“That Was My Home”
Voices from the Noongar Camps in Perth’s Western Suburbs

VOLUME 1 of 2
Exegesis

by

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BA (Hons)

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to fulfil the requirements for the degree of
PhD

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

________________________________________
Denise Cook
Dedication

This work is dedicated to all the people who called Perth’s Noongar camps home.

And to those who remember them.

I acknowledge that this is Whadjuk Noongar land and recognise the strength, resilience, and continuing culture of Noongar people. I also pay my respects to Elders past and present.
Abstract

Many Noongar people lived in camps throughout the Perth metropolitan area until the 1950s, or even later. These camps, which are relatively unknown in the wider community, are an important part of the shared history of our suburbs. An essential part of researching in this area is following Aboriginal cultural protocols. The ways in which cross-cultural research is undertaken are just as important as the information that is uncovered.

My research explores histories of Noongar camps in Perth’s western suburbs of Fremantle, Swanbourne, Shenton Park, Jolimont and Daglish, focusing on the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Although Noongar people were displaced from their land, they continued to live in bush camps on the margins of suburbs, either on vacant Crown land or by arrangement with landowners. Noongar people chose camps because of proximity to extended family, work, water and resources, as well as distance from non-Aboriginal neighbours. Interaction between people in the camps and those in the wider community was generally limited to school, work, and official contact. Today, most Noongar people remember camp life as a positive experience, though others recall hard times.

This thesis comprises a history shaped around people’s stories, photographs and archival information; and an exegesis which examines the literature, interpretation of the camps, and methodological issues.

This research expands our knowledge of the history of Perth. It facilitates more representative community histories, and applies a methodology for cross-cultural historical research based around Aboriginal cultural protocols. It also shares and preserves photographs and stories and, through a greater understanding of our past, helps build better relationships in the present.
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Abbreviations and Symbols

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CNA</td>
<td>Commissioner of Native Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAA</td>
<td>Department of Aboriginal Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCNA</td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner of Native Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNA</td>
<td>Department of Native Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SROWA</td>
<td>State Records Office of Western Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLWA</td>
<td>State Library of Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWALSC</td>
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Introduction

We really enjoyed life in the bush, you know, we were bred and born to live in the bush, because things were just sort of free and easy, we could do what we wanted to do.¹ You get no commitment, you don’t pay rent, you don’t pay gas, you don’t pay electricity. You don’t have to pay for water.²

Corrie Bodney, born at Swanbourne camps in 1932

I’d say [it was] what they’d call a humpy now. It wasn’t a house. … That would be corrugated iron, and hessian bags and things propped up against trees with branches thrown over the top for shelter and anything that would keep them dry if it rained. … You know, it was spotless inside and out. And the kids were spotless too.³

Anne Kidd, who lived near the Swanbourne camps in the 1940s

Our repeated efforts to acquire land suitable for use as a native reserve over the past ten years have failed. A mere rumour that the Department is negotiating for the purchase of a suitable block inevitably results in a spate of publicity and organised public protests, in the course of which natives and the Department are subjected to disgraceful, unwarranted criticism. The inescapable conclusion, therefore, is that natives were not wanted anywhere in the metropolitan area 50 years ago, and they are not wanted today.⁴

Stanley Middleton, Commissioner of Native Welfare, Annual Report, 1959

Perth’s suburbs have a hidden history of Noongar camps that is as recent as the 1950s. This story of cross-cultural tensions and relationships is an important aspect of our past, but one that is relatively unknown in the wider community.

I followed Aboriginal cultural protocols because the ways in which this research is undertaken are just as important as the information that is uncovered. This

¹ Corrie Bodney, oral history recorded for Claremont Museum by Denise Cook, 18 January 2007, 4.
² Corrie Bodney, oral history recorded for Claremont Museum by Denise Cook, 31 January 2007, 35.
³ Anne Kidd, oral history recorded for Claremont Museum by Denise Cook, 9 March 1988, 15.
was particularly relevant for me as a non-Aboriginal researcher working in the Noongar community.

My work has produced a thesis in two parts, a creative work and an exegesis, which together examine this history. The creative work explores histories of the Noongar camps in Perth’s western suburbs of Swanbourne, Shenton Park, Jolimont, Daglish, and Fremantle, focusing on the twentieth century, particularly the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. It is shaped around storytelling, and includes oral histories, unknown photographs and information from the archives. The exegesis examines the literature, evaluates existing interpretation of the camps, and discusses methodology and associated issues. It is built on a methodology of respecting Aboriginal cultural protocols. Combined, the works address a number of issues. These include how Noongar people were displaced from their land, firstly when it was granted to colonists, and then by laws which controlled many aspects of their lives. However, despite this, they continued to occupy bush camps on the margins of suburbs, either through arrangement with the new landowners or on government-owned vacant land. This thesis also explores where people camped and why, finding that extended families were associated with particular camps where they stayed or returned regularly. Other factors in the choice of camps included the availability of work, water, resources such as food and building materials, and friendships with landowners. Life in the camps is explored through stories from those living in the camps and others who remember them, juxtaposed with official perspectives. Interaction between people in the camps and those in the wider community highlights both friendships and tensions. Contact occurred mainly through school, work, and interactions with police and Native Affairs Department staff. I also investigate the ways the camps are remembered, both by Noongar people who have an ongoing connection to that country, and the ways they are remembered (or often overlooked) by the wider community. Finally, I investigate how a non-Aboriginal historian might respectfully research and tell these cross-cultural histories.

For guidance, I worked with a Noongar steering group, comprising key Noongar staff at the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC). I also
reported regularly to SWALSC’s Whadjuk Working Party, which comprises Elders and other family representatives descended from the Noongar people in Perth around the time of colonisation. My research was facilitated by my ongoing part-time work for the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council.

**Aims**

On a personal level, my project arose from a desire to know more about the camps, not only in Swanbourne and the adjoining suburb of Claremont where I worked for many years at Claremont Museum, but also in other parts of Perth. I was also keen to build further connections with Noongar people, the traditional owners of the country on which I was born and have lived most of my life.

On a broader level, my project was designed to achieve a number of other outcomes. Firstly, to expand the recorded knowledge of the largely hidden history of the Noongar camps, located throughout the metropolitan area until at least the 1950s, and in some cases much later. As most of Western Australia’s population lives in Perth, this history is central to our understanding of the past, and influences the ways that we live together in the present. Using storytelling, my creative work addresses this issue.

The second aim is to encourage representative interpretation of the cross-cultural histories of local communities. Much of the local history currently produced in museum exhibitions, history books and other interpretation ignores the complex, ongoing relationships between Noongar and non-Aboriginal people in favour of generalised comments about pre-contact history. This legitimates the settler colonial state and undermines attempts by Noongar people to include their story in our national narrative. I discuss this issue in further detail in the Literature Review and Interpretation chapters.

A third aim is to apply Aboriginal cultural protocols as a methodology for collaborative, cross-cultural historical research between people in the diverse Noongar, broader Aboriginal, and non-Aboriginal communities of Perth. An important aspect is developing respectful cross-cultural relationships through the process of the research. Through these relationships and this methodology
it is possible for a non-Aboriginal woman to respectfully research and write these histories. This topic is addressed in detail in the Methodology chapter.

The fourth aim is to locate and identify photos, stories, and other information that has survived from the camps. With permission, these have been shared with people involved with my project, as well as among other Noongar families, researchers, local libraries, and museums. Much of this material is in my creative work.

Definitions

The term Noongar refers to the traditional owners of the southwest of Western Australia, extending from north of Jurien Bay to east of Esperance, including the capital, Perth. There are many spellings of Noongar, for example Nyungah, Nyungar and Nyoongar. I have adopted Noongar, as used by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, but kept the original spelling if that is the preference of the speaker.

Anthropologist Norman Tindale found that there are fourteen groups within Noongar country, including Whadjuk in the Perth region. While not everyone agrees, SWALSC and a number of other traditional owners use the name Whadjuk so I have done that as well. Being a traditional owner for a place gives certain rights.

Noongar people have collective rights through succession or inheritance to particular tracts of land, and Noongar cultural protocol establishes who can and cannot ‘speak for country’ or who can perform ‘welcome to country’.

In this work, I have shared stories from the people who told me about camps in Perth. While many of them are Whadjuk Noongar, the traditional owners for the Perth area, other people also lived in the camps. They include Noongar people from other parts of Noongar country, Aboriginal people from other parts of the state, and a few non-Aboriginal people.

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Camps are defined as temporary or long term structures constructed and occupied by Noongar people. These were on traditional country, which later became reserves, Crown land and privately owned property throughout the Perth metropolitan area. Camps were constructed from a range of materials, and varied over time. In the nineteenth century camps were generally made in traditional style, using brush, grass tree leaves, and bush timber. This style was still found in the 1930s. Later camps incorporated materials discarded by colonists, often from the local rubbish tip, such as flattened kerosene tins, corrugated iron, rugs, wheat bags and chaff bags.\(^7\) The use of different materials reflects the interaction between Noongar people and the new arrivals, as well as indicating available resources.

Aboriginal people living in camps in Perth and in other places around Australia have been described as fringe dwellers. I have not used this term because it is not how Noongar people portray themselves, but it does explain how those in the wider community often viewed people in the camps. This definition from Heppell and Wigley’s history of town camps in Alice Springs gives a useful insight into attitudes towards people in the camps in Perth.

The expression [fringe dweller] refers clearly to those Aborigines who have taken up residence in town but who, in the official view, have no right to be living there in the way they do. In fact, not only have they no right to be there, but, by remaining there, they represent a potential threat to the wider community (rationalized as a threat to the health of the community). Their presence, therefore, is met with hostility on the part of white residents, and rightly so, in the official view, because of the undefined evils they bring with them. In the white view, then, “fringe dweller” is an ascribed social status describing those Aborigines who do not conform to European standards of behaviour, who should be resident in an appropriate establishment set up for them where proper behaviour can be learnt, but who have rejected this “better way” and hang on, living in small groups where they can and eking out an existence on the fringes of society.\(^8\)

This could equally have been written of people living in the camps in Perth.

\(^7\) Corrie Bodney, oral history recorded for Claremont Museum by Denise Cook, 22 February 2007, 19.
\(^8\) M Heppell and JJ Wigley, Black out in Alice: A History of the Establishment and Development of Town Camps in Alice Springs (Canberra: Australian National University, 1981), 14.
My work has been undertaken as cross-cultural collaborative research. This means that the research was across cultures: between Noongar and non-Aboriginal people, as well as being done in a collaborative way where participants and researchers were as much as possible equal partners in the research, and all benefited from the results.\textsuperscript{9} As Meredith Gibbs states in her work on cross-cultural collaborative research, one of the benefits of “a collaborative approach is to ensure research is asking relevant questions and gaining meaningful answers.”\textsuperscript{10}

In exploring this history, I draw on storytelling, which is both powerful and political. Stories may be anecdotes, examples, or something that is invented.\textsuperscript{11} In my work I use storytelling to mean sharing personal experiences, which may be either anecdotes or examples. As Leonie Sandercock points out, through storytelling different groups in society can hear and learn about each other. She adds that by imagining alternatives, storytelling can also shape the future.\textsuperscript{12} Core stories identify the meaning we give to ourselves, both as individuals and as communities. They also shape the ways we relate to others.\textsuperscript{13} In terms of storytelling, Leonie Sandercock argues Australia’s foundational story explains our origins by the “discovery” of the country by Captain Cook, and its settlement by hardworking pioneers. As she notes, this is based on \textit{terra nullius} and ignores Aboriginal peoples’ occupation of the country.\textsuperscript{14} Sandercock also identifies that conflict over land between settlers and Indigenous peoples in colonised societies draws on the core stories of paradise lost for Indigenous people, and for settlers, bravery and persistence under difficult circumstances.\textsuperscript{15} These stories are echoed and challenged throughout this work.

\begin{footnotes}
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My Background

I was born in Fremantle, Western Australia in 1960. I grew up there too, leaving the year I turned sixteen to go and live in the Perth hills. I was quiet, good at schoolwork, and enjoyed sport. I don’t remember any Noongar kids at my state primary or high schools though they must have been there. My memories of Australian history from school include non-Aboriginal explorers, but no Aboriginal people.

In the 1980s, I studied history at Murdoch University and loved the way social history enabled me to explore power relations in society. Among other things, I wrote about the injustices that Aboriginal people had experienced. I came away from Murdoch with the tools that have enabled me to work as an historian ever since, but I still did not know much about the Noongar history of Perth.

My first job after university was recording oral histories at Claremont Museum, now known as Freshwater Bay Museum. There, I was surprised to find that Noongar people had camped near Lake Claremont until 1951. That was only nine years before I was born and well within my parents’ lifetimes. My father had gone to Scotch College near Lake Claremont just after the Second World War, but had never mentioned the Noongar camps, and when I asked him later, he didn’t know about them either. I didn’t expect a middle-class suburb like Claremont to have people living in recent times in housing made from materials scrounged from the rubbish tip. Somehow, I imagined anything like that would be a long time in the past.

At Claremont Museum, I recorded those first oral histories, not with Noongar people, but with non-Aboriginal people who had lived in Claremont in the early to mid-1900s. I always asked about their contact with Aboriginal people, and a number of them spoke about those they knew from the camps at Lake Claremont. For example, Glen Doepel remembered one of the young women from the camps coming to wash for his mother in the early 1900s. The whole family would come and help or sit in the back yard and wait for the lunch of barley and sheep’s head stew. He particularly remembered the women’s beautiful singing voices and the eldest man, known as King Billy. Anne Kidd
also talked about Aboriginal people, particularly the Bodney family, camping on her family’s land adjoining the lake.16

I wanted to know more, and was pleased to discover that Robert Bropho had written a chapter about the Swanbourne camps in his book, *fringedweller*.17 I hadn’t yet actually met any of the Noongar people who had called Swanbourne home though.

For many years, I came and went from Claremont Museum, working on contracts. During this time, I also recorded oral histories with Noongar people for Mandurah Community Museum, and researched Noongar and other histories for native title claims. I curated the Indian Ocean Gallery for the Western Australian Maritime Museum, and laid the groundwork for the *Koorlongka: Stories of Indigenous Childhood* exhibition at the Museum of Childhood. Throughout my work, I noticed how little Noongar history there was in most museum exhibitions, local histories, and interpretation signage. It was as if Noongar people disappeared soon after colonisation.

In 2003, I was appointed Museum Manager and Curator at Claremont Museum. The Town of Claremont then decided to develop the former Lakeway Drive-in site for housing. Since the site is registered under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act*, 1972 as a site significant to Aboriginal people, they appointed a consultant anthropologist, Stuart Fisher, to conduct a heritage survey with the Noongar people who have connections with the site. There, in 2006, I met Corrie Bodney and was pleased that he was interested in telling me about the camps. Council agreed to fund a series of oral histories with any of the Noongar people who had connection with the site with the aim of both recording their stories and, with permission, using parts of the stories for interpretation signs at the new development. With Stuart’s help arranging interviews, I was away. On 18 January 2007, I sat at Claremont Museum and recorded the first of many oral histories with Corrie Bodney. I was intrigued as he started by telling me that he had been called Koori because he had long arms and legs like a spider, and in his language, a spider is called koori. When his teacher at school couldn’t

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pronounce Koori, it became Corrie. Then he went on to say that he was born in 1932 in the bush off Alfred Road but since it was at night they didn’t know if it was the first or the second of November. He did know that it had been Melbourne Cup day and his father told him that a horse called Peter Pan won that year. I was later to discover that his father had been a jockey until a bad accident stopped him working, and that he helped support the family by betting on horse races.

I also recorded long conversations with Corrie’s younger brother Bill Bodney, known as Toopy. He had stayed home from school until he was nine and helped his mother cleaning houses around the Claremont area. Toopy was a great storyteller and it was some time before he gave me the general background information that I usually ask for when I start an oral history recording. With Toopy, it was straight into the stories, accompanied by a lot of laughter. He was also a great artist, and after school started studying graphic design until police cautioned him for being in Perth after 6pm, the time that all Aboriginal people were legally required to be out of town. He never went back to the course. He did many paintings though and Freshwater Bay Museum was lucky enough to purchase two, one of which has been displayed in a story about the Noongar history of the museum site.

Robert Bropho also agreed to talk to me and I remember sitting on the edge of the Lakeway site, near the place where his grandmother, Clara Leyland had camped during Robert’s childhood. Her camp was on the Briggs family property spoken about by Anne Kidd when I interviewed her at the beginning of my work at Claremont Museum in 1988.\(^{18}\)

In 2008, I started part-time work at the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. Initially I had approached them to see if they would partner in my project and help fund my PhD research. They didn’t have the resources for that but offered me a job recording oral histories with Noongar Elders from the southwest. I continued to work part-time at SWALSC until 2014.

Finally, in 2010, I started my PhD at Murdoch University. In accordance with protocol, both in the lead up to starting my PhD, and in the early months of work, I asked many Noongar people if it would be all right for me to research and write about this topic, and if so, what outcomes they would like to see. It was an anxious time, waiting to see if I would get permission. I also established a Noongar steering group, and began making regular reports to, and asking for guidance from, SWALSCs Metro (later known as Whadjuk) Working Party. In learning about, and following Aboriginal cultural protocols I was inspired by my earlier work on the Koorlongka exhibition for the Museum of Childhood. In addition, some years earlier I had been invited to a lunch at the Mandurah Community Museum when Dr Mary Anne Jebb brought together participants in an oral history project of the Mandurah/Pinjarra area. I was struck by the good feeling in the room as both Noongar and non-Aboriginal people told stories about their shared past, and I wanted to do something similar with my project.

**Exegesis**

The exegesis provides a context for my work and the opportunity to explore wider issues. The first chapter is a review of the literature and other sources, examining the extent and usefulness of each for my work. To do this I critically consider primary sources, such as personal accounts, newspapers, government records, and oral histories; the early histories of Western Australia; the work of other disciplines, particularly anthropology, architecture and archaeology; writings by Noongar and other Indigenous peoples; and social histories and other more recent histories that incorporate Noongar and other Aboriginal peoples’ experiences.

The second chapter examines existing interpretation of the Noongar camps in Perth. This addresses the question of how we remember the camps. It considers fiction such as novels and short stories, poetry, plays, and children’s books; films; websites; museum exhibitions and collections; site interpretation such as sculpture, artwork, and signs; trail guides; and the use of Noongar language and names. It is clear from this work that interpretation of the camps
is far from comprehensive and I hope my research contributes to improvements in this area.

The last chapter is a discussion of my methodology for this work. This includes issues raised by Indigenous writers about research into their communities, and responses to those concerns. Through the *Noongar Consultation Protocol Guidelines* developed in the Swan and Canning Rivers Iconic Trails Project, I discuss my methods and raise issues that I experienced during this project. The last section of the chapter discusses several other methodological issues, namely a more detailed exploration of storytelling, methodology for a site-based project, work for the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, family violence, and using photographs and oral histories.

**Creative Work**

I have written the creative work as a history with an emphasis on photographs and people’s stories to make it accessible to as wide an audience as possible. Place is an important aspect of this work, and the stories link landmarks such as rivers, swamps, industrial buildings and parks to Noongar camps as well as to better-known non-Aboriginal histories. The first chapter is the background history, including land being allocated to colonists, laws that affected Noongar people, and conflict with Noongar traditional practices. The second chapter is the story of Corrie Bodney’s life in a number of camps in Perth, based on oral histories I recorded with him over many years. The third chapter is about people in the camps in the Fremantle area, particularly the Smelters camp in South Fremantle. The fourth chapter explores stories from the camps in Claremont and Swanbourne in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The last chapter focuses on the journey by a group of people to rediscover camps at Shenton Park, Jolimont and Daglish that they had known as children. As E. Ann Kaplan wrote:

> we must address other cultures, since we increasingly live in a world where we will rely on one another, where not to know will be dangerous. … Our own paradigms are further opened up,
changed in beneficial ways, through the challenges that other cultures offer.¹⁹

Chapter 1 Literature Review

This chapter locates my work within a range of writings that explore similar themes of Noongar displacement, camp locations, life in the camps, relationships, remembering the camps, and methodology. The first four themes are emphasised, as the next chapter addresses interpretation of the camps through fictional accounts, films, exhibitions, signage, trail guides, Noongar language and websites. Chapter Three deals with the methodology for my work, particularly the issue of protocols.

Firstly, I examine primary sources such as personal accounts, newspapers, government records, photographs, and oral histories. Next, I assess the early histories of Western Australia, as well as those more recent works premised on the narrative of progress that underpins the early histories. The third group is work from researchers in other disciplines, namely anthropology, architecture, and archaeology. From the 1970s, Noongar and other Indigenous peoples internationally began to tell their own stories in the public sphere and in the fourth section I draw on their work for information, perspectives, and methodology. From the 1960s historians began to rewrite our understandings of the past, broadening the focus from the achievements of “great men” to incorporate the histories of Aboriginal people, women, working-class people, and many other previously marginalised groups. This last group of work informs both my approach and the range of sources that I use.

Personal Accounts

Personal accounts include the writings and personal reminiscences of early colonists, newspaper accounts, government records, and oral histories recorded in recent years. These sources provide detailed, often personal information that covers all the themes and often cannot be obtained anywhere else. Although varying widely, many of the earlier authors had ambivalent attitudes towards Noongar people, particularly their own role in displacing Noongar people from land.
The best-known early writer is George Fletcher Moore, who arrived in the Swan River Colony in 1830 and obtained a property on the Upper Swan. He was a farmer, lawyer, and explorer, and his diaries, letters, and other accounts of the colony have been published and widely read.¹

Like many early colonists, Moore had mixed feelings towards Noongar people. While he had regular, amicable contact with many, including those who spent time on his property,² in June 1833, when settlers were still struggling to establish farms, he was frustrated to the point of suggesting that if Noongars taking sheep “persist in annoying us, I think we would be prudent to poison them.”³ Although not involved, he also supported the Pinjarra massacre as a “painful but urgent necessity” to enable settlement to continue in that part of the colony.⁴ In September 1834 Moore wrote of Noongar people:

They are troublesome friends and dangerous enemies. They are a drawback upon our success which we had not calculated upon, a charge upon our lands which we were not apprised of, and a thorn in our sides which we can not get rid of and which constantly reminds us of the inconvenience of its presence.⁵

Moore’s work is important for his detailed observations of Noongar people, including their ongoing connection to country despite the displacement of settlement, and for his account of interactions between colonists and Noongar people.

Other colonists appear to have been more aware of the injustice of settlers’ appropriation of Noongar land and their treatment of Noongar people. For example, Joseph Hardey in Perth called the Pinjarra massacre a “shocking

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² See for example, Cameron, *The Millendon Memoirs*, 238. Entry for 2 June 1833.
slaughter”. Likewise, William Nairne Clark, editor of the *Swan River Guardian* wrote the following in that newspaper in 1837.

> Their country has been taken from them by force; the natural food of these poor creatures, consisting of wild animals, birds and fish, has become scarce to them, in consequence of the demand for these articles of consumption by the whites; and we are afraid that the gun has not only been employed as an instrument, to provide food for man, but has likewise been used as a deadly weapon of destruction, against people who resented the usurpation of their territory.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Jesse Hammond’s work provides the most useful account of Noongar life. Hammond was born in Perth in 1856 and had a great deal of contact with Noongar people in Perth and the southwest from the early 1860s. In 1933, journalist and later politician and Governor General, Sir Paul Hasluck, collated Hammond’s notes into a book, *Winjan’s People: the Story of the South West Australian Aborigines*. *Winjan’s People* is most useful for Hammond’s detailed account of Noongar life, including their ongoing connection to country, descriptions of camps and camp locations, and relationships between Noongar people and settlers. Hammond has a positive, respectful attitude towards Noongar people, stating “I still have sympathy for them and consider that, generally speaking, they are the wronged party”.

However, in line with the Social Darwinist thinking of the time, he also stated in the 1930s “they have been nearly wiped out, and the few that remain know scarcely anything of their own tongue and the customs of their fathers”. As Maori educator and theorist Linda Tuhiwai Smith commented, Social Darwinism legitimated racist views towards Indigenous peoples by extending Darwin’s “survival of the fittest” concept from the natural world to the human world. She

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wrote, “[i]t became a very powerful belief that indigenous peoples were inherently weak and therefore, at some point, would die out.”

Newspaper accounts are a key source of information about all aspects of my research, often containing detailed information that is not available elsewhere. Since the advent of the National Library of Australia’s Trove online database, accessing information from many of our historic newspapers has become vastly simpler than it once was. For this project, I drew on material from the main Western Australian newspapers from the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s: The West Australian, The Daily News, Sunday Times, Mirror and Western Mail. They carried reports such as court sentences for supplying and receiving alcohol, the 1928 deputation to the Premier seeking improved rights for Aboriginal people, and the case of the non-Aboriginal man prosecuted for living with an Aboriginal woman.

Steve Mickler, in The Myth of Privilege has identified ways newspapers and other media outlets shape public opinion through means such as the headlines and language in the article, the location of the story in the paper, whether sources are checked, and whether all parties are consulted. Noongar poet Alf Taylor Cuimara also makes this point in his poem, “We Blackfellas”, when he writes: “The media always keeps us in strife. Never of good things we do. The media will always punish me and you.”

Mickler argues that after the Second World War, when assimilation was government policy, the focus of media reports was on “assisting what was seen

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as a ‘primitive’ nomadic people to make the ‘transition’ into [white] society”.  

Newspapers also published detailed accounts of the camps that aimed to stir public opinion to promote change. For example, in 1936, a year after the Moseley Royal Commission report was published, journalist Paul Hasluck, who had accompanied the commission in 1934, picked up on a number of its themes in four newspaper articles about the conditions of Noongar people in the Great Southern region. Like Moseley’s findings, the first article raises concerns about the increasing numbers of “half-castes” in Western Australia: he cites an increase from 951 in 1901 to 4,245 in 1935. He is particularly concerned with the large numbers of children, many “almost white”, whom he describes as “swarming about the native camps without proper care”. While they live in these conditions, Hasluck states, they have little chance of moving away from the reserves and “their aboriginal associations”. This highlights the pressure on Noongar people to assimilate into the non-Aboriginal population. The second article describes the living conditions of people in the camps. Starkly, he writes that “[m]ost of the half-castes in the Great Southern district live in habitations rather worse than the poorer class of suburban fowlhouse”. This article is useful for his descriptions and photographs of the camps, of which he identifies three types. He writes that the most basic are made from bags, blankets or bushes wrapped around five or six poles standing on end in the shape of an igloo; slightly better is the tent-shaped hut made of either bags or flattened kerosene tins; and the most substantial huts are built of kerosene tins, bags, timber and galvanised iron. Again following Moseley’s recommendations, the fourth article promotes farm schools as the best solution to this problem. In a comment that highlights the non-Aboriginal usurpation of Noongar land, Hasluck writes:

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already, in the more closely-settled areas, we have come across the difficulty of finding for them camping reserves where they will not interfere with or menace our own health and comfort.  

Government records contain detailed information about all the themes of this work. As Lynette Russell, Director of the Monash Indigenous Centre, and herself of Tasmanian Aboriginal descent points out, they are “at least as informative for what they reveal about the record makers as they are for any ‘knowledge’ contained within them”. Ironically, the detailed files that the Aborigines Department kept about Aboriginal people after the early 1900s facilitated both drastic interventions into people’s lives, and provided later family members and researchers with information that may not otherwise be available. As Stephen Kinnane said, “the files can be made useful in Aboriginal hands”. Unfortunately, however, families often find that the information is distressing to read.

In Western Australia, many of the files created by the Aborigines Department and its successors have been destroyed: of the files created between 1926 and 1959, fifty-five percent of the 10,787 administrative files, and twenty-one percent of the files on individuals or families have since been destroyed. As researchers Lauren Marsh and Stephen Kinnane point out, many of these were relevant to family history, native title, and other research, and those that remain may not be representative of the files that originally existed.

In my research I examined approximately forty Department of Aboriginal Affairs files, almost half of which are open access and generally available on microfilm at the State Records Office. The remainder are restricted access and after writing to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, I received copies with all names

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27 Stephen Kinnane, Shadow Lines (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2003), 127.
28 Kinnane, Shadow Lines, 127-128.
deleted. This protects individuals’ privacy, but also makes it more difficult to make sense of the content of the files. As this is a relatively recent practice, I have earlier copies of some of this information which includes names, and in other cases I could guess names based on information from oral histories or from the open access files. However, in line with the protocols for my research, I have not included any names in my creative work unless I had permission from the person or their family. In general, the files contain considerable detail about the surveillance and control of Noongar people’s lives, as well as listings of who is in which camp. There are also many comments in letters to the Department where people express an understanding that Aboriginal people need to live somewhere but that it should be somewhere else, not in their district. There were also one or two comments from Department staff indicating that bad publicity was a concern for them.

Government records may corroborate evidence from sources such as oral histories. For example, the 1937 report on camps in the metropolitan area noted that Sammy Broomhall had a camp next to Mr Neil’s stables in Swanbourne. Corrie Bodney, who was born in 1932 and grew up at the Swanbourne camp, also shared this information in his oral history. This 1937 report on the camps provides evidence of the surveillance and control of people in the camps and the draconian laws that affected them. For example, the inspections of camps documented in government records recommended removal of some people to Moore River Native Settlement and the destruction of camps, both actions permitted under the *Native Administration Act*, 1905-1936.

Government files highlight the mixed feelings that many non-Aboriginal people had towards Noongar people and the camps. As well as narrowly applying the law, officials sometimes showed sympathy for the challenges that Noongar people experienced. Stan Middleton, Commissioner of Native Affairs from 1948, was described by historian John Host as “an enlightened and humane man”

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31 Corrie Bodney, oral history, 18 January 2007; Department of Native Affairs, file 105/37, “Native camps in the Metropolitan Area – Reports on Inspection of by Head Office Inspector,” Inspection of Native Camps in the Metropolitan Area, 8 April 1937. SROWA, AN 7/1, Cons 993.
32 Department of Native Affairs, file 105/37, Inspection of Native Camps in the Metropolitan Area, 8 April 1937, fol.1-10.
compared to his predecessor F.I. Bray.\textsuperscript{33} Middleton highlighted the displacement of Aboriginal people from good housing land in his 1949 Annual Report.\textsuperscript{34}

Circumstances … require so far as the average person and local authority is concerned, that natives shall be kept in settlements and on reserves sited on land that has very little, if any, value, and is not required for development by whites, or at best, on privately-owned building blocks located in swamps, on stony ridges, or in juxtaposition to sanitary dumps and rubbish tips, which is the only land, generally speaking, that local authorities are prepared to sell and natives to purchase.\textsuperscript{35}

Royal Commission submissions and reports contain much useful information. In 1935, H.D. Moseley reported on the Royal Commission into the condition and treatment of Aboriginal people in Western Australia.\textsuperscript{36} In it, he recommended abolishing camps in the south of the state; and taking families to settlements where the adults could work, and the children could be housed separately, go to school, and be taught hygiene and other “elementary principles of a civilised life”.\textsuperscript{37} In this way, he argued, they could be “gradually weaned from the aboriginal influence”\textsuperscript{38} and “given a training which will fit them later to take their place, if necessary, in a white civilisation”.\textsuperscript{39}

More recently, oral histories have recorded personal stories about the camps from both Noongar and non-Aboriginal people. Oral histories are a valuable

source of information often not available anywhere else and cover all the themes of this work. Many non-Aboriginal people who had enough contact with Noongar people to talk about them in an oral history, also show that they liked and cared about them, although usually within the framework of racist attitudes of that time.\textsuperscript{40} Oral histories recorded with Noongar people vary in their attitudes towards the camps. Some, such as Corrie Bodney, “really enjoyed life in the bush”,\textsuperscript{41} while others such as Isobel Bropho recalled, “we used to live in bad conditions”.\textsuperscript{42} On the theme of displacement, Rosemary van den Berg, a Noongar historian whose work incorporates oral histories wrote:

   many Noongar people spoke of their sadness and anger at the destruction of their land. Most of their country, once full of natural flora and fauna, is now a shadow of an English countryside.\textsuperscript{43}

Most oral histories are unpublished and held in libraries or private collections. Some are part of a compilation of published oral histories, making them accessible to a wider audience.\textsuperscript{44} The personal element of oral histories is an important influence on my own approach. I have discussed issues associated with oral histories in the Methodology chapter.

In conclusion, oral histories, government records, newspaper accounts and the reminiscences of early colonists contain detailed information about attitudes towards Noongar people and the conditions under which they lived. They help address my aim of expanding knowledge about the camps, and sourcing stories, photos and other information which may be shared with Noongar families as well as the wider community. The next section examines early published histories of Western Australia and their role in shaping historical memory about Noongar people and the camps.

\textsuperscript{40} See for example, Donald Gimm, oral history recorded by Denise Cook, 16 May 2013, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{41} Corrie Bodney, oral history, 18 January 2007, 4.
\textsuperscript{42} Isobel Bropho, oral history recorded by Jennie Carter, Bassendean Library OH19, 2.
\textsuperscript{43} Rosemary van den Berg, *Nyoongar People of Australia: Perspectives on Racism and Multiculturalism* (Koninklijke Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2002), xviii.
\textsuperscript{44} See for example, Sally Morgan, Tjalaminu Mia and Blaze Kwaymullina (eds.), *Speaking from the Heart: Stories of Life, Family and Country* (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2007).
Early Histories of Western Australia

The early histories of Western Australia, written by colonial historians from the late 1800s, embrace a narrative of progress. They celebrate the achievements of non-Aboriginal settlers in the face of difficulties, including opposition from Noongar people. Instead of exploring complexities, such histories produce “a grand, encompassing and exonerating narrative of Nation”.\(^\text{45}\) As Paul Carter writes, in accounts such as these the “primary object is not to understand or to interpret: it is to legitimate”.\(^\text{46}\)

The perspectives of Noongar people, including their challenges and achievements, are absent from these early histories.\(^\text{47}\) Noongar people are written about largely as an obstacle to be overcome. Through my work I challenge this narrative by following Aboriginal cultural protocols to tell more complex and layered stories. Stephen Muecke offers this useful insight. As long as Aboriginal cultures have the role of representing timelessness then the story of their more recent history will tend to be put to one side, or that too will be brought forward as more evidence of the continual struggle of an eternally oppressed people; always the same as they were from the beginning. A more specific history would have to account for reversals in trends, for victories as well as repetitious failures.\(^\text{48}\)

The theme of displacement, though seldom addressed directly, underpins the early histories through information about land allocated to colonists and the expansion of European settlement. Likewise, relationships between people in the camps and those in the wider community are illuminated by descriptions of “troublesome natives” and murders of non-Aboriginal settlers.


\(^{47}\) See also Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver, BC, Canada: UBC Press, 2010), 53.

Edmund Stirling’s, *A Brief History of Western Australia: From its Earliest Settlement*, Volume 1 is an early work in this genre.\(^{49}\) Stirling was editor of Perth’s *Inquirer* newspaper and had lived in the colony since 1830.\(^{50}\) Published in 1894, it describes the history of the colony year by year, starting with the military settlement at King George’s Sound (now Albany) in 1826. Stirling acknowledges that Noongar people were displaced, though he gives no explanation of the consequences. He writes that at Albany was sometimes “attacked by natives … the sons of the soil apparently resenting the intrusion of the white man, and making it as uncomfortable for him as possible”.\(^{51}\) However, he concludes that as it was a military settlement “the natives came off second best whenever it came to open fighting”.\(^{52}\)

Almost every year of this history has an entry referring to “troublesome natives” stealing from, or attacking settlers and Stirling shows no empathy for Noongar people. For the year 1829, Stirling describes the assignment of lands, including the allocation of “immense estates,” after which, “the real work of settlement and of subduing the soil commenced”.\(^{53}\) For 1830, he comments that “the natives became troublesome and they shed the first blood by the unprovoked murder of Mr McKenzie, on the Murray River”.\(^{54}\) About Noongar leaders Yagan and Midgegoroo he writes, “These two natives were the terror of the district, and to their pillage and murderous propensities there was no end, until the avenging hand of death cut short their careers.”\(^{55}\) However, illustrating the other side of the stereotype, he describes Yagan as “a most celebrated native chief, [who] stood 6ft. 3in. in height, and was a noble specimen of a savage”.\(^{56}\)

Unfortunately, some of the information in Stirling is misleading or incorrect. The description of the death of Yagan is one example. Stirling says that when the brothers tried to kill Yagan he was too powerful for them, killing one of the boys,

\(^{50}\) GC Bolton, “Western Australia Reflects on its Past,” in *A New History of Western Australia*, ed. CT Stannage (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1981), 677-678.
\(^{51}\) Stirling, *A Brief History of Western Australia*, 3.
\(^{52}\) Stirling, *A Brief History of Western Australia*, 3.
\(^{53}\) Stirling, *A Brief History of Western Australia*, 4.
\(^{54}\) Stirling, *A Brief History of Western Australia*, 5.
\(^{55}\) Stirling, *A Brief History of Western Australia*, 5.
\(^{56}\) Stirling, *A Brief History of Western Australia*, 13.
while the second boy only escaped by swimming across the river. This obscures the betrayal of the friendship when one of the boys shot Yagan at close range after they had spent the morning with him.\(^{57}\) Nevertheless, Stirling’s work is an important record of colonial attitudes towards Noongar people and their place in the colony. Volume 1 ends at 1842 and Stirling died before he could complete any further work.\(^{58}\)

J.S. Battye, the state’s Public Librarian, wrote a history of Western Australia as a D.Litt thesis at the University of Melbourne in the early 1920s.\(^{59}\) In 1924, it was published as *Western Australia: a History from its Discovery to the Inauguration of the Commonwealth*.\(^{60}\) Like Stirling’s earlier work, Battye presents Western Australia’s history entirely from the colonisers’ point of view, again reflecting attitudes towards Aboriginal people at that time. His approach is reinforced by widespread use of official correspondence as sources, often at that time negatively judgmental of Aboriginal people. Today, historians with a greater awareness of Aboriginal history would read against the grain of these texts to place a different meaning on their information.

Battye discusses the slow development of the colony in the early 1830s and attributes partial blame to the “hostile attitude of the natives”.\(^{61}\) He acknowledges isolated instances of cruelty towards Noongar people but draws on the published writings of George Frederick Moore and Captain Frederick Irwin (in charge of the military in the colony), to argue that the colonial government made every attempt to protect and benefit Noongar people.\(^{62}\)


\(^{58}\) Bolton, “Western Australia Reflects on its Past,” 678.

\(^{59}\) The thesis was first submitted in 1920 and revised, was accepted for D.Litt in 1922. BK de Garis, “Introduction,” in JS Battye, *Western Australia: A History from its Discovery to the Inauguration of the Commonwealth*, facsimile edition (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1978), n.p.

\(^{60}\) Battye, *Western Australia*.

\(^{61}\) Battye, *Western Australia*, 105.

\(^{62}\) GF Moore, *Extracts from Letters and Journals* (London, 1834), 31, 49, 108-9; and FC Irwin, *State and Position of WA* (London: 1835), 25, both cited in Battye, *Western Australia*, 105. Captain Irwin was in the Swan River Colony from 1829 in charge of a detachment of the 63\(^{rd}\) Regiment, which provided military protection for the Colony. David Mossenson, “Irwin, Frederick Chidley (1788–1860),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography,
example, he quotes from Captain Irwin’s 1835 publication *State and Position of WA*.

Official action indeed seems, at first, to have erred on the side of leniency, and severe measures were not adopted until the attitude of the natives made it necessary to do so in order to protect the lives and property of the colonists.63 This makes explicit the attitude that it is the colonists’ lives and property are most important but fails to interrogate the discrepancies between official attitudes towards Noongar people and the actions of colonists on the ground.

Nearly forty years later, in 1960, Frank Crowley published *Australia’s Western Third*,64 described in 1978 by university historian Brian de Garis as the “first fully professional complete history of an Australian state”.65 Reflecting the beginnings of a shift in attitudes towards Aboriginal people, Crowley acknowledges the displacement of Noongar people.

Until the arrival of the white man every tree, hill, creek, swamp and valley had been the property of one of the native tribes, who were not only deprived of the community food supplies but had also to see the desecration of their burial grounds and totems.66

However, Crowley does not discuss any of the other themes I cover in my work and in the Perth area, only mentions Noongar people in the context of early settlement. Having pointed to the inequity of first contact and shown some regret at the original displacement of Noongar people, like other historians Crowley fails to regard Noongar people as continuing participants in the colony’s history.

Other histories celebrate a narrative of progress in which Noongar people are either largely invisible or denigrated as less important than non-Aboriginal people. For example, Alexandra Hasluck published *Thomas Peel of Swan River* in 1965.67 When describing her early experiences of the Murray River, and

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those of the first colonists in the area, she writes that it seemed as though the Murray River “had hardly been seen by human eyes, save those of the wild black men, if they could be called human”. 68

Popham’s history of the Armadale-Kelmscott district published in 1980 provides information about Noongar people in the nineteenth century:

Some of their native skills were soon adapted to the needs of the white man; for example, they exchanged the scraped-off wood of zamia palms, which was used as pillow filling, for tea and flour. 69

However, taking a Social Darwinist perspective, the author describes Aboriginal people in the early 1900s as “displaced poignant remnants of a disappearing age-old race”. 70 Thus, the stories of Aboriginal people living in the Armadale area in the twentieth century are silenced in the public domain.

As late as 2007, Mandy Paul and Tom Gara found a similar situation in South Australian historiography. Although fringe camps were common in country towns in South Australia, they commented that information about the camps and the people in them was found in anthropology, archaeology, sociology and geography, but rarely in local and regional histories. 71

Another common approach is to limit talk about Noongar people to traditional times. An unattributed typescript from the early 1970s in the Battye Library entitled “Pinjarra Architecture” has a description of three types of Noongar camps in the district, which it calls huts. 72 The camps are made from traditional materials: sticks or saplings, rushes, brushwood and bark. No camps incorporating European materials are described. There is no indication of a date for these styles of camps, but the lack of European components indicates that they are likely from the nineteenth century. By contrast, the work describes both nineteenth and twentieth century European housing in the Pinjarra area,

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68 Hasluck, Thomas Peel of Swan River, xi.
69 Daphne Popham, First Stage South: A History of the Armadale – Kelmscott District, Western Australia (Armadale: Town of Armadale, 1980), 120.
70 Popham, First Stage South, 120.
71 Mandy Paul and Tom Gara, “In and Out of View: Aboriginal Fringe Camps in South Australian Country Towns”, paper presented to the South Australian State History Conference, Tanunda, South Australia, 4 August 2007, 1.
72 “Architecture: [Pinjarra District]”, typescript, n.d. [about 1972], State Library of Western Australia Ephemera collection PR8679/PIN/18, 1.
particularly focusing on the nineteenth century houses of well-known families. There is no indication of the sources of the information about the camps.\(^73\)

As discussed above, the early histories of Western Australia focus on a narrative of progress which justifies the colonisation of Australia. While occasionally valuable for their content, this style of history is mainly useful as an example of how not to approach my topic. It also places into context the attitudes of non-Aboriginal people towards Noongar people at this time in history. Noongar people’s attitudes are discussed later in this chapter.

**Other Disciplines: Anthropology, Architecture and Archaeology**

Anthropologists, archaeologists and architects have produced works that inform our understanding of the histories of the camps. Until recent years, these sources were more representative of Noongar people’s stories than historical works.

One of the earliest to record detailed anthropological information about the Perth camps was Daisy Bates. A journalist and amateur anthropologist, she documented knowledge gained from elderly Noongar people living in camps in Perth in the early 1900s. She published newspaper accounts of their stories, which have since been collected as *Aboriginal Perth: Bibbulmun Biographies and Legends*.\(^74\) In addition, Bates’ field notes as well as many photographs with detailed captions have survived and remain the most detailed source of information for that time.\(^75\) Some of Bates’ work was controversial, for example her assertions of cannibalism, and for many years it was little used.\(^76\) More recently, the detailed information she recorded has been useful for work such as native title research and for Noongar people tracing their family history.

\(^73\) “Architecture: [Pinjarra District]”, 1.
Bates’ work deals with all the themes of my project. For example Jubaitch, her key informant for what are now Perth’s eastern suburbs, was born in the 1830s. Bates wrote:

Jubaitch’s immediate family were the earliest among the dispossessed groups, whose title to the Swan banks and springs and the fertile warrein (native potato) soil, dated back through hundreds of generations, yet was abolished for ever at the first axe stroke of the white man.77

From Daisy Bates’ work, I take much of the information and all the photographs I have of camps in Perth in the early 1900s. Her genealogies also helped place individuals mentioned in other sources. Bates, and others writing at that time, played an important role in reinforcing Social Darwinist thinking about Noongar and other Aboriginal peoples.

In the 1960s Rowley and Long coordinated the Aborigines Project of the Social Sciences Research Council of Australia, “the first independently financed and controlled survey of Aborigines throughout Australia”.78 One book in the trilogy that resulted from the project, Outcasts in White Australia, addresses the experiences of Aboriginal people in the southwest and southeast of the country.79 Though more recent work has superseded this, especially in terms of this thesis, it was valuable in its time.

Other unpublished sources provide information. A PhD thesis completed by Clarrie Makin in 1970 is an important source for the camps in Perth from the 1900s to the 1950s.80 Written as a “socio-economic anthropological” study of families of Aboriginal descent in Perth in the 1960s, it focuses on “the number of these people and where they live, their standards of living, spatial mobility, and on practical problems concerned with health and with the law.”81 Usefully for my purposes, Makin investigates the history leading up to that time, identifying the locations of camps in the first half of the twentieth century, the types of work

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80 Clarence Frank Makin, “A Socio-Economic Anthropological Survey of People of Aboriginal Descent in the Metropolitan Region of Perth, Western Australia” (PhD diss., University of Western Australia, 1970).
undertaken by Aboriginal people in Perth, and analysing the debate over conditions in the Swanbourne and Bassendean camps after the Second World War. During his research, Makin talked to many Aboriginal people in Perth as well as service providers, such as the State Housing Commission, and others in the community. An important inclusion in the appendices is biographies of Aboriginal families, including some oral history transcripts. In these, the names have only been slightly altered to protect the anonymity of participants and they provide information not available elsewhere.

In 1971, Edmund Gallagher wrote a Teachers Higher Certificate thesis about the role of Wandering Mission in assimilating Aboriginal people. This is useful for its descriptions of southwest, particularly country, camps at that time and his comment that within the camps, the “district’ groups tend to stay together”. This cohesion occurred in the camps around Perth as well.

There are many Aboriginal heritage reports either about specific sites or providing a general overview of significant Noongar places in Perth. Mostly these were produced under the Aboriginal Heritage Act, 1972 in response to an application to damage a registered site and they are most useful for their inclusion of comments from Noongar people about the history of particular places. One example is Macintyre Dobson and Associates’ report on the Underwood Avenue bushland, previously part of the extended area occupied by the Shenton Park camps. Other reports were undertaken as a more general study of significant Noongar sites in Perth. The most useful for my purpose is Rory O’Connor, Corrie Bodney, and Lorna Little’s survey of significant Aboriginal sites around the Perth metropolitan and Murray areas, undertaken in 1985. An edited version was published in 1989. This report was the

82 Makin, “A Socio-Economic Anthropological Survey”, 84-93, 324.
83 See for example, Makin, “A Socio-Economic Anthropological Survey”, 495, 497.
87 Rory O’Connor, Corrie Bodney and Lorna Little, “Preliminary Report on the Survey of Aboriginal Areas of Significance in the Perth Metropolitan and Murray River Regions”,

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ethnographic component of a larger overview of Aboriginal sites and their management in the Perth metropolitan area.\textsuperscript{88} Based on broad consultation with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, it also drew on the extensive knowledge of the Noongar authors, including Corrie Bodney for the metropolitan area.\textsuperscript{90} It is a mixture of historical research, including records already held by the Department of Aboriginal Sites and photographs at the State Library of Western Australia, fieldwork description, and recorded personal information. The report provides unprecedented detail about eighty-six sites, many of which were camps. While it focuses on the locations of the camps, it covers all the themes of my project through comments about the individual camps and other sites. Particularly useful are the descriptions of the locations of the camps, information about who camped there, and other reasons why the site is significant. The Lake Claremont (Swanbourne) camp has the longest entry, drawing on both Corrie Bodney’s personal knowledge, and information and photographs collected by Claremont Museum staff.\textsuperscript{91} The report is not widely known or available.\textsuperscript{92} In the 1989 publication about the Swan Brewery protest, \textit{Always Was, Always Will Be}, the O’Connor, Bodney and Little report was described as having been suppressed because of the information it contained about the Noongar significance of the former Swan Brewery site.\textsuperscript{93} After finding a copy at the State Library, I have been able to share entries for particular sites with people I have consulted, partially fulfilling my goal of giving back information to the Noongar community.

My research has also been informed by a number of anthropological and architectural works from other parts of Australia. Some focus on more recent

\textsuperscript{88} Rory O’Connor, Gary Quartersmaine, and Corrie Bodney, \textit{Report on an Investigation into Aboriginal Significance of Wetlands and Rivers in the Perth-Bunbury Region} (Leederville, Western Australia: Western Australian Water Resources Council, 1989).
\textsuperscript{89} O’Connor, Bodney and Little, “Preliminary Report”, 1.
\textsuperscript{90} O’Connor, Bodney and Little, “Preliminary Report”, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{91} O’Connor, Bodney and Little, “Preliminary Report”, 13-21. This includes my oral histories with Glen Doepel which are in the creative work.
\textsuperscript{92} The only copy I located is held in the State Library of Western Australia.
\textsuperscript{93} Martha Ansara, \textit{Always Was, Always Will Be} (Sydney: Martha Ansara, 1989), 57, 60.
times, but nonetheless suggest themes and questions for consideration in my study.

Basil Sansom’s *The Camp at Wallaby Cross: Aboriginal Fringe Dwellers in Darwin* is an anthropological study of a Darwin fringe camp in 1975 and 1976.94 It is written from the perspective of an anthropologist, interested in “ways things are said and done by Aborigines of the fringe camps of Darwin”.95 Sansom lived for fifteen months with fringe dwellers in the camp to which he gave the pseudonym, Wallaby Cross. During that time, he identified twenty-three camps in Darwin. Five were occupied permanently, and the remainder were used “on-and-off” by out of town groups associated with a particular site.96 During the time of my study, oral histories and Department inspections suggest that the Perth camps were not occupied constantly either, although this was because individual families moved around the metropolitan area. Out of town visitors appear to have camped with relatives in the existing camps.97 Sansom found that people in the camps were almost all from the Darwin area and its hinterland, and able to maintain a traditional connection to their country despite the displacement caused by the pastoral industry.98 Many people in the Perth camps also came from the Perth area or Noongar country more broadly.99 Others had been removed from their country and brought to Perth for work, to be brought up in missions, or were sent to prison on Rottnest Island, and ended up living in the camps around Perth.100 Like people in the Darwin camps, Noongar people in Perth travelled regularly through their country, for example between Collie and Fremantle or Swanbourne and Guildford.

95 Sansom, *The Camp at Wallaby Cross*, 3.
97 For example, Doreen Nelson remembers staying briefly with Melba Bodney at the Shenton Park camps when her family visited Perth from the country. Doreen Nelson, oral history recorded by Denise Cook, 1 November 2012, 18-19; Department of Native Affairs, file 105/37, Inspection of Native Camps in the Metropolitan Area, 8 April 1937.
100 For example, Tommy Bropho was taken from the Kimberley to the Swan Native Mission and later lived at the Bassendean and Swanbourne camps. Robert Bropho, oral history recorded by Denise Cook for Claremont Museum, 7 March 2007, 2, 4, 8. Sammy Broomhall had been a prisoner on Rottnest and when left at Fremantle to walk home ended up at the Swanbourne camps. Corrie Bodney, oral history, 18 January 2007, 8.
Like Sansom, I am interested in why people lived in a particular camp, and in the relationships between people in the camps and those in the wider community. Sansom, however, has been able to explore the power relations, income arrangements and the meaning of language used in the Darwin camps more than I have for the Perth camps. This partly reflects a difference in focus, but also the opportunities made available to him through living in the community for an extended time. It is also a consequence of there being few people still alive who lived as adults in the Perth camps during the 1930s to 1950s.

James O’Connell’s study of several hundred Alyawarra-speaking people at the Warrabri settlement in Alice Springs and six cattle stations north of Alice Springs analyses camp life in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{101} He draws extensively on the earlier research of W.W. Denham.\textsuperscript{102} O’Connell’s work was written to assist housing providers understand the cultural reasons for the layout of camps in order to better design housing for Aboriginal communities. While it is a much more detailed study than I have undertaken, it provides comparisons and raises useful questions. For example, O’Connell and Denham found that households were comprised of clusters of two to twelve dwellings (about ten to seventy people), based on close family relationships, such as parent-child or siblings.\textsuperscript{103} These relationships frequently define camps in Perth. Around Alice Springs, people and households often moved between camps, and individuals moved between households, usually for employment, illness, visiting, and ceremony. Families also moved between camps in Perth. Housing at the camps in and around Alice Springs was constructed from bushes, corrugated iron, canvas, metal stakes, and tree limbs, making it easy for people to move and rebuild shelters as necessary. This flexibility was inhibited by fixed European type

\textsuperscript{101} JF O’Connell, “Room to move: contemporary Alyawarra settlement patterns and their implications for Aboriginal housing policy”, in M Heppell (ed), A Black Reality (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1979).
\textsuperscript{103} O’Connell, “Room to Move”, in Heppell, A Black Reality, 107.
houses. Similar materials were used for camps in Perth and may likewise have enhanced portability.

The anthropologist Michael Heppell and architect Julian Wigley provide another useful account of camps in Alice Springs. Black out in Alice: A History of the Establishment and Development of Town Camps in Alice Springs was published in 1981. Both men had worked for the successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Panel in Alice Springs, an organisation set up to advise the Commonwealth on low cost housing for remote Aboriginal communities. This is a very useful source, highlighting the many similarities and some differences between the camps in Perth and Alice Springs. Its detailed information about the camps prompted questions for my work. In speaking of displacement, for example, they write that:

Many of the older people in the camps have watched the town grow and found themselves inexorably pushed from camp site to camp site, each time further away from the centre.

This experience was identical to that undergone in the Perth camps. In addition, people living in camps had little or no access to water or electricity: “the camps have been ignored or neglected on the assumption or hope that they will disappear”. This was also the experience of people living in the Perth camps.

There are some differences, however. In Alice Springs, reserves and missions were created on the outskirts of town, to which people were sent if they were found camping in the town. In Perth, most camps were on unofficial sites that were tolerated only because no land could be found on which local governments and residents would permit a reserve to be established. Like the camps in Perth, each camp in Alice Springs was “a small community based on

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104 O’Connell, “Room to Move”, in Heppell, A Black Reality, 102, 117.
105 Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice.
106 Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 106.
107 Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 11.
108 Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 11.
109 See for example, the 1939 discussion about the inadvisability of giving Mrs Layland a water supply because the Department of Native Affairs didn’t want to have any permanent camps in the Perth metropolitan area. Department of Native Affairs, 1937/105, “Native Camps in the Metropolitan Area – Reports on Inspection of by Head Office Inspector,” Frank Bray, DCNA, to Mr Neal, 18 August 1939, fol. 19.
110 Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 15-16, 21-24.
ties of kinship and friendship”. Residents were usually from the same traditional country, maintaining links to that country and traditional laws. Similarly, there are links between people in particular camps and parts of the Noongar country, for example many of those at the Smelters camp in South Fremantle had links to Collie. Heppell and Wigley also note that camps in Alice Springs were generally located on the side of town closest to their traditional country. This also seems to be the case in Perth.

There are similarities in both places in the materials used to construct camps, namely salvaged timber, galvanised iron, canvas or tarpaulins. Likewise, the camp furnishings were salvaged or improvised, such as billycans made from a tin with a wire handle attached. Most of the materials for camps in Alice Springs came from the rubbish tips, as in Perth.

In Alice Springs and Perth, there were problems with lack of services to the camps. Heppell and Wigley describe people in the camps having to carry water for cooking, washing, and drinking, often over considerable distances. Without electricity, food could not be stored, and as many of the camps were some kilometres from shops, this led to a reliance on tinned food and flour rather than fresh food. This was the same in Perth. Likewise, in both places people described indignities such as having to wait in a shop to be served after everyone else, and being excluded from some businesses.

A further parallel between Alice Springs and Perth was the opposition in the 1960s to establishing camps that were more permanent. This was based on inconvenience to non-Aboriginal residents and businesses, hygiene issues and drinking.

111 Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 51.
112 Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 52.
113 Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 55.
114 Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 56-8.
115 Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 59-61.
116 See for example, Lynette Coomer, in Lynette Coomer, Georgina Coomer, Beryl Hoffman and Peter Randolph, oral history recorded by Denise Cook, 7 April 2013, 57.
117 Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 63.
118 G Holden, Patrol Officer, memo to Assistant Director (Southern Division), 13 September 1963, cited in Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 77-78. Assistant Director Southern Division, memo to Director, Welfare Branch, 17 September 1963, cited in Heppell and Wigley, Black out in Alice, 79.
Tim Rowse highlighted the tension between wanting Aboriginal camps to be away from towns, but close enough to access cheap workers in an article about camps in Alice Springs. Rowse writes of:

the enduring contradiction between the townspeople's need for cheap labour and their desire to distance themselves socially from Aboriginals. In the days before electricity (which was connected in the late 1930s) and sewered homes (the 1950s), cheap or free Indigenous labour took care of heating (by gathering firewood), fresh milk and meat (by tending the town's goat herds), and the elimination of human waste (by staffing the 'night-soil' service).\footnote{119}{Tim Rowse, “Housing and Colonial Patronage, Alice Springs, 1920-65”, in Peter Read (ed.) \textit{Settlement: A History of Australian Indigenous Housing}, (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2000), 87.}

Studies by architects focus on the positioning of camps in the landscape, the structural details, and the ways people use camp buildings and spaces. Their aim is to understand this type of housing to inform architects’ work in designing Aboriginal housing today.\footnote{120}{Paul Memmott, \textit{Humpy, House and Tin Shed: Aboriginal Settlement History on the Darling River} (Sydney: Ian Buchan Fell Research Centre, Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney, 1991), 12.} Their attention to the practical details of camps complements my focus on stories.

Paul Memmott’s \textit{Humpy, House and Tin Shed: Aboriginal Settlement History on the Darling River} is another useful work written from an architectural perspective. This is a detailed study of the design, construction and use of Aboriginal camps and housing, focusing on Wilcannia in western New South Wales. Memmott notes that in constructing the camps, residents drew on fencing technology, which they had experienced working in the pastoral industry.\footnote{121}{Memmott, \textit{Humpy, House and Tin Shed}, 109.} Many residents of the Perth camps also worked rural areas and this would be an interesting area of research to pursue.

In this work, it was informative to see floor plans, including furniture, as well as outside photographs, of camps in Wilcannia in 1970. These were taken from an architectural thesis by Ken George and Stanislaw Savarton.\footnote{122}{Stanislaw Savarton and Ken George, "A Study of Historic, Economic, and Socio-Cultural Factors which Influence Aboriginal Settlements at Wilcannia and Weilmoringle, NSW". B Architecture thesis, University of Sydney, 1971; Ken George, [Field Notebook Containing Observations of Humpies and their Residents at Wilcannia, collected in 1970 and 1974.] Unpublished manuscript. Both in Memmott, \textit{Humpy, House and Tin Shed}, 109-127.} This kind of work
is lacking for Perth, however, the photographs of the outsides of the camps and the descriptions of the materials used in building camps look similar to the Perth camps. There is also a useful definition of a fringe camp:

Such settlements were comprised of self-constructed ‘humpies’ or shacks, made of second-hand materials, without the approval of the local government authority, and occupied by non-rate-paying residents. The dwellings were thus not serviced with reticulated water, sewerage disposal or electricity. Work experience in the pastoral industry often resulted in the occupants building their humpies with construction detailing derived from fencing technology.  

Stephanie Smith’s “The Tin Camps: Self-constructed Housing on the Goodooga Reserve, New South Wales, 1970-96” identifies “ethno-architects” who built many of the camps on the reserve. She cites Horne and Aiston’s 1924 account of Wankanguru people in South Australia, where the same situation existed. Corrie Bodney identifies an old man called Bonney from North Perth as doing the same thing at the camps in Perth.

Smith noted that the camps were “continually being added to, regularly being rebuilt, replanned, completed over time or altered”. Over the decades, the camps became larger with more rooms, and concrete rather than dirt floors. The few photographs of the camps of the 1950s camps in Perth also show larger structures than those in photographs from the 1900s and 1920s.

Interestingly, Smith concludes that self-built housing has advantages compared to housing provided to Aboriginal communities by the dominant cultural group. She lists these as control over their environment; speed of construction; material available cheaply and locally; little training and relatively simple tools required; buildings easily repaired, altered and moved; ease of obtaining

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123 Memmott, Humpy, House and Tin Shed, 10.
126 Corrie Bodney, oral history, 31 January 2007, 11-12.
129 See illustrations in the creative work.
replacement parts; building techniques based on local knowledge; and ownership reduces financial stress and promotes independence. This is an area needing more research for the Perth camps.

Archaeologists have also contributed to histories of the camps, adding to historical research and oral histories the extra dimensions of archaeology, material culture and studies of the landscape. Paul Irish notes that previous research into the histories of post-contact camps in Sydney draws on historical archival sources but rarely uses the additional information about place and material culture that could be derived from archaeological work. Irish developed the Sydney Aboriginal Historical Places Project, which draws on both historical and archaeological research as well as extensive collaboration with Aboriginal communities. Its aim is to raise awareness of the ongoing Aboriginal history of Sydney so that:

at least some historical Aboriginal places in Sydney will cease to be hidden in plain view but will become clear, obvious and celebrated reminders of the continuous presence of Aboriginal people in the oldest and largest urban centre in Australia.

In “Marking Their Footsteps: Aboriginal Historical People and Places in Southeastern Sydney”, archaeologist Paul Irish worked with Dharawal man and La Perouse community member, Michael Ingrey. They note that the “mixture of historical, archaeological and Aboriginal community information in this research is already generating new perspectives and uncovering previously undocumented connections.”

A collaborative project between researchers at the University of New England and the Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation at Corindi Beach on the mid-north

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133 Irish, “Hidden in Plain View”, 41.
134 Irish, “Hidden in Plain View”, 42.
136 Irish and Ingrey, “Marking their Footsteps”, 86-87.
coast of New South Wales is another useful example of this work.\textsuperscript{137} In it, five campsites occupied during the twentieth century were surveyed and excavated, and historical research, particularly into land tenure, was augmented by oral histories.

The results were extensive stories about life in the camps but very little material evidence. The items they found were all on or close to the surface, with the exception of rubbish put into an old well when the site was vacated. There were hand-dug wells at sites, like those Corrie Bodney described at the Eden Hill camps east of Perth.\textsuperscript{138} Sites were generally used more than once and contained artefacts that were reused, often not for their original function. This was also similar to the camps in Perth where campsites were occupied over many years and materials were gathered from nearby rubbish tips and reused at the camps. Exotic plants were found at all the sites, including a fig tree at one site that an Elder explained was a marker of an Aboriginal camp.\textsuperscript{139} “Whenever you see a fig tree growin’, you know that Aboriginals stopped there.”\textsuperscript{140} Melba Bodney planted a fig tree at the camp in Stephenson Avenue, now in the Perth suburb of City Beach.\textsuperscript{141}

The work of anthropologists, architects and archaeologists has been useful for my project. As well as contributing detailed information about the camps, it has prompted many useful questions for consideration. Overall, it highlights the similarities between camps in Perth and those in other places and at other times.

\textsuperscript{137} Smith and Beck, “The Archaeology of No Man's Land,” 66-77.
\textsuperscript{138} Corrie Bodney, oral history recorded by Denise Cook, 24 February 2012, 4.
\textsuperscript{139} Smith and Beck, “The Archaeology of No Man's Land”, 75.
\textsuperscript{141} Corrie Bodney, oral history, 31 January 2007, 38.
Writings By Noongar and Other Aboriginal Authors

From the 1970s, Aboriginal people such as Jack Davis, Kevin Gilbert, and Robert Bropho began to write about their own and other Aboriginal people’s experiences.\textsuperscript{142} As Kevin Gilbert wrote in \textit{Living Black}, his aim was “to show how [Aboriginal people] think about themselves and their background”\textsuperscript{143} as well as “to bring white Australia to some greater compassion through understanding and to enlighten it to its responsibilities in the areas of land and compensation for Aborigines.”\textsuperscript{144} These works bring Noongar and other Aboriginal perspectives to my topic, offering a more nuanced approach to both positive and negative aspects of histories of the camps. In addition, they are a great source of both detailed and background information. These aspects are important since I am learning about the camps from my research rather than personal experience.

For this research, a number of histories and autobiographies written by Noongar and other Aboriginal people are examined. Fiction such as plays, poetry, novels, short stories, and children’s books are addressed in the next chapter.

The most important work in this genre is Robert Bropho’s \textit{fringedweller}, published in 1980.\textsuperscript{145} Bropho discusses his experiences living in camps at Swanbourne, Dickson’s Bridge Reserve (at Jane Brook near Middle Swan), Caversham, Eden Hill, and camping out near the Aboriginal settlement of Allawah Grove in South Guildford. He also describes many camps in the country such as at Moora Reserve, Brunswick Junction, and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia, and well as at Yalata Mission and Ceduna on the South Australian side of the Nullarbor.

\textsuperscript{143} Gilbert, \textit{Living Black}, 1.
\textsuperscript{144} Gilbert, \textit{Living Black}, 3.
Speaking from the perspective of a Noongar man who, in the late 1970s, was again living in a camp at Lockridge, Bropho describes poor living conditions, difficulty getting work and food, racist attitudes towards people in the camps, and numerous deaths, to argue convincingly that non-Aboriginal people have treated Noongar people badly and that this needs to change. The stories are personal and his tone is often angry.

Bropho’s book is very useful because it offers detailed information about the themes I am addressing, for example, where people camped, life in the camps, where they got water, and how they worked or otherwise obtained food. Bropho’s Noongar viewpoint balances the strong European perspective from the archival records and some of the oral histories. The photographs of the camps are especially useful.

My work also differs from Bropho’s in a number of ways. I am a non-Aboriginal historian writing stories about the camps that have been told to me, or which I’ve been given permission to share, rather than a Noongar man talking from long personal experience. Since my work is based on historical research and oral histories, I have included information from a broader range of sources, and covering a longer time than that of *fringedweller*.

There are differences in our works in terms of intention. Bropho’s book was written in the context of the fringe dwellers’ campaign for secure, culturally appropriate, Aboriginal controlled housing at a time when Bropho and a number of other Noongar people still lived in camps. My work has different aims. These include raising awareness of the shared history of our suburbs on the basis that our understanding of the past influences the ways we live together in the present. I am also exploring a methodology for collaborative, cross-cultural historical research; and using my historical research skills to identify and share photographs and information and produce oral history records of the camps for families.

Robert Bropho is among many who contributed stories of Allawah Grove to the exhibition and catalogue of photos, *On the Outskirts: Photographs of Allawah*
Grove Aboriginal Settlement, Perth. Drawing on extensive oral histories, and written from an Aboriginal perspective, this documents the achievements of Noongar families at Allawah Grove and the support they received from the wider community. It is a useful reminder of the different perspectives and nuances that Noongar voices bring to history. The authors write:

There are many things that can be said about the history of Allawah Grove. A lot has been documented and recorded through the eyes of scholars and other professional people since it started, and even more since its closure. What was found in the existing research is that the stories from the people themselves play a minimal part in painting the picture. Emphasis was often on politics, race relations or an assessment of the success or failure of the “project”. What is missing was that this place was home to so many. To the Residents it was not a training centre, nor a settlement, nor did it fail to meet its expectations. It was a place where people lived their lives, where children grew up, where friendships were formed. It was a place of joy, of hope, turmoil and love.

I have incorporated many Noongar voices in my work, as I too, want to present the camps as “home”.

Stephen Kinnane’s Shadow Lines, a biographical account of his grandparents: Jessie Argyle, Miriwoong woman from the Kimberley, and Englishman Edward Smith, is another useful Aboriginal history. They lived in a house in Glendower Street in North Perth, and trod a fine line between the requirements of the Department of Native Affairs and Jessie’s wish for contact with the extended Aboriginal community in Perth. As well as providing important social and political context, this work is useful for occasional references to people who lived in the camps, the obligations of family relationships, and for information about life for Aboriginal people in the city in the 1930s and 1940s. Kinnane writes about Jessie’s brother Thomas Bropho (Robert Bropho’s father), who lived in the camps around Bassendean and Swanbourne. When he was in town selling clothes props, Thomas would visit Jessie and, much to her husband’s

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147 Smith Walley and Pushman, On the Outskirts, 9.
148 Kinnane, Shadow Lines.
annoyance, she would buy food for him at the local grocer and give him her husband’s shirts. Kinnane also notes that Thomas was one of a number of people from the camps around Perth who gave evidence to the Moseley Royal Commission in 1934, none of it supportive of the Aborigines Department, Chief Protector of Aborigines Mr Neville, or the existing situation for Noongar people.

Another important work is *Kura*, a collection of information from Noongar Elder, Tom Bennell, collated by Glenys Collard for the Nyungar Language and Culture Centre in 1991. In it, Tom recalls the early history of Noongar/non-Aboriginal contact in Perth, recounting a story he had been told about the arrival of non-Aboriginal people, and the killings of Noongar people by the new arrivals. This story, like many others in the collection, incorporates extensive Noongar language. Language is increasingly being incorporated in Noongar writings and will be important for future research.

*Ngulak Ngarmk Nidja Boodja: Our Mother, This Land* is a compilation of stories from Noongar people in the wheatbelt and Great Southern.

Works that provide important context for my project include *From Our Hearts*, a recent anthology of Western Australian Aboriginal writing. For example, in one piece in the collection, Roma Kickett writes of living in camps at Bayswater and Bassendean until she was taken away to Roelands Mission. Likewise, *Speaking from the Heart*, a compilation of personal stories from Noongar and other Aboriginal authors, provides useful background information. Ben Taylor, whom I have recorded speaking about his time at the Bayswater camps, shares his broader life story in this work.

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155 Morgan, Mia, and Kwaymullina (eds.), *Speaking from the Heart*; Ben Taylor, “A Nyungar is Battling,” in *Speaking from the Heart*, 95-108.
Dot Collard’s autobiography *Busted out Laughing* describes her childhood in Yarloop and Brookton, south of Perth.\textsuperscript{156} It has useful detail about camp and Noongar life, which corresponds closely with information from oral histories about the Perth camps. For example, in 1933, after her father was killed in an accident, the family moved to Brookton, where Dot describes searching for and finding the camp of her Auntie Maud Collard.

[W]e found her camp about nine miles out in the bush. We came across these lovely big tents and camps (huts), with a big camp oven on the fire, kangaroo stew and damper in the ashes, and bread in the camp oven.\textsuperscript{157}

Back in town, at the Noongar camp next to the rubbish tip, the elders helped her family build camps of “bags and bulrushes and old tin from the rubbish tip”.\textsuperscript{158} All of these details of camps were common in Perth camps too.

George Webb’s *Nunyahboogera [My Land]* is another autobiographical account that gives a feeling for Noongar life in the camps.\textsuperscript{159} As a young married man, George lived with his family in a weatherboard camp on Cave Road towards Dunsborough. “Life was a dirt floor, no water, just a hole in the ground for a well. … We had to strain the mosquito larva out of the water before we could drink it.”\textsuperscript{160} Like many others in Perth and the country, they lived on private property, in this case belonging to a Mr Bunbury, with whom the family got on well. Webb wrote, “Mr Bunbury was fine old gentleman to me. He was great. He said that we could live on his block forever.”\textsuperscript{161} As Host has noted, Noongar people often mentioned one non-Aboriginal person who helped their family.\textsuperscript{162}

Similarly to oral histories of Noongar people, these writings offer an important perspective on the camps, often not found in other sources. Like my work, they may have been written partially to raise awareness of this often-overlooked history, and thus encourage more representative interpretation. They are an important source for histories of the camps and I hope that more Noongar

\textsuperscript{156} Dorothy Collard and Beryl Hackner, *Busted out Laughing: Dot Collard’s Story* (Broome: Magabala Books, 2003).
\textsuperscript{157} Collard and Hackner, *Busted Out Laughing*, 11.
\textsuperscript{158} Collard and Hackner, *Busted Out Laughing*, 12.
\textsuperscript{159} George Webb, *Nunyahboogera*, (Busselton: self published, n.d.).
\textsuperscript{160} Webb, *Nunyahboogera*, 24.
\textsuperscript{161} Webb, *Nunyahboogera*, 25.
\textsuperscript{162} SWALSC, *It's Still in My Heart This is My Country*, 174-175.
people will write of their experiences living in Perth, both in camps and in houses.

**More Recent Histories**

From the 1960s, historians around the world wrote histories that challenged the previous focus on elites, particularly powerful, white men. Inspired by social change movements including feminism, Marxism, and anti-racism, they told stories of the challenges of ordinary working people, women, Aboriginal people, migrants, and children. In order to find information, social historians broadened the range of sources used for histories, from official documents to include newspapers, census records, photographs, artefacts, and, in particular, oral histories.\(^{163}\)

More recent historians have incorporated insights from a range of other disciplines including post-colonial theory. Heather Goodall offers a useful perspective in her exploration of sharing histories as an interpretive process rather than a collection of facts.

> What is required to work in this situation is a recognition that histories are not sets of empirically testable facts, but are instead processes of formulating and mobilising narratives, always unfinished and always contingent on the teller, their purpose, the context and the audience to whom they speak.\(^{164}\)

E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class*, published in 1963, has been an influential social history.\(^{165}\) In it, he calls on historians to focus on process and relationships as much as structure and categories, respecting the agency of working class people for “they lived through these times of acute social disturbance and we did not”.\(^{166}\)

In 1981, Henry Reynolds’ *The Other Side of the Frontier* introduced readers to a “white man’s interpretation” of “the Aboriginal response to the invasion and

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settlement of Australia”. He aimed to make non-Aboriginal Australians aware of Aboriginal perspectives on our shared history. Reynolds identified land, ownership, development, and progress as key themes in black/white relationships throughout Australia’s history. He also spoke of the importance of relationships, for example in this analysis of Aboriginal perceptions of European people.

In Aboriginal eyes the whites were invaders who came preaching the virtues of private property; people who talked much of British justice while unleashing a reign of terror and behaving like an ill-disciplined army of occupation once the invasion was effected; fornicators who pursued black women in every fringe camp on the continent but in daylight disowned both lovers and resulting offspring.

Reynolds discusses the nineteenth century camps in some detail, suggesting that Aboriginal people were attracted to the camps on the fringes of towns out of curiosity; dwindling food supplies and reduced access to land outside towns; the availability of food for people accustomed to making the most of all available food resources; and as a place for gathering with other Aboriginal people. Despite outsiders’ comments on the poverty of the camps, Reynolds suggests that in fact many aspects of traditional life were able to continue there. He cites a study in southern inland Queensland in which people from the camps remembered “the warmth, lack of boredom, fewer responsibilities, having fun and being together away from the prying eyes of whites”. Likewise, in the creative work, a number of people mentioned the positive experiences of living in the camps in Perth. Reynolds proposes that non-Aboriginal Australians may come to admire Aboriginal people for their creative adaptation of European “techniques, language and commodities” within traditional culture, as well as their “fortitude and courage” under “the massive impact of European

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168 Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, 1.
169 Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, 200.
170 Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, 199.
171 Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, 192-197.
invasion”. I hope a better understanding of the complex histories of our suburbs will elicit a similar response from readers.

Neville Green’s *Broken Spears: Aboriginals and Europeans in the Southwest of Australia* takes a pessimistic approach towards Noongar survival. Published in 1984, Green argues that Noongar people and their culture largely disappeared throughout the 1800s due to disease, loss of traditional knowledge, and dispossession from their land. As native-title historian John Host later observed, Green represents Noongar people “as objects of European actions rather than historical agents who responded creatively to the European presence”. Significantly, Green was the professional historian representing the State in the native title claim against Noongar people. Nonetheless, Green’s work is useful for its detailed information about Noongar/non-Aboriginal contact in the first twenty-five years of the colony, including camp locations and construction methods.

Anna Haebich’s, *For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the South West of Western Australia, 1900–1940* has been highly influential in understanding Western Australian Aboriginal history. Haebich’s book draws on both archival sources and oral histories, in this case to provide a detailed account of Noongar people’s experiences through the economic, social and policy changes at this time. It provides an excellent framework for understanding the transformations during those years. In both its approach to the topic and in its range of sources, including the incorporation of personal stories, it has been an important model for my work. *For Their Own Good* also has some information about the Perth camps, for example, it describes Pyrton Estate in Bassendean being resumed in 1921 by the Repatriation Department and converted into farms for returned soldiers. This brought the Noongar people who camped on the land into conflict with the new farmers, and the Noongars

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175 Green, *Broken Spears*, I, 7.
176 SWALSC, *It’s Still in My Heart This is My Country*, 77-78.
177 SWALSC, *It’s Still in My Heart This is My Country*, 22, 28.
179 Anna Haebich, *For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the South West of Western Australia, 1900-1940*, 2nd ed. (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1992).
were forced to leave.\textsuperscript{180} In addition, the camps Haebich discusses on the outskirts of country towns have many similarities to camps in Perth. All were located on poor land, often adjacent to sanitary depots or rubbish tips, and without facilities such as water, sanitary services, and rubbish collection.\textsuperscript{181}

John Host wrote the Historical Report for the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council’s native title claim. This has since been published as "It's still in my heart, this is my country": the Single Noongar Claim History.\textsuperscript{182} His work is a detailed examination of Noongar people’s ongoing culture and connection to country. On the theme of life in the camps, Host argues that a combination of family relationships and mutual obligation enabled Noongar people to survive and maintain many of their traditions.\textsuperscript{183} This observation is supported by evidence I have uncovered of families camped together throughout the metropolitan area. Drawing on oral histories recorded by Anna Haebich for her PhD, Host wrote that Noongar people whose stories were recorded had all acknowledged kindness or assistance from at least one non-Aboriginal person.\textsuperscript{184} Many comments about supportive non-Aboriginal people were made in oral history interviews that I recorded as well.

Patricia Grimshaw argues that relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians are a major unresolved narrative in Australian history.\textsuperscript{185} While not specific to the camps in Perth, a detailed exploration of the relationship between an Aboriginal woman, Mary, and her non-Aboriginal employer, Ming, in Sydney in the 1920s and 1930s highlights nuances in the power relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women at that

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\textsuperscript{180} Colonial (Chief) Secretary’s Department, 1544/1921, cited in Haebich, \textit{For Their Own Good}, 230.
\textsuperscript{181} Haebich, \textit{For Their Own Good}, 234-5.
\textsuperscript{182} SWALSC, “It’s still in my heart, this is my country”.
\textsuperscript{183} SWALSC, “It’s still in my heart, this is my country”, 166.
\textsuperscript{185} Patricia Grimshaw, “Rethinking Approaches to Women in Missions: The Case of Colonial Australia”, Australian Historical Association conference, Perth, 2010.
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time. The story is told by Ming’s great-granddaughter, Victoria Haskins, who met and shared photos and other information with Mary’s descendants.

Tom Stannage’s influential local history, *The People of Perth*, published in 1979, argues that more important than understanding “urban growth, stagnation, or decline” in history, is “placing life experiences in a meaningful social context”. A major theme is “the acquisition, maintenance, and exercise of power, and the social consequences of its distribution”. Stannage examines the history of Perth chronologically, with an emphasis on the nineteenth century. He tells stories of particular individuals, a powerful way of bringing history to life. Unfortunately, he rarely does this for Noongar people, perhaps indicating his choice of mainly documentary sources and the newness of this approach to Western Australian history. Despite this, Tom Stannage’s approach has been an important influence on my work as an historian, as well as that of many others in the state.

Stannage emphasises the oppression of Noongar people, for example detailing a punitive expedition north of Fremantle in May 1830 when Noongar people were hunted and shot over several days after a settler’s house had been broken into, items stolen and chickens killed. When discussing the 1929 centenary parade Stannage comments that a truckload of Aboriginal people were brought to Perth to march in the parade, but only to show the dangers that early colonists had faced. Highlighting oppression is also part of my work though the inclusion of Noongar voices has led to a more nuanced approach.

Stannage identifies the locations of Perth camps in the late 1800s and early 1900s. He also comments on the 1911 census of Noongar people in Perth, suggesting that the number appears lower than it really was, because there

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192 Stannage, *The People of Perth*, 267. No original sources were provided for this information.
were many more “half-castes” in the camps who were not counted in the statistics. Finally, he draws on Biskup’s work to identify the types of work that Noongars undertook at this time. Stannage’s work is an early attempt at writing ordinary people, including Noongar people, into history. While it was ground-breaking in many ways, later historians, such as those described below, have further developed the model.

In 1986, Jennie Carter wrote *Bassendean: A Social History 1829–1979* about the Perth suburb east of the city with a long history of Noongar occupation. It has detailed coverage of the camps in the Bassendean area throughout the twentieth century as well as stories that can be followed up in my own work. This history covers most of the themes of my project, highlighting community opposition to the camps, particularly from the Bassendean Road Board. Carter includes reproductions of newspaper photographs of boys getting water from a soak, and photographs of two camps at Eden Hill, one prefabricated and the other corrugated iron. Carter also describes the rare ownership of several properties in the Mary Crescent and Gallagher Street area that were owned by Aboriginal people, mainly women, in the 1940s and 1950s. A number of families camped on these properties until the area was developed and the land was bought, or resumed for unpaid rates, in the early 1950s. Carter develops the methodology of *The People of Perth* and *Broken Spears* by incorporating extensive oral histories, including those with Noongar people who lived in the camps. These oral histories are now in the Bassendean Library and have been a useful source for my research.

I consider that *Claremont: A History* is likewise an inclusive history of a suburb of Perth that had Noongar camps throughout the period of my project. However, Whadjuk/Balladong Nyungars Len Collard and Sandra Harben have

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identified it as an example of histories that “continue to focus on the experiences and achievements of prominent wedjelas”. In Claremont: A History, academic historians Geoffrey Bolton and Jenny Gregory detail the history of Noongar people in the Claremont area from the years of earliest contact to the demolition of the camps after World War II. Like other social histories from this period, stories of Noongar people in the suburb are interspersed with information about a range of other groups. While the book does draw on a number of oral histories, the authors rely on archival sources, such as government files and newspaper accounts, for the Noongar histories, so fail to identify the connection families who lived in the camps continue to have to Claremont. Nonetheless, this book is useful for its detailed coverage and leads to primary sources for stories such as Tommy Dower in the 1890s and Tommy Pimbar in early 1900s, which I have covered in the creative work.

More recently, Mary Anne Jebb together with a number of Noongar and other Aboriginal people wrote a collaborative history of Aboriginal people in East Perth from the 1920s to the 1970s. While it focuses on the area around the East Perth Power Station, there are stories about the camps at Claisebrook, the Bull Paddock, Miller’s Cave and the Starlight Hotel under the Bunbury Bridge. It is based on oral histories with people who lived in houses rather than camps but draws on their stories and archival material to paint a picture of the Noongar community in East Perth at that time.

Two published works give insight into the policies and attitudes of staff in the government departments influential in Noongar people’s lives during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Pat Jacobs’ Mister Neville is a biography of A.O. Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines from 1915 to 1940. This is useful for its insight into Neville’s attitudes towards Aboriginal people and his extensive influence on government policy and legislation. Though it has little to say about the camps or about Noongar people in Perth, there are a few references to camps on the


202 Jebb, “‘It Was Just Like a Reserve in the City’”, 54–57.

outskirts of country towns. For example, Jacobs writes that during the Depression Aboriginal people, “huddled in the squalid camps adjacent to town sanitary and rubbish dumps”.  

In 2010, Adrian Day published a memoir of his time as a patrol officer for the Native Affairs Department in the 1950s and 1960s. Through his work, he met many people living in the Perth camps and his is a largely, though not totally, sympathetic account. His stories convey an ambivalent attitude towards Noongar people, combining his strong desire for social justice with a carryover of the racist attitudes of earlier years. For example, thought provocingly, he writes:

> It will ever be a matter of opinion as to whether the race living in Australia in the late eighteenth century has benefitted from the invasion of their country by the Wadjelas in overall terms, or been grossly disadvantaged. … an invasion by some foreign people was utterly inevitable … they would have been hard put to choose themselves an invader at whose hands they might have done better.

This book is most useful for its detailed accounts of Day’s contact with people in the camps in Perth, and covers a number of the themes of my work. There is an interesting story about local identity, Don Pedro, leaving the camp where he had stayed, gambling, using his winnings to obtain alcohol from a non-Aboriginal contact, drinking, his subsequent arrest, telling Field Officer Day that he was framed, then the court appearance where the judge tricked Pedro into telling the truth about having been drinking. Generally, this would appear in the newspapers as a one-line report of his sentence but Day brings it to life, including the way Pedro pulled the wool over his eyes regarding the events that led to his arrest.

Day’s reflections on the differences between life for Noongar people in the camps and his own life as a non-Aboriginal man are revealing. He highlights the

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204 Jacobs, Mister Neville, 186.
206 Day, Wadjelas, viii.
207 Day, Wadjelas, 6-12.
tensions between non-Aboriginal attitudes and the reality of life for people in the camps. He writes:

The wild luxury of steaming showers, dry sweet smelling sheets at night, an aperitif, lashings of hot food cooked well enough for a king, the library in the living room, flowers in the vase, the telephone, talk of stocks and shares, international politics, foreign travel ….. these are all things white.\(^{208}\)

Day contrasts this with a mixture of insight and racism:

a dismal humpy with children with sore eyes and running noses huddled around a mean little smoky fire … When in winter all clothes are damp, those just washed are wet, those dry enough to wear are damp, the blankets are damp. The mattress is damp, the children wheeze as they breathe and cough when they laugh, ears are infected, hands dry and rough like those of a dehydrated ape and every meal is bread and jam.\(^{209}\)

Day’s analysis of his feelings and actions leading up to and including the removal of the Mippy children from one of the Fremantle camps provides a poignant and unusual insight into the trauma of child removal.\(^{210}\) Usually this is told from a cool administrative perspective on a government file, or from the point of view of the distraught parent or child removed. In describing events, Day recalls that he was annoyed by Alf Mippy’s defiant attitude when Day inquired why the children were sick and not at school, and how he took it as a personal challenge to bring him to account. However, once he had a court order to remove the children, he found it both distressing and physically difficult to do so, and while he tries to justify his actions, he says that he never did it again.\(^{211}\)

Sharon Delmege and Bevan Carter wrote the only histories that specifically focus on the camps in Perth. Both authors have connections with the Bropho family and others in the Swan Valley Nyungah Community and their work is mainly concerned with the camps in the Bassendean area.


\(^{210}\) Day, *Wadjelas*, 26-28. Alf Mippy’s story is included with permission from his grandson, Nick Abraham. Nick’s mother Margaret was one of the children removed.
in Perth. It focuses on the campaign between 1977 and 1994 by a group called the Fringedwellers of the Swan Valley to move out of camps and obtain their own culturally-appropriate housing in the Guildford/Swan Valley area. Sympathetic to the fringe dwellers’ point of view, Delmege’s detailed history of the campaign, including the movement from camps to houses, as well as her analysis of the media coverage, and official responses to the campaign, provides a recent perspective on the camps in Perth.

Robert Bropho and his wife Edna were key informants for Delmege’s work, and much of the background history to the camps focuses on their families through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Delmege also incorporates an analysis of Bropho’s book, *fringedweller*. In addition, there is a useful explanation of *terra nullius*, Britain’s settlement of Australia, the history of racism, and how Noongar people were perceived by the early colonists. Another work by Delmege, “A Trans-generational effect of the Aborigines Act 1905 (WA): The making of the Fringedwellers in the South-west of Western Australia”, is a useful history of the intersection of laws directed at Aboriginal people, and social and economic changes during the twentieth century. Particularly useful is the discussion of the tensions between local councils and the people living in camps in the Bassendean and Bayswater areas in the first half of the twentieth century. Delmege’s article “From Camp Life to Suburbia: Aboriginal Housing in Perth,” includes an analysis of the tension between people in the camps and those in the wider community, over the existence and locations of the camps. It deals with displacement, locations of the camps, and relationships between people in the camps and those in the wider community. Delmege focuses on the camps at Guildford and to a lesser extent, Claremont, from the late 1800s to the 1950s. Delmege’s and my work use similar archival and secondary sources. A difference is that I use more of a

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213 Delmege, “The Fringedweller’s Struggle”, 22-24, 30, 43-44.
215 Sharon Delmege, "From Camp Life to Suburbia: Aboriginal Housing in Perth", *Australian Historical Studies*, 45, no. 3 (2014), [http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2014.947298](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2014.947298)
storytelling approach, and incorporate greater consultation and larger numbers of oral histories.

Bevan Carter’s *Eden Hill Camps: Records of Racism in Western Australia* published in 2014 is an important work that complements my own approach to the topic.\(^{216}\) The first half of the book follows the development of nineteenth century legislation that affected Noongar people. The second half is a chronology of the camps in the Guildford/Bassendean area in the twentieth century. Carter reproduces long extracts from archival sources such as newspapers and government files, as well as using existing oral histories for more recent events. He introduces these with brief comments before and after and they are largely left to speak for themselves. The quotes in Carter’s book are sometimes used to highlight personal stories and paint a picture of life for Noongar people. They provide useful references and confirmation of sources. Like Delmege’s and my own work, Carter’s book considers history from the perspective of its impact on Noongar people. This book is dedicated to Robert Bropho, who Carter describes as “a much maligned man”.\(^{217}\) Carter has indicated that his next book will address the closure of the Swan Valley Nyungah Community in 2003, the establishment of which was the subject of Delmege’s thesis.\(^{218}\)

A different perspective on the camps comes from the experience of non-Aboriginal families evicted from their houses during the Depression. Shirley Burns was a five-year-old child living in a camp south of Canning Bridge from December 1930 after her family was evicted from their house in Victoria Park.\(^{219}\) A number of non-Aboriginal families lived at this time in the area known as The Camps, located between Mt Henry Road and the Canning River. Their experiences echo the experiences of Noongar families in camps, such as sitting around the fire at night listening to stories.\(^{220}\) Burns also writes of the difficulty in

keeping children clothed, and being plagued by mosquitoes and flies. A difference is that the non-Aboriginal families appear to have received more help. For example, Shirley’s mum went to Ross McLarty, member of the National Party, who located old flattened-out 44-gallon drums at the Midland Railway Workshops, and had them delivered to the camps. Men from the camps worked together to use these to build one-room shacks, with flour sacks separating the kitchens from the sleeping areas. This is similar to camps occupied by many Noongar families around Perth.

A possible case of typhoid in The Camps prompted authorities to install a fresh-water tap adjacent to the nearest house as well as pan toilets that were emptied regularly. None of these facilities were provided for Noongar families. In 1990 Shirley self-published a booklet about her experiences, writing, “It remained for years an episode that none of us ever wanted known we were a part of.” I have seen no evidence that Noongar families also experience shame discussing their times in the camps.

A number of recent Aboriginal histories from other parts of Australia examine the camps in those places and identify many similar themes to my work. This includes the most nuanced and methodologically appropriate work in this area and has served as a model for my work. I will discuss work by Peter Read, Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow, and Maria Nugent in New South Wales, Penelope Edmonds in Victoria, and Mandy Paul and Tom Gara in South Australia.

Peter Read has researched and written extensively about Aboriginal history and the camps in New South Wales. Two early, and particularly relevant articles are Peter Read’s “‘A Rape of the Soul So Profound’: Some Reflections on the Dispersal Policy in New South Wales,” and “‘Breaking up these Camps Entirely’: the Dispersal Policy in Wiradjuri Country, 1909–1929”. They highlight a

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221 Burns, The Camps at Canning Bridge, 2, 12.
similar pattern to that in Perth and other places. For example, where Wiradjuri people were displaced from one area within their traditional country, they moved to “what were known to be safer areas within the traditional compass of marriage, movement and kinship patterns”. It also has a similar refrain to the Perth camps. As people moved from one area to another, the townspeople in the new location complained and so they were moved again. This work is also important for its detailed analysis of the occupation of camps at a particular place and time.

Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow’s *Rivers and Resilience: Aboriginal People on Sydney’s Georges River* has many similarities to my work. For example, their research draws on both archival information and stories shared by Aboriginal people in the communities connected to the Georges River, arguing “such stories are a crucial part of making places meaningful”. While the chapters follow a chronological order rather than being arranged by location like my work, they are shaped around the stories of key individuals who were active at that time. They also link issues across time, such as tying early conflict in the area to that experienced by Aboriginal people today. This is also relevant for my work. For example in the 1880s, 1910s, and again in 2001 Aboriginal people attempted to obtain land around Lake Claremont. Like Goodall and Cadzow, I also link local stories into broader policy and legislative changes in the state.

In discussing the struggles over the displacement of Aboriginal people from camps along the Georges River in the 1920s and 1930, Goodall and Cadzow identify similar issues to those raised about the Perth camps. For example, in 1931 the Herne Bay Progress Association wrote to the Hurstville Council to

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224 Read, “‘Breaking up these Camps Entirely’…”, 46-7.


complain of "unsanitary conditions", “noisy disturbances at the camp”, as well as “the inappropriateness of having ‘a blacks’ camp’ in this ‘growing district’”. The letter from the Progress Association also argued that the people in the camp had come from elsewhere and should be removed from their district to the Aboriginal settlement at La Perouse, where they could be “properly ‘supervised’ and ‘protected’”. This sentiment was also part of official government policy towards people in the Perth camps.

Maria Nugent’s *Botany Bay: Where Histories Meet* explores “the nature of the relationship between local Aboriginal pasts and histories and those that can be described as imperial, colonial and national”. Drawing on both oral histories and archival sources, it is an Aboriginal-focused history of that part of Sydney, including the Aboriginal settlement at La Perouse. Like my work, Nugent explores both histories of place, and the way those histories are commemorated in the present.

In exploring the place “where histories meet”, Nugent aims to show the interaction of narratives of discovery and settlement of Australia, the reworking of these by Aboriginal people, and the role of Aboriginal storytelling in creating a place for Aboriginal people within local and national communities. The chapter, “From Shantytowns to Suburbs”, deals with the camps on the foreshore of Botany Bay during the first half of the twentieth century, tracing their expansion during the Depression, when both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families built camps adjacent to the Aboriginal reserve and lived similar lifestyles. This is similar to the Smelters camp in South Fremantle, which was occupied by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In the 1950s, the camps on Botany Bay were demolished to make way for new suburbs, removing “traces belonging to a so-called shameful recent local

A similar process happened in Perth, where the camp at Swanbourne was demolished as part of the suburban development of the area. Interestingly, in Swanbourne the old farm houses around Lake Claremont were also resumed and demolished as part of the beautification of the area.

A relevant recent book draws on post-colonial theory to examine urban contact and relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Penelope Edmonds’ *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th–20th Century Pacific Rim Cities*, is a study of Indigenous and non-Indigenous lives in Melbourne in Australia, and Victoria in British Colombia, Canada, from the 1830s to the 1870s. Like my work in the twentieth century, her book (also undertaken for her PhD) “is a story of British settler-colonial cities built on Indigenous land and their co-production with local Indigenous people and their cultures”.

There are many parallels between Edmonds’ work and my own. Edmonds points out that in both places, the overriding experience for Aboriginal peoples was of displacement and dispossession. In highlighting the importance of the “dynamic interactive contact histories” of cities, she describes “a pervasive amnesia in Australia [and Canada] regarding the contested and racialized nature of cities and towns that persists well into the present”. It is partly to address this erasure of our past that I have undertaken my work. Edmonds sees the cities of today as a continuation of the nineteenth century structure of settler colonialism. She argues that they may therefore be understood by examining “the socio-spatial histories of race” that developed in nineteenth century cities. I focus on the 1930s to 1950s but provide background history where possible to assist in contextualising the more recent history of the camps.

Edmonds highlights a spatial element relevant for my work. For example, she points out that it was in the margins of the city: the riverbanks, swamps and

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236 Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers*, 3-5.
road reserves that Aboriginal people were able to live safely.\textsuperscript{242} She adds that swamps, while providing a good supply of food for Aboriginal people, were seen by Europeans as “bad”, since they were associated with disease, and not considered attractive or useful.\textsuperscript{243} Likewise, in Perth in the twentieth century, camps were located on the margins of the city, in areas little used by non-Aboriginal residents, often by rivers and swamps, or close to noxious facilities such as sewerage farms.

Edmonds also highlights gender differences in the camps, citing Larissa Behrendt’s work identifying Aboriginal women in colonial discourse as “cheap or low class prostitutes” and “easy sexual sport”.\textsuperscript{244} Edmonds writes that while not openly discussed, sex with Aboriginal women drew men to the camps in Melbourne in the mid nineteenth century:\textsuperscript{245}

\begin{quote}
Sexual violence and physical attacks on Aboriginal women by European men were frequent occurrences. ... Aboriginal women may also have brokered these relations on their own terms. Often starving and in search of ‘white money,’ women traded sex for food and cohabited with white men in town.\textsuperscript{246}
\end{quote}

Evidence of non-Aboriginal men going to the Perth camps in search of sex shows up in court reports, newspaper articles, and oral histories. For example, in 1954 a full-page spread deplored the practice of non-Aboriginal men picking up Aboriginal women and taking them back to the camps or other places around the city for sex.\textsuperscript{247} Corrie Bodney talked about American sailors getting involved with women at the camps at Butler’s Swamp in Swanbourne during the Second World War. He remembered American sailors coming to the camps with alcohol and cigarettes, and said the girls liked it because the sailors would take them into town and buy things for them. The problem was that fights broke out among

\textsuperscript{242} Edmonds, \textit{Urbanizing Frontiers}, 132.  
\textsuperscript{245} Edmonds, \textit{Urbanizing Frontiers}, 144.  
\textsuperscript{246} Edmonds, \textit{Urbanizing Frontiers}, 146.  
girls, making it difficult for the others in the camps.248 This is another example of Noongar oral histories adding nuances to the generally accepted narrative.

Edmonds draws attention to the artwork of early colonial Melbourne, in which Aboriginal people were depicted at the margins, looking on at Europeans and their development.249 She uses the work of Johannes Fabian and Patrick Wolfe to highlight this depiction of Aboriginal people as from another time, one that will pass with the progress of the city.250 Early paintings of Perth, such as of St Leonards on the Upper Swan in the 1840s show the same arrangement of figures, although this is in contrast to personal accounts of the time.251 For example, John Watson recalled that during his childhood in Perth in the 1850s, there were Noongar cooking fires along the south side of St Georges Terrace near Mill Street in the evenings, and dozens of Noongar people squatting beneath a nearby large jarrah tree at midday.252

In South Australia, two conference papers have some relevance to my work. Mandy Paul and Tom Gara’s “In and Out of View: Aboriginal Fringe Camps in South Australian Country Towns” gives a useful overview of the locations and roles of these camps throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.253 The authors note that it is early work and draws only on archival material; further work would include research with Aboriginal informants. The paper has a similar aim to my work, in that it intends to “bring the fringe camps into view, particularly those in the twentieth century”.254 Interestingly, as I have found in Perth, the authors also note that the camps are almost entirely absent from

249 Edmonds, Urbanizing Frontiers, 47-49.
251 Elizabeth Irwin’s St Leonards, Upper Swan is reproduced in the creative work.
254 Paul and Gara, “In and Out of View”, 2.
local and regional histories, though they may have been included in work by anthropologists, archaeologists, geographers and others.\textsuperscript{255}

In another conference paper, “Aboriginal Fringe Camps in Adelaide, 1836 – 1911”, Tom Gara provides a detailed history of the camps in Adelaide in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{256} He says that while he has not done much research into twentieth century history, it appears that after the implementation of the Aborigines Act 1911, Aboriginal people were forcibly removed from the Adelaide camps and not many Aboriginal people lived in Adelaide from then until the 1940s.\textsuperscript{257} If further research shows that this is indeed the case, it is a significant difference between Adelaide and Perth.

This more recent historical work provides a strong framework for my own research. It highlights the lack of histories of Noongar people in twentieth century Perth although there are elements of these works that are useful. The histories from other states are more relevant and reflect many parallels with the situation in Perth.

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature dealing with the themes of displacement, camp locations, relationships, camp life, and the ways the camps are remembered, as they apply to my work on the history of the camps in the Perth metropolitan area in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. From primary sources, I draw detailed, often personal information, frequently indicating an ambivalent attitude towards Noongar people and the camps. The early histories of Western Australia are based on the displacement of Noongar people from their country, where Noongar people are framed as “troublesome” to the ambitions of the new settlers and the narrative of progress. The work of anthropologists, archaeologists and architects suggests useful questions for my research, and highlights similarities between camps in Perth and at other places and different times. Noongar and other Aboriginal writers contribute a more nuanced approach to our history as well as detailed personal accounts of the camps. From recent historians I draw on a wider range of sources, particularly oral

\textsuperscript{255} Paul and Gara, “In and Out of View”, 1.
\textsuperscript{257} Gara, “Aboriginal Fringe Camps in Adelaide,” 18.
histories. Many of the more recent writers also promote an agenda of social change through greater awareness of our history. My work is part of a growing literature inspired by social history, post-colonialism, and Noongar and other Aboriginal writers who challenge the historiography that makes Aboriginal people largely invisible in the landscape and in the histories of our suburbs, cities, and towns.
Chapter 2 Interpretation: Remembering the Camps

Stories about the camps are not just told through histories and the other largely written sources discussed in the Literature Review. Films, fiction, museum exhibitions, site interpretation, trail guides, websites and the use of Noongar language are among other ways of understanding the camps in our shared history. Many of these forms of interpretation draw on the histories and other historical sources discussed in the last chapter. In making the research available in what are often more accessible formats, they are able to reach a much wider audience. Examining this interpretation offers further insight into the ways the camps are remembered and understood today.

What is Interpretation?

Interpretation “communicates what is significant about places, people or events.”¹ Drawing on the work of the USA-based National Association for Interpretation, and interpretation pioneer Freeman Tilden, well-known interpreter Sam Ham recently proposed a definition that links to an organisation’s mission.

Interpretation is a mission-based approach to communication aimed at provoking in audiences the discovery of personal meaning and the forging of personal connections with things, places, people, and concepts.²

Thus, interpretation is important because it can influence people’s views. As the National Trust (WA) Aboriginal Reference Group wrote in the Introduction to the Trust’s ‘We’re a Dreaming Country’: Guidelines for Interpretation of Aboriginal Heritage, “the respect, acknowledgement and ownership of Aboriginal place and story … [can] acknowledge the past, reconcile the present and ensure

custodianship for the future”. Or, if this is not done, as Yiman Aboriginal academic Marcia Langton wrote, “[t]he easiest and most ‘natural’ form of racism in representation is the act of making the other invisible.”

I argue that interpretation of the Noongar camps in Perth ranges across this spectrum, with fiction, films and websites being generally the most representative, and site interpretation and trail guides the least. Museum interpretation is also generally poor although there are exceptions. Noongar language has been used in differing ways at different times, representing the range of this continuum.

Interpretation changes over time or according to the point of view of the person looking. For example, Captain Cook’s cottage was moved from England to Melbourne in 1933 to celebrate Victoria’s centenary. Chris Healy wrote that by 1970, the cottage had become a focus for protest “where Aboriginal people attempted to remember Captain Cook not as a founding father but as a harbinger of dispossession and death, a sign of white amnesia”. As a non-Aboriginal child I was not aware of this; I remember visiting the cottage in 1970 with my family, and seeing only the representation of the man who “discovered” Australia.

It is widely accepted that good interpretation incorporates multiple voices rather than speaking from a single perspective. Some of the interpretation I investigate in this chapter focuses largely on Noongar voices. Perhaps, like social histories, it is effective because it represents the voices of people who were largely hidden by previous interpretation.

The National Trust’s Guidelines indicate that “[t]here is still reluctance in acknowledging Aboriginal history, sacrifice and contribution to Australia’s heritage”. They contend that this is largely a result of “an inability to know how

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3 National Trust ‘We’re a Dreaming Country’: Guidelines for Interpretation of Aboriginal Heritage (2012), (Perth: National Trust of Australia (WA), 2012), 10.
4 Langton, Well I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television, 24.
5 Chris Healy, From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11-12.
7 National Trust “We’re a Dreaming Country”, 14.
to embark on the process of interpreting such a tumultuous story." I think lack of knowledge about appropriate processes to follow is an important issue. However, I argue that interpretation by non-Aboriginal people in which Noongar people are invisible, or only represented as they might have been before colonisation, is a result of uncritical reading of histories based on a narrative of progress. Anna Haebich draws on anthropologist Paul Connerton’s seven types of forgetting to argue that “forgetting and ignorance are never benign conditions: they do things”. Koori Tony Birch adds that:

A sovereign right to land and the interpretation of the past in Australia are inextricably linked. … And, in the aftermath of what constituted murder and genocide, official denial and collective and complicit amnesia became the most common response by the colonists, ensuring that the vigilance of a sanitised colonial memory was established early in the life of the embryonic nation.

The remainder of this chapter analyses existing interpretation of the Noongar camps in Perth, considering the extent to which it addresses the themes of displacement, camp locations, life in the camps, relationships, remembering the camps, and appropriate methodology.

**Fiction: Novels, Short Stories, Plays, Poetry, and Children’s Books**

Fiction such as plays, poetry, novels, short stories, and children’s books emerged from the 1960s as the first type of interpretation to represent life in the camps. Mostly, but not always, written by Noongar and other Aboriginal people, this form of interpretation powerfully represents both the injustices experienced, and the strengths of people in the camps. The storytelling style makes it is easy to engage with the characters and relate to their experiences.

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8 National Trust “We’re a Dreaming Country”, 14.
One of the first works of fiction was *Wild Cat Falling* written by Aboriginal man, Colin Johnson, also known as Mudrooroo, and published in 1965. Although in 1996 some claimed that he was not Aboriginal he believed so for more than fifty years and this novel was recognised as the first published by an Australian Aboriginal person. *Wild Cat Falling* deals with tensions about identity and belonging that face a light-skinned Aboriginal boy living in a house rather than a camp in a wheatbelt town in Western Australia. Through the boy’s observations, it includes information about his friends’ lives in the camps, and about tensions over the transition from camps to houses. The novel appears to be set in the 1960s, when many Noongar people still lived in camps. It provides useful background and has a strong message about the importance of accepting Aboriginal identity rather than trying to assimilate into the non-Aboriginal world.

Nene Gare’s *The Fringe Dwellers* likewise explores life for Aboriginal people around the time of the transition from camps to houses. First published in 1961, it is based on non-Aboriginal woman Gare’s friendships with Aboriginal people living in a camp called the Snake Pit, just outside Geraldton, to the north of Noongar country. The details are similar to descriptions of camps, houses, and racism in Perth.

The book deals in a nuanced way with the situation for Aboriginal people in the 1950s. The camps, and lifestyles of people living in the camps, are described in detail through the eyes of Noonah and Trilby, the two eldest mission-educated daughters of the Comeaway family. There is a great deal of information about life in the camps, and relationships between people in the camps and those in the wider community. The message of the book is assimilationist: that children who have learnt through missions to want a non-Aboriginal lifestyle will bring

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15 Johnson, *Wild Cat Falling*, 10-14, 120-129.
about change. However, it does point out some of the difficulties: the challenges of conforming to the expectations of family members who live in camps, and dealing with the racism of the non-Aboriginal community.

Gare’s husband Frank was District Officer in the Native Welfare Department based in Geraldton at the time she wrote this novel, giving her the opportunity to travel “extensively throughout the State obtaining first hand knowledge of the subject matter”.\(^\text{18}\) Gare later said she wrote the book because:

> I had a desire to let people know what was happening to the Aboriginal population in my small town, the awful treatment by most whites of black people. Especially since so many of them were my friends.\(^\text{19}\)

I feel similarly that it is important to tell stories of the camps both because I like so many of the people who lived in the camps, and because they are largely omitted from the interpretation of Perth’s history.

Mary Durack’s *The Courteous Savage* is a children’s book written around this time, but set in the early years of the Swan River Colony.\(^\text{20}\) It is a biography of the well-known Noongar leader, Yagan, who was betrayed and killed by young non-Aboriginal friends in 1834.\(^\text{21}\) Incorporating both a sympathetic attitude towards the injustices Noongar people experienced, and a Social Darwinist philosophy, Durack describes Yagan as a “bronz Apollo”\(^\text{22}\) and wrote “the Bibbulmun tribe, with all its laughter and its songs, was doomed to vanish from the face of the land”.\(^\text{23}\) Through the voice of Yagan’s mother, Moyran, Durack acknowledges the displacement of Noongar people from their land, and the difficulty this caused in getting food as they “sometimes sat by ‘hungry fires’”.\(^\text{24}\) Durack also made it clear that despite the assurances of non-Aboriginal leaders that both Noongar and non-Aboriginal people would be treated equally before the law, this was not the case.\(^\text{25}\) As Yagan says in the novel to his friend and

\(^{18}\) Gare, *The Fringe Dwellers*, back cover.

\(^{19}\) Nene Gare, cited in Mattingly, “An Unassuming Radical,” 19.


\(^{21}\) Durack, *The Courteous Savage*, 84.

\(^{22}\) Durack, *The Courteous Savage*, 9, 84.

\(^{23}\) Durack, *The Courteous Savage*, 84.


government botanist, James Drummond, “‘Every time white man kill black man
he say ‘Accident’. The Governor say ‘All right’.”

A much later children’s book, also written by a non-Aboriginal woman, Helen
Bell, is Idjhil: … and the Land Cried for its Lost Soul. It is based on Noongar
Elder Cedric Jacobs’ childhood memories and is one of only two works that deal
specifically with the camps in Perth between the 1930s and 1960s. The
outline of the story is similar to information Cedric shared with me in an oral
history in 2012. Set in the 1940s (Cedric Jacobs was born in 1943), it is a
story about a boy, Idjhil, growing up with his extended Noongar family in camps
in the Swan Valley on the eastern outskirts of Perth. Within its children’s
storybook style, this work powerfully covers all the themes of my work. For
example, Noongar people’s ongoing connection to country is underlined
through the detail of the story as well as the repetition of a phrase containing
the words “and the Land” at the end of each page. Idjhil’s experiences of non-
Aboriginal people were not good. When he was out for the first time with the
men hunting “cgarrdas (racehorse goanna)”, an angry “wadjallah (non-
Aboriginal man)” made them leave his property, and go outside the wire fence
they had crossed tracking the cgarrdas. When he was nine years old, Idjhil’s
connection with his family was abruptly severed when he and his brothers were
seized, taken to court, and sent to Mogumber Mission, never to see their
parents again. Despite this, the book ends with Idjhil remembering:

that he was Nyungar and bound to the Land and that the Land
would always be there for Aboriginal people. The people could be
taken from the Land but the Land could never be taken from the
people.

Perhaps because it is children’s fiction, there are some unlikely aspects to the
story. The account of a child of the 1940s who works with his family in the
vineyards of the Swan Valley, and then meets other families at Tuohy Gardens

26 Durack, The Courteous Savage, 45.
28 Bell, Idjhil, 5.
29 Cedric Jacobs, oral history recorded by Denise Cook, 17 October 2012.
30 Bell, Idjhil, 5; Jacobs, oral history, 17 October 2012, 1.
31 Bell, Idjhil, 11, 15-19.
32 Bell, Idjhil, 30-37.
33 Bell, Idjhil, 38.
in the local town of Midland, sits uneasily with practices carried out in earlier times, such as setting fire to the bush to flush out animals and encourage new growth. The novel also has Idjhil leading his group to find a campsite, even though he was only nine years old and there were Elders present.

*Idjhil* was published in 1996 and that year won the Western Australian Premier’s Book Award for Children’s and Young Adult’s Books. Cedric Jacobs told me that he and Helen Bell wrote this book together but he is not listed as an author, merely that he “provided much of the background information for this story”. I wonder if today such a book would have had joint authorship. The Premier’s Prize for that year went to Banjo Woorunmurra and Howard Pedersen’s, *Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance*. The commentary for this book noted approvingly that it “represents a unique collaboration between the traditional custodian of a major episode in Aboriginal-white relations in Western Australia and an academically trained historian, and as such provides a pioneering model for Australian historians”.

I have grappled with the issue of authorship in my own work. Many people shared stories that I include in the creative section of this PhD. Eight of those people were actively involved in commenting on drafts of their story. Are they also authors or are they merely sources of information? I have also used extensive quotes from oral histories I recorded with Robert Bropho and Toopy Bodney, both of whom have passed on; so family members have provided permission for use of their information. According to the National Trust’s *We’re a Dreaming Country*: Guidelines for Interpretation of Aboriginal Heritage, “Aboriginal peoples have the right to co-authorship and recognition for contribution to interpretation materials”. This suggests that it would be most appropriate to publish my creative work under joint authorship. However,

34 Bell, *Idjhil*, 20, 24-25.
37 Bell, *Idjhil*, 5.
39 They were Corrie Bodney, Sandra Nebro, Doreen Nelson, Mary Kemenade, Lynette Coomer, Georgina Coomer, Beryl Hoffman, and Peter Randolph.
40 National Trust *We’re a Dreaming Country*, 26.
anyone who is listed as an author may be held responsible for any part of the book, not just their own section. When I raised this with one Noongar contributor, she decided that she would prefer not to be listed as an author.\(^{41}\) Other books published under joint authorship tend to cover one topic to which all authors might be expected to contribute. For example, Alice Nannup, Lauren Marsh and Stephen Kinnane published Alice’s biography, *When the Pelican Laughed*, under joint authorship.\(^{42}\) This issue remains unresolved.

Another work that mentions camps in Perth between the 1930s and 1960s is Jack Davis’ play *The Dreamers*.\(^{43}\) First performed in 1982, it is set around that time but opens with old Aboriginal man, Uncle Worru, remembering his life as a young man living in the camps near the Hamersley homestead in Eden Hill in Perth’s eastern suburbs. In the play, Worru, and others who lived in the camps when they were young, are now old and living in houses in the suburbs. Nostalgically, Worru remembers campfires gleaming; people laughing and singing; Billy Kimberley doing a corroboree for a tin of tobacco, which he then shared with his friends; a woman, Angie, proud to have been married to Herbie in a church; Bella pulling damper from the fire, then sharing “bacca”; and “[k]indly old man Hammersley [sic] [who said], ‘They can stay there as long as they like’”, but who had since died.\(^{44}\) This speech reminds us that it’s not long since Noongar people lived in camps, and perhaps surprisingly for non-Aboriginal people, some remember it fondly and wish they could go back to that time. The same message came through in oral histories I recorded and is a good reminder that despite the more difficult physical circumstances of the camps, there were many positive aspects about life in the camps for Noongar people.

Another of Jack Davis’ plays, *No Sugar*, tells the story of the Millimurra and Munday families living in a camp at Government Well Aboriginal Reserve in

\(^{41}\) Lynette Coomer, telephone conversation, 22 May 2015.

\(^{42}\) Alice Nannup, Lauren Marsh and Stephen Kinnane, *When the Pelican Laughed* (South Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1993).


\(^{44}\) In the play Hamersley is spelt Hammersley. Davis, “The Dreamers”, 5-6.
Northam. They are deported to Moore River Native Settlement in 1929 along with all the other Noongar residents of Northam, supposedly because of an outbreak of scabies, but actually because of non-Aboriginal opposition to Noongar people in the town, just before a close state election. This play covers in detail all the themes of my project. It gives a very human account of both Noongar people’s experiences, and those of the non-Aboriginal people with whom they interact. Through these interactions, it is possible to relate to all the characters. The play is set in 1929, when most Noongar people lived in camps, and the details of both life in the camps and interactions between those in the camps and those in the wider community, especially the police and Native Affairs Department staff, are particularly vivid. Noongar, and where appropriate, northwest words are scattered throughout the dialogue.

Some of Alf Taylor’s poems in *Rimfire: Poetry from Aboriginal Australia* allude to life in the camps. I also recorded an oral history with Alf and his brother Ben. On that day we visited the sites of camps in Bayswater and Ashfield where they lived before they were taken away to New Norcia Mission. In his poem, “The Mission”, Alf remembers his mother sobbing as the Native Welfare took him away from the camp. He writes, “Not in a mission, but I’d rather be hugging my mother, sitting on her warm bended knees”. Seeing the place, hearing the stories and then reading the poem was evocative for me.

A reference to life in the camps in a country town is in Archie Weller’s collection, *Going Home: Stories*. The title work is about young Billy Woodward going home to his family’s camp at Koodup. Billy had left the camps as a sixteen-year-old to do his final year of school in Perth, and hadn’t been back; instead living like a non-Aboriginal man, as a successful footballer and artist. Getting an inkling of what he was missing, Billy went back to Koodup on his twenty-first birthday.

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47 Ben Taylor Cuimara and Alf Taylor Cuimara, oral history recorded by Denise Cook, 9 November 2011, 3, 7.
birthday, staying in his family’s camp. Weller writes that walking inside the camp that night, Billy “feels unsure and out of place and terribly alone”.\textsuperscript{51}

At the camp, Billy was reunited with his mother, who virtually didn’t speak to him because he hadn’t come home for his father’s funeral, and his brother Carlton, who, when they were both arrested the next morning, was “pulled from the humpy, sad yet sullen, eyes downcast staring into the mud of his life – mud that no one can ever escape”.\textsuperscript{52} In the pub and at the hands of the police, Billy was shocked to be suddenly black again and arrested for a crime he didn’t commit. The story highlights the racism that Noongar people experience and covers all the themes of my project, especially life in the camps, and relationships between people in the camps and those in the wider community.

A collection of poems by Jack Davis, \textit{The First-born and Other Poems}, deals with the impact of settlement on Noongar people, and relationships between the two groups.\textsuperscript{53} This provides useful background information for my project. For example, in “Desolation”, Davis writes that previously Noongar people had bread to eat, but white people gave them stone. Also, since the land had become desolate, and they were tired of sleeping on benches in parks, Noongar people drank methylated spirits to keep warm, keep back anger, and hasten death.\textsuperscript{54} On a similar theme, “My Brother, My Sister” mourns the changes for Noongar people whose traditional life has been replaced by a semi-condemned house in the city, alcohol, violence, and the Kia-ora Wine Saloon in East Perth.\textsuperscript{55}

Concerned about the loss of culture, especially language, Davis compiled “A Bibbulmum Vocabulary” for the Western Australian Aboriginal Association, based on his own earlier learning of the language and extensive conversations with people all around Noongar country. In it, Davis lists a number of relevant

\textsuperscript{51} Weller, “Going Home”, 7.
\textsuperscript{52} Weller, “Going Home”, 11.
\textsuperscript{53} Jack Davis, \textit{The First-born and Other Poems} (Melbourne: JM Dent, 1983).
\textsuperscript{54} “Desolation”, in Davis, \textit{The First-born and Other Poems}, 36.
\textsuperscript{55} “My Brother, My Sister”, in Davis, \textit{The First-born and Other Poems}, 28.

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Noongar words: *Kant* or *mia* are words for camp; *kooant* is a camp near water; and *koonga-mia* is a house on the side of a hill. 56

Graeme Dixon is another poet who writes about his experiences. He was a stolen generations child who was born in Perth in 1955, and lived in homes from the age of three. 57 Some of his poetry powerfully addresses the dispossession of Noongar people from their country. For example, in “All for the Land Part 1”, Dixon examines the European occupation of this country, and the subsequent removal of Aboriginal men to prison on Rottnest Island in order to free up the land. 58 The poem “When (in Retrospect)”, anticipates that Noongar ancestors will only rest in peace when the land is returned, compensation paid for the wrongdoings of the past, and racist attitudes overcome. 59

The last work of fiction to be considered here is Whadjuk Noongar Elder Richard Wilkes novel *Bulmurn: A Swan River Nyoongar*. 60 Wilkes wrote this in 1995 as a tribute to his ancestors and to Noongar leaders from the early years of colonisation. It is a story about Noongar life at this time of great change, as well as the interactions between Noongar people and the new colonists. There are few actual references to camps, but a great deal of detail about life in the camps and the tensions between Noongar people, settlers who killed and raped, and the police who hunted for Bulmurn after he avenged the rape and killing. Written from the perspective of a Noongar Elder it offers an informative Noongar perspective on our history.

Fiction is among the most powerful interpretation of the camps I have examined. Much of it is written by Noongar and other Aboriginal people and gives readers an insight into their characters’ feelings, thoughts and experiences. As Noongar author Kim Scott wrote, most of the audience for novels is middle class and well educated. He added, “there are things members of one’s own community want said to such an audience, loudly. There are

powerful political imperatives to express, if not assert, Indigenous identity and the continuity of Indigenous culture.”61 This is a strength of the works examined here, and one which supports my own aims of expanding our knowledge, and encouraging representative interpretation of the cross-cultural histories of local communities.

Films

In this section, I examine a number of films that incorporate references to camps, particularly Noongar camps. Some are set in Perth, others in the southwest of Western Australia and one in Central Australia. Their subject material ranges from the earliest years of the colony to the present day. Almost all are documentaries, and only one, Barragup Yarns, focuses solely on the camps.

Like the fiction described above, these films are an invaluable source of both information, and Noongar and other Aboriginal perspectives on the camps. This is important because a study of audience responses found that Indigenous radio and television in Australia help break down stereotypes about Aboriginal people in the wider community, and play an important role in education, especially for young people.62

Perhaps the most relevant film for my project is the documentary Barragup Yarns – Last Days of the Bush Camps.63 This combines oral histories with narration to tell stories of the Nannup family and their life in the camps outside Mandurah during about the 1940s. Barragup is located between Pinjarra and Mandurah, seventy-four kilometres south of Perth. This film provides a Noongar perspective on all of the themes of my project. There are many details about life in the camps, including that the family survived on the good will of landowners.

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Camps ranged from mia mia made from tea tree bushes with paperbark on the floor, to a tin shed. At one camp, there was a deep well and windmill; at another they had to cart water. An interesting historical detail is that it wasn’t until the early 1970s that their older brother got a house in Mandurah, the first house in the family. My research suggests this may have been Frank Nannup, who has now passed on. One of the early shots in the film is of a plaque at Waalitj Park in Mandurah, dedicated to Frank Nannup.⁶⁴

![Waalitj Park](image)

**Figure 2-1** Waalitj (Eagle) Park in Bass Lane, Dudley Park, near Mandurah. Dedicated to Frank Nannup and included in the film Barragup Yarns. Photo: Denise Cook

This is the only film that deals solely with the camps in the twentieth century and it provides both useful information and an invaluable Noongar perspective. The Nannup family have also contributed oral histories to the Mandurah Community Museum (one of which I recorded), and a number of paintings by Gloria Kearing are in the museum collection.

Kwinana Koorliny Together is another documentary which covers most of the themes of my work. It tells the stories of three women: Noongar Elder Theresa Walley, and two migrant women, Irma Belohlawek from Austria and Delia Gordon from the Philippines. They all live in Medina, adjoining the industrial area of Kwinana, 38km south of Perth. As is common when Noongar people tell their stories, the camps are incorporated into Theresa’s narrative. For example, she talks about living in a camp at Chalk Hill in Medina while her husband worked at the oil refinery in Kwinana. One of the good things, she said, was that there was plenty of work and the boss didn’t ask where they were living. Theresa remembers it “as a peaceful time and the kids had a lot of freedom”, but in that era of child removals, “we were always on the lookout for authorities.” In the 1960s they were among the first Aboriginal families to move into a house, and she says that the Council Health Inspector Doug Waddingham helped a lot of Aboriginal families get houses in Medina. Doug adds a nice touch to this story, explaining that in one instance, although he had to serve a health order on a camp for it to be demolished, he managed to arrange a State Housing Commission house for the occupants straight away.

Another useful film for my project is The Coolbaroo Club, about the experiences of Aboriginal people in Perth after World War II. Through the joy of the dances, this film produced in 1996 tells serious stories in a way that is accessible for audiences. It centres on an Aboriginal dance club of the same name that operated in Perth from 1946 to the 1960s. At a time when Aboriginal people could not socialise in the wider community, the Coolbaroo Club offered a place for meeting friends, listening to music, and dancing. The dances were organised by the Coolbaroo League, an Aboriginal-run organisation dedicated to improving conditions for Aboriginal people. The film touches on a number of the themes of my project, showing footage of people in the camps getting ready to go to a dance; police checking identity papers and looking for alcohol; and

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66 Kwinana Koorliny Together.

the Prohibited Area which excluded Aboriginal people from central Perth from 1927 until 1954. The story of the Coolbaroo Club and dances has also been told through a 2010 exhibition at the City of Perth, “The Coolbaroo Club and the Coffee Pot, Two Extraordinary Places in 1950s Perth”; 68 and a 2011 Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company play, “Walzing the Wilarra”. 69

A film about more recent times, Freo Yorgas tells the stories of three Aboriginal women who came to live in Fremantle in the 1960s and 1970s.70 One of them, Dolores Fraser from Meekatharra, talks at length about her experiences living in the Seagull Camp at South Beach in the 1980s, as well as sleeping rough in Fremantle in a cave, and in the historic Whaler’s Tunnel at Bathers Beach. The women describe Fremantle at that time as a friendly place where they were accepted; more so than in the country towns where they grew up. All provide a little known view of the history of Fremantle. This film is unusual in that it talks about urban camps as late as the 1980s. It addresses the themes of life in the camps, locations of camps, and relationships between people in the camps and those in the wider community. Dolores Fraser allowed me to tell some of her story in my creative piece.

A number of other films are less relevant but provide useful background information. The 1993 film Blackfellas is based on Archie Weller’s 1981 novel The Day of the Dog.71 It deals with both identity and relationships between Noongar people and those in the wider community. The main character, Doug Dooligan, has a non-Aboriginal mother and Aboriginal father, but his friends are Noongar. After being released from prison, Doug wants to get away from crime but his best friend Floyd thinks that means giving up his Noongar connections. Through Doug’s experiences, this film usefully depicts some of the tensions between Noongar and non-Aboriginal people at this time. It also includes

70 Freo Yorgas (Fremantle, Western Australia: Excalibur/FTI, 2010). Producer Paul Roberts, director Blanche Quartermaine. This film is discussed with permission from Blanche Quartermaine and Dolores Fraser.
71 Blackfellas (Perth: Barron Films, 1993). Producer David Rapsey, director/screenplay James Ricketson; music David Milroy
footage of a recreated camp at Midland (or possibly Lockridge), giving some insight into life in the camps. Apparently, a poster with the date 1991 or 1992 was accidentally included in this scene and some Noongar people were concerned that viewers of the film would think they still lived like this in the 1990s. In itself, that concern speaks of the tensions existing between people in the camps and those in the wider community.

*Always Was, Always Will Be* is a documentary about the 1989 Noongar campaign against the redevelopment of the Swan Brewery site on the edge of the Swan River in Perth. Noongar people, supported by both Aboriginal people from other parts of the state and non-Aboriginal allies, campaigned against the redevelopment of the site because it is associated with the Waugal, the Noongar creation being. They argued that the former brewery buildings should be demolished and the site become a park. From the beginning of January 1989, protesters camped at the site for many months. Through interviews with supporters, particularly protest leader Robert Bropho, and footage of meetings and camp life, this film highlights the themes of displacement, ongoing connection to country, relationships, and camp life. It also shows the protestors’ camp on Mounts Bay Road. An accompanying book of the same name contains extracts from documents and statements recorded about the site.

A 1988 film about Noongars in sport, *Black Magic*, has a few references to Noongar camps. It describes conditions on country reserves as tough, and shows recent footage of former reserves, such as Tambellup, Gnowangerup, and Doodlakine. Eric Hayward, a Noongar Elder, was interviewed, and said that when his uncles came to the city to play for South Fremantle Football Club in 1936, they camped at Bibra Lake for a couple of weeks before they could get a house. There is also an interview with Andy and Rose Nebro, who lived at the Smelters camp and whose story is told in my creative work.

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72 Kathryn Trees, verbal communication, 2011.
73 *Always Was, Always Will Be*. VHS. Produced by Robert Bropho and Martha Ansara for the Fringe Dwellers of the Swan Valley. (Melbourne: Australian Film Institute, c.1989).
The last Noongar film I will discuss, *Noongar of the Beeliar* (Noongar river people), deals mostly with the early years of the Swan River Colony and Noongar traditional practices as passed down through families. In it, Sealin Garlett, Richard Walley, Dorothy Winmar, Tom Bennell, and Brian Blurton speak about their connection to this place in a celebration of Noongar people’s history. The film does mention some campsites, for example Gooninup (the spring below Kings Park), and there are many drawings and photographs of traditional life, including camps. Its usefulness for my project is as a Noongar perspective on the early history of the colony.

I have included one film from outside Noongar country because it offers a perspective on both continuity and change in the camps in Alice Springs. *Wirriya: Small Boy* is Indigenous film maker Beck Cole’s documentary about seven year old Ricco Japaljarri Martin from Hidden Valley (Ewyenper-Atwatye) town camp in Alice Springs, in central Australia. Ricco himself tells most of the story, alternating with his foster mother, Maudie, who he calls Nana. This is most useful for its depiction of life in a present-day town camp though Nana Maudie has a well-built house rather than a camp. There may be similarities between this community and the Swan Valley Nyungah Community, Cullacabardee, or Allawah Grove, all of which are Perth Aboriginal communities that have or had houses.

Most of the people Ricco interacted with in the film were Aboriginal, though from different language groups. Maudie commented “we just all mixed up tribe living here. We just live together friendly way.” This is most likely a result of the displacement caused by colonisation, and is similar to the camps in Perth, where people from different parts of Noongar country as well as other places in Western Australia ended up intermarrying or living near to each other. In the film, there was also a small amount of interaction between Aboriginal and non-

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78 See for example, Joe Walley, oral history recorded for Mandurah Community Museum by Denise Cook, 16 July 2003, 2010.332, 30.
Aboriginal people, for example Ricco had a fair-skinned, probably non-Aboriginal teacher. A difference between Ricco’s experience and that of children in the Perth camps was that Ricco and the other children are bussed each day to what looked like a culturally appropriate school rather than having to walk to schools that many children in Perth found racist.\(^7\)

Maudie comments that family breakdowns were a big problem; she herself was looking after two granddaughters and two foster children. In Perth back in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, family separations were more often caused by government assimilation policy. This led to children being removed from their families, at times simply because they lived in a camp. Once removed, they were placed in missions or non-Aboriginal foster homes, rather than with Aboriginal families. Maudie and Ricco’s situation reflects an important shift in government policy.

As indicated in this section, films by Aboriginal people or made in collaboration with Aboriginal people, provide a nuanced and detailed insight into their lives and connections with the camps. Like fiction, they are among the most effective forms of interpretation currently available.

**Museum Interpretation**

Museums have a generally poor record of interpreting twentieth century Noongar history, although this is changing. As Dennis Byrne wrote, Aboriginal people have “had to contend with local history books and museum displays that frequently have not even conceded their continued presence in the landscape, let alone any attachments they might have to places in it.”\(^8\) The situation improved after the 1993 launch of *Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*.\(^9\) The key principle of that document was “the rights of Indigenous

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79 See for example, Bropho, *fringedweller*, 8-9.
Australians to self determination in relation to their cultural heritage. A review in 2000 found that it had made a difference in the culture of major Australian museums and galleries. I remember following it carefully in 1999 when I established the project that led to the exhibition “Koorlongka: Stories of Indigenous Childhood” at the Museum of Childhood. Following extensive consultation and feedback, an updated and expanded document, Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities: Principles and Guidelines for Australian Museums Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage was launched in 2005. However, change has been a gradual process and the most inclusive and representative museum interpretation is generally the most recent.

In this section, I discuss two museums in the Perth metropolitan area and two outside Perth but within Noongar country. I have chosen these because they have some of the better interpretation of twentieth century Noongar history, although they have variable coverage of the Noongar camps. The museums are the Western Australian Museum with its professional staff of historians, anthropologists and archaeologists; and Freshwater Bay Museum, a relatively well-resourced and long-established local government museum where I worked for many years. It is located in Claremont, a western suburb of Perth. I also look at museum interpretation in two towns a short distance from Perth: the Residency Museum in York, and the Mandurah Community Museum.

At the Western Australian Museum in Perth, the Katta Djinoong gallery (meaning “see and understand us” in Noongar language) is divided into sections for southwest (Noongar), desert, northwest, and Kimberley Aboriginal people, as well as general topics such as Stolen Generations. Through a combination of objects, photographs, artwork, and stories, the exhibitions deal with a number of the themes of my research. However, they do so in a general way, rather than specifically discussing twentieth century camps.

82 Museums Australia, Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities: Principles and Guidelines for Australian Museums Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage (Canberra: Museums Australia, 2005), 6.
83 Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities, 6.
84 Koorlongka means children. Whitehurst, Noongar Dictionary, 14. The Museum of Childhood was part of Edith Cowan University and located at the their Claremont campus.
85 Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities, 6-7.
The museum staff have followed cultural protocols with an entrance sign stating that:

Some of the images in this gallery are of deceased people. We have made every effort to ensure that communities and families agree to the use of these images. Where families and communities have agreed, the names of people are mentioned.\(^{86}\)

I have likewise only mentioned the names of people in my creative work if I received permission from the family. In addition, once inside the gallery, the first panel lists the names of the people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who shared their knowledge and contributed in other ways to the exhibition.

![Figure 2-2 Introduction and Acknowledgements panel in the Katta Djinoong gallery at the Western Australian Museum, 2015. Photo: Denise Cook](image)

The theme of Displacement is first addressed just inside the gallery on a display panel, “The Place that Will be Ours”. The title is a quote from colonist Gerard Lefroy, written after a Noongar guide showed him good farming country in 1846. This theme is repeated in other sections of the gallery. For example, “Outcasts in Our Own Country: the Twentieth Century” is a discussion of the movement of

\(^{86}\) Katta Djinoong gallery, Western Australian Museum.
people from the bush to town camps from the 1900s. In this section, seeing the Department of Native Affairs stamp used on official documents was powerful for me, having read so many of them! There is also a photograph of a camp in the southwest in the 1930s, displayed by courtesy of Nicholas Hasluck. His father, Sir Paul Hasluck, may have taken it when he wrote the series of newspaper articles about people living in camps, which I discuss in the literature review.

The main display about Noongar camps in this gallery is from the time of first contact, although it is titled “Kalleep Gurr: Home Run”, which is a quote from Ken Colbung, a Noongar Elder who passed on in 2012. In this exhibition, artefacts such as weapons, grindstones, and a booka (kangaroo skin cloak) are grouped around a traditional “balga maya” (camp of balga or grass tree), made for the museum in 1999 by Noongar Elder, Noel Nannup. While it is important for the Western Australian Museum to display artefacts from a range of epochs in our history, displays such as this can reinforce notions that authentic Noongar life is the traditional style, before colonisation. I would have liked to see more here about changes to Noongar camps and camp life following colonisation. This gallery was first developed many years ago and represents the thinking of that time. In fact, the Perth site of the Western Australian Museum, including this gallery, closed in June 2016 for redevelopment. The museum is due to re-open with new exhibitions in 2020.
One of the strengths of museum interpretation, particularly in such a long-established museum, is the collection of artefacts that date back to key events in our history. For example, a pistol reputedly used by Colonial Secretary, Peter Broun, against Noongar people in 1830, speaks powerfully of early conflict in the Perth area. Also evocative is the “Brown Bess” musket issued to mounted police in the early years of the colony and displayed next to the pistol. A number of police used these muskets in the well-known massacre of Noongar people at Pinjarra, just south of Perth, in 1834. A musket ball that was found much later in the skeleton of a young adult Noongar at the site of the massacre reinforces this. Juxtaposed with these are Noongar weapons such as a spear and spear thrower but without associated stories, they are less evocative.
A less violent aspect of early relationships is depicted in the panel titled “Intertwined Lives: Noongars and Settlers,” which discusses contact between generations of Noongar people and members of the middle-class Bussell family in the southwest. Displays on more recent topics relating to the theme Relationships include the protest over the redevelopment of the Swan Brewery in Perth in 1988, and artworks by Valerie Takao Binder referring to her early
childhood in the Swan Valley when her family had to be out of town before the 6pm curfew.\textsuperscript{87}

While there is little information about the ways the camps are remembered, a section titled “Maintaining and Celebrating Identity,” highlights using Noongar culture in modern ways. These include a dress by Noongar designer Ron Gidgup, a member of the Whadjuk Working Party guiding my work.

At the Freshwater Bay Museum, known until 2013 as Claremont Museum, staff have actively collected and interpreted information about Noongar people in the district since the museum opened in 1975.\textsuperscript{88} The higher-than-usual level of collecting and interpretation of Noongar histories may be partly due to the profile of the Swanbourne camps at Lake Claremont, which were not demolished until 1951, well within living memory. In addition, much of the museum’s early archival research was directed towards academic historian Geoffrey Bolton’s history of Claremont\textsuperscript{89} so his social history interests may have influenced research topics. The museum’s managers, almost all of whom spent long periods in the position, have also taken a personal interest in this topic.\textsuperscript{90}

The earliest interpretation of Noongar people at the museum was probably a diorama depicting a nineteenth-century farm at Lake Claremont, with Noongar people standing at the edge of the bush looking on. This representation of Aboriginal people looking from the margins at Europeans and their development corresponds with Penny Edmond’s findings from Melbourne and Canada discussed in the Literature Review.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{87} Valerie Takao Binder, “Sandy Country/Yile Boodjar”, Katta Djinoong Gallery, Western Australian Museum.
\textsuperscript{88} Previously known as Claremont Museum, it was renamed Freshwater Bay Museum in April 2013. Janette Offerman, Museum Coordinator, Freshwater Bay Museum, email communication, 19 October 2015.
\textsuperscript{89} Sally Anne Hasluck, former curator, Claremont Museum, conversation, nd.
\textsuperscript{90} I have worked with all of the museum managers, and filled the role myself for several years.
\textsuperscript{91} Edmonds, \textit{Urbanizing Frontiers}, 47-49.
In 1995, the museum produced *Dan Joo: Together*, a secondary school package that, amongst other topics, addresses the early Noongar/non-Aboriginal history of the Claremont area in a thought-provoking and respectful way.92 For possibly the first time for the museum, this involved some consultation with Noongar Elders. *Dan Joo: Together* contains copies of a range of 1830s documents, many of which mention Noongar people in the Claremont area by name. There are a number of exercises for students, including a role play where groups of students represent the interests of either Noongar people with connections to the Claremont area; the Butler family and their servants at Freshwater Bay (now the adjoining suburb of Peppermint Grove); or a government group including soldiers and the Superintendent of Native Tribes.93 The topic for discussion is the tension over access to the traditional campsite

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now occupied by Butler, and the stock that he kept on it, highlighting my themes of relationships and displacement from land.

Building on this work, in 1997, the museum commissioned Noongar Len Collard, together with Lorne Leonard and Grant Revell, to produce a map showing Noongar names and tracks around Freshwater Bay. It is called *Kau Nyungar Gabbee Gnarning Quobberup: Oh, a place within Aboriginal country where the drinking water is very good.* While it does not refer to camp sites, it does use archival records to link often unknown Noongar names with places now much more familiar for their European names, reminding us that these places all have a Noongar history.

In 2007, I recorded oral histories with three Elders who had grown up in the camps at Lake Claremont: Corrie Bodney, Toopy Bodney, and Robert Bropho. These are available at the museum, and with permission, in 2009 they informed interpretation of the museum site which is now available online. I have reproduced the exhibition panel in the creative work. The oral histories were also used in site interpretation at Lake Claremont, discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The Mandurah Community Museum, located 70km south of Perth, has also developed relationships with Noongar people to produce a range of interpretation of Noongar histories, including exhibitions and a DVD, *Barragup Yarns – Last Days of the Bush Camps*, which is discussed above.

In the museum, a gallery near the entrance to the building includes information about Noongar people in pre-contact times, as well as more recent stories of interaction. George Walley’s story “Little Mogum: Binjareb Noba-Koolang”, is about a day in the life of one of George’s ancestors, a boy called Mogum, in traditional times. In part it reads:

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96 Binjareb Noba-Koolang means a boy child from Binjareb country around Mandurah.
I lay in our shelter we call kaalak, under the cover of several kangaroo skins, joined together to make a large rug. We also slept on a kangaroo fur rug. The damp ground was covered by paperbark. Our summer shelter was built differently to the one we had for the wet weather. This one had mostly branches of tea tree to give us shelter, but also let the breeze come through.97

Another panel has extracts from oral histories telling more recent Mandurah stories, including of George Winjan (Yaburgurt) and his wife Susan, who had a camp on the Sutton’s property at Hall’s Head, close to what is now the centre of Mandurah.98

A more old-fashioned aspect of this gallery is a model of a traditional paperbark mia mia, produced in 2009 by local author Stan Richards. According to the Friends of Mandurah Community Museum Newsletter, Stan had learnt to make the mia mia from local Noongar Elder Frank Nannup.99 A problematic aspect is a wire figure of a man standing on one leg and holding a boomerang. As Lynette Russell and others have argued, this is a romanticised, timeless representation of a traditional Aboriginal man.100

98 Mandurah Community Museum, viewed 6 February 2015.
Mandurah Community Museum also has art in its collection that represents aspects of the history of the camps in the district. For example, Pinjarra artist Gloria Kearing lived in camps between Mandurah and Pinjarra as a child during the 1950s. Her story is included in the documentary discussed above. Her paintings in the museum deal with this time as well as the traditions of her ancestors. The charcoal portrait illustrated is of Noongar Elder Joe Walley who lived in camps around the Mandurah and Pinjarra areas from the 1930s until the 1970s, and whose oral histories are in the museum collection.

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The York Residency Museum east of Perth has one of the best museum interpretations of Noongar camps, covering all the themes of my project. Most useful is a panel display entitled “The Reserve”, which tells Marion Kickett’s story about life with her parents and grandparents on the York Reserve, including the strong connection her family continues to have with that place. Captions for photographs such as of her grandparents’ camp, family members, her grandad with the horse team, and a rabbit trap, add to the story.

102 Charcoal portrait of Noongar Elder Joe Walley, by Ann Winters in the Mandurah Community Museum collection. Joe was born in Pinjarra in 1935 and lived in camps around the area until he was forty-three. Permission: George Walley


The Reserve was my childhood home. My parents and grandparents lived there. Grandad Thomas 'Pop' Kickett was born in about 1898. He and my Gran Josephine Blurton, although described by the authorities as 'half-castes' had grown up clinging to the remnants of a traditional lifestyle; moving around, hunting and resisting white settler control of their country.

The 1905 Aborigines Protection Act barred 'natives' from living in towns, effectively segregating them from white society. The York Reserve was a traditional seasonal camping ground Designated "for Aboriginal Natives" on 25 July 1924. It was the only place left for my grandparents to go.

Other panels also address some of the themes of my work. “Ballardong Noongar Budjar” (Ballardong Noongar Country), illustrates Noongar people’s connection to country; the impact of European farming on traditional life; work often undertaken by Noongar people, such as sheep shearing and clearing land; and the more recent recording of, and access to, traditional knowledge and sites. It includes a photo of a group outside a camp on the Badjaling Reserve and Mission in 1938; with a caption explaining that that this was a place people where camped when they were looking for seasonal work. Nineteenth century relationships between Noongar people and settlers are covered in panels with the titles “Guerilla Warfare” and “Clashes and Changes”. Ongoing traditional knowledge and connection to country are

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important aspects of the panels “Welcome to Ballardong Country” and “Ballardong Noongar Six Seasons Garden Walk”.  

Museums and other collecting institutions preserve objects that speak to the history of relationships between Noongar and non-Aboriginal people in Western Australia. As Penelope Edmonds argues, objects can offer new perspectives on colonial histories that have previously focused on documentary and image sources. For example, the National Library of Australia has a quilt made by Noongar girls in the Upper Swan in the early 1840s. In 2015 this district is in Perth’s eastern suburbs. The girls went to Sunday School with Elizabeth Irwin, niece of Captain Irwin, head of military forces in the colony, and a keen force behind Christianising Noongar people. Elizabeth taught the girls to read, write and sew. According to fashion and textile historian Marion Fletcher, the quilt is beautifully made with neatly cut patches and fine stitches. While she speculates how much help the girls received from Elizabeth Irwin, this careful work accords with reports of sewing done by Noongar girls at Rev. Mr Smithies school in Perth in 1842. A newspaper report of the examination of the Perth children’s work describes the girls’ sewing as “extremely well done”. Thus the quilt represents the European “civilising” approach to relationships with Aboriginal people.

108 Penelope Edmonds, “Imperial Objects, Truths and Fictions: Reading Nineteenth-century Australian Colonial Objects as Historical Sources”, in Rethinking Colonial Histories: New and Alternative Approaches, eds. Penelope Edmonds and Samuel Furphy, 73-87 (Melbourne: History Department, University of Melbourne, 2006), 84.
109 “Patchwork quilt worked by Aboriginal children in Western Australia”, c.1845, National Library of Australia, an7828946.
The museum interpretation discussed above demonstrates that museums can address aspects of all the aims of my project. Research for exhibitions expands recorded knowledge, for example by recording oral histories with or about Noongar people. It can also locate and share photographs, as well as information about artefacts previously kept in storage. Museum collections contain objects that can illuminate aspects of our history, for example the Brown Bess musket possibly used in the Pinjarra massacre, and the quilt from the Upper Swan. As demonstrated by the Katta Djinoong gallery and the more recent work from the other museums, increasingly museums follow Aboriginal
cultural protocols, in particular by obtaining permission to incorporate Noongar stories.

Site Interpretation

Site interpretation commonly takes the form of signs and artwork such as sculpture. It often, though not always, celebrates the traditional past, ignoring the impact of colonisation. In terms of storytelling, site interpretation focuses on both the brave pioneer story and, where Noongar people are mentioned, the tale of paradise lost through its emphasis on traditional practices.\(^{113}\) Site interpretation and trail guides, more than any other interpretation, exemplify the cohesive past described by Staiff and Bushell, smoothing over contradictory meanings and shaping history into a progressive narrative of progress.\(^{114}\)

Signs where the camps were once located was one of the key outcomes the Noongar people I consulted requested from my research.\(^{115}\) Others have also called for signage to interpret former campsites. For example, Noongar Elder George Webb, in his book *Nunyahboogera*, said that he would like to see plaques marking former campsites in the southwest.\(^{116}\) The Swan and Canning Rivers Iconic Trails Project likewise recommended that camping sites and meeting places be highlighted on signs along the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) and Djarlgarro Beelier (Canning River).\(^{117}\) Site interpretation is extensive throughout Perth so here I have discussed only key examples, focusing on the Fremantle area and Perth’s western suburbs.

At Port Coogee marina and housing development south of Fremantle, seven public art pieces appear to refer to the Noongar history of the area pre-colonisation. Each artwork is made from glass, with words around the edge.

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\(^{113}\) See Sandercock, “Out of the Closet,” 13, for discussion of these stories.


\(^{115}\) For discussion see Chapter 3, Protocol 1: Early Engagement.


The largest, “Beeliar Boodjar”, includes the information that “there were sixteen major campsites in the area”. A smaller piece, “Gathering”, states that:

Aboriginal families and Elders gathered around the campfire to share food and pass on cultural knowledge, teach respect, discipline and caring for country. It is a place for laughter, yarning and settling disputes.118

The artists were the Kidogo Artist Team comprising Noongar woman Wendy Hayden, Gija/Yamatji woman Deborah Bonar and non-Aboriginal woman Joanna Robertson. They worked with the City of Cockburn Aboriginal Reference Group in the early stages of the project.119

While these artworks draw attention to the many ways Noongar people used this place in pre-contact times, they do not explore more recent histories of the...
area. Port Coogee is just south of the Smelter’s Camps, and Noongar people probably also camped in the Port Coogee area. For example, one of Ollie Worrall’s granddaughters used to go with her to visit a relative who lived in a camp near the slaughter yard at Coogee Beach.121

In the Fremantle area, the only interpretation I have seen of twentieth-century camps is a plaque marking Peter Jackson’s campsite east of Fremantle Cemetery.122 The plaque is in bush on the edge of Stock Road near the corner of Absolon Street in Palmyra. This is one of the few places that interpretation mentions the camps, perhaps because the plaque was instigated by a local Noongar Elder who passed on recently.

Figure 2-11 Peter Jackson’s camp plaque, Stock Road, Palmyra. Photo: Denise Cook. Permission: Darryl Jackson

At Lake Claremont, the site of an important traditional camp that existed until 1951, there are several pieces of interpretation. Not surprisingly, they improve over time. In 1979, for the “150th Anniversary of the foundation of Western Australia”, a plaque was placed on a large stone at the Stirling Road entrance to

121 Delores Flowers, telephone conversation, 15 August 2011. Permission: Marlene Warrell
122 Permission to tell Peter Jackson’s story from Darryl Jackson.
Lake Claremont. The plaque commemorated John Butler’s arrival in the colony in 1830 and farming activity in the vicinity, as well as land being allocated to military pensioners in 1850. There was no mention of Noongar people.

Figure 2-12 Plaque at Lake Claremont for 150th anniversary of foundation of Western Australia. It celebrates early colonist, John Butler, and military pensioners granted land here. There is no mention of Noongar people. Photo: Denise Cook

More recent, though undated, interpretation in the same location does mention Noongar people, although only briefly compared to the information about European occupation, birds, and water levels in the lake. The text about Noongar people starts in the distant past. “This wetland area, with its abundant plant and animal life, was formerly an important part of the hunting and food-gathering territory of the Mooroo people.”123 Unusually, it does mention the recent occupation of the area though it jumps over the shared history to the closure of the camps. Its use the word “lingered” also seems to hark back to Social Darwinist thinking. The sign states that “Aboriginal families lingered here

123 “Historical Uses: Early Aboriginal to the Present”, interpretation sign at Lake Claremont near the end of Stirling Road, Claremont. Viewed 20 March 2015.
until the 1940s, when rising waters and the needs of a ‘beautification’ programme led to their eviction.”

It is possible that the beautification programme for the lake did precipitate the removal of the camps as the houses of non-Aboriginal residents around the lake were resumed and demolished at this time as well. However, the newspaper coverage of the demolition does not mention this, stating that camps were to be removed because of the expansion of non-Aboriginal settlement in the area, and associated issues of sanitation and disturbances to neighbours. Likewise, there is no record on the Department of Native Affairs file to indicate that there was a problem with rising water levels.

In 2008, I was involved in developing interpretation for the Town of Claremont’s residential development at the former Lakeway Drive-in site with fellow historian, Dr Kate Gregory. Although we prioritised the camp stories over other interpretation for the project, unfortunately, the sculptural piece that was designed to tell the stories of the camps was located in an out-of-the-way place, and with the growth of vegetation is now hidden from view. Thus the historians’ decision about interpretation messages was negated by others on the project who decided on the placement of that interpretation. Chris Ryan made a similar observation in his work on interpretation of battle sites.

Not only do the managers of sites impact upon interpretation of place by what they choose to say, and not to say, they also impact upon that experience of place by the construction and non-construction of paths, viewing sites and the other means of destination management.

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124 “Historical Uses”, interpretation sign.
125 Mr TG Heydon, who moved the motion, reported in “Swanbourne Natives”, The West Australian, 4 April 1951 in Department of Native Affairs, file 283/1931, “Native Affairs – Swanbourne and Claremont Camp”, SROWA, Cons 993.
126 Department of Native Affairs, 283/1931, “Native Affairs – Swanbourne and Claremont Camp”.
Figure 2-13 Sculptural interpretation of the camps with photos and engraved words, Lake Claremont. Photo: Denise Cook

Figure 2-14 Detail of sculptural interpretation of the camps, Lake Claremont. Photo: Denise Cook
Figure 2-15 Lake Claremont camps interpretation hidden from view in March 2015. Although located just below the lookout, it is away from the walk path, and hidden behind the large bush at the centre of the photo. Even the rough and overgrown path on the left goes down a steep slope then ends before it gets close. Photo: Denise Cook

Nonetheless, a number of the other visible pieces of interpretation refer to the lives of Aboriginal people who lived in the camps. A work called Fences comprises a stylised post and rail fence, holding plaques with photographs and information about people, both Noongar and non-Aboriginal, who lived in this place. In a discussion with Lynette Coomer, Beryl Hoffman, and Peter Randolph in 2013, we agreed that the text is clear and easy to read, and historical photos add to the stories, but the use of white posts rather than grey gives the piece a look of a graveyard not a fence.¹²⁸ This again was a decision of the designers rather than the historians. Lynette suggested that to take away from it “looking like a vigil place for crosses” the fence should be painted grey and the interpretation incorporate turtles, since the place was known for turtle hunting, and local birds.¹²⁹ Turtles are part of the interpretation at Mabel Talbot Reserve

¹²⁸ Lynette Coomer, Beryl Hoffman and Peter Randolph, oral history, 7 April 2013, 69-71.
in Jolimont though without a clear link to the Noongar camps there. When we were developing the interpretation for Lakeway in 2008, there was tension between the historians, who wanted to tell stories of people in this place, and the designers, who wanted to focus on the animals without linking them to people stories. At the time, I thought that focusing on the animals was a way of evading confronting histories. However, Lynette’s comment suggests that it may be important to incorporate both.

Another aspect of this interpretation explores stories of Noongar people at school and work. Stylised clothes props and buckets hold interpretation panels with photos and information, largely drawn from oral histories. For example: “And mother, she was uneducated. She used to come all around the Claremont, Swanbourne and Cottesloe areas washing and ironing for different European ladies to get a few shillings.’ Koori Bodney”. Another is: “I used to give kids at school damper, they liked this damper. They used to nearly fight over the damper and butter.’ Toopey Bodney, Swanbourne Primary School,
1940s”. This interpretation provides an opportunity to hear personal stories from people who lived in the camps. Together these stories build a picture that may assist visitors in feeling a connection to the people who lived in the camps.\textsuperscript{130} Even with this piece, the design of the clothes props is incorrect and the designers and project managers overrode the historians’ request that this be changed.

![Figure 2-17 Clothes props and buckets interpretation at Lakeway, Lake Claremont, 2015. Photo: Denise Cook](image)

At Mabel Talbot Reserve in Jolimont, there is disappointingly little reference to the camps despite this being a registered Aboriginal site significant for its use as a camp.\textsuperscript{131} A 1966 plaque explains that the reserve is named after Mabel Talbot, foundation president of the Subiaco Branch of the Tree Society, noting that “the beautification was inspired by her”.\textsuperscript{132} Presumably, this refers to the transformation from bush to the current grassed park with a large proportion of exotic trees.

\textsuperscript{130} The design of the clothes props is incorrect and again the designers and project managers overrode the historians’ request that this be changed.

\textsuperscript{131} Site 3736, Jolimont Swamp, Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

\textsuperscript{132} “This park commemorates Mabel Talbot …” plaque, Mabel Talbot Reserve, City of Subiaco, 1966.
After searching through the park, I eventually found one concrete seat plinth with the words “Granny Clara Layland 1930s” and images of gilgies (fresh water marron) and turtles.

![Figure 2-18 Granny Clara Layland seat plinth at Mabel Talbot Reserve, 2015. Photo: Denise Cook](image)

Without any further information, this does not explain that she was a Noongar woman who lived in a camp at this place and that the swamp was a place where gilgies and turtle could be obtained. By contrast, a plaque on the seat that sits on this plinth has a brief but much clearer explanation.

1908 Aubrey Bott (Tasmanian) 2000
May his spirit roam this park
like he did for fifty years

The concrete plinth underneath the barbecue in the park has a commemoration of Joseph Perry in similar style to the Clara Layland plinth. However, by incorporating the words “Joseph Perry Dairy Farm 1869” with images of cows it indicates his connection to the site.

133 “Aubrey Bott” plaque, Mabel Talbot Reserve, City of Subiaco, viewed 20 March 2015.
The only other interpretation of Noongar presence at Mabel Talbot Reserve is signage placed at intervals in the footpath for each of the Noongar seasons. For example, one of these reads “djeran, April-May: cooler weather; seeds and bulbs are collected”. While this raises awareness of Noongar practices in pre-contact times or the early years of the colony, it doesn’t link it to ongoing practices or to this particular site.

![Mabel Talbot Park footpath sign](image)

Figure 2-19 Mabel Talbot Park footpath sign with the words: “makuru, June and July: cold and wet; yagine (long-necked tortoise) reappears from the mud”. Photo: Denise Cook

As mentioned above, at Mabel Talbot Park there is a sign about turtles living in the lake and laying eggs in surrounding areas. However, it has not been linked to the Noongar practice of hunting turtles and collecting turtle eggs, although the nearby “makuru” band in the footpath may go some way towards doing that for early contact times. It is possible that these signs have also been named long-necked tortoise when they should be long-necked turtle.

![Tortoise interpretation at Mabel Talbot Park](image)

Figure 2-20 Tortoise (turtle) interpretation at Mabel Talbot Park, 2015. Photo: Denise Cook

134 “Djeran” plaque, Mabel Talbot Reserve, City of Subiaco, viewed 20 March 2015
Given that much of this interpretation was installed as recently as 2011, it is disappointing that it does not make the historical Noongar connections to this place more explicit.\textsuperscript{136}

Nearby, in Daglish, Cliff Sadlier V.C. Memorial Park is also a recent campsite. To interpret the Noongar history of the site there is a plaque and a bench designed by Kimberley Aboriginal artist Francine Riches.\textsuperscript{137}

The plaque has the following words, including an acknowledgement that the words in italics are from Corrie Bodney, reproduced with his permission.\textsuperscript{138}

\begin{quote}
In the spirit of reconciliation the City of Subiaco acknowledges this place as being a traditional waterhole which was once used by the Aboriginal people of the area and formed part of a water catchment trail which was used for millennia.

\textit{All the lakes were their hunting grounds. They had plenty of gilgies, turtle and wildfowl. The women used to bury zamia nuts in the wet ground. We collected quondungs, Johnny coolbung (pigface), bourne (bloodroot), jibartch (wild potato), bardi, a variety of lizards and occasionally a brush wallaby.}

The landscaping and art seating project here has been designed to echo these memories. The layout suggests a detour in the path of life to pause, reflect and consider the journey and our part in the Creator's plan.\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

Again, despite the reference to Corrie, this interpretation reflects back to pre-contact history and ignores more recent events.

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{136} Erica Boyne, Coordinator Heritage Services, City of Subiaco, email communication, 13 October 2015.
\textsuperscript{137} Francine Riches, “Sculpture”. \url{http://users.tpg.com.au/richmob2/ngardarb/ngardarb.htm}
\textsuperscript{138} The words in italics are acknowledged on the plaque as being taken from Macintyre, Dobson and Associates, “Report on an Ethnographic, Ethnohistorical, Archaeological and Indigenous Environmental Survey of the Underwood Avenue Bushland Project Area”, 10.
\textsuperscript{139} Cliff Sadlier Park plaque, City of Subiaco.
\end{footnotes}
Lake Jualbup is another registered Aboriginal site in the City of Subiaco. This site is known to have been a camp in the 1850s and 1860s and is registered for skeletal material found there in the 1920s. Europeans named the site Dyson’s Swamp, then Shenton Park Lake, and in 1996 it was changed to Lake Jualbup, a name recorded from Noongar people by Daisy Bates.

The interpretation at this site is an artwork by Shane Pickett erected in 1996. It depicts *maarle*, the black swan, *gorya*, the frog, and *yaarkiny*, the turtle. One side of the sign has information about each of these written over the painting, as follows:

**Maarle**

The black swan is regarded as boordia of fresh water fowls.

It is the guardian over many water holes and rivers.

Part of the Swan River is the dreaming place of Maarle.

Herdsman Lake is the place for nesting

Mongers Lake is the place for courtship.

**Gorya**

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140 Site 3794, Lake Jualbup (Shenton Park Lake), Department of Aboriginal Affairs
The frog is a sign of life water
Water holes that frogs inhabit are consumable
Many camping ground can be found near such water holes

**Boorda**¹⁴⁵ **Yaarkiny**

This animal is consumed for the medicine that it contains.
The medicine is used as a preventative rather than a cure.¹⁴⁶

While the sign doesn’t indicate which time it represents, the information about the animals suggests traditional, pre-contact times, ignoring the more recent history. However, within that framework, it does give considerable information about Noongar connections to the animals found at the Lake.

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¹⁴⁶ Lake Jualbup sign, Lake Jualbup, City of Subiaco, viewed 20 March 2015.
¹⁴⁷ Government of Western Australia, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Site ID 3757.

To conclude this section, I discuss two examples of site interpretation in other parts of the Perth metropolitan area. These are Success Hill near Bassendean, and Maamba or Welshpool Reserve, which is now Hartfield Park in Forrestfield.

Success Hill in the suburb of Bassendean, east of Perth is a significant Noongar site registered under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act, 1972*.¹⁴⁷ It is listed as being a
ceremonial place, mythological place, camp, meeting place, water source, birth place, quarry, having artefacts/scatter, having a handmade structure, repository/cache and fish trap. Success Hill also has extensive site interpretation, installed in 2001, the centenary of the Town of Bassendean. This is unusually early for such representative interpretation. Bevan Carter was mayor at the time and involved in the fight to stop a women’s prison being built on land at Success Hill. As Bevan said, “we won because of its Aboriginal significance and … it felt only right we should acknowledge the area’s Aboriginal significance with something”. Bevan produced the eight interpretation panels with input from many families who had connections to the Eden Hill area. Incorporating information gathered during the campaign, they cover the following topics: “Early Conflict”; “Gathering Place”; “Federation”; “Bush on the Hill”; “Custom and Land”; “Nyoongar Seasons”; “Waugal Dreaming”; and “Desecration”. The panels address the importance of Success Hill as a camping, meeting, and sacred place. The focus is on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, the panel “Early Conflict” reproduces expiree James Walsh’s sketch of a nineteenth century Noongar camp. The panel “Desecration” deals with the inability of Noongar people to stop the extensive removal of sand from the reserve in the early 1960s before the Aboriginal Heritage Act, 1972. This panel also includes a photograph of a house known as the Chinamen’s cottage, which many Noongar families, including Melba Bodney’s parents, occupied during the twentieth century.

148 Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Site 3757, “Success Hill.” Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System.
149 Bevan Carter, email communication, 20 December 2015.
This describes the removal of sand in the early 1960s. In the lower right hand corner is a photo of the Chinamen’s Cottage, occupied by many Noongar families. Photo: Denise Cook

The other detailed Noongar site interpretation in Perth, also installed some years ago, though it is not dated, is at Hartfield Park in Forrestfield. It is on Morrison Road, just inside the entrance to the park, and was produced by Maamba Heritage Project, assisted by the Department of Environment and Heritage. The sign has three parts: the first is titled “In Recognition of Old Maamba Reserve”; the second covers the Forrestfield Scarred Tree located on the reserve, as well as a recent map of the area; and the third is titled “Nidja Noongar Boodjar – This is Noongar Land”.¹⁵¹

Although simple in design, the sign contains considerable information. The first panel explains that Maamba was set up as an agricultural settlement for Aboriginal people in 1899, based on the model at New Norcia and in the eastern states. By 1903, huts had been built and sixteen people were living there. In addition, Noongar people who moved around the other camps in Perth spent time visiting relatives at Maamba. In 1903, the reserve became a ration depot and camp for elderly Noongar people from throughout the southwest. By 1905 when anthropologist Daisy Bates set up camp at Maamba, few people were living there and it closed a few years later. This panel has a photo of Bates with one of her key informants, Joobaitch, who lived at the reserve.

The second panel has a photo of the Forrestfield scarred or shield tree, which is on the reserve, with information that it is a registered site under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act*, 1972. Scarred trees have one or more sections of bark removed...
for making containers, shields, and shelter.\textsuperscript{152} On this sign there is a current map of Hartfield Park, though it does not show the location of the scarred tree. It is common to protect registered Aboriginal sites by not disclosing their exact position. Additionally, this sign includes the information that Maamba would have been “a traditional meeting and camping place for Aboriginal families living a semi nomadic existence”. The third sign has information about Noongar country and culture, as well as this site’s links to Munday, and his descendant, Joobaitch, both customary owners for this area.

I visited Hartfield Park with Lynette and Georgina Coomer, two Noongar women who had not heard of Maamba, but who on reflection realised that their grandmother, Melba Armitage, had probably lived there. Later we found out she was actually born there in 1903.\textsuperscript{153} It was a moving experience walking in the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure25.jpg}
\caption{Georgina Coomer in bush on the former Maamba Reserve, now Hartfield Park, March 2015. Photo: Denise Cook. Permission: Georgina Coomer}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{152} Andrew Long, \textit{Aboriginal Scarred Trees in New South Wales: A Field Manual} (Hursville, NSW: Department of Environment and Conservation – NSW, 2005), 6. \url{http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/cultureheritage/ScarredTreeManual.pdf}. Note: this manual also discusses the use of bark for making canoes but this practice was not carried out by Noongar people.

\textsuperscript{153} Corrie Bodney, oral history, 18 January 2007, 2.
bush and imagining how it might have been over a hundred years ago when Noongar people camped there.

We also decided to look for the scarred tree. A few phone calls and a search on the Internet using my mobile phone yielded only sketchy information about where it was in this large reserve, so we started walking and looking. Eventually a golf course employee (part of this reserve is now Hartfield Country Club) gave us a lift to the section of the golf course closest to the tree. Then we walked through the bush to find the tree protected by a fence, and with not one, but a number of scars where bark had been cut from its trunk. This was also a powerful experience, as the scars on the tree provided a tangible link with the Noongar people who had camped there in the past. There was much
conversation between us about the importance of this tree and its markings for Noongar people.

The combination of information on the interpretation sign, the bush (ignoring the oval and other developments on the site), and the scarred tree, together with for me, historical knowledge about Maamba, and for the others, an awareness of family connections, meant that we went there looking to see interpretation and had an experience that will not be forgotten easily.

As demonstrated above, site interpretation generally either ignores Noongar histories, such as the early interpretation at Lake Claremont and Mabel Talbot Park, or focuses on the traditional past, such as the recent interpretation at Port Coogee and Cliff Sadlier V.C. Memorial Park. The best site interpretation engages with both our traditional and more recent history, for example interpretation highlighting the complexities of connection and use of the Success Hill and Maamba Reserves.

**Trail Guides**

Like site interpretation, most of the brochures for trails around bush and wetland areas in Perth focus on European history and pre-contact Noongar connections to places and there is little information about the shared histories of our suburbs.

The best of the trail guides is the Yargine (Turtle) Track self-guided walk trail around Swanbourne, including Lake Claremont. It was produced by artist Mary Yates in conjunction with Claremont Museum staff, and drew on the museum’s considerable resources about the Noongar history of the area. The trail is mostly about European history but the format has allowed the artist to cover a lot of topics. There has been a bit of artistic licence and some of the details aren’t correct, but overall it is well done and provides detail about the camps and life in the camps that I have not seen anywhere else.

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One side of the A3 sheet has a colourful hand-drawn map packed with sketches and “brief facts and trivia”. The other side contains further information on chosen topics, including “Indigenous History”. Between them, they cover the three main campsites in the area: Granny Briggs; Mr Neil’s (including Sammy Broomhall’s camp); and the camps on Crown land that later became Swanbourne Primary School. There is a rather unrealistic sketch of a camp on the primary school site, but having it there draws attention to the camps, and it includes details I haven’t seen anywhere else, such as old clothing for bedding, dogs, and clothes props and cobweb brooms being made and sold. Kerosene tins were important for carrying and holding water, and were flattened to make the sides or roof of camps; here they are shown incorrectly on a fire. There are also sketches of King Billy and Queen Jinny with the dubious information that they were the unofficial leaders of the camps in the early 1900s. This may have been assumed from the names or an oral history recounting his visits to a nearby artist, but King Billy was an Elder from the Geraldton area who spent some time in Perth and was not likely to have been a leader in the Swanbourne camps. The sketch map identifies Noongar names for Lake Claremont as well as the information that it is of mythological importance and a registered Aboriginal site. A humorous element is a sketch of a dog sitting on a shelf in front of bike handlebars with the information that its name was Bonox and in the 1930s it travelled from Albany to the camps at Lake Claremont on the handlebars of a push bike. This is taken directly from an oral history, highlighting their importance in recording details of history that would otherwise be lost.

The background information side of the map has information about Noongar history, including that Lake Claremont was a traditional hunting and campsite where families camped until removed by the government of the day in 1951. This section also has quotes from Corrie and Toopy Bodney, whose stories are in the creative work, about life in the Swanbourne camps.

155 See Glen Doepel, oral history written down for Claremont Museum by Denise Cook, 16 March 1988.
156 Bropho, oral history, 7 March 2007, 21-22.
Unfortunately, the City of Subiaco walking guide to Jolimont and Daglish fails to indicate that visitors pass by two former Noongar campsites. For Cliff Sadlier V.C. Memorial Park, the guide describes the bravery of the man it was named after, and the fact that there is artwork by Kimberley Aboriginal artist Francine Riches, even including a photograph of this artwork. However, it ignores the plaque about the Noongar use of resources in the area, which reproduces information from Elder Corrie Bodney, and it makes no mention of the Noongar camps. Likewise at Mabel Talbot Park, a registered Aboriginal site, the only mention is of Mabel Talbot and her vision for the place. The trail guide was possibly developed before the 2011 interpretation discussed above, but the City of Subiaco should have been well aware that it is a registered Aboriginal site and included that information.

Still within the western suburbs, the brochure for the Camel Lake Heritage Trail in Bold Park incorporates a list of some of the plants within the park that were used by Noongar people. It also has sketches and Noongar names for the grass tree (*balga*), and two goannas, the bobtail (*yoom*) and bungarra (*kardar*). Like much other interpretation, it glosses over our shared contact history, although it does make the following comment about the continued existence of Noongar camps, and includes a photograph of the fig tree planted by Mrs Bodney.

158 Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, “Camel Lake Heritage Trail” (Floreat: Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, n.d.).
159 Corrie Bodney, oral history, 31 January 2007, 38.
After European settlers arrived, Nyoongars continued to camp in the area. A Fig Tree near Rochdale Road marks a campsite occupied until the 1950s.\footnote{160} Kings Park offers the “Boodja Gnarning Walk”, a brochure for a self-guided trail for visitors to learn the ways Noongar people obtained food to live off the land.\footnote{161} It focuses on the traditional uses of plants growing in the area around the Botanic Gardens. It also acknowledges ongoing connection to country by starting with the words “Wanju Nyoongar Boodja” (welcome to Noongar country) and including much of the information in the present rather than the past tense, such as “there are over 12 dialect groups throughout Nyoongar country”. There is some Noongar language, such as the words mia-mia for hut and Moora Katta for the area now known as Kings Park, and the comment that many Perth suburbs have Noongar names. Reflecting our shared history, the brochure draws on the traditional uses of Kings Park for “ceremony, celebration and good hunting”, and applies these to today where “Moro Katta is a place of gatherings, celebration and learning for all Western Australians”.\footnote{162} While this brochure brings aspects of Noongar history to wider attention, it does not mention our shared history and is in contrast to comments in the book Always Was, Always Will Be about restrictions on Noongar people in the Kings Park area.\footnote{163}

The Yaberoo Budjara Heritage Trail from Lake Joondalup to Yanchep in Perth’s northern suburbs barely mentions Noongar people or the camps.\footnote{164} While claiming to highlight “features of natural, Aboriginal and historical significance,” the only mention of Noongar people in the brochure is that Lake Joondalup was a camping and hunting ground.\footnote{165}

Community Museum, has extensive representation of shared Noongar and non-Aboriginal histories. It focuses on early history and does address some of the complexities.

Life was very difficult in the early days of the Mandurah settlement for both the settlers and the Binjareb people. The settlers overtook traditional Binjareb land, disregarded their traditions and customs, and fought over hunting areas, crops, fishing, and livestock. In 1834 the Pinjarra Massacre occurred along the Murray River and many Binjareb people were killed. Yaburgurt, known to the settlers as George Winjan, survived the massacre as a child and became a leader who helped settle many disputes between the settlers and the Binjareb people.

On the main map, the only Noongar site marked is Winjan’s camp, along with a number of early European buildings. On the reverse there is much more Noongar information, such as the location of the mungah (fish traps) on the Serpentine and Harvey Rivers. The reverse also has many stylised traditional camps drawn close to waterways, with Noongar place names written next to them, but there is no legend to confirm what they are or whether they represent actual campsites.

Like the site interpretation discussed above, trail guides vary, though most either ignore Noongar history or focus on pre-contact information. Both Mandurah Community Museum and Freshwater Bay Museum have a history of engagement with Noongar people. As consultation and following protocols are a key element of researching and telling Noongar stories, this is reflected in the more representative narratives they have produced.

Noongar Language

In this section I examine the use of Noongar language as a form of interpretation that gives insight into the ways that places and people are remembered and understood. Motivations for using Noongar names may have varied from cultural appropriation that gave a uniquely Australian flavour to a place, to respect for Noongar history and culture. Sam Furphy in “Aboriginal

166 City of Mandurah and Mandurah Community Museum, Here’s Where I Live: Nidja Ngany Boodja, map, n.d.
House Names and Settler Australian Identity” argues that since earliest colonial times, Australians have appropriated Aboriginal words in developing a distinctive national identity.⁶⁶ He quotes as fairly typical Rex Ingamells’ attitude in his 1955 publication, *Australian Aboriginal Words*.

Since most Australian Aboriginal speech has passed for ever, never to be spoken again in proper dialect, [these words] are simply memorials that may be freely used and may fitly lend colour to our transplanted European life in this country.⁶⁹

As Tony Birch argues, using Aboriginal, or in this case, Noongar words, to name a place, “represents Imperial possession and the quaintness of the ‘native’”, rather than recognising Indigenous history and possible ownership.⁷⁰

Between 1954 and 1956, the Western Australian Government Railways’ new X Class diesel locomotives were given Aboriginal names.⁷¹ At a time when diesel-powered engines were starting to replace steam, they represented a “new era for WA railways”, promising faster travel times as well as more economical performance by eliminating the need to cart water and coal for steam locomotives.⁷² The first engine was called Yalagonga, “after a native chief whose tribe once occupied Perth’s site”.⁷³ According to AG Hall, Chief Commissioner of Railways, the names were chosen “to combine the old with new”.⁷⁴ None of the other forty-eight locomotives were given names linked to the Perth area though several others had Noongar names. The rest were given

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Note: technically these were diesel-electric locomotives but I have used the common term diesel.


what appear to be randomly chosen Aboriginal names from different parts of Australia. At this time of technological change, using Aboriginal names seems to have celebrated how far society had come by harking back to the traditional Aboriginal culture it displaced.

Figure 2-28 The first diesel X class locomotive was named “Yalagonga” after an Elder in the Perth region at the time of colonisation. It is shown in this publicity photo with its name “Yalagonga” on the side and “Westland” on the front indicating the Perth to Kalgoorlie route it serviced. Photo: Westrail. Collection: Rail Heritage WA, P0543

Noongar language may be found in the names of many suburbs and wetlands in the Perth metropolitan area, from both the earliest times to more recent years, but few names have direct links to the Noongar camps. Karrinyup is one of many suburbs named after a wetland, Careniup Swamp, which had retained its Noongar name from the early years of colonisation. Other suburb names include Balga, which is the Noongar name for the grass tree, chosen in 1954 for the new State Housing Commission subdivision. The suburb of Mundaring east of Perth is unusual in taking its name from a nearby Aboriginal camp. The area was initially known as Gugeri’s, after the non-Aboriginal settler who established a vineyard there in 1882. In 1893, the new owner, M.H. Jacoby,

175 For example, X1002 was “Bibbulmun” and X1012 was “Ballardong”. http://www.hothamvalleyrailway.com.au/xa_diesel_loco.htm
178 SWALSC, “Perth Suburbs Aboriginal Names.”
renamed the business the Mundaring Vineyard Company. Mundaring was the name of a nearby Noongar camp, and Noongar people told Jacoby it meant “a high place on a high place”. More recently, the suburb of Wandi southeast of Fremantle was named in 1978 after the well-liked and respected Aboriginal stockman who worked for Anchorage Butchers in the 1920s. Wandi has been described as one of the earliest residents of the Smelter’s Camp at South Beach and some of his story is in the creative work.

In recent years, Noongar names for places have often been supplied by Noongar Elders with the aim of recognising Noongar connection to places. Maori educator Linda Tuhiwai Smith identifies this as a way of taking back ownership, as “Indigenous names carried histories of people, places and events”. As Steve Mickler points out in relation to the conflict in the 1980s over the redevelopment of the Swan Brewery site in Perth, had it still been called by its Noongar name, Goonininup, “the [then] current Aboriginal claim on the site would have been significantly strengthened in European eyes”. At Lake Claremont, bushland that was retained in the new Lakeway housing development was named Ballaruk Bushland. This was in honour of the Bodney family’s connection to that place, both through their long history of camping there, and recent involvement in the interpretation of the site. Ballaruk is the Bodney family skin group, skin groups being the basis of determining relationships in traditional times. Other original names for places have been rediscovered through the work of early historians and anthropologists, particularly Daisy Bates.

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179 SWALSC, “Perth Suburbs Aboriginal Names.”
182 Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies, 158.
Noongar names are increasingly being used for roads and river crossings. In 2003, the Roe Highway bridges over the Canning River at Langford were named Djarlgarra, the Noongar name for the Canning River, to recognise the importance of the river and the area surrounding it to Noongar people. The Forrest Highway from Perth to Bunbury has Noongar as well as European names for rivers incorporated into the signs for river crossings. New roads

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185 Department of Indigenous Affairs, *Tarwangin*, 26 September 2003
accessing the highway also have Noongar names, for example Mandjoogoordap Drive links the highway to Mandurah. Manjoogoordup means meeting place of the heart, a name suggested by local Elders Harry Nannup, Clarry Walley, George Walley and Franklin Nannup. While these names reference traditional owners and arguably their ongoing connection to the place, they do not specifically link to the camps. However, they show a respect and engagement with the Noongar history of the area, reflecting the shifting relationships between Noongar people and the wider community today.

**Websites**

In contrast to site and heritage trail interpretation, most websites that interpret Aboriginal histories engage with the complexities of our shared past. Drawing strongly on oral histories, they are rich in information about Noongar and other Aboriginal history and culture. Often this information is not available anywhere else. I would argue that it is precisely because they draw on oral histories with the need to negotiate with the storytellers, that websites represent this history so effectively.

There are several good Noongar websites, and all of them mention the camps, though none in detail. In addition, some websites include Noongar interpretation within a broader focus. There are also a number of good websites that interpret Aboriginal history in other parts of Australia, including the history of camps. The strength of Noongar websites is their strong Noongar voice. For example, the Kaartdijin Noongar website states “this is the opportunity for Noongar people to tell our story our way”. Web technology was used because “we need to work with the technology of today to help the generations of tomorrow to understand our community past and present”.

*Nidja Beeliar Boodjar Noonookurt Nyininy: A Nyungar Interpretive History of the Use of Boodjar (Country) in the Vicinity of Murdoch University* was produced in

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2003 by a team led by Len Collard, with Sandra Harben and Rosemary van den Berg. While it uses a great deal of Noongar language, for my purposes, the strength of this website is in the oral histories, which are mostly in longer sections than on the Kaartdijin Noongar website discussed below. The themes of the website are Nyitting (cosmology), Boodjar (land), Moort (family relations), and Katitjin (people’s knowledge). The website uses these themes to emphasise creation stories although it does have some information about the camps. For example, Fred Collard talks about where people camped between Fremantle and Riverton, and Janet Hayden remembers camping at Maylands and near Bennett Brook. A report accompanies the website and incorporates the oral histories as well as a discussion about the Noongar perspectives of the work.

Kaartdijin Noongar – Noongar Knowledge: Sharing Noongar Culture was set up in 2010 by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. The aim of the Kaartdijin website is to share the richness of our knowledge, culture and history in order to strengthen our community and promote wider understanding.

It has three overarching themes: Culture, Country, and People. Through topics such as Home, Family, and Connection to Country, the website addresses most of the themes of my work, though it doesn’t go into detail about the camps. A strength is the Noongar voices heard in quotes throughout the website, and which may not be available anywhere else.

The third important Noongar website is Nyungar Wardan Katitjin Bidi – Derbal Nara (People’s Ocean Knowledge Trail of Cockburn Sound and Districts). Len Collard, Laura Stocker, and Angela Rooney researched it for the Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute, with input from the Curtin University

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192 http://www.noongarculture.org.au/ The project was assisted by a grant from Lotterywest.
194 There is only a little information about the locations of the camps.
Centre for Aboriginal Studies, the City of Cockburn, and City of Cockburn Aboriginal Reference Group. It was funded by Coastwest.\footnote{http://www.derbalnara.org.au/about-the-project} 

This site has some information about the locations of camps, for example, details from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs site files about the camps at Clontarf Hill and Robb Jetty just south of Fremantle.\footnote{http://www.derbalnara.org.au/indigenous-heritage-sites-1/clontarf-hill} On my themes Life in the Camps, and Relationships, Trevor Walley talks about growing up in the bush listening to stories from his grandparents, whom he describes as slaves, working for the wadjelas. His words paint a vivid picture, which is difficult to match from other sources.

Well, first of all, we grew up in the bush and we got our water from a well and we walked to school and we limped to school and we limped home and we just lived. Nan used to cook in the ashes, hand cook her damper in the ashes. And we had a tremendous life, but when you look at it, we had a poor life. A few of the people where I grew up passed away through colds, pneumonia and likes. So I used to sit round campfires with the grandfathers, and they were slaves to the people that enabled them to live there, because they worked for them. So I saw slavery and I used to sit and listen to the old people talk. And we come from slavery, it was slavery; if you didn't work, the kids were taken away and removed.\footnote{http://www.derbalnara.org.au/yeye-yarns-trevor-long. Reproduced with permission from Trevor Walley.}

Oral histories are called Yeye yarns (today stories). Like the Nidja Beeliar Boodjar Noonookurt Nyininy website, also developed by Len Collard, this website focuses on creation stories, called Nyitting yarn (past stories).\footnote{http://www.derbalnara.org.au/katitjin} 

These websites are most useful in providing a Noongar perspective on our shared history, evident through their choice of stories, the incorporation of Noongar language, and the extensive use of oral histories.

Another website which refers to camps in the Perth area is Nandi Chinna’s “Swamp Walking”, established to display photographs taken while she was

Note: Much of this information is from O’Connor, Bodney and Little, “Preliminary Report on the Survey of Aboriginal Areas of Significance.”\footnote{http://www.derbalnara.org.au/indigenous-heritage-sites-1/robb-jetty-camp}

196 http://www.derbalnara.org.au/about-the-project
walking Perth’s lost and remaining wetlands as part of her PhD project. Chinna includes photographs of interpretation, such as sculptures of an Aboriginal family at Maylands Foreshore Reserve, and the story of Balbuk at Point Fraser, which includes the text “she broke its fence-palings with her wanna and charged up the steps and through the rooms”. There is no discussion of this interpretation on the website so it is most useful as a pointer to what exists.

The Save North Lake website is part of a community campaign against Roe Highway Stage 8 being built through the Beeliar wetlands. It includes information about the Noongar significance of the area, including the sites that were previously Noongar camps. The website also has links to a number of relevant documents. For my project, it is useful for the information about the locations of camps, and about Noongar people’s ongoing connection to that country.

A website for a specific place that mentions Noongar camps is that of the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority. It briefly mentions a Noongar camp that was in the south-east corner of Bold Park, and includes a photograph of the fig tree that remains from the camp. This information is also in that organisation’s guide to the Camel Lake Heritage Trail discussed above. According to Corrie Bodney this fig tree was planted by his mother Melba Bodney. Seeing the tree was an important stop on the day of visiting camps at Claremont, Shenton Park, and Jolimont with the Coomers and others, discussed in the Shenton Park chapter of the creative piece.

Several websites from other states have detailed information about camps in those places. One that is like my own work in focus and approach is “A History

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207 http://www.bgpa.wa.gov.au/bold-park/visit/history
208 Corrie Bodney, oral history, 31 January 2007, 38.
of Aboriginal Sydney”. The website development was directed by Peter Read from the Department of History at the University of Sydney. It concentrates on people and place, “considering the significance of land in Indigenous cultures, [and] an acute sense of lost places and the locality in everyday life”. The website draws on a wide range of primary and secondary sources and has video oral histories, photographs, and an interactive map and timeline. The focus on place and reinscribing the Aboriginal history of places make it the most similar to my work of all the websites I’ve examined. The authors also envisage the website being used to ask many of the same questions as in my work, for example how do the campsites relate spatially to work, food, and invisibility from non-Aboriginal people; why were Aboriginal people there; who were they; where are their descendants now? There are many stories about people living in camps. An example is a video oral history with Laurie Perry, who talked about his grandmother and great-grandmother camping on the hill outside Singleton, in the Redornberry town camp. They and other Aboriginal people (and later some non-Aboriginal people too) were put there by the council but weren’t allowed to build anything on the site, so they lived in overturned tanks.

Another Sydney-based website is “Finding Bennelong”, established in 2013, two hundred years after Eora-man Bennelong’s death in 1813. Bennelong was a well-known figure, one of the first Aboriginal people to live with the British settlers, and to visit England and return to the colony. The strengths of this website are the extensive compilation of primary sources about Bennelong, and the commentary which encourages visitors to read against the grain of these sources, and reconsider long-held negative views of him. In both the sources and the approach used, this is similar to my work. Like this website, my work

207 http://www.historyofaboriginalsydney.edu.au/
208 http://www.historyofaboriginalsydney.edu.au/about
210 http://www.historyofaboriginalsydney.edu.au/about
211 Read and Sukovic, “Pieces of a Thousand Stories,” 46.
212 Read and Sukovic, “Pieces of a Thousand Stories,” 53.
213 http://findingbennelong.com/credits The website was established by the City of Ryde, based on research by Dr. Keith Vincent Smith and extensive community consultation.
214 http://findingbennelong.com/discovery
http://findingbennelong.com/perspectives-bennelong
also offers the opportunity for readers to re-evaluate the often negatively-portrayed history of Noongar people and the Perth camps.216

“Barani: Sydney’s Aboriginal History” deals with the barani (yesterday) of the “people, places and events in the City of Sydney local government area”.217 It states that Aboriginal people have always lived in Sydney and that their culture has survived.218 It has a few references to nineteenth century camps around Sydney. For example, a story about Ricketty Dick (also known as Warrah Warrah, and Bill Worrall), who lived in Sydney in the early to mid-nineteenth century, lists a number of different camps he lived in.219 It also describes the archaeological remains of a campsite at Lilyvale in the Rocks area of Sydney, probably from about 340 years before the arrival of European colonists in 1788.220 This is interesting for its information about camps in another place.

“The Block: Stories from a Meeting Place” is a place-based website developed by SBS Online in collaboration with the Redfern Aboriginal Community in Sydney.221 Production for the website commenced in 2010, just after the last residents of The Block were given notices to leave, ending almost forty years of “struggle, community and self-determination”.222 Dealing with a later time than my project (1973 to 2011), it covers a community based in houses rather than camps. However, like my work, the website offers multiple perspectives on Aboriginal history, its aim being “to capture the heart and spirit of a place that cannot be summed up by one story or one narrative, but many”.223 The personal stories told through video oral histories with former residents are a strength of the website. These are linked to an aerial photo of The Block, which is a good idea though hard to navigate. Another highlight is a timeline of the Block’s history incorporating videos with amongst others, historian Peter Read, and co-

216 http://findingbennelong.com/credits
founder of The Aboriginal Housing Company, Sol Bellear. The multiple voices of this website are thought-provoking and the look of the site is attractive but it is frustratingly difficult to navigate.

“The Aboriginal History of Yarra” is a useful website that details the early history of Melbourne and the Wurundjeri-willam people of the Kulin Nation.224 It was established by the City of Yarra under guidance from the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council.225 This is a contact history established to promote reconciliation.226 It covers the same themes as in my project, for example highlighting the dispossession of traditional owners and their ongoing connection to country.

While the European population was reshaping the landscape and overlaying their ideas of order onto it, the Aboriginal people continued to occupy the land, inscribing their own ideas onto it. It was a simultaneous occupation of the land underpinned by disparate understandings of what it meant to occupy the land.227

Unlike my work, this website uses only early European documents and secondary sources. Although Wurundjeri people guided the work, their voices are not directly represented.228

There is a conflict between the stated purpose of this website and the method it employs, which is a widespread problem evident in much of the interpretation reviewed in this chapter. In this case, the website’s purpose is stated as “Yarra City Council’s desire to know more about the role previous Councils in the area played in the dispossession of the Aboriginal population”.229 The authors conclude that rather than local government, it was the colonial governments, firstly of New South Wales, then Victoria that had responsibility for the laws that affected Aboriginal people.230 However, as my work shows, in Western Australia, while the colonial government undertook the initial dispossession, local governments were powerful in their opposition to Noongar camps in their

localities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In only exploring the early history of Melbourne, and then the Wurundjeri today, this website does not examine any of the history in between, which might have told quite a different story.

As discussed above, websites generally have a strong focus on Noongar or Aboriginal people’s stories and most address all the aims of my work. Some, such as “A History of Aboriginal Sydney,” have been developed by social historians and include detailed information about camps drawn from oral histories. Others, such as the Noongar websites, focus on traditional culture with oral histories providing some information about more recent events and perspectives. I would argue that the consultation involved in recording and using oral histories on these websites has ensured that Noongar and other Aboriginal people’s voices are heard and thus made it more likely that they will represent the complexities of our shared histories.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed interpretation of the camps through a range of formats with mixed results. The most representative is fiction such as novels, short stories, plays, poetry and children’s books; and films, mostly documentaries. Many websites offer interpretation from a Noongar or Aboriginal perspective but vary in the extent to which they include stories from the camps. Museum interpretation also varies. I have examined some of the best examples in Perth and surrounding Noongar country. The use of Noongar language ranges from giving Australian “colour” within a framework of Imperial possession, to more recent use reflecting engagement with Noongar history and culture. Site interpretation and trail guides tend to be the least representative forms of interpretation, often focusing on European and pre-contact history.

The strength of interpretation is in its ability to convey stories, which assist people to learn about each other, and help shape the ways we live together now and in the future.\(^{231}\) Interpretation by Noongar or Aboriginal people, or by non-Aboriginal people following cultural protocols of inclusion and consultation,  

produces the most complex stories of cultural interaction, challenging the dominant narrative of European progress.

More research needs to be undertaken, in culturally appropriate ways, to be able to further interpret the shared histories of our suburbs. However, the will to look at these complex and frequently challenging histories is often lacking. As Elder, Paddy Roe, said in Reading the Country, a multi-layered history of the Roebuck Plains in northwest Western Australia, “You people try and dig little bit more deep you bin digging only white soil try and find the black soil inside.”232 In my work, I aim to contribute to this greater understanding of Perth’s history, both through the example of my methodology and through my research and interpretation.

232 Benterrak, Muecke, and Roe, Reading the Country, back cover.
Chapter 3 Methodology

Issues

Maori educator and theorist Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out that when researching “either across cultures or within a minority culture, it is critical that researchers recognize the power dynamic which is embedded in the relationship with their subjects”.¹ She adds:

> From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term “research” is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, “research,” is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary.²

Tuhiwai Smith draws on the work of Edward Said, who argues that western researchers “collected, classified and then represented”³ knowledge about Indigenous peoples, both to the West, and then through “institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” to the peoples they have colonised.⁴ Supporting this view, Geonpul and Palawa Aboriginal academics Aileen Moreton-Robinson and Maggie Walter write that:

> the research gaze aimed at Indigenous people, culture and lives is usually informed by Western traditions and conceived and interpreted by non-Indigenous researchers. There is a quantifiable absence of Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and understandings within dominant research practice.⁵

As Whadjuk/Ballardong Noongars Len Collard and Sandra Harben write, “the British colonists placed their own *wedjela* interpretations and agendas on *Nyungar boodjar* (country), *moort* (family or relations) and *katitjin* (knowledge)”.⁶

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¹ Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 178.
² Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1.
³ Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1.
⁶ Collard and Harben, “Nartj Katitj Bidi Ngulluckiny Koool?,” 83.
Since the early 1990s, increasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have chosen to work as researchers in the academy. As a result, Indigenous research methodologies, as well as guidelines for ethical research have been developed.\(^7\) Noonuccal woman from Queensland, Karen Martin, summarised Indigenous research principles as follows.

- Recognition of our worldviews, our knowledges and our realities as distinctive and vital to our existence and survival;
- Honouring our social mores as essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Aboriginal people in our own lands and when in the lands of other Aboriginal people;
- Emphasis of social, historical and political contexts which shape our experiences, lives, positions and futures;
- Privileging the voices, experiences and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands.\(^8\)

As a non-Aboriginal, female, Australian historian with English coloniser heritage, it is important that my methodology responds to the issues raised by Noongar and other Indigenous writers. It is not just the information uncovered during this project that is important; the way it is recorded and shared is equally so.

Marcia Langton argues that “Aboriginality” is made and remade through “dialogue, imagination, representation and interpretation”.\(^9\) She identifies three ways in which this happens. The first is when Aboriginal people interact with other Aboriginal people, largely within Aboriginal cultural situations. In this way, Noongar people know of the history of the camps occupied by family and other community members. The second is non-Aboriginal people adhering to stereotypes, having had little contact with Aboriginal people. It is this group that ignores the history of the camps. The third approach is Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people engaging in dialogue, “where the individuals test and adapt imagined models of each other to find satisfactory forms of mutual

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comprehension”.

I have adopted the third approach in my work as I consider it essential to successful cross-cultural work.

In this chapter, I detail my ethical approach to researching and writing the creative work and exegesis for my PhD. I start with an outline of the issues raised by Indigenous theorists, and consider the responses of non-Indigenous researchers. I move on to an examination of my methodology within the framework of protocols for engaging in research within Indigenous communities. This emphasis on following Indigenous cultural protocols separates my work from much of the historical research undertaken by non-university trained historians. In conclusion, I raise other methodological issues, namely the storytelling writing style used in my creative work, my methodology for undertaking a site-based project, problems using photographs and oral histories, issues associated with my work at the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, and family violence.

A number of non-Indigenous researchers have addressed the concerns raised by Indigenous writers. Roslyn Carnes, a non-Aboriginal Perth woman who worked with Aboriginal ex-prisoners in her PhD research, wrote about her approach in “Changing Listening Frequency to Minimise White Noise and Hear Indigenous Voices.” In it, she identifies three key aspects of listening for non-Indigenous researchers working with Indigenous people. These are the “Re-learning of history, Reviewing of the researcher’s beliefs and placing Relating at the centre of the listening approach”. As I demonstrate, my discussions with Noongar people for this project have challenged and developed my skills in each of these areas.

Meredith Gibbs, a non-Indigenous woman who worked with the Ngai Tahu Maori community for her PhD research, utilised Russell Bishop’s whakawhanaungatanga research strategy, based on Maori extended family relationships. Gibbs commented that while culturally appropriate methodology increases the likelihood that research will be meaningful to Indigenous people,

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10 Langton, Well I Heard it on the Radio and I Saw it on the Television …, 81.
in order to share power equally “Indigenous research partners must also participate in initiating the research questions, in setting the research agenda, and continue to participate, reflexively, to the extent they desire”.13 She adds that it is the way researchers conduct themselves, and the relationships that are established and maintained, which are remembered in communities.

In this regard, communication is of the utmost importance. Respectful, open, honest, and timely communication, ideally leading to relationships of trust between researchers and researcher participants, is the foundation of successful cross-cultural collaborative research.14

Indigenous cultural protocols, such as that developed by the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre provide important direction for researchers.15 Protocols include respecting Aboriginal culture and knowledge, sharing power in any research project, and respecting that Aboriginal people retain control over any information provided. Closer to home, in 2010 the Noongar Consultation Protocol Guidelines was developed during the Swan and Canning Rivers Iconic Trails Project. This was a partnership between the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, and Perth Region Natural Resource Management.16 The project was commissioned to enable the Swan River Trust to engage with the Noongar community in caring for the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) and Djarlgarro Beelier (Canning River).17 These protocols provide detailed guidance, although as one Whadjuk Noongar pointed out, they do not clarify the important point that the traditional owners for the Perth area are the Whadjuk people.18

Protocols were of great use to me working cross-culturally in the Noongar community, but following them was not enough on its own. Non-Aboriginal researcher Margaret Raven argues that protocols need to be used as “tools for

18 Brendan Moore, email communication, 31 August 2015.
reflective approaches to research” rather than “a ‘tick-the-box’ approach”.\textsuperscript{19} Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out that responses to protocols are part of a broader set of questions Indigenous people ask of researchers, such as “Is her spirit clear? Does he have a good heart? What other baggage are they carrying? Are they useful to us? Can they fix up our generator? Can they actually do anything?”\textsuperscript{20} In response to these questions, I can only offer my best intentions, though I will add that I did receive positive responses and great support from many people.

**Principles and Protocols for a Cross-Cultural Noongar History**

Working according to a culturally appropriate methodology is a central element of researching histories of the Noongar camps in Perth. In the next section of this chapter, I discuss the methodology for my work, using as a framework the eight principles and eight protocols in the *Noongar Consultation Protocol Guidelines*.\textsuperscript{21} For each, I reflect on aspects that have worked well, and others that have been more challenging. Future researchers will be able to draw on the methodology developed and applied in my project to inform their own culturally appropriate research.

**Principle 1: Free, Prior and Informed Consent**

The first principle is obtaining free, prior and informed consent, keeping in mind that “Noongars have the right to say ‘no’”.\textsuperscript{22} In order to facilitate this, I wrote information leaflets that I gave to Noongar and non-Aboriginal people who might be interested in talking to me for this project. They are very similar: the Noongar leaflet used the word “yarn” rather than “chat,” and identifies me as a non-Aboriginal woman. The leaflets describe my project, what we might talk about, what would happen to any information shared with me, what I could offer in

\textsuperscript{20} Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 10.
\textsuperscript{21} SWALSC, *Noongar Consultation Protocol Guidelines*.
return, the process we would follow, and what to do if participants were
unhappy at any time. Once I had talked to the person about my project and
given them this leaflet, they could take their time to decide whether they would
like to be involved. In fact, most people decided straight away that they would
participate.

Principle 2: Mutual Respect

The second principle is mutual respect, including respect for Noongar
consultation protocols and culture. Respect in all relationships is important to
me and I bring this quality to research relationships as well. I also understand
that as a non-Aboriginal woman, undertaking a project with mostly Noongar
people, it is crucial for me to respect and take guidance from Noongar
participants and stakeholders.

In taking direction from Noongar people, my project was shaped by my
employment between 2008 and 2014 at the South West Aboriginal Land and
Sea Council. SWALSC’s primary role is as the representative body for native
title for Noongar people. However, it also works to promote and strengthen
Noongar culture and identity, the area in which I was employed. I have
discussed at the end of this chapter the benefits and challenges associated with
working for SWALSC while I undertook my PhD.

To guide my work and ensure it was culturally appropriate, I established a
Noongar steering group and regularly reported to and took direction from
SWALSC’s Metro Working Party, later called the Whadjuk Working Party. My
steering group comprised key Noongar staff employed at SWALSC. I worked
particularly closely with the Regional Development Coordinators for the Perth
metropolitan area, initially Daniel Garlett and later Nick Abraham. Over time,
there was some change in the group as staff left or joined the organisation, but
most were involved for the duration of my project. My steering group members
included Kevin Fitzgerald, SWALSC Cultural Counsel; Gail Beck, Manager
Regional Development; Daniel Garlett, Metro Regional Development
Coordinator in the early part of my project; Nick Abraham, Whadjuk Regional
Development Coordinator in the latter part of my project; Margaret Drayton,
Yued Regional Development Coordinator; Sandra Harben, Manager Kaartdijin Noongar website; and Carol Innes, Manager Policy and Projects. One difficulty was that the Noongar staff were very busy, although they kindly made time to talk to me whenever they could. As a result, I often spoke individually to members of the steering group, though I did have some general meetings as well. While none of the members of my steering group had lived in the Perth camps, most had stories about the camps or about family members or others they knew who had lived there.

I found this group invaluable for discussing all aspects of my project. Their thoughts about my questions and topic helped greatly in the development of my ideas. For example, they gave me guidance on the project’s scope and structure, protocols to follow, and questions to ask interviewees. They also shared helpful information about who I might approach to be involved, and which family members to contact to ask permission to use existing material. One issue I discussed was payment of royalties from the book which I plan to publish from the creative component of this PhD. I had planned to give any money to a Noongar organisation as a sign of good faith that I am not working on this project to make money out of Noongar stories. Gail Beck from my steering group suggested that instead, I give any income from the book to the people who shared information with me since funding tends to go to organisations and little goes to individuals. While this is more complicated to organise, I think that it makes a lot of sense.

Steering group members also challenged me. For example, in early discussions with Daniel Garlett, he emphasised his understanding, from talking to the old people, that the government policies of keeping people in one place, and taking the children away, were so that non-Aboriginal people could occupy more and more land. After doing more research, and bearing our conversation in mind, I proposed that one of the themes of my work would be “Tensions over Land”.

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23 Steering group members have given permission for their names and comments to be quoted here.
24 Steering Group meeting, 28 May 2013.
However, Daniel argued that “Displacement” seemed more accurate, so I changed it.\textsuperscript{26}

I also found this group supportive. Feedback in response to the project details I planned to put in my Ethics application was that it was looking great, I was doing everything according to protocol, and I received more suggestions about people to contact and possible outcomes from the project.\textsuperscript{27}

Important cultural guidance for my project came from SWALSC’s Working Party of Traditional Owners from the Perth metropolitan area. The people in this group give direction to the organisation on native title, heritage, and cultural matters in Perth. Each family descended from the traditional owners at or soon after the time of colonisation of Perth can choose two representatives for the Working Party. Many, but not all families have done so; I discuss below the tensions between SWALSC and some families in the metropolitan area.

In August 2010, I gave the first presentation about my proposed project to the Metro Working Party and gave members a flyer, which I had developed with assistance from my steering group. I asked whether it was appropriate for me to undertake this research, and if so, what practical results they would like to see. I received feedback from the Working Party that it was appropriate for me to do this project. They also gave me guidance on their preferred outcomes. I discuss this in detail under the heading Early Engagement.

Working Party members indicated that they were too busy to be on the steering group for my project, but they would like me to give them regular updates. Working Party meetings are only held every few months, and there was not always space on their agenda for my project, but I spoke with them as often as possible. Sometimes, I would chat informally with Working Party members at lunchtime, either in addition to the formal presentation during the meeting, or as

\textsuperscript{26} Daniel Garlett, conversation 19 March 2012.
\textsuperscript{27} Gail Beck, Daniel Garlett, and Kevin Fitzgerald, discussions 17 December 2010, in response to “Denise’s Project Update: 16 December 2010”.
a chance to catch up if I wasn’t able to speak to them in the meeting. In all, I met them ten times during my research.  

Principle 3: Nation Building/Relationship Building

The third principle is relationship building through an equal partnership between Noongar and non-Noongar communities. Developing respectful, cross-cultural relationships through my research is one of the intended outcomes of this project. I agree with Martin Nakata and Marcia Langton, who wrote the following in relation to working relationships between libraries, archives, Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous knowledge.

It is not about simple consultation with Indigenous people, although consultation must be part of the process. It is about dialogue, conversation, education, and working through things together.  

I feel grateful for the many conversations and discussions I have had with people on my steering group, the Working Party, others who have given assistance, and those who shared their stories. In particular, recording oral histories, and contacting individuals and families for permission to include stories and photographs, have provided opportunities for rewarding conversations and time spent together. Researching and writing my PhD has provided an avenue for developing connections with many lovely people, most of whom I would probably not have met otherwise.

In a different way, another important aspect of relationship building was finding allies in the Noongar community, so that if problems developed with the project, I had people who would help me to resolve the issues. I am grateful to Frank Rijavec for raising this point with me based on his experience of working in the Roebourne community. To that end, I was pleased when Gail Beck and Daniel Garlett from my steering group at SWALSC agreed to be listed on my introductory flyer as contacts for anyone who wanted to discuss my research.

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30 Frank Rijavec, conversation 7 July 2010.
with someone in the Noongar community.\textsuperscript{31} However, no one did contact them to check up on me.\textsuperscript{32}

**Principle 4: Acknowledgement of Noongar Country**

Acknowledgement of Noongar country is the next principle. Raising awareness that this is Noongar country is central to my work in writing about the history of the camps. In addition, at the beginning of the creative work I acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people as the traditional owners of the country about which I am writing. I also acknowledge traditional owners when I give presentations about this project.

**Principle 5: Acknowledgement of Noongar Culture**

The next principle is acknowledgement of Noongar culture. From the contact I have had with many people, it is clear to me that Noongar culture is strong today. For me it has been a privilege to learn more about Noongar culture through extensive contact with Noongar people while working on this project. To extend my knowledge I also read books by Noongar authors, attended Noongar plays, listened to Noongar Radio, and studied Noongar language for a number of years. In addition, I worked with people from all over Noongar country at SWALSC for six years until December 2014.

**Principle 6: Acknowledgement of Noongar Knowledge and Expertise**

Throughout this project, I have followed the next principle, which is being respectful of Noongar knowledge and expertise. This has included working with a Noongar steering group and reporting back regularly to the Whadjuk Working Party for guidance. In part, I chose to use a story-based approach in my

\textsuperscript{31} Denise Cook, “Do you remember the camps around Perth?” and “Do you remember the Aboriginal Fringe Camps Around Perth?”. Gail Beck, email, 21/1/2011; Daniel Garlett, email, 24/1/2011.

\textsuperscript{32} Project flyers, January 2011: Denise Cook, “Do you remember the camps around Perth?”, and Denise Cook, “Do you remember the Aboriginal fringe camps around Perth?” Carol Innes, conversation, 2 July 2015; Gail Beck, conversation, 22 June 2015; Kevin Fitzgerald, conversation 16 July 2015.
creative work to emphasise Noongar rather than my own knowledge about the camps. I discuss this further below.

**Principle 7: Understanding that Noongars Live Their Culture**

Understanding that Noongar people live their culture is clear to me through contact with Noongar people of different backgrounds and ages. For example, when asking permission to use photographs or information from family members who had passed on, I was directed to speak to the eldest in each family, or the person who had had the most contact with that relative. Where a person had married into a family, I was asked to speak to someone from their birth family. In the book, I have emphasised the connection individuals and families have with camp locations as part of their culture today.

**Principle 8: Women’s/Men’s Business**

In recognising that women and men have different cultural responsibilities, I have spoken to both men and women about their experiences in the camps. Perhaps because they were mostly children at the time, I have not been told of specifically women or men’s business in our discussions. On reflection, this may also be because I didn’t ask about it directly, though I understand there will also be information that people don’t want to share.

**Protocol 1: Early Engagement**

The first protocol is early engagement with relevant Noongar groups. Before I started this project, and in the early months of work, I asked Noongar co-workers, contacts in the Noongar community, Elders at SWALSC’s Metro Working Party, and Elder Corrie Bodney, whether it was appropriate for me to undertake this work and if so, what outcomes they would like to see. As mentioned above, with assistance from my steering group I developed a flyer outlining my ideas and asking for direction. In the flyer, I said that I had funding for a three-year research project through a PhD scholarship at Murdoch

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33 Denise Cook, “History of the Noongar camps in the Perth metropolitan area: Possible project”, unpublished flyer, 4 August 2010.
University and asked how that could be useful to them. I outlined a possible
topic, namely a history of the Noongar camps in the Perth metropolitan area. I
had noticed this gap in knowledge about Noongar and non-Aboriginal history in
Perth. I also talked about possible outcomes of the project: signs where the
camps used to be; photos and information that could be shared with families,
community groups, SWALSC and libraries; audio or video recordings about the
camps; brochures; information on the SWALSC Kaartdijin Noongar website;
and a book. I made it clear that I would follow the wishes of anyone sharing
information. I also outlined other ways that I could give back to the community,
such as helping people to get recording equipment and use it to record their
Elders; editing recordings to produce CDs; and searching through the archives
for information they might want to know. Finally, I gave information about my
background and my contact details.

All the people I spoke to agreed it was appropriate for me to do this project.\(^{34}\) Feedback included that it would be beneficial for the younger generation to
know where people used to camp;\(^ {35}\) it’s an important part of Noongar history;\(^ {36}\)
it’s appropriate for me to do this and important to fill in the gaps;\(^ {37}\) and that it
would be appropriate, interesting, quite good for me to do this project.\(^ {38}\) One
person in the Working Party raised the issue of non-Aboriginal people taking
information and Noongar people not getting anything, and thought that only
money would be an appropriate return.\(^ {39}\) I had this discussion before my Ethics
application had been submitted so I wasn’t sure at that stage whether I would
get permission to give a payment to people who were involved. In the event, he
left the Working Party so wasn’t involved any further in the project.

In terms of outcomes from the project, the Working Party asked me to produce
a book so young people could read it and share the knowledge; signs where the

\(^{34}\) See for example, Daniel Garlett, conversation 16 July 2010; Kevin Fitzgerald, conversation 16
July 2010; Metro Working Party meeting notes 4 August 2010.
\(^{35}\) Barry McGuire, Whadjuk Noongar, and Swan and Canning Rivers Iconic Trails Project
researcher, conversation 1 July 2010.
\(^{36}\) Metro Working Party meeting discussion, 4 August 2010.
\(^{37}\) Daniel Garlett, Metro Regional Development Coordinator, South West Aboriginal Land and
Sea Council, conversation 16 July 2010.
\(^{38}\) Kevin Fitzgerald, Cultural Counsel, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council,
conversation 16 July 2010.
\(^{39}\) Metro Working Party meeting discussion, 4 August 2010.
camps used to be; and to find non-Aboriginal people who might have photos of the camps that could be shared.\textsuperscript{40} Outcomes that other people wanted to see from the project were similar. They included plaques where the camps used to be,\textsuperscript{41} especially at the Swanbourne and Eden Hill camps;\textsuperscript{42} a book;\textsuperscript{43} and publicly available information that people could add to,\textsuperscript{44} particularly on the Kaartdijin Noongar website.\textsuperscript{45} I have produced a book as the creative part of this PhD, and I have found in libraries a number of photos that weren’t known before my research. However, I haven’t found that any of the non-Aboriginal people I contacted had any photos; generally, they played with children from the camps but didn’t take photos or actually go into the camps. I put a request in the “Can You Help?” section of The West Australian and had many responses from people, including Noongar people, who remembered the camps. I visited some of these people and recorded their stories, but again I had no luck finding photos. After receiving permission, I added the photos that I found in library collections, as well as information, to the Kaartdijin Noongar website, to make them accessible to a wider audience. I will talk to the local governments about installing signs to recognise the camps once my PhD is finished.

Protocol 2: Create Realistic Timeframes

Realistic timeframes are important for anyone working on a project, but are particularly so in cross-cultural work where the constraints are not always obvious to the researcher. I have respected that other business has priority, especially in working with staff at SWALSC, in meeting with the Working Party, and in recording oral histories and having discussions with people in the wider community. In addition, having a minimum of three years to undertake all aspects of this work was longer than the timeframe for many other projects, and that took the pressure off my steering group and others involved.

\textsuperscript{40} Metro Working Party meeting discussion, 4 August 2010.
\textsuperscript{41} Gail Beck, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council conversation 17 December 2010.
\textsuperscript{42} Corrie Bodney, conversation 27 May 2010.
\textsuperscript{43} Brendan Moore, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council Noongar staff member with family connections to the Perth camps, conversation 8 June 2010; Gail Beck, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council conversation 17 December 2010.
\textsuperscript{44} Barry McGuire, conversation 1 July 2010.
\textsuperscript{45} Brendan Moore, conversation 8 June 2010; Barry McGuire, conversation 1 July 2010.
Protocol 3: Cultural Protocols: Permissions

I have followed the protocol of not using material in the creative work without the permission of the family. This has involved asking permission to use oral histories, photographs, information, and anything that mentions a Noongar person’s name. As well as doing this for recent material, I also asked permission to use older photographs and oral histories, even if they had been published previously or were available in a public place, such as a library. Lynette Russell, Director of the Monash Indigenous Centre, observed from her research on Indigenous weather knowledge that “in many cases the Indigenous community concerned did not even know that the material existed in the public arena, as it had been secured by external people (anthropologists, ethnographers and other visitors) often without the knowledge or contemporary memory of the elders”.

My project has done this differently. I have returned copies of oral histories to people who have spoken to me about the project, and then contacted them again to check that they were happy with the way in which I proposed to use their story. One response I had to a family story based on oral history and archival material was, “You did a really good job of it. No not good, it was GREAT!” Where material was collected long ago, I spent considerable time finding descendants and contacting family members to ask permission to use it. If the identity of the people was not known because the photographs or paintings were done too long ago and it was not recorded, I obtained permission from the Whadjuk Working Party to reproduce the images. I agree with Russell that if any Indigenous knowledge in a museum, archive or library collection is to be published, that researchers need to obtain permission from the relevant community, as “[a]nything less is simply bad manners”. Good examples of observance of this protocol are in Mary Anne Jebb’s Mowanjum: 50 Years Community History, and Maria Nugent’s Botany Bay: Where Histories

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47 Heather Munro, email communication, 16 April 2013.
The photographs in these books have captions that indicate who gave permission for them to be reproduced as well as the more usual details of the collection in which they are held.

While I asked permission to include in the exegesis any information that people had shared with me during conversations, I made a judgement about whether to ask permission to reproduce information from published sources in my exegesis. This was partly a practical decision to make the permissions process more manageable. It was also based on the exegesis only being web-published as an academic work rather than printed as a book.

In all, I obtained permission from over eighty individuals and families, two-thirds of whom are Noongar, as well as twenty organisations, for the information, images and stories that are reproduced in my PhD. Although sometimes people knew about the existence of old photographs, many others came to light during this research, and they did not always know about oral histories with relatives that are in library and museum collections. However, even if they knew about the material, they were pleased to be asked for permission and to obtain copies.

Getting permission before I used both recent and historic photos, oral histories, and information has made this a much larger project than I anticipated, and extended the timelines for my work. This has had an impact on my scholarship income and the timeframes set by the university for completing a PhD. Partly in response to this issue, I have narrowed the focus of my work. Initially I intended to write a history of all the camps in Perth from 1870 to 1970, but I have reduced the scope to the camps in Perth’s western suburbs focusing on the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

Getting permissions for material that I didn’t collect has had its challenges. It has often been difficult to track down the appropriate people to ask permission. For example, in older photos, especially of groups of people, it has involved a lot of asking around to find out who might be descended from each person. To do this, I’ve asked a range of different Noongar people, including staff at the

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50 Mary Anne Jebb, Mowanjam: 50 Years Community History (Derby: Mowanjam Aboriginal Community and Mowanjam Artists Spirit of the Wandjina Aboriginal Corporation, 2008). Nugent, Botany Bay.
South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, as well as receiving suggestions based on known family connections from SWALSC’s anthropologist for the metropolitan area. In the case of the oral history about Fanny Balbuk and Jimmy in Claremont in the late 1890s, Mark Chambers from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs consulted his genealogical research as well.\textsuperscript{51}

If there were descendants, then my next task was to obtain contact details and get in touch. However, phone numbers people have are often out of date, and the person can often be difficult to catch on the phone. Sometimes I have been trying to contact the wrong relative, and once I speak to them, they say I need to contact a more senior family member, and I go through the process again. Each request for permission involves collating the information I would like to use from the different chapters of my work. I also gather and offer the relative copies of anything else that might be relevant that I have permission to share. Generally, I talk to them on the phone, then often post out information, and sometimes go and see them as well. As a non-Aboriginal woman, not always known to the person, they are sometimes not sure at first whether to agree. In one instance, a mutual friend introduced me to a woman who might share information with me. At our first meeting, I gave her copies of photographs and newspaper articles that were relevant to her family’s experiences. I received the following message shortly after. “Just a short email to say how nice it was to meet you today and see Leonie too. A big thank you for sharing the pics x.”\textsuperscript{52}

Sometimes there are no known descendants. I wrote the story of Wandi at the Smelters camp based on archival material, believing that he didn’t have any descendants. He is not from Noongar country and I spoke to an historian who has done some research into his history, and who had not been able to find out from where exactly he came.\textsuperscript{53} Later, in casual conversation with a Noongar Elder, I found out that he is related to a family in Collie, as many northwest men married into Noongar families. When I contacted a member of that family, he confirmed this, and shared further information about his family’s connection to

\textsuperscript{51} Mark Chambers, \textit{Department of Aboriginal Affairs}, email correspondence, 6 November 2013. Melba White, oral history recorded for the State Library of Western Australia by Ronda Jamieson, 1979, OH386. \hfill \\
\textsuperscript{52} Heather Munro, email communication, 10 October 2012. \hfill \\
\textsuperscript{53} Michael O’Connor, conversation.
Wandi and the Smelter’s camp.\textsuperscript{54} Luckily, I already knew this man, so we had a basis for our conversation. It did however add in an extra step, and if he hadn’t given permission, I would have spent considerable time researching and writing a story that I couldn’t use.

Another issue is that on occasions I have met with Elders to record their oral history, but had little contact with their families. If the Elder passed on, I needed to start again in building a relationship with the children to ask permission to use their parent’s or other family member’s material. This has brought home to me that if possible, it is important to build relationships with a number of people in the family when recording oral histories or doing other kinds of research. It was certainly my intention to do that, and my information flyers indicate that the first step for this project was for me to talk to the person, “perhaps with a relative or friend there too.”\textsuperscript{55} On a number of occasions, I did talk to the person with their family, but at other times, I spoke to them on the phone initially, and then when we met they were alone and I did not push for anyone else to be involved.

Frank Rijavec addressed a similar issue when he visited the Ngarluma and Yindjibarndi people in Roebourne for the ten year anniversary of working with them to produce the documentary \textit{Exile and the Kingdom}.\textsuperscript{56} While he had maintained relationships with many people in the community, some had passed on, and by this time, a younger generation had established the Juluwarlu Group, recording and archiving cultural materials in Roebourne. Rijavec decided that he would like to be involved with this group, partly to make good the deficit of former projects, including \textit{Exile and The Kingdom}, which didn’t leave those skills in the town.\textsuperscript{57} While his participation was facilitated by the relationships he had developed with the older generation, Rijavec spent the first year working with the leaders of Juluwarlu rewriting the book \textit{Know the Song}.

\textsuperscript{54} Joe Northover, conversation, 28 July 2013.
\textsuperscript{55} “Do You Remember the Camps Around Perth?”, “Do You Remember the Aboriginal Fringe Camps Around Perth?”
\textsuperscript{57} Frank Rijavec, “Sovereign Voices”, 29.
Know the Country that was the companion to the film Exile and The Kingdom.\textsuperscript{58} This consolidated new working relationships and made possible his involvement in the archiving and media project, the methodology for which became his PhD.\textsuperscript{59} I think that in a similar way, my relationships with the older generation of Noongar people facilitated my requests for permission from their families for this project.

In some cases, I have approached the family by telephone and told them about my project and my wish to incorporate their family member’s oral history. They have agreed that I may include the material in a draft, on the understanding that I will show it to them and obtain their formal permission, including making any changes, before it is used in any public way. This has enabled me to incorporate their material in the story with a reasonable likelihood that I will be able to use it, and in every case I have been able to do that.

While I have outlined a number of challenges associated with following this protocol, there have been many positive outcomes for my research as well. Contacting individuals to ask if I could use material relating to their family has meant that a lot more people in the Noongar and wider communities know about and support my work. In addition, it has brought in a great deal of extra, and often invaluable information. For example, I contacted Mary Kemenade to ask permission to tell a family story that had been gathered by a younger relative some years ago. She not only gave permission, she allowed me to spend two sessions recording her oral history and copying family photographs, and she lent me her mother’s Department of Aboriginal Affairs personal files. With this more extensive information, her story in the Fremantle Camps chapter is much more detailed and engaging than if I had just used the material previously available. I think in future projects, it would be useful to contact family members as soon as I think I might want to use a photograph or part of an oral history, so that more of the information they might share can be incorporated in the work.

\textsuperscript{58} Frank Rijavec, “Sovereign Voices”, 30; Frank Rijavec, Know the Song, Know the Country: the Ngaardangali Story of Culture and History in Ngarluma & Yindjibarndi country, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Roebourne, W.A: Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation, 2004).
\textsuperscript{59} Frank Rijavec, lecture at Murdoch University, 7 July 2010.
Protocol 4: Resources

The next protocol is sharing resources with Noongar people who participate in the project. This acknowledges the value of Noongar expertise by making payments for consultations, and for providing welcome to country at events. It also recognises that Noongar people do not always have the funds for meeting expenses, catering, administration, and transport to enable them to participate in projects. For a PhD this issue is complicated because the ethics process emphasises that participants must choose freely to be involved in research and that making payments might sway their decision.\(^{60}\)

For my project, I paid Noongar people whose oral history I recorded with a $150 voucher each. This was approved by Murdoch’s Ethics Committee despite me being told by a number of other researchers that generally payments could not be made to participants in a PhD project. I argued for these payments because it is usual to pay Aboriginal informants in research and it is generally considered disrespectful to ask them to be involved in a project and not pay them for their time. For example, when I recorded oral histories with Elders for the Town of Claremont they were paid $400 each, which at the time was the standard heritage consultation fee. Other oral histories recorded for SWALSC didn’t have that kind of budget but people were always paid between $100 (which was considered too little) and $200.

I generally did not pay non-Aboriginal informants because the power dynamics and expectations are different and I only had limited PhD funds to use for payments.\(^{61}\) As it was, I paid some of the extra costs myself but being on a low income, I could not do that more than necessary. Non-Aboriginal participants received all the other benefits of the project.

All participants received a CD and transcript of their oral history; and copies of photographs, and other relevant information that were produced through the project or were uncovered during my research. Participants will also receive a


\(^{61}\) I did pay one non-Aboriginal informant early in the project and was reimbursed the costs by a local history library that now holds a copy.
copy of the book and any other publications that use their information. As there are so many people involved in this project, this will be a significant cost. I also drove people in my car on most site visits, provided snacks for our meetings, and on occasion paid for meals as well. Other benefits for people speaking to me were the opportunity to reflect on an earlier time in their life, while talking to an empathetic listener. The project also provides the opportunity to share information about the camps and the Noongar history of Perth with the wider community. Elder Shirley Pickett, who lived in the camps as a child, told me, “It’s good of you to do that book. This is our history that hardly any people know about.”

In terms of economic opportunities, I decided at the beginning that any financial benefit from this project would be given to a Noongar community organisation. As discussed above, following a recommendation from one of my steering group members, any income from the project will now go to the Noongar participants. This is to demonstrate my respect for the knowledge that Noongar people have brought to this project and to share the benefits with them.

Protocol 5: Welcome to Country/Acknowledgement of Country

Another protocol is engaging an Elder to conduct a welcome to country at events. This hasn’t been an issue in my research because there haven’t yet been any events. However, I have organised Elders to conduct a welcome to country for other projects I’ve been involved in, and will do so if there is a launch for this project. I have also made a statement of acknowledgment of Noongar country when I have given talks about this project.

Protocol 6: Intellectual Property Rights

The protocol of recognising Noongar cultural and intellectual property rights is a crucial part of this project. As described above, I obtained permission from people whose stories I have told, or if they have passed on, from family

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62 Shirley Pickett, telephone communication, 21 September 2012.
members. I have also worked with the Whadjuk Working Party at SWALSC to ensure that I get overall permission for my project.

Protocol 7: Confidentiality

I followed the protocol of respecting confidentiality and negotiating the use of information with Noongar people. When I recorded oral histories, took photographs, or copied information, the person completed a permission form which detailed what I might do with the material they had shared. Sometimes it was just to be used in my project though in most cases where I recorded oral histories, the person decided that they would like them to be more widely available and a copy could go to an organisation such as the State Library of Western Australia, SWALSC, or a local library. People also indicated on the form whether they wanted to be contacted for permission before their information was used publicly. If they did want to be contacted, they gave details of a family member who could decide on use of the material in the future. Once I had written the stories, I also showed them to the person to see if they were happy with the way I had used their information. I generally did this even if they had not specified that they wanted to be contacted.

In early 2011, when I was developing my methodology, I gave a presentation about it to the Metro Working Party. At that meeting, concerns were raised about information people shared with me being sent to libraries, where they would lose control over how it was used. While I emphasised that it would only go to a library if the person decided they wanted that and wrote it on the permission form, I was asked to come back to the next Working Party meeting to discuss it again. At the next meeting in May 2011, there were a number of new members in the Working Party and they were again concerned about giving out information to me for this project. However, at the meeting in August 2012 a number of people from the Working Party indicated they were interested in talking to me. In the end, I only recorded one oral history with a Working Party member, Marion Collard, and that was in 2013. Despite this, at every
Working Party meeting when I gave a presentation, members talked at length about their memories of the camps, and throughout my consultation, they gave ongoing support to my project.

Protocol 8: Showing Results

The final protocol is responding to Noongar suggestions and concerns, keeping participants up-to-date with the project, and sharing any economic opportunities that it brings. I have taken on board comments from the Noongar steering group and Whadjuk Working Party throughout this project. I have also made any changes that people have requested to their story or the information that they have shared with me. Perhaps the area where I have struggled the most is in keeping participants up to date with my progress on the project. I have been a little shy about phoning, as well as being caught up in the busyness of research and writing.

In summary, while I have no control over the ways I shape up on intangible criteria for cross-cultural research, such as having a good heart, I found the Noongar Consultation Protocol Guidelines a useful framework for ensuring I followed culturally appropriate methodology in my research. This methodology was a crucial aspect of my research project with Noongar community members, and particularly important when I, as the researcher, come from a different cultural background.

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss other, related, methodological issues that I dealt with during this project.

Other Methodological Issues

Storytelling

As discussed above, storytelling is an important aspect of my methodology for this work. Maori educator, Russell Bishop, wrote that “story telling is a useful and culturally appropriate way of representing the ‘diversities of truth’ within
which the story teller rather than the researcher retains control". As such, it is an appropriate response to the protocols and principles discussed above. I also agree with internationally-acclaimed screenwriting educator Robert McKee that “[s]torytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today”. Since one aim of this project is to change the attitudes of non-Aboriginal people towards our shared history, storytelling is an influential approach.

Canadian critic Sophie McCall highlights issues that must be addressed in telling other people’s stories, particularly in a cross-cultural context. Her book, *First Person Plural: Aboriginal Storytelling and the Ethics of Collaborative Authorship* examines what she describes as “told-to narratives” in which often:

non-Aboriginal recorders collect, edit, and structure stories by Aboriginal narrators. Historically, collector-editors have submitted the oral performance to numerous changes, omissions, and manipulations, while claiming sole authorship on the title page. At the same time, these editors have effaced their intervention, stating in the preface that the story is in the narrator’s ‘own voice’.

This is an important issue, and in response, I noted in the creative work my editorial role in structuring extracts from oral histories, particularly in the chapter based on Corrie Bodney’s oral histories. I also made sure that I checked the edited story with the person or their descendants to make sure they were comfortable with it being told in that way. A good example of a work that acknowledges the role of the researchers who recorded and edited the Aboriginal person’s voice is Alice Nannup, Lauren Marsh, and Stephen Kinnane’s *When the Pelican Laughed*. In it, there is an account of the way Lauren and Stephen met Alice and came to write her book. They also explain that the book is based on transcribed oral histories, collected photographs, and research in Battye Library organised into a “single story format” by Lauren Marsh.

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69 Nannup, Marsh and Kinnane, *When the Pelican Laughed*, 12.
I was drawn to storytelling as the style of writing because despite the constraints of editing, it is an effective way of ensuring that Noongar voices are an important part of the creative work. But what type of storytelling would be best given that I am a non-Aboriginal woman writing about the Noongar camps, and I want the finished work to be accessible to Noongar people as well as to the wider community?

One storytelling option was to narrate the story as I experienced it. Sean Gorman does this well in his PhD about two famous Noongar footballers, published as *Brotherboys: the Story of Jim and Phillip Krakouer*. A personal example is Ros Moriarty’s, *Listening to Country: A Journey to the Heart of What it Means to Belong*. This is an account of Ros’ life with her husband John Moriarty, an Aboriginal man taken away as a child from Borroloola in the Northern Territory. Shaped around the framework of a women's law meeting she attended, the book is mostly about her experiences going back to Borroloola as part of his family. Another work with a strong personal narrative is Noongar authors’ Kim Scott and Hazel Brown’s *Kayang and Me*. In it, Hazel shares information about her life and stories of their extended family. Younger relative Kim reflects on both Hazel’s life and his own experiences, including the journey of finding and learning from Hazel. In this way, the book incorporates both voices in a moving and engaging story.

Other authors have adopted elements of this style. Anna Funder’s *Stasiland: Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall* is an account of the Stasi of East Germany and the impact they had on people’s lives. Funder writes herself into the narrative by documenting the reasons for her actions and her reactions to the events that unfold. Her narration is interspersed with lengthy accounts from individuals about their experiences of the Stasi. I find this an effective way of writing as an outsider about an oppressed group. A slightly different approach is taken by Noongar author Mary Terszak in *Orphaned By the Colour of My Skin*:

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A Stolen Generation Story. Mary combines a series of extracts from her journal entries with analysis that places her experience within the wider social and legislative context. She locates her writing style within the literary and methodological perspective of autoethnography.

In considering a personal narrative style for my creative work, I contemplated the possibility of structuring it around the trips I took with Elders to look at former camps or to record their stories. In this way, the reader would have come with us on a journey of discovery. This approach would also have helped narrow the focus of the book to our visits rather than being about every detail of a camp. In fact, I did use this approach to some extent in the Shenton Park chapter. However, the rest of the chapters were not researched in this way and ultimately it did not seem an appropriate method for the remainder of the book. In addition, while I find the personal narrative style engaging and easy to read, I am not comfortable writing about my life in that way.

Alistair Thomson’s Moving Stories: An Intimate History of Four Women Across Two Countries incorporates extracts from oral histories, letters, and diaries with extensive analysis. It gives a strong sense of the women’s voices while highlighting themes that are not obvious in their stories. While this was effective, I was drawn to a style that placed the stories in context, but allowed people to tell more of their own story. That also seemed appropriate given that I am not Noongar myself.

The approach I found most effective for my creative work combines personal voices with a variety of other sources, offering a range of perspectives. A number of works do this in different ways. Peter Read’s tripping over feathers: Scenes in the life of Joy Janaka Wiradjuri Williams, A Narrative of the Stolen Generations combines multiple sources with personal narration and creative writing. Shaped around life changing moments, which he calls “scenes from a life”, it features recreated dialogue, extracts from oral history transcripts, Joy’s

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74 Mary Terszak, Orphaned By the Colour of My Skin: A Stolen Generation Story (Maleny, Queensland: Verdant House, 2008).
poems, and information from archival documents and psychiatric notes. As well as dramatizing events in Joy’s life, Read narrates his personal connection to Joy, and to the events that unfold. Through this range of sources and writing styles, *tripping over feathers* gives a moving account of one woman’s life and the impact of removal from her mother, alcohol and substance abuse, violence, and lack of support and love. It affirms my desire to tell people’s stories and use that as the main method of addressing our shared history. I particularly enjoyed that it uses such a diverse range of sources and that it tells the stories in a personal way.

Another work that draws on multiple sources is Krim Benterrak, Stephen Muecke and Paddy Roe’s *Reading the Country*, an exploration of Nyigina man Paddy Roe’s home country, Roebuck Plains, east of Broome in Western Australia. It incorporates Roe’s dreaming and recent stories of the place, Muecke’s writing and photographs, and Benterrak’s paintings. This sense of a history of place comprised of fragments from many different sources has been helpful in my work.

Perhaps the best model for my work is Mary Anne Jebb’s *Mowanjum: 50 Years Community History*. This is a collaborative, easy-to-read book about the history of Mowanjum Aboriginal community outside Derby. The style is personal and it was easy to imagine I was listening to someone talking. In fact, many of the stories are from lightly edited oral histories, although some are from earlier publications. Another strength of this book is the large number of both historic and recent photos interspersed with the text. I have also included as many photographs as possible. The book also incorporates paintings, linked with sometimes unexpected personal stories. While I like many aspects of this work, I was especially drawn to the short, engaging stories, and have incorporated that style in my creative work, although I placed them under headings within longer chapters rather than making each a separate chapter.

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77 Read, *tripping over feathers*, xxii.
79 Mary Anne Jebb, *Mowanjum: 50 Years Community History* (Derby: Mowanjum Aboriginal Community and Mowanjum Artists Spirit of the Wandjina Aboriginal Corporation, 2008).
When incorporating multiple voices in a publication, some authors use different fonts to indicate who is speaking. In *Moving Stories*, Alistair Thomson uses italics rather than inverted commas to indicate when one of his narrators is speaking and to differentiate their voice from his own. This mostly works well, especially with the short extracts he uses. Kim Scott and Hazel Brown have two different fonts to indicate which of them is speaking in *Kayang and Me*. Likewise, this effectively signals the change of style between the authors. In Richard Price’s *Alabi’s World*, a history of the Dutch colony of Suriname, Price uses four different fonts to indicate which of the four groups were speaking: the Saramaka descendants of the slaves; the colonial officials; the Moravian missionaries; or the historian Price himself. While an interesting concept, I found it difficult to remember which font represented which speaker. In my work, I have chosen to use only one font, and to indicate quotes from different speakers in the conventional way, using inverted commas or indented text. Perhaps this is because my book has so many voices; I don’t find different fonts a helpful way of differentiating between people speaking.

Storytelling is a powerful, culturally appropriate way of sharing histories that represent the complex societies in which we live. There are many different ways of telling stories and from these options I chose to incorporate a wide range of personal stories interspersed with images and archival material. Within that format, it is important to acknowledge my role in editing the stories, as well as my methodology of checking the edited story with the person or their family for permission. This personal approach, both in telling stories, and in working with people to reach agreement on the final product, is a crucial aspect of this work.

**Methodology for a Site-Based Project**

As my research focuses on the camps within Perth’s western suburbs, place, and locating sites are important. Penelope Edmonds describes mapping as “the semiotic practice of inscribing British imperial destiny onto Aboriginal space, with all of its connotations of colonial possession and erasure of Indigenous

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presence".  

Maori educator and theorist Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes that the spatial vocabulary of colonialism excludes Indigenous people using the line (which establishes boundaries and maps territories), the centre (orientated towards the system of power), and the outside (that which is not part of the colonial centre, not existing).

These writings provide useful insight into the colonisation and mapping of Perth, where likewise European property lines and names, rather than Noongar names and country, have represented land ownership since 1829. My project involves reinscribing Noongar history back into the landscape, particularly the sites of the camps, which are not widely known. In developing the methodology for this aspect of my project, I drew on the work of Denis Byrne and Maria Nugent, described in Mapping Attachment: A Spatial Approach to Aboriginal Post-Contact Heritage. This was a project between the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the Local Aboriginal Land Councils of Purfleet-Taree and Forster, on the lower North Coast of New South Wales. The project's aim was to document and map post-contact Aboriginal heritage sites and to showcase a methodology for that work. In doing so, they took a cultural landscape approach, arguing that historical significance is found throughout the landscape rather than only at specific sites. The cultural landscape approach is important in identifying relationships between people and landscape, changes over time, and representing the values of different parts of the landscape to different groups.

My work is slightly different, having a focus on identifying campsites within the landscape, often thought to have only a European heritage. For each campsite, I have emphasised the stories associated with that place. Information about

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82 Edmonds, Urbanizing Frontiers, 23.
83 Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies, 55.
84 Denis Byrne and Maria Nugent, Mapping Attachment: A Spatial Approach to Aboriginal Post-Contact Heritage (Hurstville, Sydney, NSW: Department of Environment and Conservation NSW, 2004). At the time of publication, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service was called Department of Environment and Conservation, NSW.
85 Byrne and Nugent, Mapping Attachment, 1.
86 Byrne and Nugent, Mapping Attachment, 1.
87 Byrne and Nugent, Mapping Attachment, 73.
other elements of the landscape that were significant for Noongar people is evident in the stories but its collection and mapping was not my priority. Together, however, it all assists in identifying relationships between people and places, changes over time, and the significance of places to Noongar people, whose views have often not been recorded, as well as to the non-Aboriginal people whose stories about the camps are shared in this project.

Byrne and Nugent used aerial photographs, maps, and archival research in conjunction with detailed oral histories to locate fishing spots, paths, swimming places, and many other sites in the landscape. Having the photo or map enabled people to be much more specific about the exact location of these places. It also helped them to remember more details. Sometimes they recorded an oral history in the person’s home first and then went on country with them to stimulate further memories. This was especially useful if the landscape had changed significantly. At other times, they recorded the oral history on country with the map. Once the places were marked on aerial photos and maps they were transferred to a Geographical Information System (GIS) computer programme that allowed both individual maps and combined maps.89

I have utilised elements of Byrne and Nugent’s methodology, particularly the use of historical aerial photography and maps to help people identify campsites. I obtained from Landgate orthorectified aerial photography for the Perth metropolitan area in 1953; for Fremantle in 1947; and for the Perth CBD in 1948.90 Orthorectified aerial photographs have been geometrically corrected to deal with lens distortion and camera tilt, and to fit the uneven surface of the earth to a flat map.91 In this way, computer-mapping software can edit the photographs. I also used maps from a 1955 street directory of Perth to remind my informants, and to help me, understand the layout of the suburbs and streets at that time.92 In addition, I used a recent street directory to assist in

89 Byrne and Nugent, Mapping Attachment, 180-181.
identifying places today. On most occasions, I recorded oral histories on site or visited the place with the person afterwards. As Byrne and Nugent found, being on site prompted recollections specific to the place. It was also evocative, both for me and for the people remembering their stories. In addition, it enabled me to photograph informants in the specific places they talked about.

Together, the stories, maps and photographs play an important role in documenting the locations of the camps, and adding those meanings to places which are often thought of as having only a non-Aboriginal history. This information is also highly suitable for use in heritage interpretation, which is one of the proposed future outcomes from this project.

**Using Photographs**

I have incorporated large numbers of both historical and recent photographs in my creative work for a number of reasons. The first is to make it accessible to as wide an audience as possible. I hope that it will be possible to go from photo to photo, perhaps reading some of the captions and the occasional quote in the text, and still get a sense of my work.

Secondly, reproducing photographs in a published work assists in repatriating them to the community, one of the aims of my project. Sylvia Kleinert quotes Indigenous curator Michael Aird and anthropologist Gaynor Macdonald in noting the importance of family photographs for descendants who may have few or no photographs of their ancestors. I found photographs to be important as well. One such photo is of a large group gathered for a church service at Mary Crescent Reserve in Eden Hill about 1935. The photo includes many of the well-known residents of the camps at that time. It was owned by Corrie Bodney and copied by Claremont Museum in 2007 when I recorded oral histories with him. As part of my PhD consultation, I received permission from Corrie to share it widely and it has been of great interest. It is reproduced in my creative work together with the names of each person Corrie identified in the photo. Sadly, the

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original photograph is now missing from Corrie’s collection so the museum copy has played an important role in repatriating the image.

The third reason for incorporating large numbers of photographs is that they play an important role in identifying “what has been”.\textsuperscript{94} Like the Koorie community of Jackson’s Track near Drouin in Victoria, established in the 1930s and later demolished by shire and church authorities,\textsuperscript{95} camps in Perth were once homes and centres of culture and community, but are no longer there.

Unfortunately, there are few photographs of the camps in Perth from any time in our history. Often, a grainy copy of an image taken from the newspaper is all that is available.\textsuperscript{96} The majority of photos from the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s are in the West Australian Newspapers Limited collection. This is a commercial organisation which charges rates much higher than libraries for use of photographs, making them more difficult to access. However, at my request, West Australian Newspapers agreed that photographs could be repatriated to people in the Noongar community free of charge and since my work is helping with that they reduced the fees for reproduction of photographs in my creative work.

Photographs in Noongar family collections have been an important source for my work. Mostly these are photographs of people, though a few show the camps as well. This is another advantage of contacting families for permission to share stories, as on a number of occasions they have also shared photographs with me. My work also includes recent photographs taken during fieldwork and photos of associated places or people mentioned in the text.

While photographs are often powerful, as photographic historian Joanna Sassoon notes, “[a]s a form of documentary evidence, photographs are complex and challenging”.\textsuperscript{97} She adds that their meaning comes from the “content, context and format” and that it is important to consider the purpose for

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{95} Kleinert, “Aboriginality in the City,” 72-3.
\textsuperscript{96} See for example, Carter, Eden Hill Camps, 143-146, 147.
\end{flushleft}
which each print was made as they “are created to send a message”.98 People in photos might be dressed in clothes provided by the photographer, who also arranged the poses as well.99

Another difficulty is that such a long time after a photo was taken, it can be difficult to verify the subject, time, or place. This is particularly the case with photographs of Aboriginal people, where the names are rarely recorded, and where photographs can be reproduced out of context.

Figure 3-1 This photograph is identified in the book Nyungar Tradition as being of a southwest Aboriginal woman at a camp near Fremantle in 1890.100 Her wanna, or digging stick, is described as typical of the southwest region. Permission: Whadjuk Working Party and UWA Publishing

Confusion is caused by what looks like either a cropped version of the photo, or one taken at the same time showing just the woman. It is in the State Library of Western Australia catalogue, listed as part of a series of views of the Coolgardie goldfields. The same, cropped photo is reproduced in McNair and Rumley, *Pioneer Aboriginal Mission*, which deals with the Wesleyan mission in and around Perth in the early years of the colony. They don’t locate the photo but they do credit photographers Hemus and Hall, who recorded a great deal of Coolgardie’s early years. As well as being in Coolgardie, Hemus and Hall were...

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in William Street, Perth from 1891.\textsuperscript{104} The State Library of Western Australia 
Hemus and Hall collection also contains two photographs taken in Fremantle.\textsuperscript{105}

To further support the Fremantle link, an almost identical image, where the 
woman is sitting rather than standing in front of the camp, is reproduced in John 
Dowson’s \textit{Old Fremantle}.\textsuperscript{106} According to Dowson, it was originally published in 
the album \textit{Fremantle Views}, held in the Royal Western Australian Historical 
Society collection.\textsuperscript{107} The information about it emphasises however, that the 
only authenticated early photo of Aboriginal people taken in Fremantle is the 
family group photographed by S.M. Stout and reproduced in the Fremantle 
camps chapter of my creative work.\textsuperscript{108}

Despite the difficulties identifying photographs, they are essential to research 
that involves people and stories. Photographs are evocative of what has been, 
meaningful in terms of repatriation to families and the community, and they help 
to make my work accessible to as wide an audience as possible. In addition, 
sharing photographs has been an important sign of good faith when I have 
approached Noongar people to talk about the camps; and likewise, talking 
about the camps has brought more photographs to light.

\section*{Oral Histories}

Oral histories document personal stories about the camps, providing a valuable 
source of information often not available anywhere else. While this is one of the strengths of oral histories, it is particularly important for a subject where there are such great discrepancies between people’s stories and the official record.

For my PhD I recorded oral histories with twenty-two people, fourteen of whom are Noongar and the remaining eight non-Aboriginal. I also drew extensively on oral histories from my previous work, as well as those held in museums and


\textsuperscript{105} These photographs are 582B Grain being loaded on to Long Jetty, Fremantle, date illegible; and 585B High Street, Fremantle looking east, c1890.

\textsuperscript{106} John Dowson, \textit{Old Fremantle: Photographs 1850-1950} (Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), 138.

\textsuperscript{107} Royal Western Australian Historical Society collection, R3008, published in Dowson, \textit{Old Fremantle}, 139.

\textsuperscript{108} Dowson, \textit{Old Fremantle}, 139.
libraries. There are also published compilations of people’s stories based on oral histories which I have discussed in the literature review. Most of the people who previously recorded oral histories have now passed on, highlighting the importance of oral history in preserving information for future generations.

Most of my oral histories for my PhD were one to two hour recordings of archival quality, often at the site of former camps. Two oral histories were recorded on the telephone and in other cases I took notes while I spoke to the person on the phone. Twice my iPhone had to stand in for the digital recorder for an impromptu conversation or when the digital recorder was not available. The iPhone quality was much lower, particularly for a recording done in the car and out of doors, so it is less useful for preservation purposes. Nonetheless, it was good enough to enable me to transcribe the conversation and confidently quote the information shared with me.

Visiting the sites of former camps as we recorded oral histories was evocative for me and has changed the way I view those landscapes. It also triggered memories and feelings for those who spoke which, where appropriate, I recorded as part of the oral histories. Byrne and Nugent noted that when recording oral histories “returning to places that people had once known intimately often did provoke rich memories and further details”. On other occasions, they found that where the place had changed greatly, their interviewees sometimes became disoriented and less confident in their memories. I did have two experiences where interviewees could not identify the location of their former camps, as the landscape had changed greatly and they were young when they lived there. I don’t think it was a great problem though, as they told stories about the camps anyway. Mostly I found that visiting sites brought back memories of former times, such as when Corrie Bodney pointed out the part of Mary Crescent Reserve in Eden Hill where the two-up was played, as well as telling stories about the games. When I recorded oral histories with Robert Bropho for Freshwater Bay Museum, he insisted on sitting close to where his grandmother Clara Leyland had lived while he told stories of his time, and his memories of her, at the camps.

110 Byrne and Nugent, “Mapping Attachment,” 181.
As discussed earlier, obtaining permission to use oral histories recorded previously could be complicated. Often the person had passed on so it involved tracking down and then talking to other family members. However, in every instance where I asked, permission was granted, and often I found out more about the camps at the same time. For example, when I showed Bella Bropho the extracts from oral histories with her father Robert, and grandmother Isobel, that I wanted to use for this project, she talked a little about her own experiences and I have included that information in the conclusion to the creative work. I also gave her copies of relevant photos I had uncovered in my research and in return she shared an otherwise unobtainable photograph of the 1934 gathering of Aboriginal people in Kings Park during a break from giving evidence to the Mosley Royal Commission.

Another issue for this project was funding for the oral histories. Although I am a professional oral historian, since I was recording oral histories for my PhD research, I was not paid for my time. However, as discussed above, I paid each Noongar person and some of the non-Aboriginal people $150 for their participation in the project. Interestingly, back in 1909 Daisy Bates also found that she had to pay Aboriginal people in return for information. She wrote that she had not expected:

that I should have to pay so much, and to every individual native whose advice I sought, but I found by experience that I could gain nothing from them without paying for it.\footnote{Daisy Bates to Under Secretary, 20 April 1909, SROWA, Acc 1023. Cited in Robert Reece, “‘Killing With Kindness’: Daisy Bates and New Norcia,” New Norcia Studies 16 (2008), 17.}

I also paid a professional transcriber to produce a full transcript of each oral history. Having a transcript enabled me to more easily quote from the oral history and meant that I had a typed copy of the recording to give back to the person. For me, giving a transcript of the recording to the family is an important part of giving something back rather than just taking information. It also has other benefits; a transcript is easier for me to use, and where the person has given permission, a copy can go into the relevant library. Many oral histories in collections have been transcribed which was helpful for identifying relevant material. Given the time constraints of my work, I only went back to listen to the
audio if there was no transcript. This meant that I missed nuances of meaning from the audio but made it more manageable within the time constraints.

Funding for the oral histories came partially from the university, but they did not cover all these costs, and because of my commitment to the project and its outcomes, I paid a considerable sum myself. Quite a few people gave permission for their oral histories to be lodged with the State Library of Western Australia, the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, and a local library. I approached several local history libraries to see if they would cover costs for any oral histories that I had permission to lodge with them. They were willing to do so, and I did have the costs paid for one long oral history I lodged at the Nedlands Library (with permission), and two others at the Fremantle Library, but I haven’t yet followed this up with the other libraries. SWALSC also paid some costs for one oral history but unlike the libraries, they do not have a budget for this.

If permission is given, lodging oral histories with a collecting institution like a library is a positive outcome for all involved. The person’s story is made more widely available if they wish that to happen, the library obtains an oral history and transcript for a fraction of the cost since they don’t have to pay me to research and record it, and it facilitates my PhD research by covering some of my costs.

Oral histories were a crucial element of this research, both those I recorded for my PhD, others I had recorded previously, and oral histories in libraries and published collections. In a field where there is such a large gap between the official record and memories of both Noongar and other people, oral histories play an essential role. In addition, recording oral histories, and obtaining permission to use existing recordings, helped to build relationships, also a central aspect of this work. Funding issues offered both challenges and opportunities, and where permission was given to lodge oral histories in libraries, there were benefits for all involved.
My PhD and Work at South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council

Between 2008 and 2014, I worked part-time for the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, firstly on an oral history project with Noongar Elders; then on the Noongar history and culture website, *Kaartdijin Noongar*; and finally on a Noongar language project.

My work at SWALSC was beneficial to my PhD research in many ways. Initially, a letter of support from SWALC Chief Executive Officer Glen Kelly provided evidence of the proposed collaboration between my research at the university and this key industry stakeholder. This may have assisted in my being offered a place at Murdoch University to undertake my PhD (as well as at the University of Western Australia) and receiving both an Australian Postgraduate Award and one of only a few Murdoch Excellence Awards.112

Another important area of assistance was access to SWALSC’s extensive collection of Noongar research materials, including library books, journal articles, theses, oral histories, and other primary and secondary research. This material is not currently accessible to the public. Some of the information, such as oral histories, is only available at SWALSC. Although other material, such as theses, is accessible elsewhere, it was helpful to have so much collected in one place. My research methodology of obtaining permission from the family before using any information publicly fitted well with SWALSC’s requirements for my access to the collection.

As discussed earlier, another valuable aspect of the assistance I received from SWALSC was being able to liaise with key Noongar staff for cultural advice on my project. Working in the same office made it easier to fit meetings into our busy schedules and to stay in contact. In addition, as well as presenting regular updates about my project to the Whadjuk Working Party, which is open to anyone wanting to consult Elders in the Perth area, working for SWALSC meant

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112 Glen Kelly, Chief Executive Officer, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, letter to Denise Cook, “Support for PhD research”, 26 October 2009.
that I had some contact with Working Party members outside my presentations as well.

Another important aspect of the support from SWALSC was the loan of their professional quality Marantz digital audio recorder and microphones. Having access to it whenever I needed enabled me to record good archival-quality oral histories at a moment’s notice. SWALSC also offered the use of desk and office facilities for my research, which I mainly used when I was studying their collection.

Through my collaboration with SWALSC, a staff member produced a series of maps that are included in the creative work. The first showed former campsites in the Perth metropolitan area registered under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 1972. This was useful in raising awareness of my project when I did presentations, both to the Whadjuk Working Party, and among museum, history, and oral history colleagues. The staff member also produced useful reference maps showing the locations of places discussed in the text.

In return for this support from SWALSC, as much as possible I obtained permission for copies of my research to be held at SWALSC, and made available to the public through the Kaartdijin Noongar website. For example, a large number of historical photographs have been added to the website because of my research, and several of the oral histories I recorded are now in SWALSC’s collection. I also will supply SWALSC with a copy of my PhD for their library.

There were also challenges involved in undertaking my PhD while I worked for SWALSC. The Noongar community is diverse and holds varying opinions about many things, including the work undertaken by SWALSC. Many people throughout Noongar country support the organisation’s work, but in the metropolitan area many of the Elders who have been leaders in the community over many years, and who have links to the camps, do not support SWALSC. According to SWALSC CEO, Glen Kelly, there is a history of disputes,

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misunderstandings, and broken agreements between them. This situation created some difficulties for my research.

At the end of 2009 (just before I started my PhD), SWALSC signed a Heads of Agreement with the State Government to negotiate to settle native title rather than continuing through the court process. A team comprising SWALSC staff and Noongar representatives elected from each claim group negotiated a detailed settlement with the State Government between 2010 and 2014. The settlement they agreed involves surrendering native title in return for a package of benefits, including land; housing; funds for Noongar social, cultural, and economic development; and Noongar recognition legislation. For much of this time, both SWALSC and the Elders who did not support SWALSC had opposing native title claims over the metropolitan area, and there were various court hearings in regard to these claims. Eventually, after four years of negotiations, and many community and family information sessions, the settlement was agreed to in early 2015 at meetings held in each of the six claim areas in Noongar country. However, there was a strong campaign against SWALSC and the agreement, particularly from the families in the metropolitan area involved with the opposing claim.

When I approached Elders to see if they would speak to me about the camps for my PhD, as part of explaining my background, I told them that I worked one day a week for SWALSC, though not on native title work. This impacted on Elders’ response to my request but in the long run not as much as I had feared. I did hear a lot of negative comments about SWALSC and had to weigh up sharing with them my understanding of the native title settlement against the

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114 Glen Kelly, SWALSC CEO, conversation, n.d.
impact that those discussions had on my relationships with partners in my PhD research. I did generally share my perspective though I don’t think it changed anyone’s minds about SWALSC’s work.

I found that the relationships I had built were key to whether people were willing to talk to me for my project. Those I had met through my work at SWALSC, my previous work at Freshwater Bay Museum, or who were introduced through mutual friends or contacts were generally happy to be involved, even if they didn’t like SWALSC.\(^\text{119}\) One Elder who opposed SWALSC came with his brother to look at former campsites and tell their story. I was heartened when he said that despite his opposition to SWALSC, he and his brother and I can be friends.\(^\text{120}\) Only one person I had never met, and who was unhappy with SWALSC’s stance in negotiating with the State government, said “no” straight away to the mutual contact who asked on my behalf.

In another case, the person I knew from previous oral histories I had recorded had died, and his children didn’t know me. They were part of the rival native title claim and strongly opposed to SWALSC’s work. As a result, they were uncertain about trusting me. I attended a meeting with some family members where they asked me to write to all the Elders in the group for permission to undertake my project. They also asked if I would break any connections I had with SWALSC over the project. At the time, there were ongoing court proceedings in which they and SWALSC were opposed. I was hesitant about writing under those circumstances, and was already a year into my research, having consulted a number of other families for permission to undertake the work. I would have consulted these families initially as well, but because of my work for SWALSC I was unsure whether they would be willing to talk to me, so had not done so. I discussed the issue with a member of my steering group who confirmed that it was not appropriate to break contact with SWALSC over my project as they had offered me extensive support. The situation was difficult because the family had a large collection of oral histories publicly available that I wanted to use but didn’t know whether I would get permission to do so. After

\(^\text{119}\) For example, I had worked with Corrie Bodney since 2007 so although he doesn’t support SWALC he was willing to work with me on this project.

\(^\text{120}\) Ben Taylor, conversation, 17 March 2012.
much discussion with my university supervisors and members of my steering group I decided to contact the family representative and ask if I could use extracts from the oral histories, then show my draft work to get feedback on whether it would be acceptable for me to incorporate them. This was risky because there was a chance permission wouldn’t be given and I would have to rewrite the sections but I decided to try it. I was really pleased that the family did agree to the stories I had written. In addition, they allowed me to copy photographs from their collection, and provided extra information as well. I think the personal approach of asking for permissions overcame many hurdles for my research.

Overall, while there have been challenges, I think it has been very helpful having the partnership with SWALSC throughout my PhD. If I had not done so, I would still have undertaken this project, but it might have looked different, with cultural advice from other sources, less practical support, and possibly contact with a different group of families.

Family Violence

Family violence, including child sexual abuse, is widespread: in 2011, 6,700 children, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, were reported as victims of sexual assault in Australia. However, as noted by the Gordon Inquiry in 2002, the rate of family violence and child abuse is much higher in Aboriginal communities than in non-Aboriginal communities.

The extent of child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities stems partly from Australia’s history of colonisation, dispossession and the removal of Aboriginal children from their families. Despite popular misconceptions, it is not an accepted part of traditional Aboriginal culture. In fact, changes in traditional

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culture may have removed punishments such as spearing that were once inflicted for sexual abuse.\(^\text{124}\)

Noongar feminist and human rights lawyer Hannah McGlade argues that it is important to remember that “colonisation was and still is very much gendered”\(^\text{125}\) and that sexual abuse results from Aboriginal (and non-Aboriginal) men’s power over women and children.\(^\text{126}\) She contends that this is often not apparent because “[w]ithin Aboriginal politics the parameters of ‘race’ are prioritised over Aboriginal women and children’s experiences of violence, particularly sexual violence.”\(^\text{127}\) McGlade highlights the risks to women and children living in an isolated environment with “an Aboriginal perpetrator being empowered in a position of authority and control over a small community”.\(^\text{128}\)

While family violence is not something I explore in my research, I raise the issue because there have been more recent cases in the Perth camps. At a time when family violence was hidden in the whole community, the incidence of abuse in the Perth camps in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s may never be known.

### Methodology Conclusion

This chapter has discussed a culturally appropriate methodology for cross-cultural research into the history of the Noongar camps in Perth. Following this approach to undertake a history project in Perth is an innovative and key aspect of my research. I argue that it is essential for researchers to follow Aboriginal cultural protocols in this work.

I began by discussing issues associated with research in Indigenous communities, particularly the unequal power dynamic inherited from our colonial


\(^{126}\) McGlade, *Our Greatest Challenge*, 40-44, 94.


\(^{128}\) McGlade, *Our Greatest Challenge*, 78.
history, and the dominant western view of research that does not incorporate Indigenous understandings and knowledge. In order to address these issues, Indigenous protocols guide researchers in respectful, appropriate cross-cultural work. Using the *Noongar Consultation Protocol Guidelines* developed by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council and Perth Region Natural Resource Management, I have discussed in detail my methodology for this project, including its successes and challenges.

In the last section of the chapter, I examined other methodological issues, in particular storytelling, a methodology for a site-based project, a discussion of the benefits and issues arising from my association with the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, using photographs and oral histories, and family violence.

Ethical research ensures that Noongar people may choose to share their knowledge on their own terms. Ultimately, this means that both Noongar and non-Aboriginal people have the opportunity to heal some of the more difficult relationships of the past and benefit from a greater understanding of our shared history. Following this methodology has enabled me to address my aims of respectfully building relationships, and producing the creative work that will share Noongar and other stories about the camps in Perth with a much wider audience.
Conclusion

This thesis has explored histories of the Noongar camps in Perth’s western suburbs, arguing that they are an important, relatively unknown aspect of the shared history of our suburbs; and that the way this research is undertaken is just as important as the information that is uncovered. Together, these works fill a gap in current scholarship in Western Australia, both in terms of stories which have seldom been told before, and in linking this research to a methodology follows Aboriginal cultural protocols.

I have undertaken this work in two parts: an exegesis and a creative work. The creative work enabled me to research and write a history that is accessible to as wide an audience as possible, achieving my aims of expanding knowledge about the camps; identifying relevant photos, stories and other information; and improving interpretation of this history. The exegesis provided the opportunity to critically examine existing histories and interpretation; and to develop my methodology in response to current best practice.

As indicated in the literature review, despite a lack of published histories of the camps, there was extensive source material, though it varied widely in its usefulness. Earlier histories, and a number of more recent local histories, barely discuss twentieth-century Noongar history or the camps. Instead they celebrate a narrative of progress in which hardworking pioneers triumph over adversity, including challenges posed by the presence of Noongar people. In terms of storytelling, this is the foundational story of “discovery” of Australia by Captain Cook, and settlement by hardworking pioneers.¹ Recent historical work, particularly in other states, and increasingly in Western Australia, offers more nuanced views which incorporate a wider range of perspectives. These represent the growing numbers of people who have expressed their discomfort with Australia’s foundation story by for example, participating in Sorry Day marches, putting pressure on the Prime Minister to apologise to the Stolen Generations, and offering support for land rights, native title and reconciliation.²

Work by anthropologists, archaeologists and architects suggests many useful questions, some of which I have been able to explore in this research. The most detailed sources are personal accounts and writing by Noongar and non-Aboriginal people. While attitudes towards the camps and Noongar people vary widely in these records, without them it would have been difficult to undertake my research, and far more difficult to explore perspectives that counteract official records about the camps. It is a strength of social history that by broadening the focus on sources, many otherwise unknown topics can be explored, and I argue that in cross-cultural histories, an appropriate methodology has greatly expanded this range. They help address my aim of expanding knowledge about the camps, and sourcing stories, photos and other information which may be shared with Noongar families as well as the wider community.

Interpretation plays an important role in communicating stories, and for this reason it is a significant part of my work. As well as representing diverse histories, storytelling through interpretation can shape the future by imagining alternatives to the present situation. My research found that interpretation such as fiction, films and websites, particularly those produced by Noongar people or by others in close contact with Noongar people, provides the most representative histories of Noongar people and the camps. Site interpretation, museum exhibitions and trail guides are the least representative, although there is some good recent work particularly in museums. Noongar language was used by non-Aboriginal people in earlier years to reinforce their Australian identity but more recently has played a role in acknowledging the importance of places to Noongar people. Improving interpretation of the camps is an important aim of this research.

Following culturally appropriate methodology was essential to my research and is a key element in challenging narrative histories of progress. In this, I found Aboriginal Cultural Protocols to be of great assistance. While protocols are only guidelines, they nonetheless help to ensure that the researcher works in a respectful way, seeking guidance from community members and obtaining

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appropriate permissions. Principles and protocols such as the Noongar Consultation Protocol Guidelines offer guidance in obtaining consent; mutual respect; relationship building; acknowledgement of Noongar country, culture, knowledge and lives; women’s and men’s business; early engagement; creating realistic timeframes; cultural protocols; sharing resources; acknowledgment of Noongar country; intellectual property rights; confidentiality; and showing results.

An important aspect of my methodology was asking permission before I included a person’s name, photograph or information in my creative work, even if it had been published previously or was available in a public place. I did this for much of my exegesis as well, although I do not anticipate that it will be so widely accessed. Asking permission in this way added greatly to the work of my research but had many positive benefits. These included showing respect for protocols, meeting new people, building relationships and support for my work, and receiving extra information and photographs which greatly enhanced the finished product. I recommend that future researchers adopt this methodology.

My creative work examines a number of themes, which greatly add to our understanding of the shared histories of our suburbs. These stories are not widely known outside the Noongar community and many Noongar people shared their experiences as a way of making them better known. In this, storytelling forms a strong basis for understanding, dialogue and reconciliation.

The first theme of this work is displacement, examining ways that Noongar people were supplanted from country which was once entirely their own. Legislation, particularly the Aborigines Act, 1905 and the Native Administration Act, 1905–1936, also controlled many aspects of Noongar people’s lives, including where they could live, and who could visit them there. By the 1930s, the number of Noongar camps in Perth had been greatly reduced from those that had existed at the time of colonisation, but some were able to continue until the 1950s and beyond. Despite the constraints, Noongar people found ways of remaining in the metropolitan area. These included camping on privately-owned land, for example, Granny Briggs, and later her daughter Katie Briggs, had an understanding that Noongar people could camp on their land next to Lake
Claremont in Swanbourne. Other camps were on government-owned bushland, such as the municipal endowment land at Jolimont.

A number of factors influenced choice of camp locations. Noongar extended families tended to camp together, either sharing a dwelling or building another one nearby. People who had moved to the city from country areas camped near others from that town, for example, Collie people often camped at the Smelters camp in South Fremantle. Camps were also chosen because of their proximity to work, such as the domestic work that women did for non-Aboriginal families. Water supplies generally came from a non-Aboriginal neighbour or a shallow well dug in the sand; at times water was obtained from nearby sanitary depots or rubbish tips. Camps were located close to bush food such as a swamp with turtles and gilgies; and nearby rubbish tips provided discarded food as well as materials for building camps.

Relationships between people in the camps and those in the wider community included friendship, such as Granny Briggs coming and sitting on the tins to talk to Clara Leyland, who camped in the corner of her property at Lake Claremont, and Donald Gimm playing with Cyril Bodney at Jolimont. There were also work relationships, such as Sammy Broomhall who camped on Mr Neil’s property at Swanbourne and looked after his livestock. Sexual relationships included those described by Corrie Bodney between women in the Swanbourne camps and American sailors in port at Fremantle during World War II, and prostitution portrayed in newspaper accounts of the time. Sometimes those living nearby campaigned to have the camps removed as happened when the Nedlands Road Board decided to demolish the camps at Lake Claremont in 1951.

Life in the camps meant living in structures that included traditional camps made from brush, bush timber and grass tree leaves, still occupied by some people in the 1930s. From the early 1900s tents were also used. By the 1930s, many people lived in tin camps, often with an adjoining brush structure for shade. Food included sheep flaps, freshly-caught fish, vegetables, tinned food and damper. Rations were also available when times were tough. Entertainments included telling stories by the fire, singing, playing cards, marbles, two-up, going to the pictures, and visiting family and friends.
Some people who lived in the camps, such as Corrie Bodney, remember the freedom, others such as Isobel Bropho, the hard times. In the wider community, people remember friendships with children in the camps, and the basic nature of camp accommodation compared to the houses in which they lived.

Together these stories challenge the silences in our histories, unsettling the narrative of progress which has been used to justify the colonisation of Noongar country. An important aspect of this is storytelling, which enables people and groups to hear each other’s perspective.

I hope there will be a number of positive outcomes from my research. The first is a greater knowledge of the shared Noongar and non-Aboriginal histories of Perth’s western suburbs, in particular the Noongar camps. These histories influence our understandings of the past and shape the way we live together today. Secondly, I anticipate that this broader understanding will inform more representative interpretation, particularly heritage site interpretation, museum exhibitions, and trail guides, which often have little or no information about twentieth century Noongar histories. Thirdly, I hope that future researchers will draw on my methodology for culturally appropriate cross-cultural research. For historians, an important element of this is moving away from purely archive-based research, to incorporate both consultation with Noongar communities, and where appropriate, oral histories with Noongar people. In this context, the extra time involved needs to be factored into future research projects. Lastly, with permission I have shared copies of photographs and other information with many people through this project, and some of the material has been lodged with the State Library, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, and local libraries. I hope that the oral histories and photographs collected through this research will continue to be shared and built upon, enlarging our understanding of our shared histories.

Noongar people consulted at the beginning of this project suggested that the outcomes include a book, signage where the camps were once located, and publicly available information on a website such as Kaartdijin Noongar. The book is the creative work completed as part of my PhD, and which I hope to have published. Some of my research, particularly photographs, have been
included in the Kaartdijin Noongar website. A projected follow up is to work with Elders, local governments and other interested groups to obtain funding and install signage where the camps were once located.

Other important work for the future is to continue recording oral histories with Noongar and non-Aboriginal people who remember the camps. This is particularly urgent as many of them are now elderly or have passed on. Likewise, identifying people in historical photographs needs to be done as soon as possible. The State Library of Western Australia’s Storylines project is assisting in this area. Extending my research to write collaborative histories of the camps in other parts of Perth, such as East Perth, Belmont, Bayswater, Bassendean and the Swan Valley would offer local comparisons and build on this project. On a broader scale, future work might explore similar work being undertaken overseas.

Noongar people’s stories are a crucial part of our shared histories. As Whadjuk/Ballardong Noongar researchers Len Collard and Sandra Harben write:

Globally, Aboriginal oral histories will continue to have a profound influence on all our generations to come and they will be the eternal link to Nyungar and other Aboriginal people’s selves, our knowledges, countries, languages, identities, heritages, cultures, and ways of knowing. …

It is time to acknowledge the slaughter, terrorism and displacement imposed on Nyungar by the colonising people. At the same time, it is essential to recognise that Nyungar continue to enjoy much of their boodjar (country), moort (family), katitjin (knowledge) and wangkiny (language) and, therefore, that they have a place in wedjela versions of contemporary as well as early history.⁴

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