis and Colleen and Sandra died as toddlers, they were a year apart and they died a year apart. I reckon it was the poison from the fruit trees, but I don't know. It was just strange, they just died.*

The family always suspected that it was the pesticides that were sprayed around Gayndah.

*We had a good childhood out there, we really did, you know. My youngest sister Hazel and I both come from Gayndah and our tribes are Wakka Wakka, Kabi, Badjala and Gurang Gurang. I now live on Bribie Island in South East Queensland. I have graduated from University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 2004. My reason for returning to school was partly to set an example for my younger siblings. I was thrilled when my youngest sister Hazel and brother Clive followed that example.*

Both Hazel and Clive graduated with Degrees in Fine Arts.

*I have been active in helping our people overcome the trauma, as I believe was brought about by the transition from a traditional lifestyle to the lifestyle of today. Twenty-seven years ago Aunty Minnie, myself and several other women began an organisation, Nungeenas Aboriginal Corporation for Women's Business, this Organisation is still operating. Auntie Minnie and I are the only original surviving members. It is situated in the Glasshouse Mountains, on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. The site of the Organisation is situated on a Women's birthing site and is connected by a Songline to Uluru in Central Australia.*

It was revealing to see Auntie Marj discuss Songlines, which reiterated the importance of Cultural Knowledge in terms of geographical environment. This was discussed in both chapter three and four, and is furthermore clarified through Auntie Marj's narrative. She goes on to say:

*This was confirmed when two Traditional Women from Central Australia visited the Glasshouse Mountains in 1991, twenty-five years ago. Within minutes of their arrival, they fell to their knees and began wailing and crying, after an hour of this behaviour, which made those of us present, helpless to console them. They explained to us that they were happy because in their Dreamtime twin boys were born and one of them died and until now they didn't know where his spirit had gone. The Glasshouse Mountains were named by Captain Cook in 1770, as he sailed past them, they reminded him of ancient burial mounds in England called "Glasshouses" and*

*so it was they retained this name. To Aboriginal people however, it is a family group with twins being part of the legendary group, the two women knew this, although no one had told them, they explained to us that the twin that had died had come to this place along the connecting Songline from Uluru. There is no other creation story with twins anywhere in Australia. I was also involved with setting up a home work centre for primary and high school children for after school hours. Auntie Minnie was instrumental in approaching the State Government to secure a duplex house for this purpose. I also sit on the bench for the Caboolture Law Courts as I am an active member with Buranga Widjung Justice Group which helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth with essential services and all aspects of the Justice system. I am also an artist and love to draw and paint. I have quite a lot of my art work, hanging in Government Offices and in Hospitals in South East Queensland. I have had a great life and it started with living on a cattle station.*

*I grew up on a cattle station in Gayndah called Pennwaupell station. We didn't live in a house till I was about five or six years old, we lived in a tent on the cattle station. My dad was born in the old homestead and Grannie probably delivered him herself. My dad was the only one born on the station, the rest of the kids were born in the hospital; they must have become a bit more civilised then.*

The air fills with laughter.

*The tent we lived in, now I look back, seemed like one of those big circus tents, we had a stove and everything in there. There was a big creek that ran past the camp and we used to always see little wallabies down there. When my Mum and Dad came to Gayndah I moved into town as I had to go to school. However, I lived with my Grandmother Winnie Cobbo for a lot of the time. Grannie Cobbo was a stockwoman and worked on the cattle station. I remember going to the shows with Grannie, she used to do calf roping and all that stuff that the women do and learn out on the cattle stations.*

It is interesting how Auntie Marj comments “that stuff that the women do and learn out on cattle stations”. It is perceived as being a normal part of living and working on the stations. That women were stockwomen. This demonstrates that there was no gender divide out on the stations.

*She used to wear nice white shirt and jodhpurs and boots. It was my Grannie and Grandfather that moved to Pennwaupell after they got married and that is how my family came to be part of Pennwaupell Station: Grannie was about nineteen when she arrived at Pennwaupell. Grannie was riding and competing right up until she was in her sixties. Mr and Mrs Bambling owned Pennwauppel station, they were really nice people. My family still has close bonds with the station. It's been bore into them that we are their family. Cowborn was the name that my grandparents had to get married under. Cowborn (surname) is the name on the birth certificate, but during the past forty years has been spelt Cowburn. But after they were married they took back their name Cobbo. It was strange for the time, but apparently in the*

*old days the Aboriginal people would have four or five names. Grannie and Mrs Bambling were very young. Mrs Bambling didn't know how to cook, so Grannie had to teach her everything; even with the children, showing her how to make the bottles and food and stuff. She (Mrs Bambling) came over to Australia as a young English bride you see. Grannie did all that cattle work, droving and all that stuff. Working cattle all day and then camp muster cook as well. She was such a "Strong Woman", I've never met a stronger woman. We used to go with Grannie everywhere, we used to help her with the cattle dips and we all had our spots where we used to have to stand and move the cattle along when they would stop. "I asked about segregation". Oh no, not that family.*

There was no segregation of black and white and nor did any of the cattle stations that Auntie Marj's brothers and sisters worked on segregate people. This supports the research argument that race and gender lines were being blurred in remote areas during the pastoral movement. Pennwaupell is out west of Gympie in the Gayndah area. There is even a street named after Grannie Cobbo. Grannie and Grandfather still used language and knowledge for food collection.

*My dad got a house in town, you see, cause they had child endowment then it was like eight pound a month.*

You still own that property up there today where the house was?

*Yes, but someone stole the house, there is a brief pause from Auntie Marj then she continues her sentence with, and the toilet; oh, and the lemon trees there.*

The room fills with laughter. It is with laughter that a deeper relationality is building between the Contributors and myself. I am always reminded on the use of humour in Aboriginal culture and how this not only binds us together, but helps deal with the negative past.

*I get really sad when I think about it though. Our house was near a lovely creek and we had six acres that my dad built for us; we grew fruit trees and as kids we grew up running the creeks and swimming. Grannie and Mr Bambling would go out riding on the horses. When they would have to go droving, droving a few hundred miles, Grannie would go with them and drive the sulkie and take food.*

The trade route in the area is the trade route that links people to the Bunya Festival.

*Oh yeah, Mum used to go with them too. Pauline and them was only little then but they were allowed to go. They would sometimes drove cattle all the way to Dajarra to the railhead then across to Alice Springs. I love my other Grandmother, but Grannie Cobbo was just a beautiful little lady, she was just, the ants pants to me, cause I spent all my time with her. When Grannie decided to come into town to live, she rallied dad and all the brothers to cut all the trees down and take all the wood to*

*build the house. The house was built like, you know you see the old places that go up this way and that way then straight up the middle.*

Auntie Marj describes the house to me using her hands to show how the steps were designed. The house is an old Queenslander which has the Y shaped front steps which leads to the second story and a verandah. There was a verandah, where we had plenty of parties. So say if someone was turning twenty one or something, gran would let them have a party. Someone would come down to play music. I asked “What with a guitar?”

*Oh no, no guitars, accordions. They'd be playing all the deadly old songs, and it was just wonderful, you know. I was about ten when I went to live with Grannie Cobbo, she had no-one left then and I was the only one big enough; she took me a lot of places and showed me a lot of things. Grannies father was Chinese and he had married an Aboriginal woman, unfortunately she passed away when Grannie was only six years old. Grannie and her four sisters and her father, they were sent all the way to Barambah (Cherbourg Mission) on cattle trucks, they didn't care if it rained or not, nothing, they just threw them on. When they got there, they didn't see the girls for about three weeks. There was a girl's dorm and a separate boy's dorm. Grannie's father escaped with the girls from the mission, hiding at night, it was a really long walk.*

The significance of this is that we see the importance of interaction between peoples through song and gatherings, especially in light of being moved and separated. It is through her narrative that we get to experience her experience, and furthermore, get to present her strong voice. Driving the route today would take four hours. We roughly worked out that walking with small children and the distance that they would have had to travel would have taken them about two to three weeks. They made it all the way back to the original station; Auntie Marj believes it was Glenmore Station in Western Queensland.

*It was strange, cause no-one ever looked for them when they had gone missing. You know, a lot of them fella's they tried to stay out on stations, it was just horrible if you were sent into the mission. Grannie and her four sisters all worked cattle and they all married Aboriginal stockmen and they all lived to a good age. Grannie went to school too it was about 1903 when she was about thirteen years old.*

As the research indicates western education was not seen as useful in those times, Grannie would have been one of a few to be allowed to go to school. I asked about cultural education?

*Oh yeah, Grannie, spoke language and learnt traditional knowledge; even though you weren't allowed too. Bush tucker and medicines were still a part of life when out on the stations. There's a bora ring in Gayndah, I was only thinking about it the other day, it's just as you drive in. Grannie had to be a Jill of all trades, doing all*

*the cooking and looking after the white kids. It's hard work on the land, camp musters, mustering all day and then the cooking. She was a great horse woman.*

This demonstrates the multiple tasks that stockwomen would undertake. Aboriginal women showed great strength and resilience in, not only navigating this new world “the pastoral industry” that had been thrust upon them, but in the continuation in the transmission and practice of intellectual cultural knowledge.

*Grannie taught me so much living out there. She had a sulkie before she got the Buick. We would go down to Ban Ban springs and catch eels. Ban Ban Springs is very sacred place for Aboriginal people. We always stop there when we go through. It's like a big water hole where the water would seep up from the river; we always got a bottle of water from there to bring home. I used to go here a lot when I was a kid with Grannie. I'd see her, she would be talking to something in the water. I never really used to take any notice of her. This one time though she called me over and I was like Grannie what's the matter, she said come here quick, come on, come here. Here she was, she would be talking to this eel. She would be talking away to it, and it was such a pretty thing, with rainbow colours and pearly spots and she would be talking to it in lingo; and it would come up and suck her fingers. She made me put my hand in and let it touch my fingers. You know, I thought it never hurt her so I will be ok. I think she must have gone out there a lot. Ban Ban Springs was a place where they took all the people from way out west and dumped them and then they would be sent to Cherbourg and separated from their parents and the parents wouldn't see the kids for weeks. Girls would be separated from the boys.*

This demonstrates the multiple knowledge that Grannie Cobbo and Auntie Marj hold. This articulates the continual transmission of intellectual knowledge and how to live on Country. This reveals that even through the dispossession and removal of people from Country, that their existed a great strength and resilience of these amazing women. This illustrates that the accepted version of history is false and that Aboriginal women were not passive victims within the pastoral industry. This demonstrates Wilsons theory of there is stories within stories within stories.

*You know, there are muster camps named after my family. Where we lived on the station, Mr Bambling named that area Claudies camp and my Uncle Buddy he had a spring named after him, it was where he lived with his family and they call it Buddy Springs, and there is another place named after my Uncle Robin. You know cause that was their Country, their born Country. I asked my Uncle Dennis, where he was going to be buried. Are you going to get buried in Bundaberg with Auntie Barb. He said, NOPE. He said I'm going home. You mean Gayndah? No I'm going home to Pennwaupell.*

It was unfortunate that Auntie Marj was going back to Gayndah on the long weekend in June 2015 to take her uncle's ashes home. Mr Bambling has since passed and his son's son now runs the place. He came to the funeral and he spoke about how he felt really happy about being able to bury Uncle Danny's ashes on the property and they will be naming a camp after him now. Auntie Marj, her sister and her brother went

back to Pennwaupell after many years. She is really excited about going back to Country/going home. Auntie Maj continues:

*Things were different back then, dingoes were our pet dogs, and we ate lots of bush foods. One of the favourite things I remember doing growing up was going out to find dundals (witchety grubs) and yams. We used to cook the dundals but they could also be used for teething in babies. Also we used to love going out Saturday mornings with our little billy cans and with our little tomahawks to get the dundals and we would catch some jew and catfish. We tried to grow vegies but we had too much trouble with the wild animals, kangaroos and the like. So we had a mailman who would deliver food for us. We had a big old barn and a big old tractor; it was fun. My dad was good at water divining and we used it on the station to find water, he even taught me how to do it. I used to love going to see Grannie compete in the riding shows, doing the barrel race and what they call camp drafting now, where you have to jump off your horse and rope the calf. I was so proud of her you know, I'd be yelling that's my Grannie.*

This further illustrates that Aboriginal women were continuing to pass on intellectual knowledge relating to Country and in particular bush foods. From this I asked “So she would have been bull catching and that?”

*Oh yeah, she was. They (the women) were good buck jumpers, actually they were all good buck jumpers my father and all his brothers they were just fabulous*

*horsewomen/men. I remember one time the horse bolted over the fence and run up into the bush and next thing I see my Uncle Robin grabbed onto a gum tree branch and let the horse go, it was unreal to watch, oh the things that happened; I seemed to be there to see all these different things.*

*Anyway they built this house, it was a nice verandah, and then you walk straight down the hallway, there's one bedroom to the right, a lounge room to the left, then you went along a bit and there was a bedroom to the right, and the dining room to the left, that we would call a dining room today, but Grannie just had a table there, then you walk around behind that and there was another bedroom out the verandah there, big long sleep-out. All the boys slept out there, cause the boys had their room and the girls had theirs. All the kids had grown and left though by the time I got there. They are married and got kids. It was great living with Grannie.*

The conversation changes to a discussion of a painting that is hanging on the wall; we are told, that it is the painting of the Last Aborigine. This leads into Auntie Marj commenting about how one of her friends went over to China and how proud the women were of their culture.

*You know, Grannie made us stand up and be proud of who we were; she wanted you to stand tall and hold our back up. She used to whack us, hey you stand up straight, don't stand like that. She was a strong proud woman. There was this one family that didn't swim, cause we spent all our weekends swimming. We had to do our chores*

*before we could go swimming. We used to have to clean the house up and the boys would have to get wood. We had all these little kids with us and you weren't allowed to go down to the river unless you were able to swim. So we all learnt to swim, like by the time I was four I could swim. My brother taught me how to swim. I'd jump on his back and he would dive into the water, I learnt dog paddle first and then I learnt proper. Anyway, Grannie would take me to the creek, I used to get a bit frightened at the creek. You see, there was those little fellows down there.*

Auntie Marj is referring to the Junjudee, little spirit men. Laughter fills the room. Junjudee's a small little hairy men that normally are seen by children. I swear the Grannie's used them to scare us kids from going to places or doing things that we shouldn't.

*There was this one time, I was running away from my Mum. She said "wash up" and I said "no, I'm sick of washing up". I raced out the door, hiding from her. I ran, jumped on this little hill jumped down off there and ran around behind a big bottle tree to hide from her – she was chasing me with a stick – and I jumped and there he was sitting there, this little man, he was wearing a hat and pants and little brown shoes, it was Junjudee, and I was nearly going to jump on him and I got such a fright; I run back to Mum and got a flogging, I didn't go down there again for about six months cause I was so scared. Dad never hit me, but Mum did, but she had too, I was a naughty kid. You know I used to run away from dad, I was a bad kid. I would run and get away and then turn around and pull faces at him.*

The room fills with joyful laughter. Once again, the relationality between the Contributors, people and me grows deeper through humour. We are all laughing and acknowledging who we all are concurrently. It is this sharing of knowledge, which creates a deeper interconnectedness. In addition, it is knowledge and humour together that creates a different form of agency and connectedness. This is similar to the notion of knowledge moving in circles and is ceremony as stated by Wilson (2008). This is also as Kovach mentions the relational glue.

*My dad was a funny man, who was a good man and he was a bad man. What I mean by bad was my dad was a bit of a jealous man he was of my mother. Mum might have come home in a taxi so he would get jealous of that taxi driver or Mr Dunn give her clothes for the kids, he'd be like what he give you clothes for and stuff like that, you know the green eyed monster. Mum would say don't be stupid Claude. We knew that dad would go to the pub for a drink on the Friday, all our cousins would come over and we would stay down there at the creek, and we knew dad wouldn't come looking for us; well, not while he was drinking, I think he was frightened someone was going to grab him. We'd camp down there, we loved it, take our billy can, it was good, all our cousins loved coming down to our place, cause all their parents drank. It was sad because I'd say Mum here they come, school was out you see, I'd say Mum here come the Hawkins, here come the other kids, the Carol kids, coming across this way, more kids coming across that one. One would have a loaf of bread and another would have a tin of syrup and things like that and dragging the blanket. Me and Lola would sit there till dark pulling all the bindy eye out of the blankets, we couldn't have*

*the little ones sleeping with them like that. We would all sleep the night at the creek; next morning we would wake up and have a swim. Nobody frightened us. But dad, be there next morning early, 'Hey, get up, breakfast is ready, I made you porridge for you kids, get up'. You know Mum never worried about us not coming home. You know she would never get mad at him for not coming home and that. I just wanted her to get mad at him.*

The room is still filled with silent laughter and has a warm comfortable feel to it. There have been positive and negative recollections, taken in their stride, some laughed about and some striking a cord to the heart. These women showed great strength under the harsh reality of station life, just taking everything in their stride. It is here that we experience the value and power of yarning, building relationality together.

*Anyway, the house had a nice big kitchen and then stairs that went straight down. Oh, and the big tubs. Do you know them big tubs? Everybody used to bath in those big tubs. Anyone get sick or hurt, Grannie be there with condy's crystals, she had everything for our sores.*

I asked if Grannie used bush medicine.

*Yes. Dad used to chip this thing off the tree and the water used to go red. I don't know where that tree is, but it's not far from where we lived. And there was other medicine Grannie used to get, when we had asthma. Grannie would boil up this stuff on the wooden stove, cause we only had the wooden stove then, we would then have to drink it; it stopped the asthma. Grannie used to make it up for Grandfather.*

As discussed in Chapter Four, Aboriginal women continued to practice their intellectual cultural knowledge of Country. Grannie Cobbo's cultural knowledge is seen here through her use of bush medicines. This is the relationality, which comes from knowing Country, and the continuation and transmission of intellectual cultural knowledge in terms of knowing Country

*He died before I was born, but he came to when I was living in the house with Grannie. He came straight to my bed, and he looked at me like this, Auntie Marj shows me the look her grandfather made, she continues, I knew it was grandfather, because he just look like my uncle, with the rag around his head and I said to my dad when I went home, and he said, Oh that's your grandfather he just come to check you out and see if you alright cause he would have known that you were sleeping over there. Dad said did he have a rag around his head? Yeah, he did. Ah, he had a napkin he used to put around his head as he used to get headaches. My grandfather he died from that asthma and my uncle too.*

Nothing more was said about this. The atmosphere of the room is warm and inviting. There is a pause in the topic and general conversation is had about what's been going on in the community and updates on family and friends. A cup of tea is brewed and we enjoy a time of inconsequential conversation. It is late afternoon and the cool of the evening starts to set in. Slowly the conversation turns back to the topic, and what was transmitted next, I did not see coming.

Life on stations was hard, even for those who were under the watchful eye of decent owners. Aboriginal people may have been dispossessed and oppressed, but there was still a means of communication between people of great distances. People were able to attend to family matters, funerals or cultural obligations. Situations may have changed and movement might have been hindered and harder to pull off, but it wasn't impossible, as it seems. Auntie Marj continues:

*I was lucky enough to go to school; Grannie was big on making sure we got an education. Grannie's house was on the other side of the creek past the golf club. First there was my parents place, then the golf course, and then where Grannie lived. It was all along open creek and that runs into the Burnett River. The Burnett River comes from Bundaberg up there. I come home from school one day and I get to the house and I saw Grannie cooking. She was forever baking by then; she got to be a good cook in the end.*

The room fills with warm laughter.

*I said “Gran, what are you doing making that big stew, there’s only me and you”. She said, “Listen, we’re getting visitors tonight, so hurry up and get changed”. I said, “oh yeah, who said visitors are coming”. She said, “I said”. I said “You got no phone, how do you know”. She said, “I just know”. I said, “How many visitors”? She said, “I won’t know till they get here”. I was a bit of an inquisitive kid. Laughter flows. In the end she had to tell me, she sat me down and said “Marj, I want to tell you something, you’re not to tell anybody about our visitors we’re getting tonight. I say “Why Gran, why”? She says, “They’ll put you and me in jail. The bully man will come and get us and put us in jail so you’re not to tell anybody”. In our dining room there was the big long dinner table and I had to put the table cloth on it and set the table up with mugs and plates and cutlery. You know, all Aboriginal people always had the biggest table. We were in the kitchen and she kept looking out the window. I was getting a bit frightened, because I was thinking, where are these people coming from? In the end she looked at the window and she said, they coming soon, I said, “Oh yeah”. She said, “Come over to the window and she said see that big tree there, the one with the red rag around it, that’s how I know they’re coming. You do not tell anyone about this, this is what is going to happen here in this house tonight and it will be happening more than once. They would put this red rag around the tree on one of the big limbs and that’s how they told us that they were coming. They never came up to the house; they couldn’t, because they were frightened that somebody would ring the police. The bully man would come take these people away. This was my first time that I had participated and I was getting a bit scared. Anyway, as soon as it got dark Gran said “They’re there now; we’ll go and get them”. I said “get who”? I thought Grannie was going a bit mad. So, we were going down these stairs,*

*and she's hanging onto my hand and I'm hanging on tight to her hand while we walked down to the creek. Gran would do a big cooe and all these black heads would pop up. 1, 2,3,4,5, and I didn't know who these people were. And I said "Who are these people Gran"? Next minute, all these people they'd run up and they be hugging her up and kissing her, some calling her Auntie Winnie others calling her Grannie Winnie, some calling her other names. She said "Look, this is Claudie's daughter", and they'd be hugging me up and then we'd race upstairs and Grannie would give them a big feed. I would have to get the big dish out, one of them big old enamel dishes. We had a tap on the side of the old wooden stove; that's what we used for our bath water. Grannie filled the tub and put in her condy's crystals in it, cause all these people, had sore fingers, sore arms, sore legs, sore feet. Grannie would bathe their feet and wrap all the bandages around them. I'm not sure how long they had walked, but I do know that All my mob were on stations, way out on stations all over Queensland.*

As discussed in Chapter Three, there were political policies and permit systems at play within the industry that restricted peoples movements. People found other means of moving across country for cultural, social and kinship obligations. This demonstrates the relationality between people and kinship obligations.

*Someone up at Munduburra or out that way might be getting married or someone might have died or someone sick in hospital, places as far out as Biloela, Theodore, oh just all over, cause everyone worked on cattle stations. We cleaned them all up and gave them a big feed and they were happy. Grannie always had heaps of clothes,*

*her wardrobe was just full. I did question her about all the clothes and she told me that the Country Women's Association gave her all the clothes to clothe the Aboriginal people and all the families. I used to say to the Aunties come over I'll get you a few dresses. See they would let me go to the matinee. We all laugh. So, all these people that would come in we would give them all a bag of clothes as well. After they had had a feed, we would then hurry up and clean up and put everything away. We had to do this, just in case the bully man came. We never had any problems with the native police. My Grannie was a tough old lady, she would never have let them take us. If any of us kids had an accident or something happened, Grannie was always the first one there to help us. Grannie used to have Buick, a black Buick, and they were a big car, and these Aboriginal people weren't fat they were nice and slim. When Aboriginal people had to go away, to weddings or funerals or parties, they would ask to go, but they would be told they couldn't leave. So they would wait till it was night time and a little tribe of them would jump over the fence; it was barbed wire to you know across the top of the fence. They would get some food to eat and then travel up the Barambah creek, and only at night, they couldn't travel in the daytime, because the farmers, cattle station owners might have seen them. Oh, they must have known that road by heart. They used to catch fish from the creek and they would bring us fish. It was nice too. In the morning, we set the table but we only set the table for two, two cups, two plates and spoon for our porridge. After the first time of the morning happenings I knew what to do each time. Gran would just say, "You better go out to the verandah now Marj, you've left your ball out there. However, I remember the first time it happened, I must have been around ten at the time. She said "Now Marjie, the bully man will be coming here soon. You know what the bully man is don't you"? "Yeah, policeman". "Now, I want you to bounce that*

*ball on the verandah, when the bully man come you still bounce that ball and now yell out to me when you see him coming". You see, the bullymen had to round this corner, go all the way to the other end to the next corner and then turn left into Grannies place. When you got to Grannies place, you know when they were building the house; they built the fence a fare way from the house. He put all these big poles all together, so the bullymen couldn't drive straight in. They had to get out and walk. So from the time I saw the bully man till he got to the house and out of the car was a good fifteen minutes, by which time everyone would have hidden and Grannie would be downstairs or on the verandah. She would stand tall and proud and she would say, "What can I do for you sergeant? She would say it really nicely. Sergeant replied, "Listen here, Winnie, I've come here, looking for some people who ran away from Cherbourg. You've got people here, haven't you"? I'm not sure if it was called Cherbourg then cause it was Barambah, cause that's the creek they walked up it was called Barambah Creek, that come all the way from Cherbourg and then into the Burnett river and into Oakey Creek and that's where we lived. Grannie said, "No, I haven't! There's no-one here just me and my grand-daughter". Policeman commented, "Well I'll just come look inside". So they would walk upstairs into the house and they couldn't find them and Grannie would follow him back downstairs again. Some bullymen were nice but a lot of them were very nasty and some were real rude to her. By the time the bullyman and Grannie would be coming in the house all the visitors were all in their hiding spots. He would then say, "If you see them people from Cherbourg, you let me know, Winnie Cobbo" and Gran would say, "Yes sergeant, yes sergeant, yes sergeant. Hidden inside the house, were people in all sorts of places. The younger ones used to climb up in the manhole and lay down in there and the bullyman used to walk past. All the old people, I'd hide them in*

*Grannie's wardrobe and push all the clothes over them. You know, all the time that Grannie did this and when I was doing it with her, they never found anyone at our place. The bully man would leave, none the wiser to what was hidden inside. Grannie and I would stay outside till the bullyman would go. The whole time I would be bouncing the ball and saying "Stay there, stay there" and when he left, I would say "The bullyman's gone now, hop out". They would all jump out and Gran would say "Come on now, we'll all have a bit more tea or a cup of tea". We then had to wait till it was dark. They all had their clothes. You see, we couldn't leave town until the lights went out. In those days as soon as it was twelve o'clock in the small country towns all the street lamps went out. As soon as it was midnight Gran would get her big black Buick and get everybody in the car; give them a few more clothes to put on, and to take with them, we'd put them in the car, then we'd drive up around the cemetery, straight across the bridge, up to the next town, to Munduberra. So we'd stop there and let some people off, then we'd drive to Eidsvold and let some people off. There were other people meeting them and they'd take them on to other places, like Biloela or up that way. Grannie only ever drove as far up as Eidsvold. We would go in the back of places, so that we wouldn't be seen. They must have written each other letters, I'm not sure. "Or maybe it was the start of the Murri grapevine" interjected by myself. We all laugh. Who knows? Anyway, they would go see all their family and mob. It was pretty sad, as their family were sick and they would be out on stations. Once we dropped them off we journeyed home. I remember this one time Grannie said, alright now get in the back and lay down, you got school. I said, Oh do I have to cause I tired. She said yes you do. I remembering commenting "I'm not happy about this you know".*

The room alights with joyful laughter. Aboriginal people although were operating under the political policies that were in play, they were able to manipulate the oppressive system. This was achieved in the underground manoeuvring of people across Country to attend to cultural and kin obligations. Aboriginal women showed an amazing strength and resourcefulness to the pastoral industry and the colonial powers at be.

*You know when they took all the people and put them in the missions, they only took the ones that couldn't work. They didn't take the people that could they were all out on cattle stations, all the different cattle stations. So they go see all their Aunties and Uncles, Sister, Brother, got drunk, had a good time, spent all their money they had, and then when they finished, they'd go see the bully man, and get a ride all the way back, they didn't have to book it; they had new clothes, new shoes and away they went, they went home. I tell you what though their foot was worn out by the time they got to Gayndah, walking on all those stones.*

I asked, if this secret underground transporting went the other way, from the stations to Barambah/Cherbourg.

*Oh yeah, definitely. Station life was hard you know but it was a lot of fun too. I think we were pretty lucky as kids and being able to learn all the things that you get to do on cattle stations. The saddest part though was if there had been something bad happen, like if a girl had got raped. There was this one time when Gran got this call*

*one night, it was about a young woman who had runaway and that she had runaway about three that afternoon. So Grannie and I had to get up, get out of bed and go and look for this woman. Cause Grannie had the telephone by this time. She was the only Aboriginal person that had the telephone. Gran and I would be in that little old car (mind you remember it's a Buick) and I'd be leaning out the window with the torch, in the middle of winter, we all have a little giggle, looking for this girl. Gran said, you look that way and I'll look this way. I said, righty oh. Anyway, I said, there she is Gran, back there, after hours and hours. Grannie stepped out and spoke to her. Her name was Emily. Gran asked, what you doing bub? She started crying, and she said, Mr so and so raped me, and his son raped me another day and the grandfather raped me another day. It's alright bub, you come with me, you come home with us. Emily wasn't the first girl that was helped. She would take them home and look after them, put them up for a couple of days, cook them nice meals; they wouldn't have to go to hospital cause Grannie would look after them so well. Then Grannie would go tell the police.*

This demonstrates that Aboriginal women were not passive victims and challenges the false assumptions placed upon women of the time. The narrative once again shows a knowing of Country, intellectual knowledge and multiple knowledges that are present within the narrative.

*The last one I remember is Emily Wragg, she was pregnant; they were all pregnant. It was so sad; I used to cry a lot, it was just real sad. Emily had a little boy. Emily passed away at childbirth. And it was lucky that the little boy got to come home. You*

*know farmers were different to station people. Farmers would take all the young girls and boys and work them hard.*

This was the harsh side of the pastoral industry, and how pastoralists dominated all Aboriginal people's lives especially Aboriginal women. There was not a lot Aboriginal women could do when faced with this form of injustice from pastoralists on isolated stations.

The atmosphere of the room has changed. Sadness lingers in the air.

*Mr Bambling he was a good man. When we were kids we used to swim all the time and we could swim anywhere but this one watering hole. Dad would tell all us kids, you can swim anywhere you want but just don't swim in that waterhole. We never swam there we were too scared too. Mr David Bambling, the owner, well he had a daughter and she was always at boarding school, so she didn't spend time with us other kids swimming and that. I will never forget the last time she would come home from boarding school for the holidays and she had brought a friend home with her this time. Anyway, the two girls decided they would go out horse riding, it must have got hot, so they went for a swim in the waterhole.*

Auntie Marj pauses for a while before continuing.

*They were found later, both clinging together with horrified looks on their faces. I recall Mr Bambling commenting, that he knew that Claude had told all the kids not to swim at the waterhole and he had wished that he had told his daughter.*

Auntie Marj didn't elaborate any further on the details on why the waterhole was a sacred place that was prohibited and I didn't push for the sharing of this intellectual knowledge. This demonstrates that intellectual cultural knowledge continued to be passed to the next generation and in particular the taboo's and sacredness of Country and the lores/laws of living on Country.

This is where our conversation ends as it is late in the day and we all enjoy a nice cuppa tea to end a beautiful, enlightening day.

Through being able to relive Auntie Marj's story, I have learned a great deal of knowledge. Auntie Marj and Grannie Cobbo are both significant women in the transmission of Intellectual Cultural Knowledge and their participation within the pastoral industry. Auntie Marj's whole family were and still are significant participants within the pastoral industry and the sharing and transmission of Cultural Knowledge and ensuring that the children and youth of today have the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate within the modern world without losing their culture. The yarnning circle allowed me to appreciate the multiple knowledge that Aboriginal women had. It enabled me to see that there is stories within stories within stories. It revealed a continued use and transmission of intellectual knowledge

relating to all aspects of Aboriginal life. It demonstrated that although there were political agenda's at play that Aboriginal women showed great strength and resilience and were significant participants within the pastoral industry.

The following narrative to be discussed is Auntie Honor's.

### **Auntie Honor Cleary**



Figure 33: Auntie Honor, Simone 2013, private collection

Frail from her hard years, Auntie Honor is very welcoming to our visit for yarning and the jug is on the boil to make tea and coffee as soon as we arrive. Auntie is very eager to tell her lived experiences. Auntie Honor was fifteen years old when she

would start her lived experiences on stations, firstly on a sheep station and later with cattle. She would leave the industry when she married. Auntie is a strong lady of spirit with the harsh life that she lived but stated that it was those lived experiences that have made her who she is today, “A Strong Black Woman”. The yarning an informal yarning and cross conversations occurring in between the exchange of information. As we talk there is people coming in and out and one of those is a lady who wants Auntie Honor’s time to talk about the project which she is undertaking relating to ensuring that young Aboriginal children aged four start kindergarten. After leaving the industry and having children, Auntie Honor dedicated the next thirty-four years of her life in early childhood education. Auntie Honor was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Central Queensland University for her dedication and services to the community and education. Auntie Honor commented that she believes that it is important for children to attend kindergarten as it provides them with the skills that they need when they start primary school.

*Prior to working on a station I had to do training as a nurse for four months. I was sent out on to a station at Blackall, however, Auntie caught the wrong train and ended up at Blackwater near Murgon. I then had to wait for the next train with the station master, who called the station owner to let her know what had happened. I had to carry a permit with me for this journey which stated what the purposes of my travel and work were. I got out to the station at Blackall which held mainly sheep. When I arrived it was shearing time and there were about thirty workers in the shearing team. Where I had to walk was quite a distance to where the shearers were and I went down and all the shearers were drunk by this time and there was an Indigenous woman there and she was drunk with them, I was scared and the next day*

*I went up and asked if she could take me with her and she did and she was drunk around the pubs.*

Auntie Honor was one of many Aboriginal people that were under the umbrella of the political policy of the permit system which dominated her movements and life.

*I was then sent back to the dormitories at Cherbourg for six months scrubbing floors and it was hard after six months then I went to work in the kitchen.*

Auntie Honor was punished for her inability to be a successful worker on this station even though this was out of her control. The patriarchal system that was in play dominated all her life.

*Then came another job on a station, it was cattle and sheep that one, it was at Inglewood, outside of Warwick. So I went out there and I got there alright as the station people met me at Warwick and took me out there. Nobody to talk to, only the postman twice a week, in your little room, oh but it was hard at first. I did everything on the station, I used to have to bring the cows in and checking up the fences for the dingoes, collecting wood for the combustion stove. I would have to take the meals up at different times and a bell would be rung and I would then have to take the next course up to the house. It would be 9pm before you would get to bed. I had a room underneath the station manager's house, which was a lot better than*

*the first station I was on which was with all the other workers in quarters. The Manager had daughters that lived at boarding school and they treated you like slaves when they came home. They would come home for holidays and put their orders in for food. I remember one time one of them had asked for an omelette and by the time I walked up to her room with it, it was flattened and she threw it at me and then told me to clean the mess and get out. That's the way they treated you. You had to be a Jill of all trades on the station but today "I'm a strong black woman for what I had gone through". So that was my second job, and but I wasn't game to leave it, I stayed there two years, it must have been hard, but they were pleased with me and sad to see me go. They were nice, they just had to carry their duties and get what they could out of you. You had to fight for your wages, you didn't get much wages and I used to ask for permission to draw wages to send to my mum to help with food. All the cattle people, our old Uncle Sam bred cattle up around Redgate and he bred cattle for Angels, they owned a butcher shop in Murgon. Old Uncle used to go droving for weeks, and Auntie Daisy and their daughter Nancy with her husband Colin used to go droving with Uncle all the time. I remember my first time down at Redgate and I had to go milk the cows and I tied up the wrong leg and Uncle Sam looked at me and said "Hey you want to get your head kicked in" (jovial laughing). Auntie Daisy did a man's work and work hard with working cattle and eventually ended up bed ridden from the days of riding horses. Auntie Daisy was a significant participant within the pastoral industry and performed all aspects of cattle work such as mustering and the processing of cattle. All the girls were really good horse women. After bringing in the cattle the women would be there helping in the yards with branding. I remember my first time I saw cattle being branded "I cried". We used to get fed bones and tripe and all the horrible left overs of the cows.*

*All good quality meat was sold for Non-Indigenous people. It wasn't fair, because we worked hard.*

This can be seen through the social stratum of stations at the time and the dominance over all aspects even the distribution of food rations.

Although Auntie Honor didn't spend her whole life in the industry, she did experience the harsh realities of the paternal colonial policies that dispossessed, oppressed and forced labour of Aboriginal people and particularly women. Having to carry a permit in order to move around as the environment was still under the force of the Native Police and the forced entrapment into the missions. As Auntie Honor states, times were hard and scary for a young Aboriginal woman at the time and her story shows the strength and resilience of our Aboriginal women at a time of adversity. She is a "Strong Black Woman" of the community ensuring that the children of the future can have the best and equal opportunities that were denied to her.

As stated in conducting the research one of the ethical requirements due to the sensitive nature of the research was that I have an Elder with me to guide and ensure that I adhere to cultural protocols. My Elder Auntie Minnie contributes to the yarning circle. This was from a yarning circle with a Contributor who for cultural reasons was unable to be part of the research. However, this is important to include and contributes to the *relational narratives* that are formed with yarning circles.

## Auntie Minnie Mace: Koa Custodian of knowledge



Figure 34: Auntie Minnie, Simone 2014, private collection

*My Birth name is Lynelle Mace, but at the age of three my cousin Charlie Chambers nicknamed me Minnie. I have an older brother named Michael, because Micky and Minnie Mouse were created around that time, so Micky and Minnie Mace stuck with us. I am a Koa woman by my Grandmother and my Grandfather was taken by an African Circus from Cooktown in the late 1800s. When the circus returned overseas, Grandfather was abandoned by them in Melbourne to fend for himself. As a teenager it would have been very tough existing on the streets especially since his knowledge only allowed him to survive in the bush, he was quite unprepared for life on the streets of a strange City and large unfamiliar town. A solicitor named “Charles Chambers” took Grandfather under his wing and gave him his name and*

*formally had him christened "Charlie Chambers". Eventually he sent Grandfather to Maloga Mission, which is on the Victorian side of the Murray River. In the later part of the 1880s, Grandfather Charlie returned to Queensland. It was recorded in Daniel Mathews Diary, that he was good friends with another Missionary by the name of Father Gribble, who had earlier written to Mathews that the Lord's work was needed in the North. So Reverend Mathews closed his Mission and packed up his home and family and set out to establish a Spiritual Church in the Glasshouse Mountains near the East Coast of Southern Queensland. Due to a lack of funds and government support for Daniel Mathews and his family, they returned to South Australia during the early 1890s. Grandfather Charlie Chambers, after the departure of the Mathews family was sent to Fraser Island off the coast of South Queensland. Fraser Island was one of a group of sand Islands which are the largest group of sand islands in the world. Father Gribble was unable to grow enough crops to feed his charges at the time, due to the infertile conditions of the soil. As fate would have it, Father Gribble had recently received a letter from his father in Cairns, describing a site just south of Cairns, which would be ideal for establishing a mission. Shortly after Father Gribble set sail for North Queensland, with all of his Aboriginal Flock including my Grandparents. Father Gribble landed just south of Cairns and today it is called Yarrabah Mission. Soon after arriving in North Queensland Father Gribble put an expedition together to travel inland to Kowanyama to bring a herd of cattle back, my Grandparents. Father Gribble entrusted only two Aboriginal men to carry and use a rifle for the purposes of supplying wild game. My Grandmother Nancy Watson was to be the stock teams cook on the way up to Kowanyama and aided in the droving of cattle on the return trip. I believe that this was just one of many times that Grannie worked droving*

*cattle. Grannie had her own horse and this is what she used when she would have had to muster cattle, she was a great horse woman. She performed in all aspects of cattle management relating to mustering, processing of cattle and the maintenance involved in station life, such as fencing, checking waters and maintaining of her horse for stock work.*



Figure 35: Nancy Watson, Mace ND, private collection

As with other Aboriginal women in this research Grannie Nancy Watson blurred the gender boundaries and participated not only in cooking for the muster or droving team but had to perform the task of cattle work and therefore was a stockwoman.

*When my grandparents first arrived in Yarrabah, Grandfather had a wife called Winnie, who later died during childbirth. Some years later in 1905 Father Gribble*

*performed the Ceremony uniting my Grandmother Nancy, a Koa Woman in Marriage to my Grandfather Charlie Chambers.*

As discussed in Chapter Four, Koa Country is located in south Central Queensland and our creation story is based on Two Eagle Hawk Brothers. It is here, that we can reveal the significant contribution that these narratives make to not only the pastoral industry but also to our collective histories.

*Growing up in Brisbane, I always remember having families from Cherbourg Mission coming to stay at our house, sometimes for weeks or longer until they got employment and accommodation then moving on. Our house was always full. When my grandmother came down from Cherbourg mission, I would share Mum and Dads big bed with her. I grew up with the old values and rules one of which was “children should be seen not heard”. Because of this I got to hear all of the old story’s, one in particular was told to mum by Grannie about Yarrabah Mission, that if you climbed up one of the Mountains that surrounded Yarrabah and entered a slim opening in the rock face, you would find that it opened into a large cavern and on the rock wall was painted a huge Maori longboat, I had heard that story during the late 1950s. Forty years later I heard the rest of the story of that longboat. I was invited to the TAFE College at Kangaroo point in Brisbane to meet some Maori exchange students, travelling with them was an Elderly Gentleman who was in charge of the Marae in Rotorua, New Zealand. At the conclusion of the meeting this Maori gentleman spoke to us of a ceremony that they still do in New Zealand to celebrate their long journey to the land of the long white cloud. During their voyage the boat of his ancestors got*

*separated from the other boats and landed on the shores of the Uri Maroa People, which translates as “Very Ancient people”. He also added that his old people believe that it was the east coast of Australia that they had landed on and spent time there twelve hundred years ago.*

With families separated and dislocated it makes it difficult for us to find our histories. This is why the narratives extracted from the Contributors and the yarning with literature about the role these important women played is vital to constructing histories for future generations.

*It was only around five years ago that we found out that Grandmother Nancy had another sister that we were totally unaware of and that Grandfather had three other brothers.*

This is why this research and further research is important not only to set historical assumptions correctly but to find the missing links that were caused through the political agendas of moving people to different missions and/or stations and through what is now known as the Stolen Generations.

## Tauri Simone: Locating My Space



Figure 36: Tauri Simone, Simone 2016, private collection

This following section of this chapter relates to my experiential knowledge and I am going to write it in a way that I am moving inside and outside of my own experience in order to communicate it through this thesis. I do this in a similar way to the previous section on the Contributors in the yarning circles. Firstly, I have shown I have yarned with literature and the secondary interviews. Secondly, I have yarned with Contributors through yarning circles in order to validate the agency of knowledge. By doing so, I demonstrate the continuity of Aboriginal lived experience as a continued knowledge production. I have separated this lived experience section in order to demonstrate that all Aboriginal stockwomen have entered the pastoral

industry in different ways and for different reasons. In my case and lived experience, this is very true for me.

For this research I am not only the researcher, I am also the student to my Contributors and a Contributor to developing an understanding of social and cultural dynamics relating to the research topic. Sharing the story of my lived experiences provides a further insight and grounding for the research project and helps paint a picture of the current context of the pastoral industry. In order to construct or etch the picture I must start at a time shortly prior to my introduction to the industry and the experiences that not only led to my participation but also how I came to view the industry in the way I have. As discussed earlier, I have interacted with my own narratives and have demonstrated this by having my yarning's in italics and the interaction/analysis of these in regular text.

Below is a list of the various places I have lived and conducted work as a stockwoman. It is defined in order of Aboriginal Country name, Non Aboriginal name and size of the property:

Wunumara - Julia Creek, Queensland – unsure of the size due to the small time spent here.

Yilba - South West of Charters Towers, Queensland – 220,000 acres

Andegerebenha - Northern Territory – 140 km east of Queensland/Northern Territory border 750,000 acres plus 250,000 acres used for agistment

Kokatha Country - South Australia – unsure of size due to short stay... left due to the sickness of the environment from nuclear testing performed on the place.

Warluwarra - Dajarra, Queensland – 1.25 million acres

Mayi-Kulan - Normanton, Queensland – 1.25 million acres

Barundji - Louth, New South Wales – 47,500 acres primarily a sheep station

Wudjari - Condingup, Western Australia – 37,500 acres mixed farming

Wangkathaa Country - Emu Flat, Western Australia - 2 million acres

Border Tjupany and Nana Country – East of Wiluna, Western Australia - 1.3 million acres

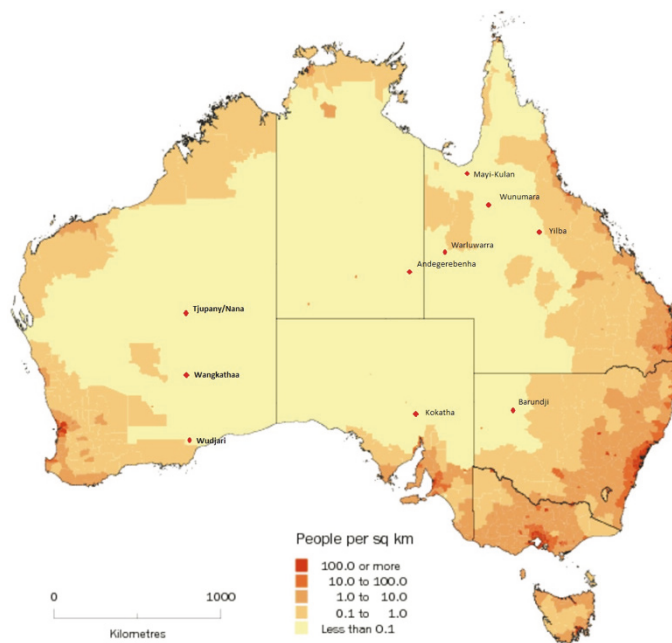


Figure 37: Cattle Country where I have lived and worked, Casanovas et al 2012

As stated the transmission of my own lived experience starts at a time shortly before my participation within the cattle industry. Similar to the narratives of Auntie Marj, Auntie Honor and Auntie Minnie, it is important to lead into how I was introduced to the pastoral industry. I have transcribed it in this way, in order to highlight the relationality needed when conducting research with an Indigenous paradigm. As Wilson puts forward:

An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge... you are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research (Wilson 2008, p. 56-57).

This is why Wilson (2010) states that research is Ceremony. My story is relational to Contributors and to the yarning with literature, and this is what Wilson was talking about in that there are stories within stories within stories. It is the relational glue.

*I had been travelling Australia for about two and a half years. In the past, Aboriginal stockwomen travelled by foot, horse, wagon or truck. Today I travel by*

*any means possible, plane, car, and truck and on more than one occasion long days of walking Country. Many times passing vast quantities of land and not knowing that what I was passing and only later learning that they were stations. On return from one of the last of these journeys I would take, I ventured home to community to reconnect with my Elders and family. Yarning with my Elders about my journeys their responses were what was I going to do with the new knowledge I had discovered and how could I use this to benefit our community. My Elders then produced an application to the Institute of Koorie Education at Deakin University.*

*I really wasn't sure about it but completed the application anyway, however I never mailed it. I left it on the table and off I went on a trip to Nitmiluk Northern Territory. Spending two weeks on Country sharing and exchanging knowledge, I decided it was time to leave and made my way to Darwin. Jumping on a road-train I started the journey back to Brisbane. From Darwin I travelled down the Stuart Highway and then across the Barkly Tablelands, crossing over to Camooweal then to Mount Isa, which were places that I had heard about but not yet seen. I remember the driver explaining Mount Isa and how they had built the town around the mine.*

The next stop was to be Kynuna. At this point in time I was unaware of the importance that Kynuna, not only to my journey but the significance it had in my family and the Ancestors. This relationship to “place” is vital to Aboriginal peoples.

*Leaving Mount Isa around 3 am we were to stop in Kynuna for breakfast as they made the best bacon and egg burgers. After three days in a truck, I was looking forward to stopping for a while and to be able to have a nice shower.*

There is not much in Kynuna, a roadhouse, a small museum dedicated to Waltzing Matilda and the Blue Heeler Hotel, famous for its outback surf lifesaving event held each year and the place where Banjo Patterson penned Waltzing Matilda. Just across from the Blue Heeler Hotel was the famous Dagworth Station for which the burning of the wool shed was the basis to the song.

*Arriving around 8am we made our way in to the showers and to have breakfast. We were met with the friendly face of the cook who just happened to be named Cookie and the owner at the time Ron. I took a place at the side bar and placed my order, from here I was able to see through to the public bar and Ron was sitting at the corner opposite me. We got to talking and the lady who was working behind the bar was leaving in a week, after talking for a while and telling some of my story, Ron asked if I wanted a job as the book-keeper and night bar manager. I promptly said yes, as I had a feeling the Ancestors had something in store for me, and now looking back they surely did.*

As discussed at points throughout this thesis, it was also vital to demonstrate accountability in talking to Ancestors and seeking their counsel. This is a cultural

obligation and is the same in this instance of this current narrative about my lived experience.

*I unloaded my belongings and found my room which was just a donga (normally a transportable dwelling) consisting of a bed and a small desk and the bathroom was just a communal one used for the dongas and the powered caravan sites that were available. There were six motel rooms also on the premises, which I would eventually move into one after being there for a short time. It was a Friday and I was lucky enough that a small band was going to be playing that night at the pub and I didn't have to work but just get the feel for the place. It was a great night and my first realisation of the importance of this tiny outback pub. A lot of the station workers from the area came in to socialise, some travelling over a one hundred kilometres to get there. I rang my Family the next day to tell them I wouldn't be making it home just yet as the Ancestors had other plans. It turned out I was not only the night bar manager but as the only female I was also responsible for cleaning and preparing the donga's, laundering the sheets and towels and organising of the bus tours that would stop in on their way to Mount Isa. I eased into the adjustment of a rural pub life, days were long starting at anywhere from 9am if a bus was coming in or I had rooms and laundry to do. Nights were till at least midnight if it was quite, however, it was a stopping point from those coming from the north or west. When it was quiet I closed at midnight, but busy nights could be anywhere from 2am to 4am. There was no mobile phone service only a public phone, one of the old blue ones.*

*At first this was a difficult adjustment as I had relied on my mobile phone for so long as my only means of communicating with family and friends.*

It is here that I build my narrative in order to situate my lived experience with the Contributor's to the research.

*Kynuna gave me my first insights into the social dynamics of living in rural remote Australia. Supplies for the hotel were picked up from Mount Isa and if I needed anything personal I rang the store in Winton and they would put it on the bus for me. WOW, I was in another world that I never knew existed and I hadn't even left Australia. I felt a real Spiritual connection to the area and my spirituality was and is an important part of my everyday life and even an underlying factor in completing my research. I rang my family once a week just to reassure them I was still alive and sometimes just to get some grounding with being the only female. I had been working there for about a month when I got the call from the Institute of Koorie Education (hereafter IKE) about the application to attend, which was obviously not still sitting on Mum's table. Got to Love Mums.*

*Due to my geographical position I was to have an interview by phone within the following week and I also had to produce a five hundred word essay. This was one of the first of many challenges that I would face in trying to further my education. I had the phone interview with three people from the institute and before I knew it, I was on my way to Mount Isa to fly down to IKE for my first intensive to complete a double Major in Anthropology and Sociology.*

This was to be the start of an amazing journey, not only to further my education but would be the beginning of the lens of my Anthropological and Koa perspectives. It is here that I interweave my lived experience with the new learned experiences. Similar to the stockwomen of the past when they would move on to holiday camps during the change in seasons to retain, build and acquire intellectual cultural knowledge, I would do something similar. Not only would I find the time to experience Country with Elders and kin, I would take time “out” to build my learned knowledge and experience by attending university.

*Returning to the Blue Heeler with a new laptop in hand and bags of books, I was overwhelmed by the journey I was to embark on but I knew the Ancestors were behind me all the way which eased the anxiety of being in a rural remote area with the lack of services which I felt I would need to complete my degree. I had formed some great relationships with people in the area and it was about six weeks after that, that I was offered a job on a cattle station. Hesitantly I agreed as I felt that this was the path that the Ancestors wanted me to take.*

*The station was situated in the Julia Creek area, but it was one hundred and twenty kilometres north of the town on the Flinders River. I didn't stay here long. The Ancestors showed me that it wasn't this station that I would start my journey. After talking to Country on arriving I didn't get a good feeling and a few nights later I was outside at night when I saw a Spirit man swinging a bullroarer.*

This is so very important. Apart from the protocol of talking to Country, this also interrelates to the Songlines that were discussed in Chapter Four. Furthermore, as seen with Auntie Marj and Grannie Winnie's narrative of talking to the rainbow coloured eel in Ban Ban Springs, talking to Country and entities is of continual importance.

*Well I went inside and packed and the next day I left and headed to a station in Charters Towers. Later on talking to a Wirinun (Spiritual Person for the tribal group) of my people, I was told that in that area was a big men's ceremony site, he went on to say I give you permission now to go there, but there was not a chance I was going back on that Country.*

Moving to a station between Charters Towers and Belyando Crossing would be the first real experience of living and working on a cattle station.

*Once again on arrival, I attended to cultural protocols of "talking to Country". The station was two hundred and fifty thousand acres and at that time and space I thought this was a big station. I would later learn that it was a small station compared to stations I would later come to work on. This is where my Anthropological lens really kicked in. I started to see everything not only from an Aboriginal perspective but an anthropological perspective and relating my own experiences with new knowledge I was gaining from going to university and my continued learning of cultural knowledge.*

As discussed, just as Aboriginal stockwomen would have gone to holiday camps for cultural knowledge, in the modern contemporary world I attending Deakin University for further educational purposes became a substantial cultural experience. The interconnectedness between different knowledge becomes quite significant and created the analytical, relational, anthropological and Indigenous lens as relayed throughout the thesis.

*It was on this station in Charters Towers, that I learnt fairly early on that I had to be self-sufficient and resourceful as there weren't the luxuries of living in an urban environment where everything was at hand. Shopping was something that was done fortnightly and you had to know what you wanted, as there was no just popping down to the shops to grab something if you had forgotten it.*

Aboriginal stockwomen would not have had this luxury. As the research has demonstrated, most Aboriginal women would have purchased rations from the station and/or supplemented their rations with bush foods.

*The first important lesson I learnt was that no matter where you went you were to carry water. Working with cattle was unfamiliar to me and general knowledge of station life was just as foreign. I will never forget the first time I was to watch and participate in the killing of a beast for the station. The beast was first shot and then it was hung up off the back of the ute to be skinned, after this it was to be split.*

*Which mean splitting the beast down the middle of the backbone, keeping in mind this was 2005, the splitting of the beast was carried out using an axe. I can still remember thinking that surely in this time and space that there was some modern technology that this would be carried out with, but no. After the beast was quartered it was hung for over a week to allow for the blood to drain from it, once this was done it was then to be cut up into the various meat cuts. The day came when it was to be cut, this was an important undertaking on the station and everybody gathered to partake in it. It was more than just the cutting of the meat it was a day to socialise and catch up with each under more informal circumstances. It was a bonding time for those who worked on the station and seemed to come across as a special occasion I suppose you could say. That night we had a barbeque which was like the barbeques you have when you get together with family, there was lots of laughs and stories exchanged and it was a refreshing insight into the sub-culture of the pastoral industry. It made me realise that being on a station was more than you just being a worker, it was a community of family.*

Aboriginal stockwomen in the past had social gatherings, however, these were for cultural obligations of ceremony and catching up with family and were performed when on holiday camps. Aboriginal stockwomen of the past would experience both the communal structure of station life and community structure on Country.

*As I had not long started my anthropology and sociology degree I was excited and inquisitive about all of station life. I'm sure I drove the owner's nuts with the hundreds of questions I was asking about station life. I laugh now as I remember*

*asking about is it true that bulls go for red, like what you see in bull fighting. The owner he laughed at me as he replied everybody asks that. His response though was that he believed it wasn't the case at all as they use coloured lights in camp-drafting competitions and the cattle didn't seem worried about it.*

I have learnt over the years though that there are certain things that do set cattle off.

For example, people who use poly pipe in yards or any sort of long pipe or stick, cattle react to, as they feel threatened by it and this can cause problems. The country was amazing out on the station and I feel that I had eased into the industry with no troubles at all, with the continual guidance of my Ancestors along the way. All the while I was making trips to Waurin Ponds in Victoria for two week study intensives every six weeks while on the station. I would stay on this station for around eight months before moving on. With the guidance of my Ancestors I would next work on a station one hundred kilometres from the Queensland border in the Northern Territory. This station was also family owned and was originally one of Kidman's many properties.

*This station was a lot bigger than Charters Towers, it was seven hundred and fifty thousand acres plus another two hundred and fifty thousand next door which they leased to put cattle on.*

The two hundred and fifty thousand acres was an Aboriginal station, but the people had not been able to run cattle due to the lack of support with managerial aspects of

cattle management. It was given back to the Aboriginal people of the area by the people I was now working for but they had not been given any means to be able to carry out any form of cattle management on the station. It was a token gesture and that was all. Nobody was able to do the management of the station as most of the people spoke language and had no education or idea on managing a station. Basically, people were taken out there and left to fend for themselves.

*It was an amazing place on the back of the Simpson Desert and with remnants of the inland sea still present within the area and the old bomb shelters were still there from the rocket testing that had been carried out many years earlier. This was the first station where I would learn about rains and dirt roads. It was also my first real job employed full-time as a Jillaroo and the station team on this property was only small, the owner, a stockman and I were the only permanent people living and working here. I really hadn't had much experience prior to this, although I had helped with cattle at various times on the station in Charters Towers and got a small insight into cattle management, it was nothing compared to what was expected of me on this station. I will never forget the first day on the job, it was relatively cold as we loaded up the vehicle for the day's work, we were off out to a set of yards which had cattle in it from the day's prior as the traps had been set in the yards to capture cattle to be processed. On this station they used the technique of trapping. We had not long left the house when a dingo was spotted in the distance and next thing I knew the gun was pulled out and the dog was shot.*

As someone who grew up on the coast and lived at the beach, cattle station life was far removed from my familiar comforts. However, I know that my ease of adjustment to the industry comes from my spiritual connection to Country and the Ancestors in being able to navigate my way on the frontier.

### **Becoming a Stockwoman**

This station was to provide myself with a real insight into how Aboriginal women would have been able to navigate their way across the landscape.

*This station was the closest one I had experienced in using cattle strategies that were used, by early pastoralists, due to the lack of modern conveniences. Fresh food was a luxury and tin food and salted meat were the main food source. There was only generator power for which ran for three hours in the morning and three hours at night from 6pm to 9pm, however, there was solar electricity which was used for keeping the cool room running during the day. Accommodation was a donga and not of great standard, but at the end of the day all you want is a bed to lie in. The days were long, hot, humid, and dusty and there was the constant pestering of flies, which one soon became accustomed to, some days it would be well after dark before I would return to the head station. Trips to town which were approximately a six hour drive down a dirt road to Alice Springs would be done roughly once a month. I would normally spend about three to five days in town before returning to the station.*

As mentioned, mustering was done by trapping cattle, which has its own down-falls. Cattle are intelligent and wild cattle would soon work out what was going on and would not come into the traps, which meant that we had to go bull-catching. Aboriginal women who were stockwomen that I have spoken about, that were participating in bull-catching were using horses, however:

*I was given a Toyota Landcruiser which had been fitted with bullbars across the front and side of the vehicle. I will never forget this day, and the sight I was to witness. I was instructed to drive onto the beast and knock it to the ground. As I was inexperienced I tried, but eventually the owner jumped in the driver's seat and said let me show you. He proceeded to knock the beast over and then pin it with the vehicle. Later I was so glad this was not me that had done this, as when we eventually got the bull into the yards he was not HAPPY. The owner tried several times to get into the yards, but that bull was not going to let him.*

*This is dangerous work because when you knock a rogue beast over and tie him up and then push him into a yard he remembers you and wants to kill you. I have been rammed through a fence on more than one occasion by a beast seeking retaliation. This method of trapping was similar to early methods of trapping and was as follows:*

A yard is built around a water source and the yard has a gate in which cattle can come into the yard but cannot exit. All other sources of water within that paddock

are turned off forcing cattle to use the water that is within the yard and once they are yarded, cattle are drafted, branded, dehorned, castrated (if male), earmarked (where a piece of skin is cut from the ear to distinguish which station cattle belonged to. Every station has its own distinct earmark and ear tagged (station tag to identify cattle in paddocks). Most of the cattle that I worked with in the territory were rogue and had not seen humans very often. I was constantly reminded of this when working in the yards and there wasn't a day that I wasn't being run up the fence by wild mickey's (a young cleanskin bull) (you know you are awake then). As I was the least experienced on the station I actually found that I was required to do more, which was to provide me with the experience needed quickly and earn my place.

*Although I was a stock worker my performances on this station were many and varied. Cooking was shared (although I tended to cook more). Mustering was obviously as a team, however, when on musters I was a tailer as well as muster camp cook. As muster camp cook, at a certain point in droving cattle to the yards I would have to make my way around cattle so as not to disturb them and then make my way to a point up ahead in which I would have to collect wood for a fire to boil the billy (which was an old milo tin) for a meal break. At the end of the meal break I was required to pack up the camp and then join the rest of the team. As the team was small, more work was required from a stock person and once cattle had been yarded we would push cattle from the receiving yard to the forcing yard. Once this had been done I would normally then have to move to the crush, where I was expected to brand, ear tag and earmark cattle. On this station, stock stills were used to immobilise cattle. Stock stills are a device that consists of two clamps from an electrical source, one clamp is clipped to the nose of the beast the second around the*

*anus, the beast is then rendered immobile. Further to mustering, tailer, yard work and cooking, I performed the duties of a boundary rider (this could take three to four days to complete), fencing, yard building, general maintenance as well as tending to the chickens and cleaning of the managers house; it can be said that I have participated in all aspects relating to the management of stock and there is no differentiation between the sexes and I was expected to do all that a male stock worker was expected to perform, although I never castrated a beast.*

The research shows that Aboriginal stockwomen of the past and contemporary stockwomen of today did and have to, participate in the many numerous jobs that are essential to cattle management. As one of the most important objectives of the research, this demonstrates that there is no gender divide, no race divide and demonstrates my argument that Aboriginal women were participating and performing the job equal to any stockman.

As discussed in Chapter Three, cattle stations have unwritten station politics. There is a hierarchy of authority and this hierarchy is, boss, jackaroos, men.

*As I have worked in various positions I have been able to experience different positions in the hierarchy. From my research and participant observations, this hierarchy has not changed much in the hundred plus years of pastoralism. As a stock worker and new in the industry I was at the bottom of the social stratum and as such treated in a very child-like manner. Everyone else was experienced and were*

*all telling me (and sometimes all at once) what I needed to do and this is because I needed to be educated as to the role of what it takes to be a stockworker. The head stockman does associate with the stock workers, however, when I was a stock worker there was a definite line drawn in the association with us stock workers, and as part of the hierarchy he can be perceived as the enemy. On the station at Dajarra I was the station cook. As the cook, I had a lot of authority or respect given to me. A saying on stations which is quite often said to newcomers is “don’t upset the cook”. As long as meals were cooked and ready when needed, being a cook had a lot of freedom.*

As discussed throughout the thesis, Aboriginal stockwomen of the past also experienced the freedom to remain connected to Country and their cultural traditions, while maintaining their role on the station.

*As a caretaker for an outstation in the Gulf of Carpentaria, I didn’t so much have authority over others but I seemed to sit on the outer of the station team, however workers would bend over backwards to aid me if I asked. The manager would quite often talk with me about problems with the workers and my reply would always be “that’s why you live in the big house”. I then joined the ranks as manager of a station in New South Wales and whilst at Emu Flat Western Australia and totally understand and empathise with the Managers that I have worked under over the years. Oh the joys of the big house. Stations are small close knit communities where you live and work with each other 24/7 and the manager’s role doesn’t finish at the end of the working day. You are there at all hours to deal with the many and wide-*

*ranging problems that may arise. At Emu Flat my performances were to maintain the gardens, feed the numerous animals, ensure that the high tanks are filled with water and maintain the water pipes to the tanks. I am the nurse for the Royal Flying Doctors and am also this at the current station at Wiluna, I help with yard work and processing of cattle and I am also a School of the Air Mum, having to teach my daughter. I not only teach her western education, I am also responsible for teaching and passing on to her my Koa Intellectual Cultural Knowledge, in the form of tracking, animal behaviour and being able to read and understand Country.*

From the research, I have demonstrated that Aboriginal women in most cases on stations did not receive western education, but it can be seen that they were educated through the transmission of Intellectual Cultural Knowledge passed to them from their Elders. My lived experiences as a stockwoman have enabled me to better understand and imagine what the lives of Aboriginal stockwomen may have been like and the resourcefulness they drew upon. These experiences have come from the various environments that I have had the opportunity to participate and live in. In New South Wales on the Darling River I observed and experienced life on a smaller station and the boundaries that were laid in fencing of the terrain. This property was only forty seven thousand, five hundred acres and the property I lived on in Condingup Western Australia was thirty seven thousand, five hundred acres. Small fenced off paddocks and a heavy reliance on intense farming. Both these properties enabled me to observe how fencing off, of the land through re-territorialising into pastoral and farming facilitated in the removal of Aboriginal people from their tribal lands.

*Further to this, it was on this station that I had to supplement my income by catching wild goats. The mustering of goats is very similar to that of cattle and done by mustering goats into a yard, which had been set up amongst a clump of trees with two wings coming out from the yard. The wing that was at the back would extend out further than the front wing, which then forced goats into the yard. The goats were then loaded into an enclosed trailer and taken into the local town of Louth, where I was able to sell the wild goats.*

Having lived in the many various environments of the Australian landscape, one aspect which is a constant dominant feature is the geographical environment and the weather. This was also discussed at length in Chapter Three.

*It was probably one of the first characteristics that I learnt about. This is especially when it came to the rain. When it rains it is not just rain that you have to consider within the immediate area, but that of what is within the surrounding areas. Just recently, Kalgoorlie had approx. 100ml of rain. I was in town at the time and was needing to get home quick before the road was, just unpassable.*

Pastoralists would have had to face these challenges of being able to navigate across water logged Country. However, if they had Aboriginal stockwomen with them, who were from the area, the Aboriginal women would have been able to steer pastoralists to higher ground through this knowledge of Country.

*Getting a call from the homestead, I enquired on the status of rain there and at that time there had been none. However, there was rain north of the homestead, which was easily visible from town. As I proceeded home down, I hadn't even got to the dirt road, when the road was inundated with water, which was following over the salt clay pan on the edge of town. The construction of the Super Pit and a processing plant behind it have changed the direction in which water now flows, although going from the amount of water now channelling over the road, this was probably an environmental disaster. The road was half a foot deep in water and I really didn't have a lot of time to make the journey home before I would be cut off. The drive was going to be slow, that was for sure. Upon reaching the T inter-section for the Trans line, I come upon a Holden Ute with two older ladies in it who have run off the road onto the soft side. Really not a good place to be. Another vehicle had stopped to try and help but only had a little four cylinder car, so I said I would try and help by pushing their vehicle with mine. This turned out to be fruitless. I made sure that they had a phone to call someone and were all good and continued on my way before I missed my window of opportunity. At one stage I really didn't think I was going to make it as the car dropped about a foot down a part of the road, which I found out a few days later was a complete two foot washout. I normally wouldn't take the risk on driving on a road like this, but it had just been gravelled a week or so earlier and this is why I knew I had a brief window of opportunity to be able to get down the road before it was impassable. This is just one of many experiences of dealing with rainwater and roads. If this had happened when I was living on the station in the Gulf of Carpentaria, Charters Towers Queensland or in Louth New South Wales, I wouldn't have even considered driving on the road whatsoever.*

Within these areas, around the stations that I lived was black soil. Black soil is a rich soil that is very good for areas which undertake irrigation, however, one little bit of rain and black soil becomes like sticky black ice to drive on.

*I have had to drive on it once for about fifty kilometres and I can tell you it was the worst fifty kilometre drive I have ever had to complete. The most important thing to remember when there is no other option but to drive on it is to remember do not let the vehicle get into the table drains (a “V”, trapezoidal or parabolic shaped surface drain located immediately adjacent to the edge of a road) otherwise this is where your vehicle will stay. Other than this it is a matter of just trying to keep the vehicle on the road. I drive a Toyota Hilux, which is an older model and is relatively high off the ground and there is quite a bit more space within the guard to allow for the build-up of sticky black soil which is flung up under the vehicle. Although I made it home safely, it was not a nice drive to have to do, the vehicle was barely controllable, at one stage the vehicle tyres were facing forward, however, the vehicle itself was positioned sideways as I proceeded up the road. It was a very long drive home. Once again, this was only something I did because I knew the road and knew how to drive on that road. Fortunately, this was the only time that I had to drive on this road under wet conditions.*

In the research, I revealed that Peggy and Alice were to experience rain on their travels to Queensland, however they were in a truck and were stuck for a period of

time as the road became unpassable. As discussed in Chapter Three, we see that the geographical environment dominated the pastoral industry and the people who participated with in it.

In Normanton, there was several times when I was cut off from the rest of town. Basically, once you get rain on black soil, you try not to drive on them, not only for safety reasons but it destroys the road, which becomes hard ruts once dry. As can be seen from Figures 38 and 39, a before and after you can visibly see the effects of the rain on the road.



Figure 38: Before: Normanton Flood, Simone 2009, private collection



Figure 39: After: Normanton Flood, Simone 2009, private collection

The roads and surrounding environment become drenched with water as black soil acts much the same way as a sponge, it just keeps absorbing water. These periods of rain were in the wet season. On one occasion I had to get a helicopter out to get to

IKE and as can be seen from Figure 40 the whole landscape becomes engulfed by water.



Figure 40: Normanton flood taken from helicopter, Simone 2009 private collection

As has been shown in some of the Aboriginal stockwomen's stories, in the wet season they would leave the station as cattle work slows over the wet season due to the inability to manoeuvre around the station. During this time the research has shown that Aboriginal stockwomen had adjusted cultural obligations to be performed now over the wet season

*Where I am living now, even with an inch or two of rain, it would only be a matter of a day or two for it to dry out before it was possible to drive on as the road drains relatively fast. I had not experienced any real flooding at Emu Flat, the biggest fall of rain we had in a twenty four hour period was 193ml on the 23rd January 2014. This allowed for the road to be closed to the public for about two weeks on the Trans line. However, the Kurnalpi Road which is situated approx. eighty kilometres north which runs parallel to the Trans line was closed for about six months. This was due to the fact that the road had been washed away to such a state that it had to have major repairs completed before it was safe to drive on. Further to this, I was only cut off from town for about three to four days. I believe the biggest difference here, is that although the homestead is situated in the middle of a water channel there is no river, enabling for widespread flooding of the environment.*

In the Gulf of Carpentaria and Louth it was not just the rain that impacted the station with water, it was also the river systems that were situated on the property and within the area.

*I recall an instance while at Emu Flat when I was talking with the jillaroo on the station and commented that I felt that I had become relatively complacent with regards to the rain. Here I am relatively close to town, it's only one hundred kilometres of dirt road, whereas other stations that I have been on it has been a minimum two hundred kilometres of dirt road to the nearest supermarket and the furthest that I have been from services is approx. seven hundred kilometres. This*

*was specifically when I lived near the Queensland and Northern Territory borders on the Northern end of the Simpson Desert.*

One might wonder why this is important. It is important when someone lives and has hundreds of kilometres of dirt road before you reach any form of services, especially when it concerns stores.

*Before coming to Western Australia, my stores always held enough that we could last at least a month without the need to obtain food stores. The difference is that I was aware of the environmental weather changes and occurrences that were possible to eventuate in a short period of time. In 2007 I transferred from a station in Dajarra Queensland to an outstation at Normanton in the Gulf of Carpentaria. It is a common occurrence within this area for the wet season rains to cut the roads to the area for anywhere from two weeks to two months. With this in mind, it is common practice to have enough food stores for the period. In 2008/2009, it flooded and it was the biggest flood the area had seen in twenty five years and I was prepared. Every month myself and my then two year old daughter would rise at 3.30am have breakfast and be in the car driving by 4 am for the five hundred kilometre drive to Mount Isa to do the food and stores run. We would arrive home around 7pm that night. Further to this, during the dry season we had a truck that would come over from Cairns with fresh fruit and vegetables, sometimes once a month and sometimes twice a month. I made the best of this service, always ensuring that I made it in to Normanton to buy from the truck. I would then blanch anything possible to freeze*

*so that we would at least have fresh food stores as well to get us over any flooding period.*

Although contemporary and using a freezer, I interconnect back through to Aboriginal women of the past. This is because Aboriginal women would have known the seasons of the environment and would also have stored foods and moved to dry country during the rainy season. Further to this, stations that Aboriginal women were living on, would have also ensured that their stores were well stocked. The difference between the past and now though is the fact that I have a car and it takes no time to drive five hundred kilometres, whereas, to obtain stores back then they would have been bought in by cart and bought in bulk. Most stations have a vegetable garden and this would have been the only means of the station to have fresh fruit and vegetables. One thing to keep in mind is that prior to the wet season, the weather can become quite irritable and humid, so on top of dealing with monsoonal rains there is the heat and humidity and this is a big factor to what has become known by the locals as the “silly season”.

*Imagine a team of workers all competing to prove themselves and throw in a bit of really irritable weather and alcohol and you have the “silly season”.*

From the research it can be seen that during the wet season period Aboriginal women and other workers were put off and it became known as holiday time. As pastoralism had impacted on Cultural practices being performed during the year the wet season

had become a time when Aboriginal women would carry out the many important ceremonies and gatherings that, in early days, were undertaken during other parts of the year. Nowadays, there are several means of acquiring information for the weather. The internet has had major impacts on determining when station performances can be undertaken. However, this only ever is an idea of what is coming. As the saying goes when discussing the weatherman, is that there is a fifty-fifty chance of rain.

*For the past week (starting 14/03/16) I have been paying extra attention to the weather patterns as the BOM had been predicting rain for the area on Saturday and Sunday. Well it was Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup> March and as normal the first thing I did was get up and check the BOM, (I checked it last night just before retiring). Anyway firstly, I looked at the rain radar which showed a rain depression occurring North west of the station looking at the radar you would think, yay we going to get some rain. It is now 1pm in the afternoon and have just looked again, as I was thinking that the rain should have hit by now. Unfortunately, no rain! It has all broken up and there are only sporadic showers now occurring in small areas. It looks like we won't be getting the much needed rain that we require. I think the hardest part of it is that we have had sporadic rain that keeps the feed going but nothing to fill the dams and everywhere you look it is a vibrant green, just no water. The weather still impacts heavily on the day to day running of stations throughout Australia.*

This is where the correlations between pastoralists and Aboriginal people collide. The central element of both is the environment, the land and Country as discussed in

Chapter Three and Four. Although a lot of pastoralists don't have Ancestral connections to land as such, I do believe from my time spent amongst pastoralists that they feel they have a spiritual connection to the land. They know the land can read it and feel the spiritual allure that comes from being on Land/Country.

*The station I was on at Emu Flat had only recently changed from sheep into the cattle game and a big task was that of checking the boundaries as the place was two million acres. The remnants of past pastoralism with sheep are still evident with the many sheep fences that can be seen and traverse the property and the boundary. This is why we have to use the method of open range grazing and what is known as old school cattle management. Some paddocks do have fencing but as you can imagine with over a million acres of property to fence it is going to take time and it is not something that is seen as a priority at this stage of development. As it is the colder part of the year mustering is normally not performed and other station duties are tended to that are left to the wayside in mustering periods. One of those duties is checking boundaries, waters and on Emu Flat in particular, poachers. The last paddock on the eastern boundary has been noted for poachers as we currently have no stock in it. We drive out and set up camp. Ah the few luxuries that I can enjoy now, no sleeping on the ground and set up the camper trailer and this will be our base for the time.*

This would have been different for Aboriginal stockwomen of the past. Aboriginal women of the past would have had to sleep in their swags on the ground with no luxuries of power and a bug proof camper. This time is also important for me and

my nine year old daughter Nakara as I incorporate intellectual knowledge with station work.

*Over the time we were camped out and any other time we are out on Country I instruct my daughter on my intellectual knowledge relating to reading the land and the environment. These skills will also help her with navigating her way if ever she is lost. We are lucky enough to find various animal tracks from dogs, camels, emus, and kangaroos and even ducks, studying each one so that we can determine how long ago the animal was in the area. Over the days camped we follow recently made vehicle tracks which have recently been made. Found remains of a campsite where someone has stayed and a ground covered in shot gun shells. Windmills shot up, alcohol cans, general rubbish and dead kangaroos. Relieved we have no cattle down this way as cattle duffing is a major problem within the region. The station also has a sandalwood plantation which is monitored by the station and is known for poachers. After three days of not only performing station duties, but also connecting to Country and the Ancestors, we return to the homestead. As we come round to the homestead we notice a few stud cattle as they are kept in the house paddock with a few scrub bulls amongst them.*

This lived experience occurred at the start of July 2015 and it is normally too cold to muster.

*However due to the size of the scrub bulls we need to get them into the yards. The team is gathered, bikes are prepared and the muster begins. The team is successful and three big fellas weighing well over a tonne are brought into the yards. The first job is to draft the cattle as there is a mixture of stud cattle, calves, steers and scrub bulls. Sounds easy enough. However, scrub bulls tend not to be so friendly as can be seen in Figure 41 and when locked in a small space and by the end of the week we have six, but one jumps the fence so we are left with five who are around four to five years old.*



Figure 41: Bulls Fighting, Simone 2015, private collection

*Known also as cleanskins, meaning they have not been in the yards before, and not been marked, earmarked or tagged already. Now we have five big boys weighing*

*over a tonne each fighting each other in order for them to work out the pecking order amongst themselves. Over the week they will settle. We are lucky as one of them is rather quiet and he turns out to be the boss, as with coachers used by pastoralists and Aboriginal stockwomen, this bull will be used to aid us in manoeuvring the others around the yards.*

*Mission accomplished, cattle drafted and sorted ready for loading. If they are going to the sale yard and to be let out if they are to go back into the paddock. It is an early morning rise the next day which is a Saturday to load bulls. This should be fun as there is two of us, myself and the stockman/driver. It's cold, the yards are muddy as it rained mid-week, bulls are a little settled, however, there is always one in every crowd that doesn't want to co-operate, leading younger ones to misbehave. Considering the circumstances, we are doing relatively well. Most of the big fellas are on the truck. Now we have a small group running in circles around us and the big bull on his toes waiting for the right opportunity to charge one of us. I notice the dominant bull standing at the door of the truck blocking the way, contributing to the bull in the yard not wanting to proceed up the race. I run up to close the gate of the truck only to make it in time to have the bull ram the gate as I push it across and jamming my finger between the door and the 3-inch steel rod of the race. Ouch. A quick look and I, have severed the base of the fingernail from finger, all good, no time for doctoring. I need to get out of the way as I am now blocking the cattle from going up the race. I return to the back of the yards and we start pushing the cattle to a small yard at the base of the ramp. They finally move, the gate is pulled closed and I run with a cattle prod to the front beast to push him along. If making noises and pushing on his rump doesn't move him along only then will I use the prod. As one*

*proceeds, so to do the rest with only little guidance needed at the rear to encourage him onto the truck. Yay all cattle loaded. Now back to the homestead to check the full extent of the damage too my finger. The station I am on is a base for the Royal Flying Doctors and I am the nurse and custodian to the medical box. I've cleaned it up and yes have severed the fingernail clean off the finger at the base, and I would think from the pressure of the crushing have split the finger at the front side. Flying Doctors are called for advice, all my details are taken and I am put through to a Doctor who questions me on everything. I am given antibiotics and told of things to be aware of. The Royal Flying Doctors play an important role to those who live in rural remote Australia and have saved many lives over the period of their service.*

### **The primacy of lived experience**

The following are some brief extracts from a journal I was writing throughout the research. The following shows the diversity over four days of my lived experience. The reason why I have included this here is to show that each day is never the same. It is important for me to demonstrate this in a journal type of way to relay exactly what had happened on these days. This also demonstrates the relationality between myself and the Contributors.

6<sup>th</sup> October 2015

*Station life is very unpredictable! This morning I had planned to mind map my research while I tended to the gardens, in order to write the Chapter Four, Country, Songlines and Interconnectedness. In spite of this, my day now was to help with*

*loading scrub bulls at Sawmill yards and bring them home to the homestead yards. (I am now living my research everyday – quite literally.) I did manage to mow the lawn and I organised the high water tank before leaving. This was still an acceptable task, a great way to clear the mind better in order to mind map. Beautiful clear warm day of about 21 degrees. The first part of the drive is across the salt and blue bush plains and then up through the Salmon gums and wattles, about an hour's drive in the truck.*

*As Nakara and I proceed up the road to the yards, a wedge tail eagle takes flight and puts on a magnificent show, of all times I had to be driving the truck unable to take the photo opportunity. However, this is a good sign for me, it wasn't just an eagle flying in the distance, it was circling so close I could see the under markings on the underside of its wing., What a majestic bird. The Ancestors are watching and, so it will be a great day. To give you an idea of what I had to work with, the yards consist of portable panels that slot into each other at the bottom and are fastened at the top by a chain. These panels have been assembled around a trough that cattle frequent, which enables them to get used to the panels. See Figure 42.*



Figure 42: Portable Yard Guildford, Simone 2015, private collection

*When working in these yards you can't be complacent, because if one of the cattle decide to ram the fence it won't come down, however, they will move the panels around, so it is a continual game of fixing the yards, which keeps you on your toes that's for sure. Arriving at the yards, I find that everyone is conversing on what the strategy should be to muster a small mob of cattle that is hanging on the outside of the yards as the yards are full of cattle where they need to go. The plan is then to organise the bulls onto the truck that way we can let the cows into the back yard and open the side out and create a wing and drive the cattle into it. Again, my day is to change, I will now need to stay and help, mark, earmark, ear-tag which is two tags in the right ear, brand and vaccinate. It sounds simple enough, huh, yeah right, cows have been separated from their calves for around eighteen hours and mixed in with the cows are seven scrub bulls and not very happy ones at that, I might tell you. First we have to get the bulls out, so we proceed to draft them up the race, all goes*

*well, except for one steer that is just not going to go into the holding yard, there is always one in every crowd. After running in circles for about twenty minutes and ramming the fence we finally get him where we need to, yay.*

Then off the others go on the bikes to get the mob that was hanging at the yards, as they have decided they are not hanging around. In the past, Aboriginal women would have performed this same task, however, they mustered with the use of horses.

*Nakara and I aren't waiting long and three other workers turn up from the head station, just as the others are bringing the mob up over the dam bank, the cattle see the car and baulk at continuing on, so I proceed to let them know what's going on and get them to move the vehicle. The cattle are brought into the yards, with the exception of three who just did not want to co-operate. Day is going relatively smoothly so far. We stop for a few minutes to grab some water and a quick bite while we discuss what the plan is. We bring through all the cows which are staying, some just walk through the race and crush into an adjacent yard, those who don't have earmarks, tags or brands are processed and put in the same yard. I am standing in the yard that the cattle is to be let into and have the job of putting the two ear-tags in and opening the gate to let them out. See Figure 43.*



Figure 43: Earmarking, Simone 2015, private collection

*Once the processing of the cattle is completed, they are put back into the back yard. Once again this is not an easy task and three decide they don't want to co-operate. I am run up the fence and left sitting on top while being stared down by a very upset cow. It's unfortunate, but for her first time through the yards it wasn't a pleasant experience as she had got her leg stuck in the side door of the crush while we were trying to process her, so she really wasn't a happy cow.*

A lot of cattle work comes down to animal behaviour and being able to read the cattle as to know when they are baulking or if they are really going to charge you.

Aboriginal stockwomen would have learnt this knowledge while working with cattle, enabling them to be skilled stockwomen.

*Depending on where you are, but if you are in a position that you cannot avoid being in, it is best not to look them straight in the eyes and it is best to duck down as much as possible and even turn your back until they are secured in the crush. After we have finished, we proceed to process the calves and weaner's, this also sounds easy. The weaner's were not so bad to process, only one trouble maker as he falls in the crush and one of the stockman has to sit on him while the head stockman puts a ring around the bull's testacies. Dust and legs were going everywhere! Never a dull moment around the yards! Next is the calves, this is not so simple! The calves are too small to fit into the crush, so we have to scruff them by hand (this means one of us has to grab the calf and pull to the ground and then pin it in such a position that it is unable to move and get up). This will be fun! Oh boy, yes it was, calves were jumping everywhere, people were scrambling and slipping trying to grab them, it was a sight to see. We were just scruffing calves which were relatively small.*

From the research I illustrated instances where Aboriginal stockwomen were scruffing large cattle. This lived experience allowed me to understand the exceptional skills that these Aboriginal stockwomen had in cattle management. This is the *multiple relational narrative* and it is through the interweaving of our shared knowledge that our experiences inform one another.

*My job has changed now. We process the small calves straight on the ground as they are too small for the calf cradle. Not an easy task.*



Figure 44: Calf Cradle, Simone 2015, private collection

*My job now is to load all the tags into the guns, hand them to the head stockman as well as hold the ear markers and vaccine, and then run and grab the brand when needed. However, on top of this, for quite a few calves I also had to aid the stockman by restraining the back legs. This was done while the calf was on its side. I restrain the bottom leg and then pull the top leg backwards which restricts the calf from kicking out, while the stockman marks the calf. I did get kicked on one occasion with an unco-operative calf. All in all though things went well! All the cattle are reunited with their calves and they are let out into the paddock. They all head in the direction of where they had come from. We all pack up and I jump in the*

*truck and proceed to make the long slow journey home and a great time to contemplate the day's experiences.*

7<sup>th</sup> October 2015

*Another unexpected task needs attention. The house tank isn't filling, so off I go on the motorbike to check the pipelines, tanks and troughs. The job is left to me as everyone else has gone out mustering and to check the cattle traps. A broken water pipe is found and fixed. However, the house tank won't fill until all troughs and cattle water tanks are full. My poor garden, the temperature is already 34 degrees and its only 9.30am, I can already see the wilt of the plant leaves starting.*

8<sup>th</sup> October 2015

*Lunches packed, utes and truck loaded and off to Guildford to check the cattle trap. As stated the station is only new to the cattle industry and open range grazing is used. A trap has been erected in order to trap cattle onto waters, its effective and we are lucky for the first time setting of the trap and it captures around 100 cattle. There were also cattle hanging around the outside of the trap yard as we arrive. Traps can be hit and miss, especially when cattle are unfamiliar with how to utilise the trap. The cattle in the yards are drafted and we load up 32 scrub bulls and steers and they are taken back to the homestead yards, while the rest of the cattle are processed to go back out into the paddock. I go with the truck to unload the first load and then return to the yards to collect the rest. This time, I don't go with the truck and I stay at the yards and help pack up. It's dark as we start to make the long*

*journey home, covered in red dust from head to toe, the drive is slow and the sun is just setting and the road has an unusual feel to it as the dust lingers on the road.*

As the research showed, open range grazing was used in early times of pastoral management. On stations that had built yards, Aboriginal women would perform this same method of trapping cattle onto waters in order to muster and process cattle. However, before the use of trucks used for carting cattle, Aboriginal stockwomen would have used horses to drove the cattle to where it was needed.

9<sup>th</sup> October 2015

*The crew return to Guildford to finish processing the calves and weaners and plan to return to the homestead yards to process the cattle in the yards for the truck that will be arriving Saturday morning. I feel relief that I am able to stay at the homestead catching up on all the watering and homestead tasks and the opportunity to write. It is mid-afternoon when the crew arrives home, with five more bulls for the truck. Now the big fella's need to be processed, ear tags, earmarks and a few that need their horns tipped. I was feeling relieved that I didn't have to help as a few of these big fellas are over 6ft tall and built really well and when you confine them in the crush they are not overly happy and they thrash around.*



Figure 45: Big Fella Bull, Simone 2015, private collection

*Having gone off to check the tanks and troughs, I thought it a great opportunity to go and take some photos of the stock and the work being done. Well my relief was short-lived, on returning to the yards I was given the task of ear-marking the bulls. Poor Neville (who is in his 70s) was on the ground with a pole jimmied between the head bail and the frame of the crush, Julian (stockman in his 30s) was pushing on the lever that is supposed to hold the head bail shut, while Cliff Jnr (in his mid-20s and the least experienced stockworker) has a pole pushed through the crush behind the bulls' rear end. All the while I am trying to put an earmark in the bulls ear (which is*

*about 1cm thick) while the bull is thrashing its head around like no there is no tomorrow. Boy the adrenaline was surely running.*

This experience has made me appreciate and admire even more the work of the Aboriginal stockwomen in the early days, especially people like Weeda Munro, who as stated, was known to jump off a horse, process a beast and then push it back into the mob. I was on the edge and I had a crush holding the beast for me. It was a tough afternoon for all involved, luckily though we all got through maybe a few cuts and bruises each but no one was seriously injured and the cattle are all ready for the truck. Been a big, unexpected week of activity, this shows how when living and working on stations and in remote areas you have to be able to rise to any challenge that comes along. Never is there a day that is the same as the next. You just never know what to expect, so expect the unexpected. Cattle work is very much about animal behaviour and being able to read what the cattle are going to do. Being able to read the cattle is an important aspect to being able to stay alive, especially when dealing with bulls. This research shows, through my lived experiences in the contemporary cattle industry, that Aboriginal stockwomen had an understanding of animal behaviour, which enabled them to be great stockwomen.

### **Creating knowledge through practice**

The journey again starts early in the morning with the long drive to Kalgoorlie down the corrugated dirt road to the airport. Part of the journey is the thought processes to get in the frame of mind that I am now going to not only be the researcher talking

with Contributors but will become the student learning from the lived experiences of my Contributors. Fourteen hours later arriving at my first destination, no need to unpack though as in the morning will continue the journey to meet with my Elders for my community yarnning circle. Before any work can be done, relationships are re-bounded in an un-formal manner. Community obligations are discussed and unawares to me that afternoon I will be meeting with a group of people not as a researcher but as an active member of my community for cultural obligations. We venture to a site, which contains scar trees and a burial tree which have been marked to be destroyed. It is of importance to this area as where the tree's lie is an original Aboriginal pathway for the trading routes. One aspect that I find fascinating is that this next to this area where the burial tree lies is the cemetery for non-Indigenous people. This area has been bookmarked for a bus interchange, which will take out the Aboriginal burial tree and other heritage sites, leaving the Non-Indigenous cemetery intact. For Aboriginal people the burial tree is a mark of respect for their Ancestors, so is it that more respect is shown to Non-Aboriginal people's respect for their Ancestors due to the fact that they pay up to \$30,000 for tombstones and the privilege.

Informal discussions with my cultural advisor begin that night in the way of how are things going, what has been going on and how are they going to be able to aid me in progressing with my work. Laughs a many and tears of frustration from myself as the researcher and the outer influences that have been affecting my progress. However it is more of a release and letting go that it is of a seeking of sympathy. The next morning I yarn with two of my community advisors where in a more formalised discussion we talk about the outer influences and the progress of my

work. All work that I have been writing is handed over and looked at briefly but is taken at the end of the day to be thoroughly scrutinised as to where I am sitting and as to where I need to be progressing with the research. Over the following three days yarning continues relating to aspects of the research and how certain information is going to be interwoven into the research.

A big part of the research journey is ensuring participation in community obligations. Arrangements have been formalised for a gathering at the back of Toowoomba at Gumminguru an Aboriginal ceremonial site which consists of two quite large and intriguing Bora rings, one a woman's site and the other a men's site.

### **Yarning Circle Gumminguru**

As stated in my methodology an important aspect of my research is adhering to community cultural obligations and my lived experiences. One facet of these obligations is partaking in yarning circles. These yarning circles are above and beyond yarning circles with Aboriginal women and their lived experiences in the pastoral industry. This yarning circle is part of my cultural obligations to community. The attributes are in the same context as with Contributors, however, these circles are where people gather to participate and exchange intellectual knowledge. To reiterate, yarning circles are circular in manner. When a person asks a question they are not given a direct answer at first. The person answering the question will first bring the circle to an understanding of the intellectual knowledge and its origin so as to give credibility to the answer. This is an important element

when participating in yarning circles as you can only exchange knowledge when you have enabled the circle to be on the same level of understanding.

Gumminguru is situated at the back of Toowoomba and is an important ceremony site which has links to varying tribes that would travel through the area on the way to the Bunya festival. The yarning circle consisted of over fifty women and men, there was also a Singapore film crew. My Elder, Auntie Minnie was the guest speaker and the one to welcome the Ancestors for the smoking ceremony. The people who have gathered for this yarning and although belonging to differing belief systems, it was the thread of truth that runs through them all, which was shared and embraced by all. There was also myself, my two daughters, Geane and Nakara and my grand-daughter Tekoa.

It was a beautiful clear day and the sky was blue with a gentle breeze. The site is situated on 16 acres at the back of Toowoomba. There is a meeting hall that houses many artefacts handed down or placed there by people for learning. Down the hill is where the men's ceremony site and rock formations of animals have been surfacing from below the ground for over eighty years. So unique was the rising of these rock formations, that the owner, whose family had settled the property and lived on it for three generations, has returned this land to the traditional owners. Due to the breeze it was decided that the best place to have the yarning circle would be inside. Outside are blankets and chairs to sit on and on the verandah is an earthy coloured piece of wood which has copper wire attached to it in a skeletal circular formation. There are beads and more copper wire next to it and it is hoped that over the coming hours all

those in attendance will thread beads onto the wire and attach to the foundations of the skeletal circle.

Welcome to Country occurs and the yarning circle begins. Auntie Minnie is an amazing woman to hear speak and the room is buzzing with energy of the back and forth flow of knowledge and questions being exchanged. After a few hours of yarning, we are invited to a meal which has been generously supplied and cups of tea from which the water has been boiled on the fire. The fire has been lit ready for the smoking ceremony which occurred later in the day after we had all come off the ceremony site. It was important to conduct this after walking on the grounds due to the spirits that were present and to inhibit anyone taking any negative spirits home with them. As ceremony grounds are normally situated on the intersection of crossing Songlines of a positive and negative nature the smoking ceremony is a necessary performance. Evidence of the Songlines can be observed by all the twisted tree trunks situated on the property. Elders Australia wide will agree that when reading the land these twisted trunks are found central to most ceremony grounds with exception to treeless areas. These trees are deemed as doorways or vortexes to the metaphysical world. In articulating this complex knowledge, I have endeavoured to break it down to its simplest form for the benefit of the reader.

After our break and mingling we return to the meeting hall and the custodian of the site presented a talk which was culturally enriching about the site and the artefacts that have been donated to this Aboriginal sacred place set up upon this land for that purpose. After which we are then invited down to the ceremony site to see the rocks

that have been emerging. Prior to entering we were instructed on the protocols of entering the site. My eldest daughter Geane came down with me to the area but on getting to the boundary she started to feel ill and felt that it was not appropriate to enter the site. I proceeded to enter the site after I had asked permission myself from the Ancestors to enter. The custodian leading the way and informing us of what the rocks were representative of and what the site would have been used for. I looked back to see where Geane had gone and she was heading up the hill, she later told me that the more she stood there the sicker she felt, which she took as that she was not meant to be down there. I found out some information that related to another researcher's paper that I felt would aid her in her research journey in relation to the Bunya Festival. I believe that this is why I was able to enter the site as I would not have been able to pass this information had I not gone down there.

After leaving the site, the group headed back up the hill to have a tea break. At this time, I met back up with Auntie Minnie, my daughters and grand-daughter and we gathered around the beading table where we all began to bead our pieces of copper wire and add to the circular formation. After we had completed this, Auntie Minnie, I and a few men of the group gathered at the fire in order to prepare it for the smoking ceremony. After preparations had been completed the group was asked to gather in a circle around the fire. Auntie Minnie proceeded to address the group on the purpose of the smoking circle. The smoking ceremony started with Auntie Minnie addressing the Ancestors and I was the one appointed to place the green gum leaves on top of the sandalwood which had been placed upon the fire.



Figure 46: Gumminguru Sacred Site for Yarning, Simone 2015, private collection

Sandalwood is used by Aboriginal women for ceremonies for dispersing negative energies. As the smoke started to form, the wind came up very strongly and blew sideways meaning the group had to rotate around the fire ensuring that everyone in the circle would be embraced by the smoke. The group was also asked to face inwards and outwards with arms up in order for the smoke to cleanse the whole of their body. As this was being performed Auntie Minnie continued to address the Ancestors and the group. Once I had finished placing all the leaves on the fire I too joined the circle to be cleansed. Once the smoking ceremony was complete we spent about another hour mingling and exchanging knowledge and experiences with each other before leaving to go our separate ways. There was not one negative remark made and a euphoric feeling was felt by all. This was a special day for me as it was

the first time that my daughters and grand-daughter had participated in a yarnning circle and the lived experience of ceremony.

This chapter revealed the lived experience of the Contributors in concert with my own lived experiences. By conducting yarnning circles, I have uncovered the strength and resilience of Aboriginal women at a time of tyranny and adversity. The yarnning circles also exposed how the Contributors continued to use intellectual knowledge relating to Country and the use of bush medicines and foods. Further to this, how the Contributors adjusted their cultural practices in order to attend to cultural and kinship obligations, manoeuvred, and manipulated the patriarchal system that was in play. Furthermore, specifically Auntie Honor's narrative shows how Aboriginal women's lives were dominated and controlled by the political permit system that functioned on the frontier. The interweaving of our *relational narratives* informs and demonstrates the *multiple relational narratives* that exist between my Contributors and me. Part of the research is not about the pastoral industry it is about our lived experiences of living and working on cattle stations. This is the data, it is narratives, and it is these narratives that connect us and makes us who we are and it is here that we connect, it is, the relational glue. This chapter was the last layer of building relationality through the premise of lived experience.

## CONCLUSION

The Australian pastoral industry has been a place of great injustices and abuse for many Aboriginal people over the years since its violent beginnings. Whole collectives of people were dispossessed not only from Country but from cultural practices. Contrary to knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, it was within this industry that a great strength and resilience came from Aboriginal women enabling the establishment and continuation of this industry in the harshest places of the Australian landscape.

The aim of this research was to provide a voice and recognition to Aboriginal women who have been under-represented and under-acknowledged as stockwomen within the Australian pastoral industry. The research revealed how Aboriginal women were integrated into the pastoral industry by frontiersmen. This further revealed how Aboriginal women shifted their cultural dynamics from integration to adaption to cattle station dynamics through the continual use of cultural knowledge, values and practice. The research demonstrated that the cattle industry enabled facilitation of intellectual cultural knowledge to evolve to the present day, yet Aboriginal women kept hold of core conceptualisations of their world view.

The research uncovered that the geographical environment was a significant feature in the spatial progress of the pastoral industry and that it was here that Aboriginal women dominated with their intellectual knowledge of Country. This intellectual

knowledge enabled pastoralists to establish the foundations of the industry and for the continuation of the pastoral industry within areas of rural remote Australia.

In researching the “what”, it was also vital to formulate a framework of the “how”. This was found to be vital in an Indigenous approach to the research, as the “how” and the “what” are inseparable in an Aboriginal world view. This has been accomplished using a *multiple relational narrative* framework through utilisation of *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun*, yarning with literature, yarning circles with Contributors and their lived experiences on stations. This was further complemented with my own knowledge and lived experience as a Koa stockwoman. From this method, the research established the process of colonisation and the foundations of the Australian cattle industry and how Aboriginal women came to be integrated within the cattle industry. This was constructed in Chapter Three. The research demonstrated that Australian political policies, native police and pastoralists dominated and control Aboriginal people’s lives. The research further showed that the environment was an important aspect of the cattle industry and that Aboriginal women’s knowledge of Country enabled the establishment and continuation of the cattle industry. Aboriginal women were respected for their skills and continued to practice and pass on intellectual cultural knowledge by adapting the cattle industry into their own social and cultural dynamics. The research revealed that, Aboriginal stockwomen were regarded highly for their skills and knowledge of the land and this is shown by the positions they held, such as, head stockwomen and the all performances relating to cattle management which were undertaken within the industry.

Chapter Four extended on the environment section of Chapter Three and provided an Aboriginal perspective of Country. It demonstrated that Aboriginal women had an extensive knowledge base of living and working on Country and their knowledge of seasons, water and food sources extended through this. This research presented that this intellectual knowledge was passed down from generation to generation and continues to be a means of transmission of knowledge. This was demonstrated by my lived experience of passing down of knowledge of Country to my daughter. This knowledge of Country demonstrates why Aboriginal women were a significant asset to the new world of pastoralism within Australia. It further revealed that Aboriginal people had an agricultural system prior to colonisation. This knowledge would have further lead to the ease of adjustment to the cattle industry as it was not as unfamiliar to their already existing practices. This chapter also further illuminated the relationality and circular manner of knowledge. This was demonstrated through the knowledge of the interconnectedness of people and Country and through that was created continual relationality. Further to this, prior to colonisation of the frontier there was an extensive system of paths and trade routes that connected people for various purposes. These trade routes and paths were what non-Aboriginal people de-territorialised and re-territorialised into the travelling stock routes and people and cattle were transported on across the frontier. The research demonstrated that Aboriginal women had extensive knowledge of Country and everything within that Country and their knowledge of animal behaviour is a significant aspect of this knowledge. This knowledge on observing and reading animal behaviour was utilised by Aboriginal women when they became part of the cattle industry. The research reveals that Aboriginal women were stockwomen and that this knowledge of animal

behaviour would have further enabled them to become the skilled horsewomen and cattle women that they were and are.

Through *Collumbum Angk Yunkundun*, yarning with literature and the yarning circles I have established that Aboriginal women did participate and perform the role of stockwomen and were a significant part of the process of the establishment and continuation of the Australian pastoral industry. Part of the research revealed that the narratives of these women clearly demonstrated that they had a significant role in the industry. I have also found that in my own lived experience that I have had a significant role yet different role to those women. This is what is so important about the approach to the research because it substantiates the argument of Aboriginal women's role in the industry through the framework and my lived experience.

Further research in this area can involve an extensive and deeper collection of first-hand accounts from Aboriginal stockwomen. This would provide a greater knowledge base to the cultural and historical foundations of the Australian cattle industry and an understanding of cross cultural relationships between the colonisers and the colonised. Extending on this research would be to not only illuminate further narratives of Aboriginal women but the significant role that non-Aboriginal women now play within the Australian pastoral industry. However it is hoped that future research in this area can be carried out through the exploration utilising Indigenous knowledge methods and as such through the *multiple relational narratives*

framework. Further research could influence policy relating to Aboriginal self-determination and continued cultural practices. It could also influence political policies by enabling people who are situated in rural remote area's having better engagement with policies implemented for living within these areas. There is nothing worse than having politicians that spend only a few weeks within these area's implying and implementing policies which are impractical for those who actually live within the areas. Therefore, research like this can inadvertently influence people across a broad arena. These need to come from the grassroots of the communities. From this research and the research methods implemented could enable research into other countries such as North American pastoral movement and in particular the participation and performance of Native American women. This research is significant as it questions two things: race relations and the gender divide.

This is a vibrant area of research and at present becoming an area of research that is being explored. The Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame situated in Longreach Queensland is currently in the process of conducting research through its Indigenous heritage program, and collecting data from around Australia on the impacts of Aboriginal people in the pastoral industry. This is an important program as it will enable Aboriginal people who have been under-represented and under-acknowledged within the industry to be recognised for their contribution to one of Australia's largest economic driving forces. This thesis would provide a significant contribution to this program.

Ultimately, my research has provided a starting point for further exploration of the role Aboriginal women who have played a significant role in the Australian cattle industry and the blurred boundaries of gender and race that were evident within the Australian environment.

The data and findings have been discussed and interpreted throughout the research paper, especially in Chapter Six. The research has been conducted in this manner as it demonstrates the relational methodology specifically the *multiple relational narratives* framework. As the research has discussed these narratives, they are not only the method, but also the meaning which incorporate the physical, the human experience and the metaphysical. Indigenous knowledge is circular and not linear and the interweaving is necessary to prevent the stories being examined as objects. The stories are the agency of knowledge. The research presented the data from the Contributors and me and I am part of the data and this has been demonstrated and interweaved throughout the research by utilising my own lived experience and the autoethnographic, insider/outsider perspective. The interweaving of lived experience further validates not only the experiences of the pastoral industry but the Aboriginal women's stories through the agency of knowledge. It gives us voice.

The research also reconfigures the false representations created throughout Australian history. Australian history talks about the great feats of great non-Aboriginal men taming the frontier country and establishing pastoral stations in the remotest areas of Australia. It is these meta-narratives that dominate our histories in Australia. The challenges they faced with Aboriginal people not allowing the theft

of their Country to go without a fight. The geographical environment that dominated everything that came with trying to establish and continue to run a pastoral station. The cattle industry is one dominated by the symbolism of strong men in their Akubra's, jeans and shirt. However, the research demonstrates that this is a false representation. The Australian pastoral industry was the largest employer of Aboriginal people and specifically Aboriginal women within Australia and in most cases, they were unpaid for this labour. However, historical assumptions of Aboriginal women's role within the industry have falsely portrayed Aboriginal women as domestics and slaves to non-Aboriginal men's desires. Aboriginal women however, were significant participants and contributors in the establishment and continuation of the industry by becoming stockwomen, stockworkers and drovers. It was this integration that enables and facilitated in Aboriginal women being able to continue their intellectual knowledge and practices into the contemporary modern world.

Although many things have changed in the industry and Aboriginal women are now paid if they participate within the industry, the methods of cattle work have remained relatively consistent over the years. This was demonstrated through my lived experience of living and working within the cattle industry today as a Koa stockwoman. I have been able to uncover and validate Aboriginal women's experiences as stockwomen, stockworkers or drovers within the cattle industry and their performances that were needed to be undertaken when working with cattle.

The research has contributed to the gap in knowledge that exists relating to the true value and significance of Aboriginal stockwomen. It has further contributed to the way in which research can be conducted in a culturally appropriate paradigm. This was achieved by the creation and implementation of the *multiple relational narrative* framework.

The research was limited in that I was unable to delve into how Aboriginal people have now been able to regain their Country in some areas and run and manage their own cattle businesses. Through Aboriginal people being able to be self-determining within their communities they have been able to integrate the cattle industry into Aboriginal cultural and social dynamics. Aboriginal owned cattle stations are not only managing cattle but have incorporated their intellectual cultural knowledge to the industry which has enabled the continuation in the transmission of intellectual cultural knowledge in the contemporary modern world. In some cases, using cattle station life to get our youth off drugs and alcohol and give them a new skill with cattle management and sense of pride and respect within themselves and for the community through continued cultural practices.

A major area that was unable to be investigated as it was beyond the purview of the research, was the stolen wages and stolen generations that were in a large part facilitated by the use of the cattle industry by the political policies and agendas that were implemented in order to control Aboriginal people and in particular Aboriginal women. The emotional distress that has been caused through the stolen generations did limit my research in such a way that there are women that are still reeling from

the emotional distress that this has caused them and their families. The lack of mental health services within rural remote areas has further aided in the continuation of generational trauma transference.

I have deconstructed and reconstructed the current western knowledge relating to the pastoral industry and Aboriginal women's positions within the industry. In applying an Aboriginal lens to western paradigms I have unmasked the historical foundations relating to the research topic. The research has continually demonstrated that the core element to conducting research for and with Aboriginal people is the relationships that must be formed not only with Contributors but with community and with knowledge. I have established the relational aspect of all knowledge production and that it is grounded in principles of political and cultural integrity. I have valued the agency of knowledge created in the yarning's and narratives.

There is so much more to the pastoral industry than just cattle management, the research was only able to scratch the surface of this sub-culture. There are many reciprocal relationships that occur within the industry with other industries. There is feral animal control such as wild pigs, cats and dogs. There is the industry of roo shooter which relies on a reciprocal relationship with pastoralists to control the number of kangaroos within the area. There is also in some areas camel shooters who are part of the reciprocal relationship and these also aid in the eradication of wild dogs as the meat is used for the baiting process.

In my time in the industry, I have seen within areas especially around Winton area, pastoralists joining with traditional owners and collaborating through programs such as Caring for Country. This is enabling better cattle management strategies and better strategies for caring for Country. Even as I sit to write the conclusion, I am having to work the cattle yards and help in the mustering as we are one man down. It's an extreme contrasting of positions, one moment I am writing, next I am chasing cattle in the bull catcher with a chopper flying thirty metres above me. Dust and cattle going everywhere. At one stage I couldn't even see five metres in front of me and it was just a matter of hoping for the best that I don't collide with another vehicle and that I am still pushing cattle in the right direction. Then I am within the yards processing cattle, being chased and at one stage having to hurdle the fence. This further reinforces my admiration for Aboriginal stockwomen as in some cases they didn't have this fence that could separate them from the cattle and they would have had to find a tree or somewhere high to get away from upset cattle.

The significance of this research is I have had the opportunity to not only build *multiple relational narratives* with the Contributors through yarning with literature and also the yarning circles. I have also had the opportunity to step on the shoulders of Kovach, Rigney and Wilson and what is important and significant in this research is the relational glue that brings all the relationality of everything together and that is through my lived experience. I then extend beyond Rigney's notion of giving voice to Indigenous people with political integrity because it is me giving voice to these Aboriginal women in particular not only as a Koa woman but as an active contributor in the pastoral industry. Without these two things this thesis is not possible, this argument is not possible.

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