

Connection to a Dying Country:

Aboriginal Protection, Defence and Adaptation



Image 1: Murray Daring River

Image 2: Dhimurru Land Management staff

Image 3: Elder Nancy Yukuwal McDinny at Sydney protest against mining corp. Glenore

- Table of Contents -

Acknowledgement	3
Introduction	4-5
Impacts of Climate Change and Land Degradation	5-9
Exploitation and Defence of Country	10-13
Climate Adaptation in Remote Communities	13-15
Contemporary Application of Caring For Country	15-21
Conclusion	21
Reference List	22-27
Appendix	28-44

Acknowledgement

I want to acknowledge that this piece has been written on Gadigal Country, I wish to tread lightly on this land that has been protected, and cared for tens of thousands of years. I want to acknowledge that myself, as a non-Indigenous person, is living on Stolen land. Sovereignty was never ceded. I want to acknowledge the atrocities that have been committed since invasion, much of which dispossessed Aboriginal people from family, Country and culture. I also pay my respects to past, present and emerging Aboriginal leaders and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

I also want to acknowledge Gundungurra Aboriginal Elder and leader David King a Gundungurra man, Dave Lardner a Dungutti man, and Dr Jason De Santolo a Garrwa and Barungga man, for sharing their inspiring stories and deep level of knowledge with me on the areas within my topic.

I respect the diversity between the 50 different Aboriginal groups in Australia and recognise there to be differences between and within these groups regarding cultural and spiritual attitudes, including Connection to Country. I also recognise and respect the differences and contours of different Knowledge Systems and experiences of different communities. The words First Nations and Aboriginal People are used throughout this essay to refer to these diverse communities. I base my essay on consultation and extensive research of credible sources and stories.

Introduction

Connection to Country is a fundamental element of Aboriginal identity, and it is the relationship to Country that is central or in some way inextricably linked to many of the contemporary issues faced by Aboriginal People. The term 'Country' for Aboriginal people refers to all living and non-living things that make up the land, this includes one another, the seasons, and The Dreaming¹ stories attached. Aboriginal relationship to Country has existed for over sixty thousand years and goes deeper than the natural interdependence of the individual and the land, it is complex, spiritual and practical. This connection, existing for over sixty thousand years², goes deeper than the natural interdependence of the individual and the land, it is complex, spiritual and practical.

The removal of Country for Aboriginal People results in the degradation of culture and individual wellbeing. The teaching and passing down of Traditional Lore, through language and ceremony, is often based upon the relationship with all biophysical elements of the Country on which they live. When land is disrespected, damaged or destroyed, it breaks this cycle of shared knowledge and significantly damages Aboriginal culture. Since the arrival of Europeans, policies of dispersal and dispossession have been enforced informally and formally by the Australian government. These policies continue to systematically destroy Aboriginal access and ownership of Country.

In the 21st century a seemingly new threat to Aboriginal Peoples in the form of climate change, reveals both the corrosive effect and ongoing nature of these policies. The degradation of ecologies cannot be separated from the systematic exclusion of Aboriginal leadership in land management and the lack of Aboriginal self-determination³.

¹ 'The Dreaming' represents the continuous process of interaction between Ancestral Spirits, the land and all life

² 2018, Pascoe

³ 2005, Brooks

Both the steps to reduce the risk of climate change, and the necessary adaptation to mitigate its impacts, have, in most cases, been taken from the hands of Aboriginal communities. The communities have instead been provided with irrelevant, ineffective, and/or temporary blanket solutions or no support at all. The Australian government continues to put financial gain, profit, before the Traditional Owners and continues to systematically ignore the demands of self-determination for Aboriginal People. This essay will explore what steps Aboriginal People are taking in the light of government inadequacy in protecting their Country that is now facing impending ecological ruin that will degrade wellbeing, livelihoods and continuation of culture and traditional practises.

Impacts of Climate Change and Land Degradation

“Country burnt with fire, then Country cried with flood, then Country got angry with thunder and lightning” Dave Lardner, Dungutti man

Climate Change is already being felt in remote parts of Australia by Indigenous Communities, particularly in coastal and island communities vulnerable to rising sea levels and very remote inland communities vulnerable to extreme heatwaves and drought. Weather is becoming more unpredictable resulting in a loss of native plants and animals. The Murray Darling River has lost millions of litres of water due to inadequate government water management and regulation systems, in combination with drought and climate change (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: A kangaroo struggles in mud in an all but dried-up drainage canal in the Menindee Lakes system NICK MOIR

The Darling River was used as a source of food, recreation and economic generation by the Barkindji People, but since it's drying up, locals faced immense cultural turmoil at the loss of one million fish⁴ and a river that was so closely tied to their culture;

“... It'll die. There will be no stories for the kids. All they'll be hearing is how the white people destroyed our culture, our way of life, our self-being... They won't be able to pass stories on because they won't have nothing to tell about the river.”⁵

The Barkindji community is also experiencing shortages in safe and reliable drinking water as a result of the over drying up. Families must depend on external donations of bottled water or have to spend up to one hundred dollars on store-bought water a week, a crippling figure for already disadvantaged families. This leaves them vulnerable to dehydration. The collapse of the river

⁴ 2019, Gibson

⁵ 2019, Norman, H. Janson-Moore

system also means the collapse of many of the industries situated along the river and in turn any remaining rural employment that came with it. Although despite the dire economic conditions of towns along the river such as Menindee, many residents are reluctant to leave because of their connection to the area. Michael Kennedy, chairperson of the Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council, on the Darling riverbed, was interviewed by The Conversation and when asked about his possible forced departure from Menindee he stated;

“We can’t move from here because this is our Country, this is where we belong, this is where we live. It breaks our heart.”⁶

The Arabana People, located in the far north of South Australia are also currently suffering from the impacts of climate change. These changes in climatic conditions are generating confusion amongst the community where natural indicators such as flowering or animal migration have been disrupted and traditional calendars are no longer reliable. Sacred sites such as a six hundred-year-old men's smoking site are now under threat of flooding from nearby creeks, due to unpredictable precipitation. It also directly threatens Dreaming storytelling and the passing down of tradition and cultural education for younger community members. Dave Lardner who works in NSW education describes Aboriginal Children as having two classrooms, one being the western education system, but the other being the classroom on Country;

“Country very much become the classroom.. our curriculum, it is that connection that tie”

When Country is damaged, so is teaching and learning on Country, a process that is integral to the continuation of Aboriginal culture. Changes in natural processes also create significant problems

⁶ 2019 ibid.

surrounding communities' food security. This is particularly an issue for remote communities where the Australian Bureau of Statistics records that thirty-one percent of the population is already food insecure⁷. Remote communities have also expressed fear regarding extreme heat, inadequate housing and the spread of disease. Inadequate access to clean drinking water increases communities' risk of waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea and parasitic infections⁸. Already disproportionately impacted by respiratory illnesses, infections and cardiovascular disease, Aboriginal health is projected to significantly worsen as a result of climate change. This is mainly due to the projected temperature increases in remote inland communities. One study found that fifty percent of Aboriginal participants reported heat stress from higher temperatures, and could not afford or have access to air conditioning⁹. These issues must be directly addressed by the government, but as an Adelaide respondent to a study in climate adaptation states;

“There's a lot more to it than putting in an air con and getting petrol to fuel it”¹⁰

Aboriginal people, however, do not only live in remote communities, seventy-nine percent live in cities and non-remote regional areas (see figure 2)¹¹. Surprisingly, Indigenous People living in these regions are more susceptible to deadly heat waves due to the heat island effect¹². Urban populations are also more vulnerable to rapid-onset flooding, as a result of insufficient drainage systems in cities. The very real and new impacts of climate change in remote communities are highlighting and

⁷ 2018, Browne et al.

⁸ 2012, Ford.

⁹ 2019 Nursey-Bray et al.

¹⁰ 2013, Nursey-Bray et al.

¹¹ 2006, McMichael, Anthony J, et al

¹² 2015, The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

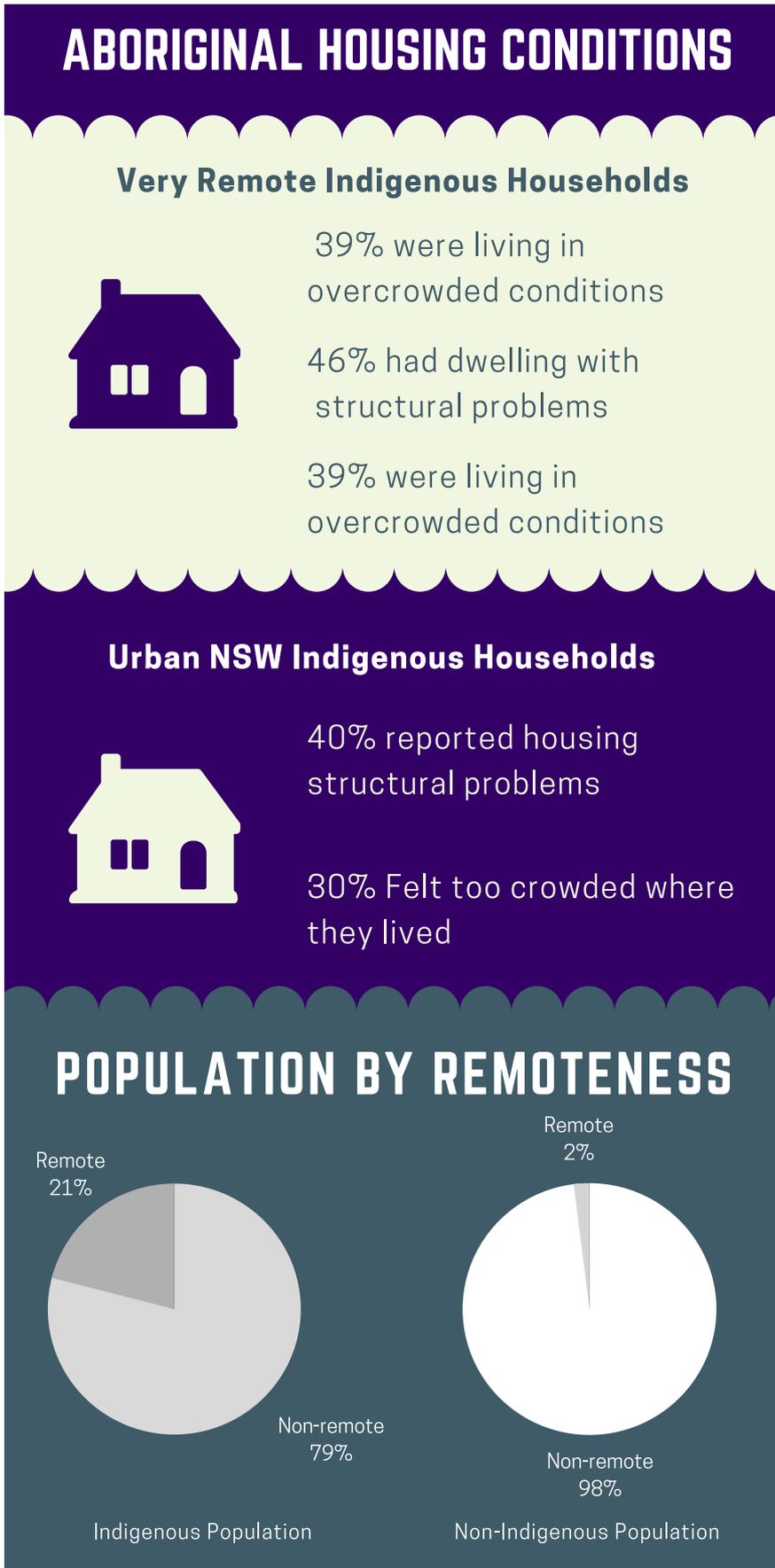


Figure 2: Aboriginal Housing conditions in Remote and non-remote communities, data from (2006, McMichael, Anthony J, et al) and (2015, The Health and Welfare of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Islander Peoples)

exacerbating pre-existing disadvantages and government inaction regarding poverty¹³ in rural Australia of which can not be resolved through 'fixes'. While projections of climate changes' impact on Indigenous education, transport and infrastructure are limited, deficits in these areas are likely to increase due to future climatic changes¹⁴. The structural integrity and housing conditions, including overcrowding, of a family, greatly impact their vulnerability to unpredictable and extreme weather events. Unfortunately, both remote and non-remote Indigenous communities experience high percentages of poor housing¹⁵ (see figure 2). Reliable services to support Aboriginal livelihoods in remote communities must be in place to reduce the growing vulnerability of these communities to climate change.

Exploitation and defence of Country

Throughout history, the importance of Connection the Country has been expressed by Aboriginal people through their political fight for government action and the recognition of Native Title over their land. Issues based on connection to Country have primarily arisen in the contemporary political climate through the inadequacies of the government.

“...there's this outward perception that Australia is this amazing place of BBQs and beaches, and freedom and equality and it's not like that for Aboriginal people” Jason De Santolo, Garrwa and Barunggam man and a senior researcher at Jumbana Institute for Indigenous Education and Research

¹³ 2002, World Bank et al

¹⁴ 2009, Nursey-Bray

¹⁵ 2006, McMichael, Anthony J, et al

This can be attributed to not only a lack of effort to learn more deeply about Aboriginal Peoples relationship to Country, but also the gap in the representation of Aboriginal People in parliament and court systems results. This often results in either inaction or poor support of Aboriginal communities in regards to land management, preservation and restoration. Since invasion, there has been pushback to land destruction and dispersal policies led by leaders such as Pemulwuy. Fierce defence of Country broke out once the intentions of European invaders became obvious, when small land agreements were continuously breached. This period of conflict was known as Frontier Wars¹⁶, a period of resistance towards colonial forces that were forcibly taking Aboriginal Country.

The stealing and destruction of land in the contemporary sense is now largely attributable to Trans - National Corporations in their pursuits to generate profit regardless of the human or environmental cost. There is a troubling trend of fossil fuel companies located in rural Australia taking advantage of disadvantaged communities. These communities often have extremely limited employment opportunities, employment in rural Aboriginal sits at 54 percent in major cities to 31 percent in very remote areas¹⁷. The government sees the employment “opportunities” that these corporations can bring into an area, as a perfect way to address the soaring local unemployment and gain up to a few million dollars on the side¹⁸. According to Australian law, Native Title can be wholly extinguished, without compensation, by historical grants of freehold, leasehold and other interests, including mining leases. Corporations can also operate through Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA) and work with the consent of local communities. However, the short-time payments of these ILUAs, often from mining companies, force many communities to overlook and compromise their long-term wellbeing to sustain the livelihoods of community members. But;

¹⁶ 2002, Connor

¹⁷ 2019, AIHW

¹⁸ 2019, Smee

“Aboriginal people should not be in the position of having to choose between two forms of egregious harm”¹⁹

In response to the systematic destruction of Country and the lack of options for remote communities, there have been protests around the country. Resistance comes from many different communities within or external to a series of different campaigns, most famously; including Frack Off and Stop Adani.

One community that has been fighting against invasive fossil fuel industries is the four tribes of Borrooloola; the Garawa, Yanuwa, Mara, and Gudunji. Borrooloola is located on the McArthur River, which is of immense cultural and practical importance to the community, but which has become subject to extensive lead poisoning due to the development of the McArthur River Mine. Glencore, the company overseeing the project, did not adequately predict nor communicate the implications of operating on the river and while proper research and testing of the river’s water conditions have not been conducted, the high levels of lead has to be known to impart foetal and child development.

Jason De Santolo whose family calls Borrooloola home explains how the river contamination has also impacted culture, forcing local people to abandon Traditional hunting and fishing, becoming dependent instead on ‘Western food systems’. All four language groups have been involved in the long drawn out fight against the mine since 2003, as well as a range of protests against the mine in both Borrooloola and Sydney. One of the main demands is to push the government to enforce free prior-informed consent²⁰, which is the highest international standard and protect the human right for

¹⁹ 2014, Ritter pg. 8

²⁰ 2013, UNHR

self-determination amongst Indigenous Peoples. This would ensure land claims could not be extinguished for mining licenses, like what happened in Borroloola, Jason states;

“Some Elders in the land council agreed to something, but I don’t think they agreed to what has happened. I know they did not want to divert the river. So that’s a really good example of going to court is making a ruling saying you can’t divert this river, and then to the government going and legislating to let that diversion happen. Where is the separation of powers?”

As necessary as it is to fight to reduce these impacts by demanding a cease in fossil fuel emissions and a just transition to renewable energy, the reality of climate change must be addressed through the implementation of adequate adaptation processes.

Indigenous Adaptation in Remote Communities

Adaptations within these communities would include improvements in quality and access to housing, and health facilities as well as food and water security, and cultural maintenance. These initiatives would be run out of and supported by cultural and land management centres as well as extensive ranger programs. Awareness and acknowledgement of colonisation in combination with current issues arising from climate change and other environmental disruptions is paramount to constructing sustainable and effective adaptation.

“...Indigenous peoples... do not dichotomise between the effects of onslaughts of climate change and the onslaughts of human development... Indigenous people’s adaptations to these forces have the same objectives – to effectively defend life”²¹

Adaptations must be community led, localised and continuous, with publicly funded government support. There has to be direct investment into consistent research and necessary technology to track and monitor changing climatic conditions and determine place specific adaptation requirements. These technologies include Climate Witness Community Toolkit²², help communities to document localised impacts of climate change and to provide advice for relevant adaptation initiatives and community action plans. National Climate Change Adaptation Research facility (NCCARF) is an example of government facilitated research into adaptation for Aboriginal communities across Australia, however recently funding has essentially ceased despite there being no conclusion to the bodies findings.

Discontinuity amongst government research and planning based in communities is a common occurrence in this area of research and making it difficult for Indigenous adaptations programmes to find stability. The other option is to run these research programmes through universities or other independent facilities. Seventy percent of research facilitated by independent institutions were “founded, initiated or coordinated by research or other groups external to the Indigenous organisation/community involved”²³. This research will often remove Aboriginal voices further from engagement and subsequent decision making.

²¹ 2019, Nursey-Bray

²² 2019, *ibid.*

²³ 2019, Nursey-Bray

It is thus necessary for these programmes to be implemented into the pre-existing structures of communities to avoid Aboriginal communities having to modify their own culturally and locally informed planning into the western dominated land management models. Where western knowledge is often linear, empirical and sequential, Indigenous Traditional knowledge tends to be more holistic and circular in nature. Ignoring Traditional and localised knowledge will not only limit the effectiveness of the adaptation structures, but will also reinforce the entrenched colonial approach to land management and set a mandate for future vulnerabilities. There needs to be a clear and upfront co-existence of both local Indigenous knowledge regarding Country and global scientific knowledge regarding climate change within adaptation.

Once research can be conducted into suitable adaptation plans the next hurdle for communities is the actual implementation of said plans. Cultural barriers and fundamental differences in the operations can often limit the integration and community leadership insights into adaptation. Complex compartmentalisation of government that separate issues such as land management, land rights and climate adaptation into a series of separate state and federal departments, make creating a cohesive approach to adaptation impossible. The disjointed planning networks further excludes the voice of community leaders and jeopardises the ability to implement continuous, streamlined and culturally appropriate adaptation.

Contemporary Application and Challenges of Caring for Country

While contemporary Aboriginal land management differs greatly from that of traditional management, the intentions, purposes and values of the practise have remained the same. Traditional Aboriginal land management, or 'Caring for Country' consists of four main components; hunting and trapping, cultivation, fire, and the totemic system. It was these components, practised

and perfected over hundreds of thousands of years, that made a sustainable, efficient, highly skilled management system. Despite common misconceptions that were used to justify the claim of Terra Nullius, Aboriginal people were sophisticated farmers and fire practitioners²⁴. Contemporary land management requires both Indigenous self-governance and land-governance to be successful which is why much of traditional management has been disrupted and takes place on a much smaller scale than pre-invasion.

The government must provide paid land management to support the restoration and protection of Aboriginal Country, rather than leave employment up to private companies - companies that are often destroying the land. Jobs that are Caring for Country provides communities with economic relief, increased opportunities to claim Native Title, and also foster continuous Connection and Caring for Country. Despite the advantages of working on Country, government-run Indigenous Land Management still lacks adequate funding. Indigenous People working within these reported stop-start conditions and training that ultimately lead to no employment²⁵. While there has been an increase in continuity and investment into these programmes over time there is still extensive improvement that needs to be made. Eighty-three Indigenous ranger groups employ over 660 individuals across Australia²⁶, and although these Indigenous Land management programmes are necessary to meet national conservation targets, they receive under 0.14 percent ²⁷ of overall government National Landcare funding. While there are many barriers keeping Aboriginal communities from practising self-determination and agency over their land, many communities have successfully organised management groups.

²⁴ 2018, Pascoe

²⁵ 2007, Luckert et al, 2007 Putins et al, 2008 Sithole et al

²⁶ 2013, Hill et al.

²⁷ 2018, Preece



Figure 3: Dhirmurru Rangers have been working over the past 12 months to repair the long term environmental damage that has accumulated over the past

One case of extremely successful Indigenous land management is the Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation (NT) operating in north-east Arnhem Land. Dhimurru, corporate under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976, was established by the Yolngu People of the area to mitigate unfettered access and fishing as well as harmful recreational activities occurring on their coast²⁸. These activities were having serious, detrimental impacts on the local wildlife, including turtles and other marine life becoming entangled and killed by ghost fishnets. Yolngu self-determination and empowerment is at the forefront of Dhimurru aims;

"...The land will exist forever. It must be protected so that it will remain the same so that it can be seen in the same way that the Elders saw it in the past. Our vision and hope is that Yolngu will continue to use the land for all generations to come." Roy Dadaynga Marika, 1990. Dhimurru Vision Statement.

²⁸ 2013, Hill, et al

Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation is run in accordance with customary institutions and decision-makers are the local clans connected through Yothu-Yindi and Mari-Gutharra Kinships. It employs thirteen Yolngu rangers and six non-Indigenous staff that facilitate the “protection, conservation and sustainable management of natural and cultural resource values, concentrating on those areas which are subject to recreational use”²⁹.

Yolngu People’s fight for land rights and self-determination of self and Country, is one that essentially initiated the modern Indigenous land rights movement in Australia. In 1963 the Yolngu presented parliament with a bark petition, after the government took 300 square kilometre³⁰s of land for Gominco mining corporation, petitioning for their land and their rights to be returned³¹. The petition commonly known as the Yirikala Bark petition (see Figure 4), was unfortunately unsuccessful and the mining went ahead. Even appeals to the supreme court in *Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd*, or the Gove land rights (1971), left the Yolngu People empty-handed. Despite the losses, the Bark Petition raised awareness of Yolngu peoples struggle and inspired a [protest](#) outside parliament in 1974. Protests in turn set off a debate that led to the 1976 Land Rights Act, wherein all of Arnhem Land was immediately designated Aboriginal-owned land and aside from the mining lease at Gove, the Yolngu People could now control their land. This Act in turn led to the High Court's overturning of 'terra nullius' in 1992 following the Mabo Case. Through their own political struggles, the Yolngu People paved the way for many other Aboriginal communities to win ownership over their own lands.

²⁹ Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation

³⁰ 2019, Korff

³¹ Land rights, AIATSIS



Figure 5: 40 volunteers listen to Aunty Sharyn and David King talk about Clean Up Australia at Maple Grove (located in the Gully) and its importance to the health of the

“We love Country, we just want to heal it hey, because it’s unique when you look at it, there’s nothing like this place, we are one-off. It’s not just about regeneration and connection, it’s also about land use. If we start using land properly we wouldn’t have a lot of the problems we are seeing today” David King, Gundungurra man

It was not all smooth sailing for David and his community. In 2001 Maple Grove or ‘The Gully’ in the blue mountains was completely bulldozed for a racing track, known as Catalina Park³² with “no repute for the people”. The establishment of the race track was controversial since its proposal in the 1950s, as its construction would involve the removal of an Aboriginal camp. However, the racetrack was constructed and was active from the 1960s up until the 2000s. As David told it, “the people fought and fought and fought”; community members proved connection to the government

³² “Catalina Park”

with the help of anthropologist archaeologists, and on 18 May 2002 the Gully was declared an Aboriginal Place, the largest of its kind in NSW. Now park restoration and cleanups are a common occurrence on site (see Figure 5). These projects are so important, not only to preserve the blue mountains ecosystems, but also in bringing the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community closer to the land and one another, all the while gaining a cultural education from leaders such as David King.

Contemporary issues such as silt runoff from highways are still a point of challenge for the bush care group, and insufficient funding from the government for habitat and plant restoration. The bush care group was getting offers from external research organisations, in place of the state government, such as the Blue Mountains World heritage institute, to provide data for more informed restoration. David King has also expressed having to make adaptations to how the Blue Mountains Bushcare group and other restoration groups operate due to climate change. He recently spotted a Brown Falcon, a Dhurg bird, in his backyard. He thought the bird had been displaced as a result of the recent NSW bushfires, that destroyed much of the bird's habitat forcing it to migrate.

" Instead of going "not my bird, not my responsibility"...I have to research what the bird eats and start planting. I was at Orange two years go, and there was an old professor.. [who] was planting 700m of the native plant even though it only grew 600m, but because of climate change, they die out faster and then the glossy black-cockatoo and yellow tails will have nothing to eat. So she's already adapting her planting. We've got to start thinking outside the box."

Conclusion

Connection to Country, for Aboriginal People, is not a factor of life, but a concept in which life is shaped and guided by. In this way Connection to Country is what defines the cultural, political, social and economic lives of First Nations People and is what continues to drive communities such as the Yolgnu, Barkindji, Gundungurra and Arabana People and the Borroloola community.

Aboriginal People will be disproportionately impacted by the impacts of climate change, due to this cultural connection to the land as well as post-colonial housing, health, employment and education disadvantages of many Aboriginal communities.

Connection to Country is a clear driver of Aboriginal political agency in securing rights over ones land, and establishing self-determination, and it is also what pushes communities to adapt to the alterations climate change had on Aboriginal lifestyles and culture. Connection to Country also manifest itself in the communities practising Caring for Country in the contemporary context despite the barriers that still exist for autonomous Aboriginal land management.

It is evident that the government needs to acknowledge and respect Aboriginal Connection to Country, as well as address the post-colonial experiences of Aboriginal communities, to successfully support these communities through the onslaught of climate change and environmental destruction.

Reference list

AIHW. *Indigenous Employment*. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 11 Sept. 2019, www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-employment.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. (2015). *Land rights*. [online] Available at: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/land-rights>.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. (2015b). *Yirrkala Bark Petitions 1963*. [online] Available at: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/collections/collections-online/digitised-collections/yirrkala-bark-petitions-1963>.

Baldwin, A 2009, 'Carbon nullius and racial rule: race, nature and the cultural politics of forest carbon in Canada', *Antipode*, vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 231–255.

Bark, R, Garrick, D, Robsinon, C & Jackson, S 2012, 'Adaptive basin governance and the prospects for meeting Indigenous water claims', *Environmental Science and Policy*, Vol. 19–20, pp. 169-177

Brooks, N, Adger, WN & Kelly, PM 2005, 'The determinants of vulnerability and adaptive capacity at the national level and the implications for adaptation'. *Global Environmental Change*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 151–163.

Browne, Jennifer, et al. "Food and Nutrition Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians: An Overview of Systematic Reviews." *Australian Health Review*, vol. 42, no. 6, 2018, p. 689, 10.1071/ah17082.

"Catalina Park." *RacingCircuits.Info*, www.racingcircuits.info/australasia/australia/catalina-park.html#.XsORGxMzY0o.

"Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples | Australian Human Rights Commission." *Humanrights.Gov.Au*, humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/climate-change-and-indigenous-peoples.

Connor, John. *The Australian Frontier Wars, 1788-1838*. UNSW Press, 2002.

Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation. (n.d.). *Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation*. [online] Available at: <http://www.dhimurru.com.au/>.

Ford, James D. "Indigenous Health and Climate Change." *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 102, no. 7, July 2012, pp. 1260–1266, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3477984/, 10.2105/ajph.2012.300752.

- Forsyth, H. (2016). *The Barkindji people are losing their “mother”, the drying Darling River*. [online] The Conversation. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/the-barkindji-people-are-losing-their-mother-the-drying-darling-river-57884>.
- Gibson, P. (2019). *Aboriginal Communities Demand Water to save the Rivers*. [online] Solidarity Online. Available at: <https://www.solidarity.net.au/aboriginal/aboriginal-communities-demand-water-to-save-the-rivers/>
- Green, Donna, et al. “Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice in Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments for Remote Indigenous Communities in Northern Australia.” *Local Environment*, vol. 17, no. 3, Mar. 2012, pp. 295–315, 10.1080/13549839.2012.665857.
- Hill, et al. *Indigenous Land Management In Australia Extent, Scope, Diversity, Barriers And Success Factors*. CSIRO, 2013.
- Holden, Emily. “‘A Lot at Stake’: Indigenous and Minorities Sidelined on Climate Change Fight.” *The Guardian*, 10 Mar. 2019, www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/10/environment-climate-change-movement-indigenous-minorities-sidelined.
- Howitt R., Havnen O. & Veland S 2012, ‘Natural and Unnatural Disasters: Responding with Respect for Indigenous Rights and Knowledges’, *Geographical Research*, Vol. 50(1), pp 47-59.
- Hromek, Sian. “RIGHT COUNTRY - RIGHT FIRE: Podcast Series.” *Firesticks*, www.firesticks.org.au/right-country-right-fire-podcast-series/.
- Hrynkow, Christopher. “Book Review: General Politics: The Power of the Talking Stick: Indigenous Politics and the World Ecological Crisis.” *Political Studies Review*, vol. 13, no. 2, 9 Apr. 2015, pp. 288–289, 10.1111/1478-9302.12087_82
- “Indigenous Climate Justice: India, North America, Australia.” *University of Technology Sydney*, 6 July 2018, www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/climate-justice-research-centre/events/indigenous-climate-justice-india-north-america-australia.
- Korff, Jenns Creative Spirits (2019). *The 1963 Yirrkala bark petitions*. [online] Creative Spirits. Available at: <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/land/the-1963-yirrkala-bark-petitions>.
- Juanola, Marta Pascual. “Welcome to the Slums on the Very Edge of WA’s Mining Epicentre.” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 2019, www.smh.com.au/politics/western-australia/welcome-to-the-slums-on-the-very-edge-of-wa-s-mining-epicentre-20190524-p51qyl.html.

Law, T. (2020). Australia's Wildfires and Climate Change Are Making One Another Worse in a Vicious, Devastating Circle. [online] Time. Available at: <https://time.com/5759964/australian-bushfires-climate-change/>.

Luckert MK, Campbell BM, Gorman JT & Garnett ST 2007, Investing in indigenous natural resource management, Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin.

"Mabo Case." Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 11 Sept. 2015, aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/mabo-case.

Marciniak, Catherine. "Impact of Climate Change on Indigenous Communities - ABC News." *Www.Abc.Net.Au*, 14 Apr. 2016, www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-14/impact-of-climate-change-on-indigenous-communities/7289604.

McMichael, Anthony J, et al. "Climate Change and Human Health: Present and Future Risks." *The Lancet*, vol. 367, no. 9513, Mar. 2006, pp. 859–869, 10.1016/s0140-6736(06)68079-3.

Merriman, John. "Blue Mountains Local Studies: Catalina Park, Katoomba." *Blue Mountains Local Studies*, 18 June 2010, bmlocalstudies.blogspot.com/2010/06/catalina-park-katoomba.html.

"Native Title Report 2002: Extinguishment of Native Title | Australian Human Rights Commission." *Humanrights.Gov.Au*, humanrights.gov.au/our-work/native-title-report-2002-extinguishment-native-title#f75.

Nursey-Bray, M, Fergie, D, Arbon, V, Rigney, L-I, Palmer, R, Tibby, J, Harvey, N & Hackworth, L 2013, *Community based adaptation to climate change: The Arabana, South Australia*, National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Gold Coast, 133 pp.

Nursey-Bray, Melissa, and Arabana Aboriginal Corporation. "Cultural Indicators, Country and Culture: The Arabana, Change and Water." *The Rangeland Journal*, vol. 37, no. 6, 22 Jan. 2016, pp. 555–569, www.publish.csiro.au/RJ/RJ15055, 10.1071/RJ15055.

Nursey-Bray, Melissa, and Robert Palmer. "Country, Climate Change Adaptation and Colonisation: Insights from an Indigenous Adaptation Planning Process, Australia." *Heliyon*, vol. 4, no. 3, Mar. 2018, p. e00565, 10.1016/j.heliyon.2018.e00565. 2019. Risks from Climate Change to Indigenous Communities in the Tropical North of Australia. 2009.

Nursey-Bray, Melissa, et al. "Old Ways for New Days: Australian Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change." *Local Environment*, vol. 24, no. 5, 15 Mar. 2019, pp. 473–486, 10.1080/13549839.2019.1590325.

Pascoe, B. (2018). *Dark emu*. Broome, Wa: Magabala Books.

Preece, Noel D. "Indigenous Rangers Don't Receive the Funding They Deserve – Here's Why." *The Conversation*, 18 May 2018, theconversation.com/indigenous-rangers-dont-receive-the-funding-they-deserve-heres-why-115916.

Putnis A, Josif P & Woodward E 2007, Healthy country, healthy people: supporting Indigenous engagement in the sustainable management of Northern Territory land and seas: a strategic framework, CSIRO, Darwin.

Ritter, David. *Black and Green Revisited Understanding the Relationship between Indigenous and Environmental Political Formations*. Nov. 2014. ---. *Black and Green Revisited: Understanding the Relationship between Indigenous and Environmental Political Formations*. AIATSIS, Nov. 2014, aiatsis.gov.au/publications/products/black-and-green-revisited-understanding-relationship-between-indigenous-and-environmental-political-formations.

Serpe, Nick. "Indigenous Resistance Is Post-Apocalyptic, with Nick Estes." *Dissent Magazine*, 2019, www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/booked-indigenous-resistance-is-post-apocalyptic-with-nick-estes.

Sillitoe, P, Bicker, A & Pottier, J (eds) 2001, Participating in Development. Approaches 114 Community based adaptation to climate change to Indigenous Knowledge, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 108-139.

Sithole, B 2007, Aboriginal natural resource management: an integrated assessment framework, CSIRO, Darwin.

Smee, Ben. "Adani Mine Would Be 'unviable' without \$4.4bn in Subsidies, Report Finds." *The Guardian*, The Guardian, 29 Aug. 2019, www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/aug/29/adani-mine-would-be-unviable-without-44bn-in-subsidies-report-finds.

Slezak, Michael. "Scorched Country: The Destruction of Australia's Native Landscape." *The Guardian*, 6 Mar. 2018, www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/07/scorched-country-the-destruction-of-australias-native-landscape.

"Steffensen." *Www.Capeyorknrm.Com.Au*, www.capeyorknrm.com.au/people/steffensen-victor.

Steffensen, V. (2020). *Fire Country: How Indigenous Fire Management Could Help Save Australia*. 1st ed. Explore Australia.

The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: 2015. AIHW, 2015.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-health-welfare/indigenous-health-welfare-2015/contents/differences-by-remoteness>

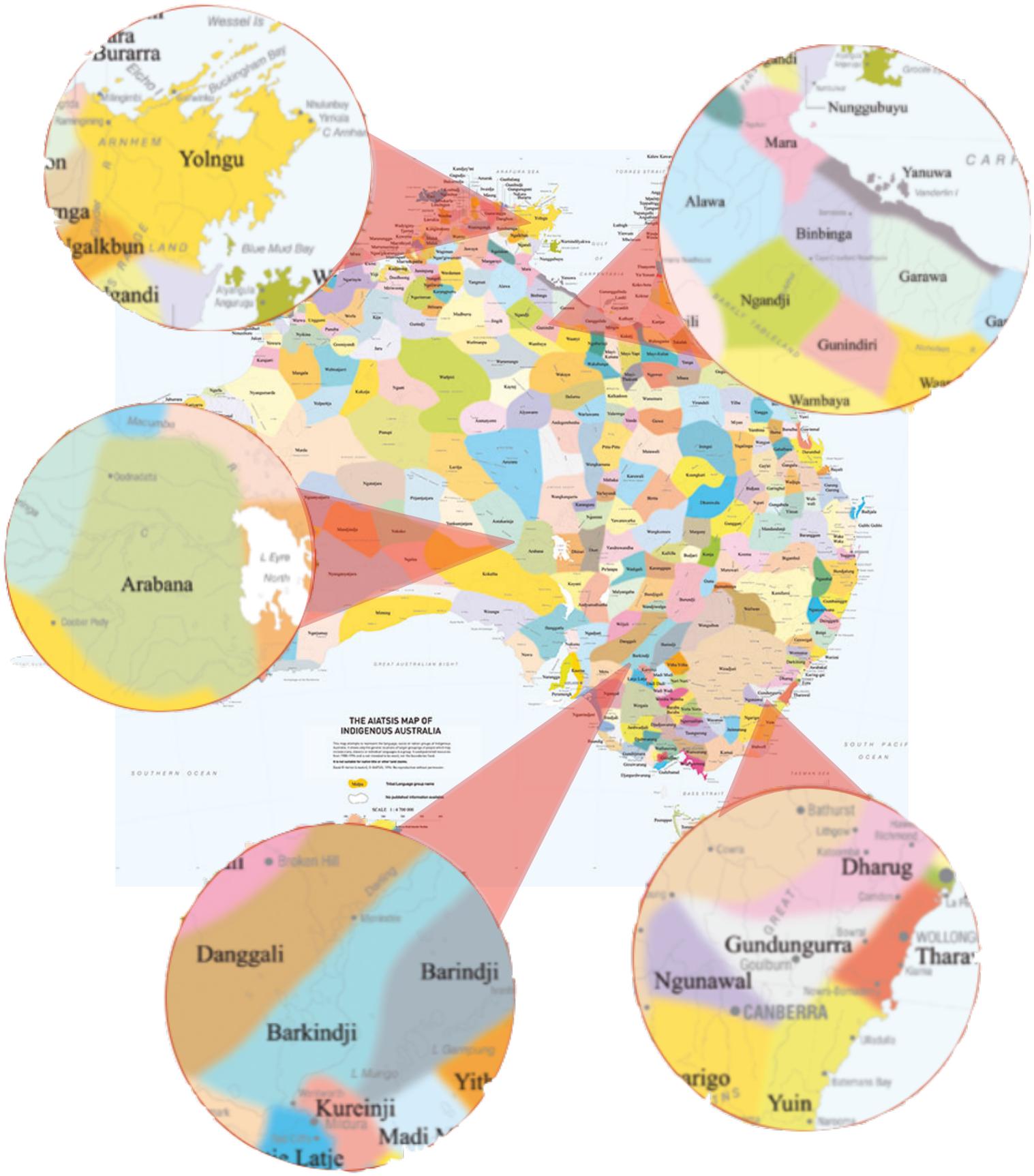
Tungandame, Bertrand. "Borrooloola Leaders Bring Fight against NT Fracking to Sydney Climate Strike." *SBS Your Language*, 2019, www.sbs.com.au/language/english/audio/borrooloola-leaders-bring-fight-against-nt-fracking-to-sydney-climate-strike.

United Nations Human Rights "Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples." Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section, OHCHR Rule of Law, Equality and Non-Discrimination Branch, 2013.

World Bank et al 2002, Poverty and Climate Change. Reducing the Vulnerability of the Poor through Adaptation.

Appendix

1. Locations of referenced Aboriginal Groups



2. Interview with Dr Jason De Santolo

Dr Jason De Santolo is a Garrwa and Barungga man, researcher & creative producer. He is Assoc Professor of Indigenous Research in the School of Design at University of Technology Sydney and an Adjunct Assoc Prof in the Institute for Sustainable Futures. I know him through my own participation in climate activism.

Jason: Some of the work I've been doing with Jumbana; collaborating with Indigenous Fire Practitioners for about 15 years mainly from Cape York Victor Steffensen in particular and Oliver Costello, he's just launched his book "Fire Country", it provides a history of the revitalisation of fire practises and cultural bring as a way not just to manage the land, but stay connected to Country and as a way to heal the land and heal the Country. We are in a bit of a crisis as you know, all the great work that you've been doing and all your crew, so there real potential there in where we are kind go signing our movements; Indigenous self-determination, sovereignty and right to access and be on land and live a healthy lifestyle for Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander People. And then aligns really well with the climate justice, [school] strikers have really inspired them I think because its really about families and future generations and what you guys are going to see the kind go chaos, which can just be really overwhelming I think.

India: So you've been working with the Fire-Stick Practitioners for 15 years did you say?

Jason: Yeah we've been working with them for 15 years. Jacqueline Gauthier is an amazing visual communications expert, she been working really significantly with the Fire-Stick Alliance which is a great national alliance of Fire Practitioners building their grassroots movement, looking after Country in communities that are doing that work.

India: How long has that alliance been around for?

Jason: It's been a while but only been incorporated and getting more capacity as the Fire Stick Alliance in the last few years, she's got some great work i can send through to you. A bit of her stuff is in the Fire Country book.

India: I might actually go and pick it up after this

Jason: It been an ongoing thing UTs has been an instrumental part in that. Design faculty and Jumabana institute for Indigenous Education and research. I used to work there, through the work of Paddy Gibson. Thats where we align with some of the workers stuff, Jobs on Country was one of the key demands we are working for.

India: I was wondering if you could talk a bit about Borrooloola and the struggle that our family has been going through

Jason: It my mothers mothers county, I wasn't born there, I was born in Darwin and at a young age i was taken away. So I came back to the community later in life, in the middle of my law degree, thinking i was a bit of. hot shot. When I can back to the community my grandmother said oh well we have family in Boroloola and Queensland, you should go back to your homeland. I went down to Boroloola, at that tie in the mid 90's and really strongly connected to my family there, and realised how much colonisation affected our people and how much i had to learn and unlearn about my society an our knowledge, my perception of what Australia is. there's this outward perception that Australia is this amazing place of BBQs and beaches, and freedom and equality and its not like that for Aboriginal people. But yeah we are really famous in the area, there are four main tribes in the area; Garawa, Yanuwa, Mara, and Gudunji. We are all tied in together in all different kinds of ways through family, and ceremony and history and movement. Borroloola is the main town there, its got a really amazing history. It was kind of a place where everyone want if they wanted to get away from the law, so yeah this amazing story of rouges and gangstas going there. there's been a long history of Yanuwa in particular wit relationships with the Makassans, trade relationships that go back hundreds and hundreds of years, so quite a sophisticated understanding of being in a region being close to Indonesia. And culturally tied in all across the northern Territory. In particular some of the challenges we have faced, obviously invasion, the usual things, but also with the land rights and that movement we got two significant areas of land back through the land rights legislation. Now the establishment of the McArthur River mine and its ramping up and expansion through the 90's and 2000's has really damaged the McArthur river system, and so that coupled with the Northern territory intervention, which was a rally oppressive interventions that happened in 2007 has really smashed a lot of the good work that was done in terms of community empowerment and self-determination and the establishment of a bunch of outstations and communities has really been challenged because of the intervention the really untie systems. Jumbana has written a lot about that, they have been protested and there's been lots of complaints, the UN has called out Australia on a number of different things including this as a breach go international human standards. Australia is really good at breaching international human rights standards, not just in terms of people but in terms of land and caring for it. So part of our work and the work I've been doing with my Elders came from a need to look after the and and try to revitalise and decolonise, and that part of my job. My PHD was around how we can renew our longlines through video making. So I went back to community thinking I'm this big hot shot, with my law degree, I'm a producer etc, that's really cool but your family are in the best busy reggae band in the Northern Territory, you kinship brothers are in this great band. Ive been working with them to sort of revitalise song lines. Our longlines are really important in repositories and canons of Lore, Traditional Lore, that also holds the key for ways forward for looking after the land and each other. I ended up doing that and through that work we identified that there were some major licenses to explore the region for gas and apart of their racing expansion. No one was aware of that, the council hadn't been able to communicate that to the community. There was a ig moratorium, from the very early stages, which was about 7 or 8 years ago we recognised that was a major issue, so we started to mobilise around that, including shielding strategy to shield the homeland from extractive industries and try to mitigate and slow down any of those activities from expanding. Like keep the McArthur River Mine accountable accountable and try to get the government to support higher standards of environmental protection. We mobilised just through connecting up with Elders and their intent to protect the Country, like Nancy Mcdengee and other

leadership, so continuing that work of our Elders. We used Jumbana as research and defence. Up that gate and Seed, working with original power and a bunch of cool allies, we built a really good movement, frack free NT, we are still a big part of. There have been little victories, and little wins. One of the big things has been a big water contamination in one of the big camps, but no ones going to leave so we need to protect the water. We are quite a resilient community, but people got really upset and stressed, we had a young niece who pass away quite young, she was on dialysis in her teens. The levels of toxins in the water and/or water were not monitored correctly. Having lead and magnesium in the water is a slow-burner and has an impact on the development of your children and foetal development. These are things that are really hard to measure, but are definitely there. And then not just the human impact, not being able to fish and have sustenance, and hunt on the lands means that you're relying on Western food systems. The intervention also meant you could only shop in certain areas, you couldn't trade barter with local gardeners. You had to spend your money at Woolworths or at the local store, so quarantining of money has had implication into the health and wellbeing of community. It's all tied into government policy that is really oppressive in a way. And the impact on livestock. The 400 cattle had to be killed because they were raised near the MacArthur levels because they had too high levels of lead. There was an inquiry in 2011 that found you couldn't eat more than once fish a day or a week because of the lead as well. In an impoverished community fish is a way you can feed your family, but now people can't do that. And then all of the ecosystems that have come about along the river have been affected and in the bore water as well.

India: You were saying before how Borrooloola put up this great fight up against the Mine

Jason: I wasn't involved in everything, but i was up there in 2015. We had a really big protest against some of the companies, but also to put pressure on the government to actually start to enforce free prior-informed consent, the idea that you need to have consent to do things on peoples land. There were a really great number of protests that happened, one really great one was down in Sydney, that was lead by Seed, it had theatrical elements too, people dressed up in suits and had fish they were digging up, some really great images. The mobcap down and were part of that, articulated in a way of our cultural resurgence. So you'll see culture resurgence is happening all around the world you could look at Hawaii, which is not about wanting to build on a cultural site, expression of sovereignty, its much more complex then that but its not up against anything its just an expression of life and culture. They are also lead through we need to protect you cultural sites. These have been how my family has expressed their cultural resurgence. It's not up against anything its actually a an expression of our ongoing conception to land and seek life, and live healthy and sustainable ways. That's why the just transition is so important, that's why we need to critique the just transition, understand that for climate justice, Aboriginal sovereignty and self-determination, should be in my opinion at the forefront of a just transition. Communities that have been affected by should benefit first from a just transition.

India: Do you think that the climate movement is not doing enough to prioritise Aboriginal justice in Australia at least.

Jason: I think so, I mean you need to look at the demands and what's being said in the bf forums. The demands in my mind should prioritise, the history and the truth and communities that have suffered the longest, because you're not going to move without doing that. There's also a logic behind it, that Indigenous Knowledge and practises have proven to be really effective for thousands of years, like culture burning. **Lets fund jobs on Country so Aboriginal People and once again look after the land, guide the communities to a place where we can live sustainably.** I think Indigenous practices and knowledges are key to that, not the only thing, but key. There's plenty of impediments and public perception that are blocking that. The climate strike movement is in a really important, especially you guys to start schooling up your families etc to say hey look at this amazing book or amazing films these people that are supporting us, where does that generosity come from. When we know that our ancestors killed these people and land, we are living on unneeded lands, how do you want your kids to live. If we are making decisions that are going to affect several different generations, how do we make that real for communities, including urban communities. Like Auntie Rhonda, how do we support them in looking after their Country. Let's create beautiful urban spaces that makes feel better for our own wellbeing. I think all of those things are really important. I think imaginaries in design and architecture are really great specs where we can actually do that, rather than the traditional old school disciplines like law that are almost constraining in their approach. I encourage you guys to keep going and stay strong, and connect other your people, seed is really great. There's been interesting conversations that I've been seeing about the climate movement and how the media tries to whet wash it a bit. There's been things coming out of seed about the "black new deal" or the "red new deal", not just the green new deal, there are so many other discourses and activists.

India: Back in the day I feel like the green movement was very much more exclusive, in that they wanted and advocated for sustainability, but were largely blindsided to the entire understanding and knowledge and sustainable practises that have been going on for thousands of years.

Jason: Yeah, they act like "this is our stuff". Like permaculture go this is ours, we invented this in the past few decades, but really it had been around for thousands of years practised by Indigenous people. I think we can see that more so in the international field, like the co-leader of the Greens party in New Zealand is Marama Davidson. Which is really outstanding Māori activist, it's a while different dynamic over there, a higher standard, but also part of a liberations strategy. **You can't move forward unless there's Indigenous leadership and social movement.** And workers stuff too, I think the stuff we are doing in mobilising May 1 and May 15, is critical. We are all working for our families, we can't just say "you can't have a job". We need that just transition, and we need to let people know **there are opportunities for every person, just in a better economic system.**

India: Has the fire-stick alliance, has that completely separate from the government?

Jason: I think the government had provided some financial support, but definitely not at all what they need. I think the key strategy is to train to train, the idea of having a hundred really well trained fire practitioners on Country around Australia. It's a really beautiful vision, it's what's needed. Education on ground and evolve the authority back to Aboriginal people to care for the land, it just makes sense.

India: Do you think in some of those remote communities who might at the moment have their employment based mostly in the fossil fuel industry, do you think there's an opportunity for a transition from those positions back into land management and Caring for Country.

Well People are still doing it, it's just doing it for nothing. It shuts like jobs on Country, it's brainer. The First Nations Worker alliance was set up for that purpose to unionise that work force. In the NT people work under the CDP development project which is the doll. You have to work a certain number of days to get the doll, and if you don't turn up a number of days you get cut. These are punitive policies and just so discriminatory, let's get rid of that, let's give people good jobs, stable conditions to look after Country. We will see things transform in the next generation.

We really just need to push for that free prior-informed consent, beach native title doesn't have veto over mining. So what happened, the elders in the and council, agreed to something, but I don't think they agreed to what has happened. I know they really petitioned for not diverting the river. So that's a really good example of going to court is getting a court ruling saying you can't divert this river, and then to government going and legislating to let that diversion happen. Where is the separation of powers? We talk about tenures of democracy, that stuff breaks peoples hearts and spirits. Consultation is a god that really limited in practise, its a word that thrown around a lot but free-prior consent is really the international standard we should be aiming for.

3. Interview with Dave Lardner

Dave Lardner is a Dungutti man, and Curriculum Officer at the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group. I attended him contact through my Aboriginal Studies Teacher Mrs Jade Carr.

Dave: *What I impart on you today are my knowledge and my experiences and it is no way any disrespect to other Aboriginal Peoples knowledge and experiences regardless of there experiences, your only getting one experience here, so keep in mind my knowledge doesn't represent all Aboriginal People.*

India: *Can I start by asking if you identify as Aboriginal?*

Dave: Yes

India: *Where is your mob from, and could you share with me a bit about your family and heritage?*

Dave: *On my fathers side, he was in Kempisie, or Dungutti, and various other parts of my family are from the Grafton area or similar. Kempisie is very interesting in itself because in 1967 we had the referendum, to count Aboriginal peoples as citizen of this Country and Kempisie had the biggest no vote. So look yeah, times are very difficult for my father and very difficult for me, because he's no longer with me, his mum died when he was very easy on and so he was put out to both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal families doing the 190s their and experiences from both were quite both quite negative, so he put his age up to get out of the area and go to war, unlike a lot of other people who went to war he never had a mother to wave him off, and he was given a piece of granite their from one of the fellas there an it was only in recent time that we did a reburial of that piece of granite up on Country.*

India: *Are you living on Country at the moment?*

Dave: *I was actually brought up in Western Sydney, an I've been living on the Coast for a while now, although heritage and connections to the north coast, absolutely my home and connection to country in the contemporary sense.*

India: *So could you talk a little about you connection to country or relationship to country at the moment on a personal level?*

Dave: *I guess this is inherent in why we do an acknowledgment or welcome to country because it is very much about connection and continuity and inherent in those cultural affirmations that we do it*

at formal or informal occasions, we focus on the word respect and respect is a very pertinent term. If we go to the Uluru statement from the heart, and we look at the spiritual notion, the ancestral tie between the land and how that link still remains and is our ownership. And so when we talk about that connection for me its a three way process in terms of a physical connection, a spiritual connection and a sacred connection.

India: Thank you, that is very insightful. So you talk about your connection to Country and the wider connection to Country, I was wondering who gave you this knowledge, who passed down their knowledge of Country to you, if you did have someone in your life to do so.

Dave: I always remember when i was young, and its a story I often tell to staff, i was picking up on the Macquarie river; the river that runs through Kempsey there, and we down towards the end of the river and I asked to Uncle, where does all the water go, he said I was only looking at the destination, to get to a destination you must take a journey, the journey is like the river it will flow and it will ebb but always are there parts to the river, new knowledges, new experiences, and new opportunities and he said that river will carry your hopes and dreams and it can also drown your hope and dreams. So the country very much becomes ur classroom, and because its our classroom it becomes our curriculum, its that connection, its that tie. We tend to work within our parameters of curriculum as we do now, which is our old mantra of reading writing, arithmetic well I guess we have two classroom in the sense for many Aboriginal Peoples today it is the classroom of the western education system, but its good to have the classroom on Country, You will never stop learning, regardless of where you, regardless of what country you will never stop learning. And you can see that now as we take the tie to look you will see there's dew on the grass, the sunrises a tad later; we tend to make the linear distinction between summer and the begging of autumn, for us it was more, and still is, the changes Country an flora and fauna. Your seeing that now. Autumn temperature still nice but that will change.

India: Do you work in education?

Dave: I do yes, my background is Im a Geography, history Aboriginal studies teacher, but imc currently working in the role of the Aboriginal Education team working with a lot of schools, with students and staff and of course link with the community.

India: Did you find teaching Geography and History you had to take some of your own initiative to implement that connection to Country or information about Country to your students?

Dave: *Your always conscious of it, teaching Aboriginal studies certainly. I don't just add it on though, its not an afterthought. I'm always conscious of adding in localised content with respect, where relevant and where meaningful.*

India: *Right yeah, I just find at least in my Geography textbook or my history textbook it very much is treated like an add on or afterthought.*

Dave: *Yeah there is that conundrum of only giving the narrative in the traditional sense, in Aboriginal past, whereas these things are very much contemporary, Aboriginal poles going out on Country, Country as their homeland, Country is their management, their connections till. Which is what the Dreaming is isn't it, its that continuity of Past present future.*

India: *Did you learn about that during school, or have you always had that connection and knowledge?*

Dave: *Ahha, nah. My old social studies textbook didn't really go near that, but really heat Mr Captain Cook and them were the first fellas here. First people were the the ones on horse back so to speak, the curriculum has always been, well the real history has always been hidden if you like.*

India: *Right so its more been on you to go out and source your information yourself.*

Dave: *Well and there's a to of Authors too, Aboriginal Authors, people like Bruce Pascoe, who change the narrative on its head, some of Bill Gamage's work and the work of land councils and heritage officers or national parks officers, have been able to set the story straight.*

India: *You've done a really great job in answering my questions, I think we've almost covered everything*

Dave: *Well probably we should conclude when we look at this concept of Country and probably something you should include in recent light of the summer we had, and the bushfires. one of the contemporary things there is, known fire-stick-farming, we call it cool fire burning, or slow burning. Its a practise that has always been there fr thousands of years and its undergoing a revival where we are using traditional techniques to care for Country in the contemporary sense. We create fire that is low, fire that is ow, bessie as we saw over the summer, and if you looked at the sun, it*

*looked very angry, very dismayed, so the **Country burnt with fire, then Country cried with flood, then Country got angry with thunder and lightning**, through the storms we've had. That's why we care for Country.*

India: Right. In your opinion what is the best way, to implement traditional and management in the contemporary sense. Like how does the dynamic fall of government funding and outside assistance, how it should be completely community led?

Dave: *Well you have to have a holistic approach, and recognise all practises, and knowledge and combining those where applicable. For many years many of the winters have been warm and hot and it hasn't allowed for the back burning of fuel loads across Country, whereas perhaps the RFS would have done that, but the climatic conditions have been against them, but certainly recognising the revival of traditional management practise by Aboriginal Peoples and their communities which has to be incorporated into any and management, because at the core there is the sustainability of Country. Well see **spirits put things Country for us to use not overuse**. And they've put those things there, such as kinship poems to take care of those living things, and of course non-living things across Country.*

India: *Have you recognised any changes in focus on Traditional land management practises?*

Dave: *It's probably hard for me to answer that one, probably one for the land councils like the metro land council.*

India: *Oh completely fair. Okay so I am particularly interested in how your personal connection to Country impacts your day-to-day life, it at all?*

Dave: *Well, for many Aboriginal People, we have our feet in two camps, the one where we have to go to work and earn money, pay bills and buy the bread and butter, but we are conscious, outside of that work, that we walk across aspect of local country and want to see it cared for, despite the ever increasing industrialisation and urbanisation that occurs across large parts of Sydney for example. And we are conscious of the attitudes towards Country. Even only got one planet we have to look after it.*

India: *Yeah no a big part of my project is to look at how Aboriginal peoples are going to be severely and disproportionately impacted by Climate Change due to the already existing disadvantages as*

well as this deeper connection to Country which mean not only loosen your home, but loosing the culture attached to it.

Dave: Yeah, well Im not going to say culture and has ever been lost, is has though past policies and process people have been systematically suppressed like language it may mean some low lying areas may inundate some rock engravings or shelter spots or middens across the Sydney basin for example. Urbanisation and industrial and clearing of land for coal plants and roadways and tramlines etc. It all has the same impact.

India: Yeah, right. Well do you have anything else you think you could add o the general topic, as I've kind of out of questions to ask ask you!

Dave: I guess you just need to visualise, It's interesting we have the anniversary of Captain James Cook coming out in April there, 250 years ago, that life was like in the Sydney Basin prior to colonisation. What traditional practices and techniques and how they were impacted upon, as well as Aboriginal Peoples culture and lifestyle. But in saying that there is also this contemporary sense of empowerment through Aboriginal Organisations such as the Aboriginal Metro Land Council and the Aboriginal Heritage Offie on the Northern Beaches.

India: Thank you! and i think that's all I have to ask today, thank you very much for your input, your insight. It has been extremely interesting an important for me and my research.

4. Interview with David King

David King is Gundungurra Aboriginal Elder, and member of The Gully Traditional Owners, co-founder of Blue Mountains Bushcare.

India: Can you tell me a bit about your family and heritage?

David: I grew up in Parramatta district, my mum was born here in the Gully, she grew up on the South Katoomba mission, she was removed as an eight year old. The government in those days went for people who weren't what they called full "tribal", I have a Scottish grandma and Aboriginal Grandpa, and when my grandma died my mother got removed. She had a fear to reconnect because she was told she couldn't be Aboriginal, so you can't earn your language you can't learn your culture. In the mid 90s Aunty Sharon, one of my Elder up here, her dad was dying and about an hour out from death he got all the older ones in his room and told them "we are Aboriginal". Even though we kind of knew it cause you couldn't grow like I did with my mums brother Uncle Harold, because he used to track possum up here in Katoomba, he was a legend. So in the mid 90s that all happened, something you sorta knew became a reality, and then like what do you do with it. I was always a kid that would go out Bush, we rode push bikes everywhere beach all around Parramatta Liverpool was bush back then, and my mum used to bring me out here to Katoomba, and I started walking the valley and walk with Uncle Harold, and you just, I don't know you just felt like there was something there, you didn't know what it was. So when I found out I was Aboriginal, when I found out I was Gundungurri, It all made sense, so we stayed around, hunted around for a connection. Today's Clean up Australia Day and it marks my 26th year, I've always had this Connection to Country. So we started to Clean up, then we started to do weeding, then the animals started coming back, and the uncle and aunts started to tell us stories, so [Connection to Country] became key. So in 2001 we started restoring Country, so where I live is a big old occupation centre, so me and my daughter went down there, so somehow we pulling out weeds and just built this Aboriginal Community. My mum always said have a cuppa and have a feed, so we started community, now we have around 20-30 volunteers work day.

India: As volunteers? That's so impressive

David: Yeah its all voluntary, its because we love Country, we just want to heal it hey Because its unique, when you look at it, there's nothing like this place, we are one off. And wee to to learn that,

and i think- I always talk about, we've ate this food for thousands of years, it not just about regeneration and connection, its also about land use. If we start using land properly, we wouldn't have a lot of the problems we are seeing today. Ya know if we didn't have this many people in the one four square yard space, but predominately could change.

India: Has there been changes in how you have implemented land management since you've begun?

David: So when I started, it was just the toolkit, you get everything out stick it the ute and out it all in land fill. And then all of a sudden, I went to Uni and did a graduate diploma in NCRN, and a few of the Uncles said; Dave what's your problem with weeds, it's not their fault there here, you've got to learn to respect them. And that's when I started to reuse the weeds, and that's why I like going down to Cooks River because down there we learn to eat the weeds and reuse the weeds. We are trying to teach people how to not poison them, you can't poison the land they said, instead you can use steam, or black plastic, you've got to find a way to manage the land without leaving Country worse off. So we've changed massively over the 19 years of pulling weeds and making teas. But the community thing has never changed. My family, they always say there are "sacred places" is an overused term, but the Gully is a very special place. In 2001 the entire Gully was bulldozed for a race racing track, no repute for the people. So they fought and fought and fought and in 2002 it was handed back.

India: what did this fight involve?

David: They went to the government, put all this paperwork in, used anthropologist archaeologists, proved connection. So in 2002 it was handed back. The Aunts and Uncles are passionate about Country, they are all nervous because they never feel like they are an equal, because of the schooling and clothing. So for them to fight for Country and them to win it. So then it took a few years to sort out the logistics and at then end of 2007 Aunty Sharon gave me a call, the council has told me if you can get up here and start a group in the swamp, where your mum was born, you could probably get some money into restoring. Since then we've won regional land care awards, state land care awards, and we've just done a massive event booked in corporate groups, and brought a lot of the old people back. And this is the emotional part I might cry, my mum and I don't really have a strong connection, ya know she was removed when she was eight years old and told to get out there and live, no one protected her. So a few of my Aboriginal mates invited me to uni, and I was like mate I didn't even finish high school, but they said they would help me, so I went to uni and finished it. I said mum if you don't keep telling me stories or I won't pass this course, so she said oaky mum,

and she had as broke, so every Saturday I would pick her up from the nursing home and take her out here where she'd tell me her stories. She started telling where she walked, she told me the ecosystem, she would say "up there son was all dry" and I'd say yeah the woodlands "call it what you want son", then "and down there it was all wet" yeah the rainforest, "call it what you like son", "just wetter". 6 months before she died, I was sunning where she was told by her dad she had to leave when she was eight, she went over to a tree, a specific spot, she crouched down and looked like how we do in Sorry Business, then she got up and told me, we can leave now son. She had made peace with the Country, yeah. And that's what weeding can do, in connecting, and she came to the weeding, Uncle Ronny came down and Auntie came down, and they told their stories. Connection is that important. When we do our connection, we take our cars out and yarn up. And it hasn't gone yet, that connection has remained.

India: Have you noticed a change in yourself moving out from Parramatta back on to Country?

David: I went from Parramatta, worked in Youth work for a few years, worked in Mt. Druitt did all this stuff telling kids they are all right, because growing up none ever told me I was alright. So I did that, then I had two girls. So yeah I thought this is my mum's Country, so I brought them up here, so it opened up that door for them, and now they Care for Country, they do bush care. Kelsey come to me and goes, hey Dad there's a lyre bird, we've got lyre birds around here, it our totem. It got might on its foot, it's wild, but it's come to us, and you see it's the Lyre bird is the totem for our moiety. And I go to her, I go Kelsey you know why it's one it us don't you? And she goes no why? And I said because basically we are the traditional custodians, it knows that. We took it to wires and they released it, but it still comes up our creek. Even the other day my youngest does to me and goes, Dad, there are two magpies outside talking to me what doing on. I said they must have a relationship to you. And I think they've got that because I brought them up here, Kelsey I wanted them to know home, so now they've done talk and welcomes and shared, like Bella did some sort with Bob Brown.

I've seen some of your work, I looked you up unless you were some weird person, and I said this girls on it, with the Borroloola mob you did that talk. I get a lot of requests, I usually don't do many interviews, I want real people, because there are a lot of tokens out there you know "oh I met some black fella and I did this, and went home and-" but I looked at you, and nah thanks for fighting. I was saying in a welcome the other day young people have lost faith in us, they're standing up because of our failure, and now we need to stand up for our kids.

India: *I mean it's communities like Borroloola who are inspire us, and your community as well to, you just told be about your fight for the gully*

David: *If you don't realise what's happening in your world, this is why your kids are striking, beaches they've seen the failure in you, so well done*

India: *No well done to you! thank you! You're doing amazing work, online it said you won Bushcare Legend in 2015, can you tell me a bit about this?*

David: *Uncle Claud, he has a plaque down at Faulconbridge, his son grew up with my mum, I looked at this park [where the plaque is] and I was shattered so I went in there and started weeding, and started a group restore that whole lily pond and then [restored] down near my place at Horseshoe falls. Then the rock shelves with all the art works were decimated.*

India: *How was it decimated?*

David: *It was from runoff from the highway, and the silt and erosion causing a landslide. So we started working there, so we had the Horseshoe falls occupation, the the rock shelves and the lily pond and Garang. Then started land care at the high-schools, at the Public School, so that's still going. It's simple, Just pull weeds and make tea. Nah we've just been at the clean up picking out the micro-plastics, all the kids come along, its fun.*

India: *I also want to ask what you think its the best method of land care, like what are the correct government and community dynamics/roles*

David: *So the good thing is, you do have land-care and bush-acre. Land care is state based organisation, so its funding for private land and bush care basically its council based, so they covers insurance and an officer, so you need that, that were the agency has to come on board, if you don't have that agency its really hard. We've had a few groups try to run without funding, but we have an economy that looks economically, it doesn't look humanly, there no "humanness" in our vision, so quite often if its not going to make a dollar, their not going to support you unless they can get a return on their investment, there is no ROI other than connected people, beautiful country, so here's the good ROI on this stuff. So what eve done, through bush care, they are very supportive up here, so a lot of corporates come in and want to do tree planting, the next month they're gonna pay fr 600 plats and pay for the whole thing. So basically in corporate charters they have to be involved*

*with Aboriginal communities, so just recently we've done the reconciliation film, that and then council supporters, well try get hey for the officer and they'll bring toolkits for the day. Just the visibility, in our family web talked in most parts of Australia about what we do, it encourage people to see what you can do. Initially when we came together 20 of them just sat down and drank tea, and at the start it annoyed me a bit, but it was just community, they just sit and the kids come and play, its just the beauty of allowing that to happen. Some times we'll get half a dozen, sometimes we'll get 40 at then end of the calendar year we've probably done as much as anyone else, but also generated a community, because its about the person, **my family understand land but we understand people more.***

India: Thats something I'm also interested in, which you've touched on there, is the way in which you are passing on this knowledge to the next generations

David: My girlfriends somehow gotten my head into this portrait thing in the community centre, and on the night my eldest daughter came and my cousin Jim brought his two kids, and it was great in the welcome, with the past and present and future, it was great to be able to point them out, that's the ting that never used to happen, sometimes their political, sometimes they are token, so it was great to be able to point to them an say there's out future. It's all about the future and that's like some of the stuff you're doing.

India: Well you've got to when the government doesn't really seem to be doing anything really, that's why its great to see i guess that you guys are being well funded up here.

*David: Yeah in my opinion both parties are disconnected, in the end of the day, labor used to be very much more human and environment based and not good in the bank account, you almost need 2 years of labor and one of liberal. **There seems to be nobody who is thinking about the environment these days in government, nobody, they just want money.***

India: Yeah a big part of my project is that how climate change and climate destruction, disproportionally impacts Aboriginal people because of this connection to Country, like you're not just loosing your home, but also all the culture attached.

David: You loose all the stories and the animals too, its like you already lack this sense belonging, you also gain this sense of lostness, if our culture if your Moiety is destroyed, you're dead.

India: Its just like this unfortunate reoccurrence of events really, I mean there was dispossession and removal of culture at invasion and now the governments inaction is having the same imputes of Aboriginal People.

David: Nah agreed, so Blue Mountains World heritage institute, both of their professors were at our cleanup and their offering up their data to me, because I'm currently fighting the government, thank you for the money for trees, but we need money for food and habitat, we also need data. So in my backyard we've had brown falcons but they're a Dhurag bird and they're on Gundungurri Country, they've got no food, they've got no habitat, its all burnt out, so they've come over our side. I might have to plant some non-Gundungurri plants, to save some of the species. Instead of going "not my bird, not my responsibility", I've got to look at my plantings and go -hey this their migration, I've got to feed it, so i have to research what the bird eats and start planting. I was at Orange two years go, and there was an old professor there saying she was planting 700m of native plant even though it only grew 600m, but because of climate change they die out faster and then the glossy black-cockatoo and yellow tails will have nothing to eat. So she's already adapting her planting. We've got to start thinking outside the box.

India: I think oftentimes the government talks about climate change as a far off thing in the future, but it really is happening now, and especially in Aboriginal communities. How did the recent bushfires impact you?

David: Yeah its weird- you've actually got me on a great day actually india I just gave a welcome speech where I said "I actually felt normal today" because we've had to sit through all these fires, we've never seen fires like these before, we never burnt the canopy, koalas went to the top because we burnt the bottoms, koalas were never dispossessed, we had drought already so everything was already dying, we fish kills, then we had burns, then we had floods, just yesterday we had marsh frogs in our back yard. And so all of a sudden we had floods, so I'm thinking we have rubbish in Gundungurri now which was previously clean, we went for micro-plastic today because we saw the birds eating them, it all rushed into the gully because of the pipes. You look on facebook this is what is killing the animals. I said in my welcome, if your here today after all this pain, tears and distress, to do something you've done for 26 years, to stand in front of your group, together with community and clean, it felt great, today felt great. I'm home and everything is alright.

Just sitting with your people, looking after Country, its just great, I love it.