SharingStories: Does digital storytelling strengthen identity and enhance community building in remote Indigenous communities?

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This thesis, along with the creative practice, www.sharingstories.org, is submitted in total fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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The aim of this PhD research was to address broad theoretical and creative practice concerns around community building and digital media. The research exists in the context of Indigenous young people living in remote areas creating and sharing their own stories and cultural experience using contemporary digital media often via online communities. One of the key questions was how to facilitate such a practice so that it is creatively dynamic, culturally appropriate, contributes to long-term capacity building and is sustainable.

In the process of exploring how such a creative practice enhances community building and cultural identity, a number of specific social, cultural and practical questions arose. They relate to: training methods and communities; organization and funding; archiving, storage and cultural and intellectual copyright; education both in its traditional form and a contemporary school setting based on curricular learning according to a particular pedagogy; aesthetics in relation to production and reading of images.

Much of this work took place in the educational space and resulted in an exploration of how a digital storytelling practice might best be embedded there. The implementation of innovative digital literacy / digital storytelling practices in an educational setting remains relatively new territory for most educators and even more so in a remote Indigenous context where significant emphasis is placed on conventional numeracy and literacy acquisition. Exploring ways to do this led me to engage with the implementation of a place based learning pedagogy and the development of resources to support the creative media practice. The intersection of those trajectories, i.e. self-representational digital storytelling, digital literacy acquisition and place-based pedagogy in a remote Indigenous educational context is a poorly researched area and required innovation and experimental research. This work and its findings are the outcome of that creative practice.
Signed and dated Statement of Authorship:

"Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

This written thesis describes and responds to the experience and results of the creative practice, both from my own perspective and from the perspective of participants. These multiple perspectives and points of view are included in the writing. I consider the creative practice was collaboration and voices of participants, community members and cultural facilitators are an essential part of the resultant thesis. I hope to contribute to conversations in this space and believe the voices presented here to be an integral aspect of that conversation.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the relevant Ethics Committee."

Signed

By Liz Thompson.
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Importantly I would like to thank the organisations who have supported the realisation of the SharingStories workshops, particularly The Ian Thorpe Fountain for Youth and The Australia Council of the Arts, as well as Adobe, Fujifilm and Budget Car Hire.

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SharingStories: Does self-representational digital storytelling strengthen identity and community building in Indigenous Communities?

Figure 1: John Darraga Watson at Honeymoon Springs with his grandson Mervin. Jarlmandanah, Kimberley.

The aim of this PhD research was to address broad theoretical and creative practice concerns around community building and digital media. The research exists in the context of Indigenous young people living in remote areas creating their own stories using contemporary digital media, and sharing some of that content via online communities. One of the key questions was how to establish such a practice within a creatively dynamic, culturally appropriate framework, which contributed to long-term, self-sustaining, capacity building.

The research inquiry arose in the context of work I had been performing with Indigenous communities. I have worked as a photographer, filmmaker, radio producer and writer for over twenty five years, often writing stories about the experience of marginalised communities, in an endeavour to extend their voices into the media space. In recent years I have focused on collaborating at a deeper level as well as transferring media tools to communities, such that they have the capacity to articulate and share their own experiences should that be their desire. For several years I have
collaborated with Indigenous communities in the creation of a series of bilingual traditional storybooks called *Sharing Our Stories*. Throughout this process I have worked closely with young people and Elders for extended periods. Several of these communities asked me to return to help teach their young people how to work with, and utilise, digital media.

These requests, which came from community Elders and leaders, grew from a number of concerns which included: the rate at which cultural knowledge and practice is being lost; the desire for a cultural archiving process to be established; the need for young people to be engaged in creative practices which interest and excite them; the wish to use digital media to facilitate self-expression with a capacity to communicate in a broad social context, and, to become skilled in the context of digital media as a way to enhance employment opportunities. As a result I sat down (worked) with the relevant Elders and began to develop a framework for the implementation of digital storytelling workshops in their remote communities. We identified the desired outcome to be a self-sustaining digital storytelling practice in which young people were able to create their own stories, upload some of that content on the Internet to share with a broader community, thus developing not only a voice and skills for themselves and their communities, but also creating connections and relationships with other young people from a diverse range of backgrounds. In conjunction with these desired outcomes was the hope that these skills might be passed on from workshop participants to other members of the community and that the project might serve to support potential employment.

This framework led to the formulation and implementation of the project now known as SharingStories. There were several stages involved in establishing SharingStories which has spanned five years and continues to evolve: firstly, the implementation of intensive training workshops in which young Indigenous participants in remote areas are taught to use equipment required to create and document their own stories; secondly, the recording and creation of digital stories or content creation; thirdly, the development of a website and online platform to host the sharing of selected media; and
fourthly, establishing dialogue in relation to content between participating communities and the viewing public. Another significant aspect of this research was the recognition of a need for, and direct engagement with, the development of resources to support a self-representational digital storytelling practice in the remote Indigenous educational space. My research and creative practice has taken place within the context of SharingStories, a self-representational digital storytelling program, now implemented in eleven remote Indigenous Australian communities. This thesis relates largely to work with Jilkminggan and Wugularr communities in NT and Jarlmadangah community in WA.

The SharingStories workshops were primarily funded by The Ian Thorpe Fountain for Youth and the Australia Council for the Arts with additional support from Adobe and product support from various corporates and, on three occasions, schools themselves. The work has relied largely on the generosity of program sponsors and supporters. While not addressed directly in this thesis, the process of raising funds and assistance for the workshop program has required a significant amount of time and effort.

In the process of exploring how such a creative practice enhances community building and cultural identity, a number of specific social, cultural and practical questions arose. They relate to: training methods and communities; organization and funding; archiving and cultural and intellectual copyright; education both in its traditional form and in a contemporary school setting based on curricular learning according to a particular pedagogy; and aesthetics in relation to production and reading of images, which includes the relation of form to content. These are questions which this thesis addresses.

In terms of research methodology, for the action research of this project, at each site, alongside recording my own observations, I conducted evaluation and research interviews with principles, teachers, assistant

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1 Lockhart River and Palm Island in Qld, Kalkarindji, Manyallaluk, Wugularr, Jilkminggan, Maningrida and Galiwin’ku in NT, Bidyadanga and Jarlmadangah in WA, Wilcannia in NSW.
teachers, cultural facilitators, Elders, workshop facilitators and participants. These enquiries explored: professional and educational experience and perspective of the program; assessment regarding student engagement with the practice as well as immediate and personal experiences of all those involved in the practice in relation to the issues outlined and questions raised in this thesis. SharingStories facilitators began to collate data on attendance which, in many instances, increased during the course of the workshops, we also discussed student outcomes with teaching staff and when relevant and appropriate compared these with the same students historical engagement and achievement in the school environment. The fifteen SharingStories paid facilitators and five volunteer facilitators -- who worked with me during the period of this research, and whose skills sets included a wide range of arts practices, media production, teaching and curriculum development and web design and development -- were selected because they were skilled practitioners and often had experience working in a remote Indigenous context and in an intensive workshop environment. I also conducted interviews with community members after the presentations or screenings of students’ work. These were used to help determine community perspectives on the program outcomes and the reflections of parents on their own children’s engagement as well as their views on the methodology of the SharingStories ‘place based learning’ approach and acquisition of digital literacies and storytelling skills.

The public impact of media produced by workshop participants was evaluated and assessed through a mixture of online comments as well as public and community responses to the content in a variety of contexts. These included formal and informal presentations through which I garnered feedback from Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, researchers as well as a wide range of organisations and government departments. In addition I utilised festival screenings, awards and requests for inclusion of the work in public forums and events as an indicator to determine the manner in which the content communicated to the broader public.

In referencing those Indigenous people with whom I have spoken, I have identified them according to their own preferences, whenever possible,
in terms of clan, Elder, community, ceremonial or cultural title. These vary as relationships with these identifiers change from place to place and individual to individual and it was not appropriate to establish or impose a generic formula for this purpose. In the instance of citations I have, when appropriate, included a reference to the work of individuals quoted. Whilst I acknowledge that none of those whose voices form part of this work are to be reduced simply to members of a clan, community, chairmen or women, professors, researchers, writers or activists, I have elected to identify them in relation to aspects of themselves that I, or they, have deemed most relevant to this particular work.

As I have indicated, this project involves an action research methodology. I have engaged actively in effecting or responding to the issues, which have arisen in the context of my own work and creative practice. The Creative Arts research project, which has resulted from that engagement, is located at the intersection of various disciplines including Media Studies, Cultural Studies, Indigenous Studies and Education. I am not an expert in these fields and approach them from the position of creative artist working as documentary filmmaker; audio arts radio feature producer and photographer in the digital domain. My work has long been engaged in Indigenous Cultural and Educational inquiry. In the context of this research and the facilitation of self-representational digital storytelling in remote Indigenous communities, my creative practice and action research has intersected with each of the above disciplines. Extensive reading in these fields has supported my analytical engagement with both my practice and the primary research material. The primary research resulting from my work speaks to these disciplines.

Alongside the creative practice as research, SharingStories² I am presenting the research in six chapters. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction and outlines the emergence of Indigenous media organisations, and the relevance of locally produced, community-based media practice. Chapter II explores digital storytelling creative practice as a means of returning to

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² www.sharingstories.org
Country, supporting intergenerational transmission and rebuilding stories in young people in the context of cultural archive, custodianship and copyright and digital media. Chapter III considers emergent forms and interpretations in the context of Indigenous aesthetics. It explores identifications and representations in relation to the cultural consensus established through increasingly monopolised mainstream media channels and provides examples of digital stories created by young people who participate in the rewriting of historical and political perspectives or accounts, stories which relate to everyday interests and activities and stories which combine traditional and contemporary cultural experience. Chapter IV examines a digital storytelling practice in educational environments, why I chose to work in that space and issues of infrastructure, Internet access, permissions and releases, educational agendas and filters. Chapter V investigates the history of educational pedagogy and culturally relevant, ‘both-ways’, learning and how they relate to the proposed practice. Chapter VI provides a potential framework, and sample resources, for implementation of a digital storytelling practice in a remote educational context and demonstrates why I consider that such a practice, if well implemented and executed, has the potential to make a significant contribution to learning and engagement for Indigenous young people in the school environment.

This PhD’s creative practice-as-research approach is conducted within a Media Arts academic context. The response to the inquiry has taken place in two parts. The first relates to the practice of working collaboratively with Indigenous communities to support independent digital storytelling and the sharing of those stories through an online platform as outlined. The next relates to the production of this written thesis, which describes and responds to the experience and results of the creative practice, both from my perspective and from the perspective of participants. These multiple perspectives and points of view are included in the writing. As the possibility for self-representation underpins the enquiry, and the creative

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3 I have made the decision to capitalise C in the term Country throughout to indicate the significance and distinctiveness of an Indigenous understanding of the term.
4 All the URL links presented in this work which pertain to SharingStories were retrieved in October 2012.
practice was defined by collaboration, the voices of participants, community members and cultural facilitators, are embedded in the thesis. This writing explores a form that responds to questions in academic fields in ways which I consider to be both an appropriate and necessary part of collaborative work with Indigenous communities. I consider the context of creative practice as research, which sits in interdisciplinary fields, an appropriate environment for such a format. This approach supports the essential qualities of innovation and experimentation in research. While many media practices exist in remote Indigenous contexts, and a growing body of research is evolving around them, my research led me into the educational space (for reasons explained in Chapter IV). The implementation of innovative digital literacies in an educational setting remains relatively new territory for most educators. Exploring ways to do this effectively in a remote Indigenous educational context, through a self-representational digital storytelling practice, led me to engage with the implementation of a place-based learning pedagogy and necessitated the development of innovative resources to support the practice. The intersection of those trajectories – that is, self-representational digital storytelling, digital literacy acquisition and place-based pedagogy in a remote Indigenous educational context requires innovation and experimental research. The potent intersection that exists between these practices remains an extremely underdeveloped and poorly researched field of knowledge.

In conclusion, this project has engaged in action research and creative practice to explore the intersection of community action, digital media practices, and theories of storytelling and archiving. My hope is that this work will contribute to the specific communities involved and broader knowledge about digital culture and community building. I hope to contribute to conversations in this space and believe the voices presented here to be an integral aspect of that conversation.
Chapter I Introduction

Historical Background

This chapter outlines the establishment of various Indigenous organisations in the media production landscape and their current capacities to facilitate the creation and distribution of digital stories by remote Indigenous communities. It identifies government initiatives to support that practice and issues therein. I look at the manner in which mainstream media impacts on the construction of representations and possible identifications. I reference the emergence of the World Wide Web and an online platform as a potentially transformative environment in terms of democratizing those representations. I also reference some of the central issues and enquiries that are inextricably bound in that potential, particularly in relation to Indigenous media production.

When American anthropologist Eric Michaels was invited to Australia by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) to study the impact of television on the Warlpiri community between 1982 and 1986, media representations of Indigenous life and culture were predominantly created by non-Indigenous media producers. While
federal funding had supported the creation of the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA), which broadcast Aboriginal radio, and was to commence production of film and music in subsequent years, the launch of AUSSAT satellite system in 1985 meant free to air television and radio became available in an increasing number of remote Indigenous communities. Video Home System (VHS) cassette tapes were also prevalent and Europeans, according to Michaels, fed predominantly violent action films into communities, making considerable profits and controlling content on the basis of what they determined Indigenous viewers wanted to watch. On the contrary, Michaels believed there was a much greater interest in watching locally produced VHS tapes depicting community-based events which were often circulated until they fell apart (Michaels 1994 [1986c]).

Neil Turner, who was working with the Ernabella Video Project in the early 1990s, supports this view suggesting the studio at Ernabella is packed every work day with people watching favorite programs, and VHS copies of more than fifty edited productions in Pitjantjatjara language are readily available for sale. Inma tapes especially sell well locally and our annual revenue from video sales is around $10,000, mostly at $30 or $40 a copy. (Turner 1992: 45)

At the time Michaels arrived in the Central Australian community of Yuendumu, the Warlpiri people living there were on the cusp of broadcasting their own content locally. Community members were beginning to experiment with locally produced media and, with assistance from Michaels, went on to create Warlpiri Media, now known as PAW (incorporating Pintubi, Anmatyerr, and Warlpiri communities) Media Inc. Shortly after the establishment of Warlpiri media, the community at Ernabella, with assistance from Turner, created ‘Ernabella Video and TV’, (subsequently called Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara Media [PY Media]); both organisations were broadcasting unlicensed.

At this time there were some moves being made by the government to support local content production, even though the state had no licensing category for small-scale operations like those at Yuendumu and Ernabella. Something which anthropologist Faye Ginsburg suggests was indicative of
“an ambivalent governmental stance toward Aboriginal initiatives, despite the commitment to Aboriginal self-determination in policy rhetoric” (Ginsburg 1993: 557-578). The Department of Aboriginal Affairs initiated the Broadcasting in Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS) in 1987, which saw local studios established and equipped with technology in 103 remote Indigenous communities. The intention was that communities would replace the culturally offensive material on free to air television “with their own ‘culturally appropriate’” content produced within the BRACS framework. That content could “be broadcast on BRACS and received within a five-kilometer radius of the community” (Deger 2006: 4). BRACS was relatively unsuccessful and historically the scheme has been roundly criticized for lack of community consultation, failing to provide the necessary technical support and lack of provision for “repairs, upgrades, suitable buildings, electricity, or cassettes, all of which are necessary for the development of local media production” (Ginsburg 1993a: 567). These shortcomings were alleviated to some extent in the late 1980s when Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA) provided assistance to twenty eight BRACS communities. Irrunytju Media grew out of a BRACS initiative supported by Ernabella Video and was then named Ngaanyatjarra Media. Ngaanyatjarra media is now supporting fourteen BRACS communities within the Ngaanyatjarra Lands and southeast Australia. Like Paw and PY Media, the organization is an extremely active nucleus in the remote, community based, media production landscape (Kral 2010c).

Imparja, the private commercial station belonging to CAAMA, began broadcasting in 1988. Driven by the need to raise advertising revenue and therefore relying on non-Indigenous viewers who were identified as greater consumers of advertised products, Imparja’s programming was made up almost exclusively of non-Indigenous content. Researcher Philip Batty, who works closely with the communities, material culture and history of Central Australian Aboriginal people, wrote of a Nigerian visitor to Imparja who was amazed to learn that the federal government had given the local Aboriginal people more than $18 million to set up and run Imparja over three years, but even more perplexed to discover that the station only employed four Aboriginal people (at the time) out of a total staff of
thirty two and that Imparja’s programming was 98% white! (Batty 1992: 18 in Ginsburg 1993a: 570)

In 1998 PY Media, PAW Media, Pilbara and Kimberley Aboriginal Media Association (PAKAM) and Ngaanyatjarra Media formed Indigenous Community Television (ICTV) to support the distribution of local community-based media production, usually in local languages; it was responsible for receiving and retransmitting media to over 151 remote communities. Imparja fulfilled their Indigenous content requirements by allocating their second channel, Channel 31, to ICTV prior to 2007. The arrival of National Indigenous Television (NITV) in 2007, which broadcasts almost exclusively in English, saw a “turning off of ICTV to all the remote communities accessing it and contributing to local productions as a result of diversion of government funding” (Rennie & Featherstone 2008 in Kral 2010c: 4). Channel 31 also went to NITV and since 2009 ICTV has been using Westlink, a WA government channel, as a weekend service. Whilst NITV was theoretically set up to do what Imparja was unable to do under a commercial arrangement, that is to support production and to ensure distribution of Indigenous content, this has not been well demonstrated. Daniel Featherstone, Project/policy officer for the Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA)\(^5\) argues that NITV, rather than create media “that has come from grassroots of Indigenous community and lifestyle”, has instead, broadcast game shows, sports, beauty pageants, music programs, which are very, very similar to what you’d see on a commercial TV except that they are with Indigenous people presenting. So the model has been very much based on the sort of content they think a mainstream audience will find palatable rather than challenging that whole model of television and looking at something that has come much more from grassroots of Indigenous community and lifestyle.\(^6\) (Daniel Featherstone, pers. comm. Alice Springs 2012)

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6 The kind of media Featherstone alludes to as ‘coming from the grassroots of Indigenous society and lifestyle’ is relevant to the production of media as referenced by Fry and Willis ([1989] 1994: 653 when they suggested that “Resistance to ethnocide is not seen as trying to simply defend an existent cultural identity but the forging of a new one which rejects the models sought to be imposed”. In the context of radio, television and video, they argued that media production had become part of a “cultural strategy” and that such media had the
According to Daniel Featherstone and Rita Catriona, Manager of ICTV, very little of the approximately $80 million dollars that has gone to NITV has been used to support remote media producers. This is a significant issue, particularly in the context of the extremely small budgets generally secured by remote media organizations. Capacity for local, community-based media production has been further aggravated by the fact that most funding for the remote media sector comes primarily through the Indigenous Broadcasting Program under the Department of Broadband Communications and Digital Economy which, in 2006, reduced funding to radio only and did not allow for production in any other medium:

video, music, IT, any of the new convergent media weren’t to be funded, neither were technical services able to be funded. As a result remote media services have been quite hamstrung in their capacity to get out to communities, and they have enormous coverage. (Daniel Featherstone, pers. comm. Alice Springs, 2012)

This means that any form of video production has to come from other funding sources or be delivered by other organizations. Distribution of anything produced from the grassroots of Indigenous community and lifestyle is going to be further impacted with the roll out of the National Broadband Network (NBN) and the implications of the much touted ‘direct to home’ capacity. With the digital switch-over that is part of the NBN, analog television broadcasting will be switched off at the end of 2013 and communities will, according to Daniel Featherstone, “lose the ability to do community broadcasting in the way they have been set up under the BRACS program since 1987” (Pers. comm, Alice Springs 2012). Every house will have a satellite station on the roof as part of a ‘direct to home’ model, “all collecting the same services from the VAST (Viewer Access Satellite Television) digital satellite, so what’s being lost is that locally specific content distribution” (Featherstone, pers. comm. Alice Springs 2012). This is capacity to “break the circuit of producing products for circulation and consumption within the culture of dominance”.

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7 According to Featherstone, ICTV secured $20,000 in 2006 after five years of operation for a basic play out system and has subsequently received about $40,000 annually. It wasn’t until 2012 that ICTV received $400,000, which finally allowed the organization to support three staff.

8 The National Broadband Network (NBN) is a national, open-access data network under development in Australia.
relevant, not only from the point of view of broadcasting content available for public viewing, it also limits a community’s capacity to manage and control viewing of restricted content. Whilst numerous communities have been contributing to Indigenous community television as a way of sharing content. Some material has been produced which isn’t intended for a national audience but rather only for local or regional audiences, as well as content intended only for viewing in private sessions.

In addition the VAST satellite solution is a fast down, slow up model, twelve megabyte down per second, one megabyte up per second, which assumes Indigenous people are consumers of content but not necessarily producers. Large numbers of communities exist who want to share content, a practice that will be slow and expensive under the NBN model. The NBN model does not currently support strategies which were previously put in place by Indigenous people to manage the impact of television and video including capacity for “control of incoming television signals; control of self-representation through local video production in local languages” (Langton 2003: 124) and distribution of that media. Neither does government funding does effectively support Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMOs) in the implementation of any kind of broad or comprehensive capacity for self-representational media production.

The World Wide Web

Until relatively recently, if a community was either not part of the established networks (and often even if they were), or had no independent infrastructure for the purpose of community-based media production, there was little capacity to create or distribute self representational media. Digital media, social media, and the online platform have given rise to new possibilities of authorship and distribution.

The shift from the broadcast to the interactive era, from analogue to digital technologies, from expert/professional production to DIY or 'consumer generated' content – from 'read-only' to 'read-and-write' media for consumers as well as professionals” (Hartley 2008: 24)

has significantly altered the landscape in terms of capacity to create and
distribute self-representational media. However there remain a myriad of issues to be addressed in the context of the creative practice. Questions of access, inclusion, ownership, copyright, distribution, education and identity politics are some of those that exist within the read/write era. It is in these spaces my research sits.

Many, like John Hartley, Professor of Cultural Science at Curtin University, believe the Internet has significantly democratized the media space. Others are much more skeptical regarding “loose language that opines the Internet as “immensely” or “inherently” democratic” (Schuler 2004: 70 in Guins 2008: 76). Certainly net neutrality is a contentious issue, and its democratic potential is in danger of being hijacked by commercial interest and government Internet censorship agendas. David Buckingham, a leading international researcher in the field of media education, argues that ‘transcendent’ notions of technology as a means to empowerment and the idea that the Internet offers “a medium for social awakening” are flawed, failing to take into account “the undemocratic tendencies of many online communities” (Buckingham 2008: 14). Aspects of this critique relate to what is often referred to as the ‘digital divide’ seen as existing, between the technology rich and the technology poor, between and within societies. Others argue concepts like digital divides are flawed, because of the set of assumptions on which they are based, that is, a general assumption by the ‘wired’ world that inclusion in the digital realm is universally desired. Those who speak of a digital divide invariably express concern for those they believe to be living on the wrong side of it. Faye Ginsburg, who has written widely on the use of, and adaptation to, media in remote Indigenous communities, questions “First world Illusions,” in relation to the ubiquity of the Internet (Ginsburg 2008: 289). Ideas of a digital divide spawn “neo-developmentalist language that assumes that privileged cultural enclaves, with little or no access to digital resources – from the South Bronx to the global South – are simply waiting endlessly to catch up with the privileged west” (Ginsburg 2008: 290). This inscription onto the world is dependent upon a unilineal perspective, an age of “forward march, reason-guided
progress, describing the Other as outdated” (Bauman 1994: 104), which is often neither appropriate nor true. In the words of Jampinjinpa, a senior man at Yuendumu, testifying to the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, “that’s why Aboriginal people got their land back, to keep away from European things. Now the government’s chasing after us with satellites” (Michaels 1994 [1987b]: 64). Michaels suggested there was “a motivated, articulate, and general concern about the possible unwanted consequences of television, especially among senior Aborigines and local Indigenous educators” (Ginsburg 1993b: 371). Neil Turner, Manager at Pilbara and Kimberley Aboriginal Media (PAKAM), clearly recounts a similar concern amongst the community at Ernabella who, he suggests, feared that satellite programs in English would devalue Aboriginal language and culture, especially in the eyes of the children. They worried too about the effect of European values, especially romantic and sexual mores as portrayed on hire videos, on their children and already disintegrating traditional social observances of sexual segregation of young people. (Turner 1992: 44)

According to Ginsburg “by the mid-1980s in Central Australia, families were leaving settlements such as Yuendumu to keep their children from being exposed to television” (Ginsburg 1993a: 565). 10

No doubt there are those, like Jampinjinpa, who would prefer to remain beyond the reach of the ‘wired world’. However, in the early twenty first century, and within the context of this research, in all the remote Indigenous communities in which I have worked, the younger generation were almost all using mobile phones, mostly for the purpose of games and texting, and were keen to engage with technology at school and at home. The older generation who worked with SharingStories as cultural teachers/facilitators and translators, assisting with the story telling processes in numerous ways, were generally less interested in engaging with computer technology and the Internet but frequently expressed a desire for their own children to learn

9 Bauman is referring here to the work of Johannes Fabian in ‘Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object’ 1983, in which Fabian discusses what he calls the ‘allochronic distancing device’ as a practice of “constructing the Other (defining the Other) in a way that a priori decides its inferior and, indeed, transient and (until disappearance) illegitimate status”. (Bauman 1994: 104)
10 Personal communication between Faye Ginsburg and anthropologist, Francoise Dussart, who was living at Yundumu at the time. (Ginsburg 1993a: 565)
how to use it, believing it to be an important medium for participation, opportunity and self-representation.

We want them (young people) to learn how to use computers and video cameras. This will be good for them if they want to get work in media in the future. We want our children to be able to do the things that children in the cities get to do. Our views and our voice don’t usually get heard and this project (SharingStories) would help us to change that. (William Watson, Jarlmadangah Burru Chairperson, pers. comm. Jarlmadangah 2009)

Djuŋadjunṉa Yunupiṉu, a dalkarramirri (ceremonial ritual specialist) of Yirritja clan groups suggests that through the use of technology,

the children are learning both ways, they are trying to express from their own heritage, from their own culture, from their own land their stories and trying to make a bridge between themselves and other communities with technology. Through that technology they are sharing and telling who they are. (Pers. comm. Galiwin’ku, Elcho Island 2010)

It should be noted, that these articulations from Elders do not come without regular lament regarding the ‘rubbish’ they perceive their children watching on television and the video games they endlessly play on their phones,

Kids are more interested in the video games and looking at the movies. That’s all they just about do now and they talk like American style, ‘How you going there man’, and this and that. They using language that comes from the video. Well I really don’t feel much good about it but what can you do about it, now all these things are coming out and that sort of cuts everything out, like language. They don’t listen to it. (Micky Coulthard, Adnyamathanha Elder, pers. comm. Flinders Ranges, SA 2009)

As David Vaidiveloo, director of Community Prophets -- a media entertainment and social justice agency 11 -- suggested when interviewed regarding UsMob, an interactive digital project created in collaboration with the Arrernte Aboriginal young people from Hidden Valley (a camp outside Alice Springs), 12 that he “was particularly concerned to develop an alternative to the glut of single shooter games online and the constant diet of

12 UsMob allows users to “interact with the challenges and daily lives of kids from the camp” (Ginsburg 2008: 297).
violence, competition and destruction that characterize the games they were (Indigenous young people) exposed to in town” (Ginsburg 2008: 297).

From the perspective of many of the Elders and cultural facilitators involved in this research, there is clearly not a wholesale desire to accommodate all the influences of modern media, as Micky Coulthard clearly indicates. However, one of the most consistent ideas expressed to me was the hope that the acquisition of new media skills by young people will mean they have a capacity to ‘document and hold’ culture for future generations as well as capacity to counter mainstream media interpretations of their lives. Indigenous community members with whom I have worked and dialogued extensively over the last decade, continuously express the wish to see their own young people skilled up to produce media which reflects local concerns and issues. In addition they express a desire to see the local, community based production of media which counters what Annette Hamilton identified as the ‘national imaginary’, a term used “to describe the means by which contemporary nation-states constitute ‘imagined communities’ through the circulation of televisual images even more than print media” (Hamilton 1990 in Ginsburg 1993a: 561).

National Imaginaries

Twenty years ago well-known Indigenous scholar Marcia Langton wrote on the politics and aesthetics of filmmaking by and about Aboriginal people, for the Australian Film Commission (AFC). She suggested that the work of Indigenous media organizations was filling in “the empty place which most white filmmakers have circumscribed with their mumbo jumbo, landscape and fauna pastiches” (Langton 1993: 17). “The most dense relationship is not between actual people” suggests Langton, “but between white Australians and the symbols (of Aboriginality) created by their predecessors. Australians do not know and relate to Aboriginal people. They relate to stories told by former colonists”. These discourses are now so dense argues Martin Nakata, Chair of Australian Indigenous Education and

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13 Drawing on ideas from Benedict Anderson, Edward Said and Jacques Lacan, Hamilton uses the term to describe the means by which contemporary nation-states constitute ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983) through the circulation of televisual images even more than the print media. (Ginsburg 1993a: 561)
director of Nura Gili, Indigenous studies unit at University of NSW, that “it is very hard to make out whether one speaks from within them, or whether one can speak outside of them, or whether one can speak at all without them” (Nakata 2003: 134). The mumbo jumbo pastiches, and, more recently, the almost singular focus on abuse and dysfunction that dominates mainstream media representations of Indigenous Australia, greatly shapes the broader public’s perspective and the subsequent construction of the particular and varied myths of ‘Aboriginality’. “In our media saturated society the reported crisis in Indigenous communities has become a public spectacle of relentless horror (Langton 2008a)” (Slater 2008: 1). Marcia Langton has called this public spectacle, the ‘Aboriginal reality show’, a media exercise in the use of “suffering as a kind of visual and intellectual pornography” (Langton 2008a: 1).14

These constructs, however ill informed or limited and for whatever purpose they are perpetrated or utilized -- which is, from Langton’s perspective, to “shift attention away from everyday lived crisis that many Aboriginal people endure” (Langton 2008a: 1) -- inevitably interact with the establishment of a particular set of identifications for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. “Identities, whether individual or collective, are not unitary wholes cut out of a single cloth, they are constructed in action, using whatever cultural and life material is at hand” (Weber & Mitchell 2008: 43). Significant ‘national imaginaries’ are developed in response to media influences and the ‘Aboriginal reality-show’ (Langton 2008: 1) that has replaced the flora and fauna pastiches of the 1980s. These constructs of imagined communities fold back into the ‘bricolage’15 of available cultural material in terms of identity construction for Indigenous people, even if that is in the form of an active rejection of such discourses.

14 Langton speaks about the use of this suffering as a kind of visual and intellectual pornography in Australian media and public debates in reference to an essay by Jean Baudrillard which, generated international controversy when he described in his essay ‘War Porn’, the way in which images from Abu Graib prison in Iraq and other ‘consensual and televisual’ violence were used in the aftermath to September 11, 2001. (Baudrillard 2005 in Langton 2008: 1)

15 Claude Levi Strauss’s notion of bricolage has been used by many researchers in the context of assemblage of elements from a variety of sources, which are re-contextualised and reorganised in the creation and defining of identities.
The impact of stories in the media relating to Indigenous issues has been discussed in a number of the digital story telling workshops I have facilitated in remote Indigenous communities in recent years. On leaving to facilitate a workshop in Wilcannia NSW, we were warned by numerous non-Indigenous people to wear bulletproof vests or to drive straight through Wilcannia, by stopping, it was suggested, we almost certainly risked our valuables if not our lives. I was told this was the result of a television news story produced years ago by Ray Martin, Channel 7. Some ten years later community members expressed considerable anger in relation to the impact. They believe the story, broadcast on prime time television, was detrimental to their well being, as was certainly evidenced by those warnings we received which were, in fact, completely unfounded. These are not uncommonly held sentiments as, L McKain West, Chairperson of Warburton, home of NY Media has said, “[i]t’s not up to someone else to show the way we are or control how we are seen. We are trying to do this ourselves in our work. We are watching too. (L McKain West, Wilurarra Creative 2010: 39).

Or as author and social activist bell hooks argues:

Stereotypes, however inaccurate, are one form of representation. Like fictions, they are created to serve as substitutions, standing in for what is real. They are not to tell it like it is but to invite and encourage pretense. They are a fantasy, a projection onto the other that makes them less threatening. Stereotypes abound when there is distance. (hooks 1992: 96)

Self-representational digital story telling has the capacity to convey perspectives which offer an alternative to the stereotypes, created to serve as substitutions for what is real.

Part of the mumbo jumbo, of which Langton spoke and which continues to be perpetrated in new forms, is the construct that Aboriginal people can be reasonably represented by some kind of generic national Aboriginality: “The term ‘Aboriginal’, and the colonial and post colonial implications of the concept, began to take shape in Australia to some extent in 1770, but more so in 1788” (Langton 2003: 118). There was no ‘Aboriginal’ identity prior to colonization:
it was the white settlers who lumped various Indigenous peoples under the homogenizing name of ‘Aborigines’, then brought into being the categories ‘Aboriginal history’, ‘Aboriginal culture’ ‘Aboriginal experience’ and ‘Aboriginal conditions’. (Nicoll 1993: 709)

Similarly, Martin Nakata speaks for the people of the Torres Strait when he says that the imposition of “a single name for all the islands effectively silenced territorial boundaries and political affiliations between and among the different tribal groups of the various islands…and the islander is now the all encompassing ‘Torres Strait Islander” (Nakata 2003: 133).

Indigenous communities had their own system of identifications according to their own Law, which determined language, Country, songs, stories, dances and ceremonial process. This cultural specificity continues to connect people to Country and place. On the contrary, through media produced about the ‘Aboriginal experience’ or more commonly today, the ‘Aboriginal problem’, nation states like Australia “increasingly constitute their ‘imagined communities’”. (Anderson 1983 in Ginsburg 1993: 367)

Cultural Consensus and Lifestyle Options

Media, in this context, is a myth-making device, a mechanism, which, in the face of public consumption of its mythology, establishes the dominant “Sources and repositories of common sense and conventions of seeing and knowing” (Fiske & Hartley 2003 [1978]: 64-66, in Hartley 2009: 21). As a result it is predominantly mainstream media which offers diverse models of lifestyle and of the self” (Weber & Mitchell 2008: 43-44). Weber and Mitchell argue, identity construction is indeed, like bricolage and the lifestyle market place plays a significant part in terms of dictating what material is at hand. While consumers participate in determining that which is offered in the ‘lifestyle’ market place, a significant aspect of the shaping of lifestyles on offer is determined by the corporate sector. This occurs both through persuasive texts in the form of product advertising and the presentation of particular role models that either sell or embody those products and the lifestyles they afford. Television has functioned as a sense-making system, both verbal and visual. Prescriptive media does much to “articulate a cultural
consensus…implicate individuals in the cultural value-system…celebrate the doings of cultural representatives…transmit a sense of cultural membership” (Fiske & Hartley 2003 [1978]: 66-67 in Hartley 2009: 22). What Hartley and Fiske identified as the bardic ‘function’ of popular television works to ‘sing the praises’ of the dominant culture and its value systems (Hartley 2009: 22). Or, as Annette Hamilton suggests, “from the viewpoint of the emergent visual-aural culture of the twenty-first century, ‘what’s on’ creates the context for what is known and hence finally for what ‘is’”. (Hamilton 1993 in Langton 1993: 5)

For Indigenous communities these cultural value systems existed in a traditional setting with great specificity in a multifaceted and complex system of Law and kinship obligations. Independent systems of governance and Law as laid down by the great ancestral Creation Spirits have provided, and continue to provide for many communities, a powerful and incontrovertible political, social and spiritual system and code for living. In contrast “European mass media with its homogenized messages transmitted from a central source are at odds with Aboriginal information patterns” (Molnar 1989: 8 in Ginsburg 1993a: 569). In a cultural space where traditional systems of identification spanning tens of thousands of years have been significantly undermined in just over 200, there is inevitably a particular vulnerability inherent in the making of identifications in the context of creating a meaningful sense of membership. Media has had, and continues to have, considerable influence on the way in which identifications or lifestyles are constructed by youth whose traditional cultural framework has been subject to profound trauma. This vulnerability is intensified by the onslaught of negative media representations in which Indigenous young people invariably see themselves within a narrative of dysfunction and despair. If the means to accessing power as prescribed through mainstream media is to begin developing identifications with mythologies endorsed or celebrated according to the ‘cultural consensus’ (Fiske & Hartley 1978 in Hartley 2009: 22) then the implications for identity construction for Indigenous young people are profound. Michaels identifies this prescription as demise of culture in a period of ‘ultra-merchandise’, a substitution of ‘lifestyle’ for culture. In an Indigenous context:
Culture – a learned, inherited tradition – is superseded by a borrowed or gratuitous model, what your parents and grandparents taught you didn’t offer much choice about membership. Lifestyles are, by contrast, assemblages of commodified symbols, operating in concern as packages that can be bought, sold, traded, or lost. The word proves unnervingly durable, serving to describe housing, automobiles, restaurants, clothes, things you wear, things that wear you – most strikingly, both ‘lifestyle condoms’ for men and, for women ‘sanitary napkins that ‘fit your lifestyle’. (Michaels 1994 [1987]: 119-121)

As Weber and Mitchell suggest, “For many young people, especially in industrialised parts of the world, digital media are significant modalities through which they are seeking, consciously or unconsciously, the answers to identity questions” (Weber & Mitchell 2008: 26). Digital media and the online environment is potentially an environment through which Indigenous young people can appear, inscribe their own stories, participate, can render visible “[I]ndigenous cultural and historical realities to themselves and the broader societies that have stereotyped or denied them” (Ginsburg 1993b: 365-382). There can be no doubt that the most relevant representations are likely to result “If we take community rather than Aboriginality to be the subject and make ‘local’ the qualifier, only then do we avoid the traps of racism and paternalism in our rhetoric and practice today” (Michaels 1994 [1986]: 43). A local, community based media production works to contradict imagined communities, to create truths which stand in opposition to the unimaginative ‘national imaginary’.

Figure 3: Liz Thompson assisting Jessica Malarra in creation of a story about the Djulpan Song Series with Djuŋadjuŋa Yunupiŋu. Galiwin’ku, Elcho Island.
Chapter II  Returning to Country: Where the Stories Live

Knowledge management: holding traditional knowledge in the digital realm

In this Chapter I will discuss how digital storytelling as creative practice supports a returning to Country, where often the stories to be told ‘live’,\(^{16}\) and how that returning contributes to and activates intergenerational transmission. I will address why these processes are important in relation to the creation of digital cultural archives which contribute to a ‘holding of story’ for future generations as well as the need to ensure knowledge is managed according to protocol such that those efforts to ‘hold culture’ do not undermine the very systems they endeavour to protect (Christie 2008).

There are differences of opinion in relation to transferring stories to media repositories, both amongst senior Indigenous leaders, and non-Indigenous researchers, facilitators and organizations working in the realm of cultural maintenance or holding traditional knowledge. Linguist, educator and researcher Michael Christie, referring to the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC)\(^{17}\) scoping project on Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (Desert Knowledge), remarked that,

The group leader pointed out after some months that she was surprised that a fight had not yet broken out between those members of the group who were ‘sharers’ (i.e., those who were keen for desert knowledge to be shared as equitably and efficiently as possible in the interests of all) and those who were ‘protectors’ (who were keen for knowledge owners to keep their knowledge to themselves until they were completely convinced of the justice and profitability of the access and benefit of sharing arrangements they were being offered). (Christie 2008: 283)

Part of this discourse clearly relates to subsequent access to that knowledge -- how it is managed, cared for, and/or distributed. The management of content in the media realm has always been, and remains, a

\(^{16}\) The stories and songs left by the creation ancestors live, are alive in, the Country to which they belong.
complex one for Indigenous and non-Indigenous content producers and digital storytelling and online distribution intensify those complexities.

There are differing perspectives on storing culture in new technologies. The incorporation of aspects of their knowledge system in a digitised CD Rom format, ‘Maguta Aru Inu: Recollection Maguta Thinking’ by the Ticuna Indians of Brazil, represented, according to anthropologists Priscila Faulhaber and Louis Forline, a kind of ‘magical thinking’. “For the Ticuna magical thinking is associated with the possibility of reproduction of cultural information disseminated on a large scale” (Wilson & Stewart 2008: 30). This reproduction of cultural knowledge may well serve as “more than mere storage devices for Aboriginal knowledge” and rather create possibilities for a “dynamic interplay between digital technologies and traditional forms of knowledge and remembering” (Wilson & Stewart (2008): 29). Whilst this may be so for the Ticuna and other global Indigenous communities, it does not necessarily reflect the Indigenous Australian experience of new technologies and the distribution potential inherent in them. Michael Christie, in his work with the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre in Alice Springs, spoke clearly of the need to be aware of the way Indigenous knowledge is traditionally managed and cared for and how the protocol inherent in that management must be part of any endeavour to ‘hold’ knowledge for future generations or share it with a broader public. Professors of media, Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart, referring to Michael Christie’s work, suggest:

Aboriginal ways of knowing and theories of knowledge are particularly compromised when information technologies are at work bringing with them a bias toward Western assumptions about knowledge and its commodification and commercialization. (Christie 2008: 30 in Wilson & Stewart 2008:30)

Traditional Indigenous forms of knowledge do not fit into prevailing Western assumptions regarding knowledge sharing and people’s right to information. Michaels wrote at length on the strict management of knowledge amongst the Warlpiri,

Knowledge is a form of property here and violating the highly structured rights that restrict general access to information is regarded as theft… It should be remembered that the most extreme punishments
of Aboriginal society are reserved for people who violate these traditional restrictions on the communication of cultural knowledge. (Michaels 1994 [1986]: 8)

Why rebuilding and holding stories for young people matters

The impact of colonization on Indigenous people, their Country and knowledge systems has been and continues to be profound. The removal of people from their Country, of children from their families (stolen generation) and cultural learning spaces and the restrictions imposed on language and ceremonial practice, significantly impacted on cultural practices and inter-generational transmission of knowledge.

Ceremony stopped because the missionaries came and they told them to cut that out back in 1947. That was the last ceremony held here and that was it. I was only a young boy but now as I got older and older I’m sad they didn’t keep that thing going on, didn’t keep it for us. If the law was going now we’d probably be still alright, there would be a better chance for that younger generation coming up today if they had law. Nobody left, nobody at all, they all gone, they all resting, they took all that knowledge with them. (Micky Coulthard, Adnyamathanha Elder, pers. comm. Flinders Ranges, SA 2010)

Development, pastoralism and resource exploitation meant the land itself was damaged, waterways were irrigated, cloven hooved animals desecrated the jila (waterholes) disturbing the bolong (rainbow serpents) that lived in them and sacred sites were mined.

When you mess with sites, you’re actually taking away a piece of religion, a piece of culture, a piece of tradition, and it’s irreplaceable. These stories (and the sacred sites that hold the stories) are like the Bible. If you burnt all the Bibles in the world, then these people would have nothing to build a framework of belief on, and that’s like us. We have to have these mountains and these hills; we have to have the Country. We use it as a tool for teaching people about respect for mother. (Terry Coulthard, Chairman of Iga Warta Community, pers. comm. Iga Warta, Flinders Ranges, SA 2010)

Leigh Creek mine sits on Adnyamathanha land. According to Adnyamathanha beliefs, the coal being mined was left behind by the embers of Yulu–The Kingfisher Man’s fire. When the mining company dug in the ground the old people warned they would disturb part of Yulu’s Muda (Dreaming), the remains of his fire and the two damper he had been cooking there. Deep in the pit miners came across two huge calcified mulga logs laid
out in a fire setting and two very large fossilized forms in the shape of damper. The Muda (Dreaming) story isn’t there any more, “it’s been dug up”. (Linda Coulthard, Adnyamathanha Elder, pers. comm. Leigh Creek, SA 2010)

People ask where they was born, we just gotta say, ‘Oh you were born there at the coal mine where the big hole is. Aboriginal people are proud of the place they was born. They take their children, their grandchildren and show them. Where the baby was born, they used to have their little cord unabi cut off and buried there, you weren’t born in hospitals in them days, and they protect that little place, that area. Where you born, your spirit is always there. (Linda Coulthard, pers. comm. Leigh Creek, Flinders Ranges, SA 2010)

Figure 4  “Oh you were born there at the coal mine where the big hole is”. Leigh Creek Coal Mine. Leigh Creek.
Murray Butcher, a Paakantji man who works with SharingStories in Wilcannia, explains the fundamental connection between Paakantji people and Country.

Paakantji means ‘belonging to paaka, the river’; we are the people that belong to the Darling River. We don’t own the land, this land owns us—our river is our soul. It’s where our ancestors grew up. (Murray Butcher, Paakantji Cultural Leader, pers. comm. Wilcannia, NSW 2010)
The irrigation and subsequent drying up or ‘sinking of the river’ beneath the ground, is a metaphor, says Murray, for what is happening to his people. He suggests that the Paakantji spirit has sunk as a subterranean river beneath the mud, waiting until it is safe to rise. Across Australia the sacred places in which the stories live have been, and continue to be, damaged and destroyed. The old people who carry knowledge are passing away and taking much of it with them. Sacred sites, ceremonies, songs and stories are pivotal in establishing, amongst many other things, kinship ties, relationship and obligations to Country and all things. They are road maps for living, which have significant identifications encoded in their topography.

Part of the desire expressed by communities with whom I have worked, in relation to using digital media for the purpose of holding and communicating traditional knowledge, is the reality of how much of, and how rapidly, that knowledge is being lost. A variety of cultural maintenance programs have evolved in response to these concerns. Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways (TKRP) and Yiriman are two organisations, which not only archive cultural heritage using digital technologies but are also concerned with facilitating a return of people to Country where the songs were ‘born’, and where intergenerational transmission naturally occurs. The desire to sustain and maintain cultural traditions is repeatedly expressed to me by Indigenous Elders with whom I have worked and collaborated. From an Indigenous perspective, the performance of songs, stories, dances and ceremonial process which re-enact the travels of the creation spirits who brought all into being, is an essential aspect of cultural and cosmological maintenance. The loss of capacity to do so has significant cultural and social ramifications.

It is on returning to Country that Elders spontaneously sing the songs or tell the stories that belong to that place. I have regularly witnessed this process in travelling onto Country with workshop participants and their Elders for the purpose of digital story making. An Elder whom a participant asked to tell a story in community offered a completely different rendition to

the one inspired in the place where the story ‘lives’, where the song or story are speaking to the storyteller. Liyadhalinymirr Elder Yiniya Guyula articulates why, from this perspective, it is imperative to return young people to Country for the purpose of transmission,

We must take our children back to the land, back to the country, sing for them, teach them about language, about culture, ceremonies, what happened, actually standing on the land and actually holding onto the stringy bark tree, the gadayka (stringy bark) and telling them this is the holy gunduy (sacred knowledge), this is the holy sacred tree that our spirit comes from. Straight away those people can understand because behind that tree behind the rock, there are spirits of our fathers telling the story, the rock itself can speak, the tree itself can speak… listening to the wind blowing cleansing and empowering, in its own language… it teaches, it gives knowledge to our young people, knowledge to our people. (Yiniya Guyula in Thompson & Green 2011)

Figure 6: Sacred Stringybark left by Gandjalala, the Sugarbag Hunter. Goyder River, Arnhem Land as referenced by Roy Wunyumbi Ashley.

To access the vast bodies of knowledge contained in the epic Song Cycles and Song Series, “the great classical music of this land” (Garma Statement on Indigenous Music and Dance, 2002: 1), songs, which are “in effect … echoes of eternity” (Corn 2010: 2); people need to speak the
language the songs are sung in. There is no doubt that Indigenous languages are the ‘repositories’ of Indigenous knowledge systems. “What is known, how knowledge is gained, and even how knowledge is defined and expressed is, to a large extent, determined by language and its use in context. In other words, language is knowledge” (Fogarty & Kral 2011: 3). The overwhelming majority of young participants who took part in the SharingStories program, with the exception of the Yolŋu participants in Galiwin’ku, Elcho Island and Maningrida, Arnhem Land, speak very little of their own traditional languages and communicate largely in English or Kriol. This makes it almost impossible for young people to learn the songs, or if they manage to do so by rote, to access the knowledge held in them.

Yiriman

Yiriman is an Indigenous organization based on the premise that teaching young people about the stories, kinship, language and songs belonging to the Country, to which they’re traditionally connected, impacts on their well being and identity. Anthony Watson, Co-chair of Yiriman holds the view that:

Without an anchor in their own cultural heritage, without connection to Country, without a sense of place, young people are lost in the wind. They are living in another culture, it’s not mainstream, it’s not traditional. (Anthony Watson, pers. comm. Jarlmadangah, Kimberley, WA 2009)

Yiriman operates within the Nyikina, Mangala, Walmajarri and Karajarri language region, which extends from Bidyadanga in the West Kimberley to Balgo in the South.
The central ethos of Yiriman’s work is teaching Indigenous young people about their Country and cultural heritage. Cultural bosses recognise that as an imperative aspect of the way in which young people construct identity. Several years ago Yiriman ran a ‘Justice Camp’ in collaboration with the Department of Corrective Services. Twenty young Indigenous offenders due to be sentenced were taken onto Country with senior cultural bosses for fifty seven days. The purpose was to undergo an intensive process of reconnection with Country, culture and language.

Bob Young, the magistrate who tried the participants on their return stated as a result of his own observations:

(Yiriman) Walks re-establish connection between Elders and young people, they affirm young people’s connection to their Country to their culture, give them some idea of where they fit in, some idea of historical struggles by aboriginal people in this region. They also give them a sense of the future, that they don’t have to settle for second best, that they can achieve in a western sense, in a western economy but, at the
same time, retain and be proud of their Aboriginal culture. (Pers. comm. Broome, WA 2009)

William Watson, Yiriman Chairman explains,

Yiriman walks give them an identity. When they’re in town they are looked at as those mad fellas, nothing positive, always negative, but by going back out bush, getting their recognition, they are somebody. They go back with their head held high, their chest out, they have surer steps, they know where they’re heading and they say to their parents, their grandparents, ‘This is me, this is my skin group, this is my Country,’ and then the parents look at them, ‘Yes, that’s my son, yes, he’s come back different,’ and there is that change. (Pers. comm. Jarlmadangah, Kimberley, WA 2009)

Figure 8: At walks end Yiriman participants are smoked by John Darraga Watson as part of a cleansing and protection process.

On completion of the camp each participant wrote a synopsis of their experience of the walk, the impact it had had upon them and their hopes for the future. As a result of Young’s observations in the courtroom when the boys returned for trial, and what he perceived to be the changes that had taken place through the ‘building of stories’ in these young people… he dismissed most of the charges. The boys who already had a record were placed on a short community based order. All walked out.
Trips to Country deliver people to ancestors and stories are re-inscribed and built upon. As land is healed, from an Indigenous perspective, when the people who belong to it care for it, so there is correspondingly a ‘healing of young people as they walk on Country and look after it’ (Watson et al 2008: 87). Djuṯadjunṯa Yunupiŋu suggests:

children have to know who their ancestors are and their link to land and animals; about every creation in this land that we dance or perform or sing about. This story has to be maintained to educate them, so they’ll learn Yolŋu stories instead of Balanda (whitefella) stories, understand their connections to the land, find the real meaning of where we come from and why we are here.20 (Djuṯadjunṯa Yunupiŋu, pers. comm. Galiwin’ku, Elcho Island, NT 2010)

As well as strengthening identity I would suggest that engagement with traditional culture, connection to land, stories, songs, dances and ceremonies, provides a framework in which the multiple and multifarious nature of new influences can be more effectively held, filtered and interpreted.

Black fella way we start from the roots and work up, you get the stories from the ground, that is where the roots start, from the ground. You don’t plant your tree on a rock or on a building, you plant it in the ground and it has to hold so it can be strong. Our old people are our roots. We have to get our story right from the old people. (William Watson, pers. comm. Jarlmadangah, Kimberley, WA 2009)

One aspect of the creative practice on which this research is based was a return of young people to Country with their Elders for the purpose of storytelling and the creation of digital stories. In this context, the intention to create digital stories supported intergenerational transmission.

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20 For further insight into the epistemologies of Yolŋu, Aaron Corn’s papers ‘Ancestral, corporeal, corporate: Traditional Yolŋu understandings of the body explored’, in Borderlands 7.2 (2008) is of considerable interest and for a Warlpiri perspective, Steven Patrick, Miles Holmes and Alan Box’s 2008 Ngurra-kurlu: A Way of Working with Warlpiri People (Alice Springs, Desert Knowledge CRC) is very valuable.
Figure 9: Crusoe Gurdal teaching the Mimi Spirit Dance during a SharingStories workshop in Maningrida.
Examples of digital storytelling practice in Country and the manner in which it contributes to a rebuilding of stories in young people

Figure 10: John Darraga Watson teaching young people how to speak with the ‘beings’ on Country. Jarlmadangah.

On storyboarding and discussing narrative ideas at Nyikina Mangala school in Jarlmadangah, workshop participants decided they wanted to tell a story about Galgapin, a sacred jila (waterhole) that sits in a beautiful red stone range in the heart of the Kimberley. We drove out through the ranges with Nyikina Mangala Elder John Darraga Watson, eventually stopping and walking along a narrow track shrouded by vegetation and the dense root systems of fig trees. As we approached the top of an incline John started to call out in language, explaining to the young people that he was letting the spirits know they were coming. Meandering over rocks and brushing against the milk-white skin of the boabs, we eventually emerged at a small waterhole. John immediately spoke to the water, for a man of his knowledge one does not visit the sacred jila without speaking to the bolong (rainbow serpent) that lives or rests in every ‘living’ (permanent) water source. He tucked a small stone beneath his armpit and instructed the children to do the same; they continued to photograph and record as they followed his instructions and threw the stone into the water. John explained that the stone, carrying their sweat, along with his speaking to the spirits, spraying water from his mouth
and explaining who they were, meant the ‘beings’ that reside there would be hospitable and would take care of them.

When you go back to Country, to waterhole, to jila, you know there is a certain ceremony, things that you have to do, rituals and ceremonies to recognise that Country so you can be one. You could have beings there that you have to make happy and then that way that Country will look after you, that Country will embrace you, and say you’re welcome here, you’re welcome to camp here. By doing the right thing, by recognising Country, the songline, the story line, how all are connected, you become one. (William Watson, pers. comm. Jarlmadangah, Kimberley, WA2009).

Participants experienced and documented the teaching that occurred, following all John’s directions. The photographs and audio were to be crafted into a digital story back at the school.21 Bronson wrote and recorded a script describing the experience and mixed it with atmospheric sound he’d recorded on location. He chose the images that he believed best illustrated his script. Teaching staff at the community school, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, felt the final story was a great cultural resource for the children. Being out on Country with his grandfather was, for Bronson and all those involved, a cultural learning experience in which knowledge regarding

21 See http://www.sharingstories.org/content/honeymoon-springs-0
protocol on Country was transferred. Some of the children participating had not previously visited the area with an appropriate Elder who had been able to introduce them to the jila and the spirits residing there in a manner which ensured they would be both protected and welcome at a culturally significant and spiritually potent site. Bronson’s writing of a script in English was an effective English literacy exercise and the importing and editing of images, working with Audacity, a freely available cross platform audio editing software and iPhoto to create the slide show, introduced him to new technologies. Furthermore, from an Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Standard Australian English (SAE) and Society and Environment perspective, the experience could be designed to implement culturally relevant learning practices while also achieving several important standard curricular objectives and outcomes, which is something I will explore in more depth in Chapter VI. The creative practice supported intergenerational transmission, cultural archiving, and skills development and produced a story that represented Bronson’s experience, which he chose to share in the online media space.

Whilst the broader community is well versed in the bitumen roads and state boundaries of the Google mapping paradigm, there is generally little understanding of Indigenous cartography and protocol pertaining to it. As an artist and Umpila community member Patrick Butcher articulates:

Sacred places are like places that are prohibited or that are forbidden. If people go there, in our law that’s trespassing and it’s unacceptable in our tradition. It’s just like someone is walking without knowledge. It’s so powerful you can’t go there by your self; you have to be there with an elder of high status.

I’ve been in the army reserve and defense force; it’s just like a chain of command, but in our way, traditional way, we have to respect this chain of command, if we want to go (to sacred places) we have to let them (senior traditional owners) know. Then they take us, we can’t go by our self. This thing they call reconciliation, if they want reconciliation it’s about time they (non-Indigenous people and governments) woke up and respected our beliefs and values. We’ve been under this so-called colonial law for two hundred years. It’s time they woke up and respected our Law. (Patrick Butcher, Umpila pers. comm. Lockhart River, Qld 2010)
Bronson’s story was not only a learning experience for him in the capacities outlined, he also expressed pride that the story would teach people watching it about his culture and how to behave appropriately at the jila. His digital story has the potential to show not only other Nyikina Mangala children but also the broader public, something about being in Country ‘right way’. That is, it demonstrates not only cultural relationship with Country but important and necessary protocols for being on it. This story contributes to the construction and distribution of media beyond mainstream representations of Country and represents other ways of seeing and relating to the world and natural environment in accordance with the experiences of the content producers. In addition, there is a suggestion made that all those visiting this Country should be aware of the necessary protocols and observant of them, it is not simply an alternative perspective, but is in fact a call to honour traditional protocols in relation to sacred sites.

Figure 12: Wittadong Mulardy with the boab tree she was dreamed through.

Wittadong is a Karajarri Elder. Considered to be the last ‘of the old people’ for the Karajarri community. She lives at Bidyadanga, 170km South
of Broome. I travelled with Wittadong and her granddaughter, who was participating in a workshop, about half an hour out from Wittadong’s camp through thick scrub. During the storyboarding precursor to the trip, the participant decided she wanted to record a song her grandmother sings which relates to a significant boab tree. When we arrived at the location, she and a handful of other young family members piled out of the Troupe Carrier and helped Wittadong over to the huge, ancient tree that she had immediately gestured toward. On sitting down in the red dirt Wittadong began to talk about how she, ‘bin born’ through the tree. Her son Mervin explained that before Wittadong was conceived, his grandmother had slept here and dreamt of a woman walking towards her carrying a coolaman (traditional wooden bowl), which held a baby. Shortly after that dream his grandmother became pregnant with Wittadong and the dream was recalled. The dream informed the family that Wittadong’s spirit had arrived through the boab; she had been ‘dreamed’ through the tree. On passing away it is this tree to which her spirit must return. Indigenous people are identified with particular places in Country, places to which they belong, places to which they will return, places they are dreamt through, born from. Whilst Wittadong talked and sang a song about the tree and the spirits that relate to it, participants recorded and created photographs with which, with the help of a facilitator, a digital story was made.\textsuperscript{22} The story itself is about the spirits that live in and around the tree. Whilst several participants already knew the story and were interested in recording it, the process of creating digital media was as much about the opportunity to return to Country and to spend time in that place ‘with the story’. Dorothy Short, an Umpila Elder involved in the program, herself in her sixties, articulated a need to return to her story place, the place for Wunta, the Wind story, “with Elders, older than me, who can talk language better than me. I have to have Elders with me who can talk to that story” (Pers. comm. Lockhart River, Qld 2009). The opportunity to be in Country with Elders who can speak to stories is significant. In many instances this return to Country with Elders was facilitated by the provision of vehicles, fuel and supplies. As such, trips organized for the purpose of a digital storytelling practice supported presence in Country, otherwise difficult to realize, particularly for large groups.

\textsuperscript{22} See http://www.sharingstories.org/content/stories-my-grandmother-wittadong.
On one occasion, while documenting a story with Elders and children as part of the *Sharing Our Stories* book series, a long trip to Country was initiated. It was determined by the storyteller to be the last time she would physically be capable of undertaking it. The trip, in Purnululu National Park, was led by Kija Elder Shirley Drill. It involved a three-hour drive; camping overnight and then a five-hour walk over rocky terrain and dense spinifex in order to reach the waterhole from which the Kija people ‘rose up’. The only other way into this area would be by helicopter, which would be highly unlikely to include the sixteen young participants walking with us. None of the workshop participants had been to the place prior, and as a result of the walk, they were introduced to the waterhole. Several young participants and members of the Kija community, remarked at the significance of the experience.

I learnt about the Bungles. My great great grandmother took me up on top of that hill and she showed me that waterhole where the Brolga took all the water in a coolaman. I saw that waterhole where we all started, where we all come from. It was special to me to see that place and to walk in that Country with my grandmother. (Claire Drill, Kija Community, pers. comm. Purnululu, Kimberley, WA 2007)

Ongoing negotiations regarding land ownership at the time meant that there was significant concern that children knew which was their Country, what belonged to them, and which areas they had to ‘speak for’. From that point of view both Elders and the young people involved deemed the trip to be of importance: “We’ve got to be frightened for the land. Our stories tell us what we’ve got to look after…” (Wally Drill, Kija Community, pers. comm. Purnululu, Kimberley, WA 2007)

Creative practice in these contexts importantly reinstates Elders in a position of authority. When Elders transmit stories in Country they are recognized as the rightful custodians, holding knowledge and having the authority to share it. Speaking of cultural bosses who lead the Yiriman walks, William Watson tells how, out on Country, they are “put in charge, put in front, we are behind. We give him the drive, the push, he leads the way and out there he is King in his Country” (William Watson, pers. comm. 2009). In
a report to the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS 2006) on ‘Community Building Through Intergenerational Exchange Programs’, which included Yiriman as a research site, benefits for older people were identified as including: change in mood; increase in vitality; increase in sense of worth; relief from isolation; renewal of own appreciation of past life experiences; re-integration into family and community life and development of friendship with younger people. In returning to Country with young people, Elders and senior community members are more able to take their rightful place as teachers and conveyers of knowledge because this is the environment in which that knowledge lives. The majority of Elders do not hold the knowledge, which the education system advocates is unequivocally necessary. Power and authority in mainstream Australian society is garnered through a set of qualifications that lay a world away from their own.

Yiniya Guyula suggests when he explains, “behind that tree, behind the rock, there are spirits of our fathers telling the story”, that the Country itself, the features of the landscape, speak to those that belong to it. It appeared to be much easier for participants to speak about stories pertaining to Country, or experience in or of Country, when they were on it. Reading written scripts in a school environment was often challenging for them and sounded stilted, these same participants created impromptu recordings on location, stories and feelings flowed much more freely. At Malkgulumu (Beswick Falls), ‘home of the mermaids’, one participant recorded this unscripted story in a single take:

This is my land. I feel proud of myself because this is our land and it’s very beautiful. It’s got a lot of stories about two mermaids and a rainbow snake. It belongs to us. I belong to this Country too. I got to look after it, take care of my family and the land, the waterhole. I feel like I’m strong and healthy and proud of my people. I feel love for my family, my father, my grandfather, my grandmother. When I’m in this Country I feel love. 23 (Alex, Wugularr workshop participant, http://www.sharingstories.org/content/my-country, 2010)

The content producer used the recording with photographs he’d taken at the location to create a digital story which clearly presented the depth of his feeling for what is a very special place, his knowledge of the stories that

23 See http://www.sharingstories.org/content/my-country
belong or ‘live’ there, and the pride, strength and sense of belonging that arise in him on being with them. The clear articulation of health, well being, love for family, of feeling love when in Country, offers a particularly intimate narrative and one which provides a potent counter to dominant representations of Indigenous youth. When on Country there were regularly explicit expressions regarding the manner of connection felt there. Works were produced by several participants in this context which spoke of pride in culture and place, a sense of well being in Country as well as a responsibility for taking care of Country and ensuring maintenance and ongoing transmission of important stories passed to them by their own Elders.

Figure 13: Alex creating media for his story at Malkgulumubu.

Other stories incorporating cultural material relating to Country involved places too far away to visit in the context of the workshops. A participant in Wugularr created a story with his grandfather Roy Wunyumbi Ashley, which involved recording part of an important Song Series for the Wagilak people of North East Arnhem Land. The song guides spirits of deceased Wagilak clan members back to their ancestral lands near Blue Mud Bay in North East Arnhem Land. If the songs are lost Roy is concerned the spirits of his people will be unable to return ‘home’. He believes that recording these songs for future generations is of immense value and serves as an important record and educational tool:

If I pass away early and he (young people) got no song, no Country, no Law, no culture, he might sing liar song, he can’t sing the proper song. If this mob learn (young generation), they’ve got to teach other young mob coming up, new children. Then they teach the next generation. I try to teach them properly so they can have their proper Law, proper

24 See http://www.sharingstories.org/content/learning-songs.
culture. It’s important to record it because we want to put something there for them, to learn something, that new generation growing up. (Roy Wunyumbi Ashley, Wagilak Elder and senior Songman, pers. comm. Wugularr NT 2010)

Traces: A Memory Resource

Eric Michaels recounts how several senior Warlpiri viewed Warlpiri fire ceremony tapes made by anthropologist Nicolas Peterson and filmmaker Roger Sandall 15 years after their creation. In the process of its review, “It became clear that the community was gearing up to perform the fire ceremony again for the first time this generation” (Michaels 1984 [1987]: 117). In this context ‘assemblages of digital objects’ or artifacts, as Michael Christie (2005: 5) suggests, have the potential to be useful ‘in the intergenerational transmission of living knowledge traditions’. However, he cautions there is always the need, in an Indigenous context, to “rethink knowledge as performance, and data as artifacts of prior knowledge production episodes”; that is, a digital resource is only ever a “trace” to be returned to “as a resource to support the work of active, creative, collaborative, knowledge production” (Christie 2005: 2)

Researcher Genevieve Campbell suggested in an abstract for a paper presented at the Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities (ITIC) symposium in 2010 25, that during the course of her work with Tiwi Islanders, and in the context of archived material,

[w]hile some Elders felt that many of these recordings should perhaps not have been taken in the first place, many believe that with the tenuous state of Tiwi song, language and ceremony they are now of great value to the community for the preservation of culture. They are proving to be a meaningful resource for the continuation of existing and new forms of Tiwi music making. (Campbell in ITIC document 2010: 11) 26

There are various accounts of media being returned to as a repository of

25 The Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities (ITIC) symposium was “an AITSIS research symposium co-hosted with the Australian National University and the National Film and Sound Archive, held in conjunction with the National Recording Project” (AITSIS) for Indigenous Performance in Australia’s 9th Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance.

26 Information about this symposium can be found in the ITIC workshop program produced by AITSIS. Retrieved October 2012 from http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/symposia/Digi10.html
cultural material no longer available through living transmission. Media activist Philip Batty suggested in the early 1990s, that work produced by Ernabella Video Television (EVTV),

had the effect of engendering a kind of local renaissance in traditional dance, performance and singing. The various video programs depicting the actual land where the dreaming lines were located gave renewed strength to traditional beliefs and values within the community. (Batty 1993: 113 in Ginsburg 1994: 370)

Michael Christie (2005: 3) recounts that,

people continue to carry in their sacred dilly bags audio cassette recordings of secret/sacred stories which detail the ancestral connections between individuals, places and groups from which their spirituality, their rights and their responsibilities derive.

Neil Turner tells of numerous cross-country expeditions undertaken with large numbers of custodians, for the purpose of documenting important Tjukurrpa (Dreaming) routes. During these trips:

Some of the sites were only remembered by a few elderly people, none had ever been recorded, and these visits were a powerful and emotional experience for the participants. Women wept and embraced standing stones, for example, at a Kutungu site they had almost given up searching for. (Turner 1992: 44)

At the ITIC symposium reference archivist Julia Mant delivered a paper written by herself, Neparrnŋa Gumbula, Yolŋu Elder and Indigenous researcher and Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology Aaron Corn. The paper spoke specifically to the importance of recordings, not only in the context of archives, but in relation to the creation of contemporary recordings for future generations:

There is an immense interest among Yolŋu in discovering their recorded history. Over the past decade, the introduction of new digital media to Arnhem Land has enabled copies of rare records and materials held in cultural heritage collections worldwide to be returned home. Their rediscovery, after many decades of radical socioeconomic change, has stimulated a new awareness of history among Yolŋu communities, and prompted many local Elders to consider what kind of recorded legacy they might leave behind for future generations. (Gumbula with Corn, ITIC 2010: 14)
My concern to facilitate a creative practice which supports endeavours to ‘hold culture’ through the making of media which serves as a ‘memory resource’ or ‘repository of representations’ (Christie 2005: 10), is a response to many conversations with senior community leaders and Elders, articulating both their concerns for the next generation, their deeply felt obligation and responsibility to ensure the maintenance and ongoing transmission of the Law they carry and their desire to use technology for that purpose. In addition, my first hand observation of the significant impact of cultural reconnection, informs this work.

Knowledge Management

All the material in the digital stories referenced in this thesis are public stories with unrestricted access and are appropriate for children to hear and know. Even so, the right to share public material had to be approved, often by many of its custodians. Perspectives on what is approved for distribution isn’t static but changes according to circumstances and discussions, shifting within a community. In Jarlmadangah, images from one particular slide show, which had previously been approved, became restricted in the intervening months and needed to be removed. Approval also changes according to mortuary rights and, until recently, the almost exclusive need to remove from public view images of any one who has passed away. In the course of this work two young workshop participants sadly passed away. One participant’s family wanted their work and image to be immediately removed from the site, the other wanted to keep the work and profile up in memory. As articulated in the Introduction, the digital media process, its interpretation and application will vary, as will the way in which media is held, organized, retrieved and shared. The only way to work effectively is with a local, community-based practice within community-based guidelines, though of course even this is complex as there are often differing views within a community. From the point of view of the Education Department and the facilitation of media creation proposed in Chapter VI, I will outline in my conclusion the conditions I have determined to be necessary, as a result of this research. I will also discuss the need for dialogue between education departments and organisations involved in developing protocols for recording traditional knowledge and cultural heritage and the use of
appropriate Cultural Knowledge Management/Database Systems and storage methods for holding that knowledge.\textsuperscript{27}

I have cited only a few examples of the digital stories produced in relation to Country. There are many, relating to many aspects of culture, how to recognise when certain foods are ready, which blossoms flower when fish are fat, where the moon sits in the night sky when it’s the right time to hunt for turtle, which saps, barks and leaves are good for which ailments and how to prepare them, how to call in the rain, make traditional grass skirts, pandanus baskets and a variety of other stories.

The creation of digital stories in this context impacts on identifications and community building in a number of ways which include the learning or ‘skilling up’ inherent in the making. The practice supports the occurrence of intergenerational transmission on Country, a setting and process that affords respect for, and authority of, the Elders involved. It actively engages with the transmission and rebuilding of culture, contributes to greater social cohesion, nurtures social relationships and so a more integrated and inclusive social fabric—all of which strengthen community and capacity building. Distribution of content when desired provides a forum for the extension of stories created by content producers to other members of their community and potentially further, a process through which their voices are heard and their stories are seen. When experienced by others the stories inform the viewing public about ‘right way’ to be in Country and protocols to be observed or at least conscious of. Digital stories make a significant contribution to the ‘holding’ of culture for current and future generations and consequently, to the well being of Country itself.

Cultural maintenance is not only important for the people to whom the culture belongs but also for the Country to which those cultural practice, songs, stories and ceremonies are inextricably bound. The maintenance of

\textsuperscript{27} The design and evaluation of ‘digital resource management systems… congruent with and supportive of Aboriginal knowledge traditions’ (Christie 2005: 5) is beyond the scope of this work but has been the subject of research by, Indigenous Knowledge and Resource Management in North Australia (IKRMNA), (Clark 2004; Verran 2005,2006; Christie 2005; Verran et al 2007; Verran & Christie 2007) the Northern Territory Library’s (NTL) Libraries and Knowledge Centers (LKC), (Gibson, Lloyd & Richmond 2011) and others.
these knowledge systems feed Country and ensure its regeneration. The re-enactment of the creation ancestors travels through the songs, stories and ceremonies they left behind reconnects people with the ‘beginning’, when all came into being. The re-embodiment of this process, afforded through ceremony, ensures the regeneration and revitalization of the Country to which those songs, stories and ceremonies belong. As Turner suggested in speaking of trips to Country as part of the Ernabella Video Project, “these recording trips have provided the motivation and the means to travel the traditional storylines as of old and to perform the Inma at each site, which in itself restores the potency of the Tjukurrpa28 embodied there” (Turner 1992: 44). Holding culture is also relevant to land claims. Capacity to demonstrate connection to and custodianship of stories and songs, which belong to, and speak for Country, is considered relevant in Native Title Claims. It is possible that digital stories which contain material pertaining to traditional stories and songs could be returned to, not only as a means of learning and informing future generations, but for the purpose of supporting claims for Country. Songs and stories in the form of digital media are of potential value for future generations in this regard. The return of Country to the people to whom it belongs is of course intrinsically relevant to the question of identity and community building.

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28 Different Indigenous communities have their own word for the Tjukurrpa, it refers to the creation period when ancestral beings travelled, creating Country, Law, ceremony, language and all things.
In this chapter I consider emergent forms and interpretations in the context of Indigenous aesthetics, identifications and representations in relation to the cultural consensus established through increasingly monopolised mainstream media channels; and I suggest the need for arts media education in that context. I also discuss the creation of digital stories by SharingStories participants who are engaged in the rewriting of historical and political perspectives or accounts. I will do this by looking at both stories which relate to everyday interests and activities and stories which combine traditional and contemporary cultural experience.

The practice of self-representational digital story telling has been criticised for “[t]he use of sentimentality, the subjectivity of content, and the confessional style” (Simondson 2009: 121) as well as naivety, nostalgia and un-self conscious production; it has been denigrated as a genre that is “reactive – rather than interactive, a medium whose strength lies in its prescriptive format” (Watkins & Russo 2009: 267). Helen Simondson, who curated The Memory Grid, an installation of digital stories, at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), counters, that it is precisely the ‘rawness’ presented through personal stories that leads to what she believes to be a ‘surprisingly powerful’ form (Simondson 2009:121). Simondson suggests that ACMI facilitators make curatorial decisions all the time in relation to inclusion and exclusion, decisions that require ongoing navigation between product and process. Hartley and McWilliam also disagree with critical observers who entertain various misgivings regarding digital storytelling, including that “[a]s a textual system, the potential for serious work is underdeveloped – there is too much attention to self-expression, not enough to the growth of knowledge” (Hartley & McWilliam 2009:15).

While critiques of digital story telling are thus debatable, it should be noted that, the digital stories facilitated by the SharingStories practice (at this stage of a workshop-based process) did not strictly adhere to the conventional textual characteristics most closely associated with the
movement known as ‘digital storytelling’. These characteristics, as demonstrated in the work produced through major digital storytelling programs such as those facilitated through the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in Berkeley, California and as also evidenced in the work of the BBC’s Capture Wales, project in which people from all over Wales made digital stories about their ‘real-life experiences’, were typically built around first person narratives and the primacy of the human voice:

These individual stories balance the personal and the universally accessible, through a combination of familiar tropes and the strong affective resonances created by the warmth and visceral presence of the narrator’s voiceover [most often assembled with] scripts using around 250 words [and] a dozen images, usually brought from home. (Burgess 2006: 9)

Digital stories produced within the workshop program on which this research is based were less formulaic. Some pieces were audio only, others were group collaborations in which several participants wrote a script or a song and recorded it together, some were sampled sounds combined or mixed with traditional songs, some sampled sounds with images, some were single portraits with audio vignettes, some incorporated old photographs brought from home, but the vast majority involved creating new work. So while these works may not necessarily be subject to exactly the same criticisms as their more classical counterparts might be, they may remain subject to criticisms regarding aesthetic and production values, an issue I go on to address.

A premise of digital storytelling as a movement is that the creative process is not fettered by the kind of production values that dominate the mainstream media space. As a result there are facilitators who interpret the democratization of self-expression as an entirely hands off domain, i.e., any kind of intervention compromises self-expression. Based on my own experience, having worked for over two decades as a media maker and facilitator, I would agree that the facilitator’s role “is to create inviting spaces for people to interact with media and technologies in their own way, and then to support the trainees within the processes that they determine and
direct” as suggested by facilitator, Anna Cadden (Kral & Schwab 2010: 1). I also consider that encouraging an exploration of representations has validity in the face of the monopolization of mainstream media and the manufacturing of a “cultural consensus” (Hartley 2009: 22). In light of that, I suggest that it is appropriate to extend invitations for self-enquiry and encourage consideration and exploration of varied interpretations of one’s own stories. In this sense, the work between facilitators and communities is dependent on “mutually meaningful collaborations… useful and instructive reciprocal learning between all the participants, artists and community members alike” (Lambert 2009: 88). Facilitators are guided and educated by participants and cultural facilitators and in turn do more than simply ‘pass on the technical tools’; they also provoke inquiry and curiosity in relation to image making as well as in relation to media representations and the manner in which they impact upon self-representations.

In the SharingStories process, each participant was sent home with a camera at night with a task to create a series of single image portraits. The pictures downloaded the next day frequently contained up to 80% of young people emulating a range of gangsta hand signals associated with mainstream black American rap artists. Raiford Guins, founding principal editor with the Journal of Visual Culture and Digital Cultural Studies researcher, points to a significant and specific control structure which sees commercial rappers of the Snoop Dogg, Jay-Z and 50 Cent genre whom he places in the ‘gangsta…thug’ category as problematic, particularly when the rap artists allowed through the gates of big record companies are “about nothing but bitches and money” (McLeod 2005 in Guins 2008: 71). When young people look at 50 Cent, they see “a man of colour that they respect, perhaps even believe they relate to” (Park 2006 in Guins 2008: 71). Park suggests that 50 Cent grosses a lot of money, “[s]o why show anything else when billions can be made, even at the expense of young people who try to emulate what they see, which is a lifestyle of violence, misogyny and bling”? Besides these economic impacts on cultural possibilities, there are also political limitations. For instance, United States Clear Channel Communications compiled “a list of 164 songs – ‘songs with questionable lyrics’ – the day after September 11,

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29 Anna Cadden works as a Warlpiri Education Training Trust (WETT) Youth Media trainer.
2001, attack”. As a result, “Clear Channel’s 1,207 stations composed a nationwide ban on music ranging from any song that references an aeroplane (e.g., Peter, Paul, and Mary’s “Leaving on a Jet Plane”) to songs about peace (e.g., John Lennon’s “Imagine”)” (Guins 2008: 74-75). With this combination of economic monopolies and state control, there are in fact significant limitations to available representations, which therefore have little to do with freedom of expression or choice.

As the industries of television, the Internet and music are increasingly regulated and privatized, the mediation of available identifications is increasingly limited, which has significant ramifications in relation to the bricolage of identity construction. Within this very particular and highly manipulated construct of meaningfulness, aggravated in the context of the Internet as a result of the now accepted practice of ‘detailed surveillance of consumer behaviour’ allowing for the development of user profiles which facilitate the feeding of targeted advertising to consumers and in which “[c]hildren have become key targets” (Centre for Media Education 1997 in Buckingham 2003: 30). In this context, Henry Jenkins argues, that:

A new mediated landscape of mainstream news sources, collaborative blog projects, un-sourced news sites, and increasingly sophisticated marketing techniques aimed at ever younger consumers demands that students be taught how to distinguish fact from fiction, argument from documentation, real from fake, and marketing from enlightenment. (Jenkins 2009: 81)

As David Buckingham, argues, the approach to this issue, or the ‘transparency problem’, as Jenkins calls it, is not “a paternalistic contempt for children’s tastes and pleasures”, an attitude which spawns “protectionist approaches to media education” which are, in his view, “positively counter-productive”. Instead, he calls for a comprehensive approach to multimedia literacies (Buckingham 2003: 33). The British Film Institute’s model of ‘cineliteracy’ proposed in the Report of the Film Education Working Group: Making Movies Matter (1999) worked with three main conceptual areas, which were: the language of moving images; producers and audiences; messages and values. Regarding issues of representation, the messages and values aspect of the program was concerned with the “’effects [of the media
on] ideas, values and beliefs” (Buckingham 2003: 40). Regarding issues of representation, the ‘messages and values’ in an Indigenous context, there is the added complexity of the dominant culture’s construction of ‘Aboriginality’. Speaking of his own children of Torres Strait Island descent, Nakata suggests that they will always be perceived as ‘girls of colour’; and “what they need most is an understanding of the political nature of their position – and that this requires both the language and the knowledge of how that positioning is affected in the mainstream world” (Nakata 2003: 144).

It is partially in schools that the racial representations and the imagined communities discussed in the chapter I are created and reproduced (Anderson 1991 in Buckingham 2007: 53), as such, it is appropriate to bring to that environment an examination of how those constructs work. In Buckingham’s own schematic summary of media education he examines four key areas in this regard: production; language; representation; and audiences; and he works toward preparing young people to engage critically with the media in each of these contexts, as opposed to regulating and filtering in order to protect them from it. This approach enhances a student’s capacity to consider ways in which cultural consensus is constructed and particular models of power are established and for what purpose. Critical literacy in this regard, not unlike the corresponding practice in a traditional literacy learning environment, gives individuals tools to unravel the often “aggressive” and “stealthy marketeer[ing]” of the World Wide Web (Seiter 2005 in Jenkins et al 2009: 23-24).

Providing young people with tools to discern the manner in which meaning is constructed through media is immensely useful; and, correspondingly, I consider that it is also useful to encourage enquiry in relation to the 80% of the images produced and downloaded by students in the initial stages of the workshop being photographs of friends, peers and family (even babies) emulating gangsta hand signals. I would argue that such a consideration is not a paternalistic critique of ‘tastes and pleasures’ but an appropriate suggestion of other possibilities. In my view it is an essential part of an endeavour to broaden the palette of “cultural and life
material... at hand” (Weber & Mitchell 2008: 43) in the context of the likes of Viacom’s manipulation of available identities, the heavily regulated, sponsorship driven programming of television and the increasing surveillance and regulation of the Internet environment, which undermines its supposed neutrality.  

Whilst during the SharingStories workshops we were not in a position to implement substantial media literacy programs, we did encourage participants to explore varied representations of people they chose to photograph in a workshop context. I agree with Stephen Muecke, who has a long-term research interest in Indigenous Studies, transnational cultures and new ethnography, when he suggests that facilitating media production in an entirely non interventionist manner in an endeavour to allow for content production somehow unadulterated or uninfluenced by ‘whitefella way of making video’ (Muecke 1994: 93) – or any fella frankly, as workshops in remote communities often include Indigenous facilitators – is a form of ‘inverted patronage’. An approach that says it values Aboriginal knowledge above any European knowledge forces Indigenous students “onto their own essential selves” and thus they are not “given the opportunity to think about the relations between their own ideas and video making and the generally available (non-Indigenous) techniques” (Muecke 1994: 93).

As Muecke’s arguments underline, implementing media making workshops in Indigenous communities involves an ongoing negotiation in relation to the extension or transmission of creative possibilities, new skills, ideas and influences, alongside a respect and regard for what Juan Francisco Salazar, and Amelia Cordova31 identified as ‘the poetics’ of Indigenous media production (Salazar & Cordova 2008: 39). In order to broaden the narrative approaches, we encouraged participants to search for or explore

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30 There is considerable debate regarding the idea of “throwing gangsta signs” in relation to issues of rap and race representation and some would certainly ask whether, in throwing gangsta signs new hybrid meanings and identities being created. This is, of course, an important discussion; however, I am concerned here with the impact of the limited representations available to young people as a result of the ‘bardic function’ of media monopolies.

31 To avoid confusion with the identification of two authors in this sentence: Francisco Salazar is a senior lecturer in communication studies and media and Amelia Cordova is the Latin American Program Manager at National Museum of the American Indian
other ways of saying things about individuals or groups they chose to photograph, beyond the pervasive hand signals associated with gangsta rap identities. While storyboarding, we made suggestions in relation to consideration of light and form and the environment in which people chose to create images, particularly portraits. Such suggestions in no way determined how, when or in what way an image should be taken, but were rather designed to provoke an exploration of varied of ways of ‘telling stories’ about people or things, through, in this instance, photography. One of the SharingStories workshop strategies to achieve this exploration was to introduce students to the work of other artists, photographers, media artists and musicians with whom they were not necessarily familiar. Hip Hop artists like Paris for example, the force behind guerrilla funk, “negates the stereotypes of violence and sexism that often dog hip-hop in the public eye, to offer young people provocative images of the world that extend well beyond their neighbourhoods”. (Guins 2008: 65)

Artists like Paris function as a ‘hyperlink’ (Guins 2008: 75) to an alternative set of representations of power, where it lies and how to access or engage with it. We attempted to stimulate enquiry-based discussion around a broad range of content. Students were unaccustomed to such a practice and shy about speaking in a group context. We worked to develop strategies for discussion and consideration of the media to which they were exposed, to begin to negotiate a way of looking at and engaging with these issues, rather than to determine or implement a formula. I suggest this is an important area for discussion in relation to teaching and learning in remote Indigenous communities.

Emergent forms

While acknowledging the ‘mutually meaningful collaboration’ which exists and certainly has a place in this context, there is of course also the need to understand that I and many others working in this space are always ‘being learned’ in relation to other ways of seeing, telling and sharing stories. A particular issue in this regard is the need to understand differences in relation to contents and aesthetics across different cultures.
In his essay, “For a Cultural Future: Francis Jupurrurla Makes TV at Yuendumu”, Michaels gives a wonderful account of the work of Francis Jupurrurla Kelly who ran the Warlpiri media centre. (Michaels 1994 [1987a]: 99-124) Michaels’ discussion with Jupurrurla about footage he had shot as part of a Warlpiri interpretation of the Coniston massacre revealed that what might at first appear as ‘naïve’ camera work was, from Jupurrurla’s perspective, filled with intentional symbolism. The shifts in focus that Michaels suggests might appear to an unknowing eye as “evidence of a simple lack of mechanical skills” actually carried intentional symbolism:

When asked, he (Jupurrurla) provided a rationale suggesting a meaning in everything his camera does. The pans do not follow the movement of the eye, but movements of unseen characters – both of the Dreamtime and historical – which converge on the landscape: ‘This is where the police trackers came over the hill,’ ‘that is the direction the ancestors come in from...’ Shifts in focus and interruptions in panning pick out important places and things in the landscape, like a tree where spirits live or a flower with symbolic value. (Michaels 2008 [1987a]: 115)

Similarly, on many occasions images were produced by SharingStories workshop participants which may not initially be understood or appreciated as engaging, from a content or aesthetics point of view. However such content often holds stories relevant to the producer and their particular cultural framework, that, if one were to know them, imbue the image with a depth, that significantly alters the viewing experience. One participant, for instance, created a photograph of a termite mound and was clear he wished to upload it to his profile. In writing a caption to accompany the image he explained the meaning it held for him to the facilitator with whom he was working. In understanding the image from his perspective, the photograph took on a considerably different resonance to that which it had on my first viewing.

I like this termite mound because my mum told me that it helps gather together all the clouds and form a rain. And all the raindrops and all the plant grows. The termite mound grows because it comes from all the sacred stories. The rains make the bush tucker and bush medicine grow new shoots.32 (Online caption created by SharingStories participant)

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32 See http://sharingstories.org/content/termite-mound
In their essay on ‘Imperfect Media And the Poetics of Indigenous Video in Latin America’, Salazar and Cordova (2008) discuss the manner in which “Imperfect Cinema, for example, warned against the illusion of technical perfection fostered by hegemonic cinema” and how Imperfect Cinema endeavoured to ‘overthrow’ the hegemonic structures of “film production, distribution and consumption dictated by the Hollywood system” (Salazar & Cordova 2008: 42). The Latin American Council of Indigenous Film and Communication (CLACPI), at their seventh festival held in Chile, “consolidated a different approach to recognizing the contribution of works screened at those festivals”. Their approach took into account the “distinct cultural poetics of Indigenous Media practice”. In this recognition, Salazar and Cordova suggest, “we see a significant shift away from rewarding impeccable technical products toward praising processes” (Salazar & Cordova 2008: 48). Interestingly or tellingly, on visiting the BBC ‘Telling Lives’ site which hosted many of the digital stories the creation of which the organisation has facilitated, this message greets the viewer, “The Telling Lives website was closed in 2011. It was no longer being updated and the quality of the online video no longer meets current technical standards. The filmed stories have been added to the BBC archives”! Much has been written in this context regarding film, less so regarding photography, which was the focus of the workshop production process, although photographs of course are subject to similar judgements in terms of their worth.

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33 ‘Consejo Latinoamericano de Cine y Communicacion de los Pueblos Indigenas’ is the name which gives rise to the acronym CLACPI.
As Michaels suggested of Jupurrurla’s work, “[v]iewers from outside Warlpiri culture are unlikely to retrieve such intended messages from the video” and so too, viewers from outside Yolŋu culture, in fact quite possibly from outside the participants’ particular clan group, would be unlikely to perceive the intended or implicit messages and storytelling inherent in his choice of image making. In the context of Jupurrurla’s work “[t]he European eye, failing to see the epic authority of the Coniston story, observes instead a home movie, in the most banal sense of that term” (Michaels 1994 {1987a}: 115). As a result of this, facilitators of media production need to take great care that they are not in the business of undermining “Emergent Indigenous forms” which “are vulnerable and likely to be destroyed precisely by the forces of media education, training and development in that sector”. A lack of capacity to ‘see’ what the content producer sees, that often results, as Michaels suggested in “an ‘official’ rejection of Indigenous production as clumsy or amateurish” (Michaels 1994 {1986a}: 36).

There are many instances when work could be seen as either ‘not good enough’, or facilitators might see fit to encourage a content producer to ‘make it better’. Herein lies a navigational challenge as a facilitator, the challenge of serving as a conduit for the introduction of new ways of seeing and communicating, as provocateur for more varied ideas and approaches to storytelling, new or diverse possibilities for creative interpretation, whilst avoiding ideas of how to ‘make it better’ within a particular cultural aesthetic. Avoiding the imposition of another way of seeing the creative practice such that it stifles the creation of images such as the termite mound. Many images were produced that were later explained, often pertaining to Country and the movement or mark of spirits, stories and memories held within it. Facilitators ideally remain receptive at all times to interpretations, appreciating that often, though an image may initially appear banal in the conventional (or dominant) sense of production values, within it lies something of considerable depth if there is capacity to remain open to seeing it.

Series of images were regularly produced as slide shows during workshops often as ‘still life’ galleries. One series produced by a participant
in Jarlmadangah was built around photographs that provided an intimate window into his world and surroundings.

Figure 15: Images from Razac's Still Life series.

The series compiled into a video with audio script read by Razac\textsuperscript{34} received the following comment from Alex Soth, a well-known Magnum photographer living in Paris:

That is an absolutely incredible video. I’m giving a lecture in a couple of weeks and will be using it to illustrate some ideas I’m working on about digital photography and education. For me it illustrates the idea that photography is simple. I sometimes think it is crazy that we have four-year degrees, then master degrees, in this very simple medium. Razak’s pictures are better than a lot of the grad work I look at. I’m using the video to challenge educators. (Alec Soth, Magnum Photographer, pers. comm. 2008)

These kinds of images are more closely aligned with the storytelling that “encourages us to settle into a community and watch what unfolds, even if nothing (in terms of traditional narrative action) does” (Gauthier 2008: 63). The Igloolik Video Cache Collective of Igloolik Isuma Productions \textsuperscript{35} in Canada wrote the following in a proposal to Telefilm Canada, by way of explaining why they don’t write final scripts:

Our NUNAVUT programs have a different narrative structure… The changing rhythms of weather, wind, snow, light and animals so determine how people behave that this natural rhythm may in fact be the central story line of every program; and that ‘action’ is actually more about doing and making things to stay alive, than arguing about

\textsuperscript{34} http://www.sharingstories.org/content/photos-around-my-house
them. Cooperation is the story rather than conflict. (Cache Collective 2008: 78 [Igloolik Isuma International 1996: 70-71])

These ideas differ fundamentally from the linear conflict and ubiquitous unfolding drama, which drives much contemporary media. Similarly, Razac’s work is about simplicity of observation, not about getting from here to there, or creating a chain of cause and effect.

Self-representational media produced in remote Indigenous communities has the potential to contribute to a reformulating of perceptions for those other than the media producers’ immediate community. However, very little Indigenous media production -- which may be considered to be aligned with ‘Imperfect Cinema’ in its demonstration of ‘distinct cultural poetics of Indigenous Media practice’ (Salazar & Cordova 2008: 48), as in the work of Jupurrurla for example -- will have been experienced beyond local distribution networks. The lack of distribution through mainstream media channels is problematic only within the context of a creative practice, which contributes to, from an Indigenous perspective controlling ‘how we are seen’ (L McCain West, Wilurarrra Creative 2010: 39). In the context of Australian productions by Indigenous organizations, through which thousands of hours of television have been made in local languages about local issues, very little has been broadcast beyond the community-based distribution network. In terms of an inquiry regarding self-representation, the question for and to whom self-representations are being made might be asked, or perhaps as Michaels posed, “What, and who, is it good for? Behind all these matters are questions of value and evaluation” (Michaels 2008[1987a]: 116). During community screenings at the conclusion of SharingStories workshops community members and local facilitators, regularly made it clear they hoped a broad audience would experience and be influenced by the work their young people had created. While content producers were often more interested in the technology’s creative capabilities than on the works’ intrinsic values, Elders involved were hopeful that the media would impact on public perceptions and the way their communities were seen. As Cheryl Lardy, President of Jilkminggan Community Government Council suggests,
[d]igital media and technology allows children to develop skills to create their own stories and culture which they can then tell and share with the broader Australian community. (Pers. comm. Jilkminggan, NT 2007)

Djungadjuŋa Yunupiŋu articulates this in reference to the SharingStories creative practice:

Through the SharingStories program the children are learning both ways, they are trying to express from their own heritage, from their own culture, from their own land their stories and try to make a bridge between themselves and other communities with technology, sharing and telling who they are. (Pers. comm. Galiwin’ku, Elcho Island, NT 2010)

Digital storytelling has a powerful role to play in this process. If it is determined that an important aspect of production is that the work will be viewed broadly, then, like all media producers who wish people to engage with their work, content producers need to consider whether they allow the capacity to reach their audience (and of course who that audience is) to influence the creation of their work or not, a decision that would also impact on facilitators involved in supporting creative practice.

Story Samples: Bush Fashion

![Figure 16: Preparing Serani with ochre and mud makeup for the Bush Fashion shoot.](image)

Leela Watson created a digital story combining local knowledge and contemporary influences in which she shared something unique and intrinsic to her own life experience. The Bush Fashion slide show demonstrates how
Leela organised a photo ‘shoot’, from using bush materials to create contemporary fashion through to hiring a photographer to create photographs on the banks of a local river. Leela crafted a skirt from desert grasses, make-up from ochres and mud and styled hair with dried bush flowers. She combined the resulting photographs with a script in which she spoke of her desire to draw on traditional influences and bring them into a contemporary fashion context in order to create something unique to her traditions and cultural experience. The idea for ‘Bush Fashion’ Leela tells us, grew out of an oil extracting process in which she and other women from Jarlmadangah extracted oils from bush plants, and, along with emu oil and beeswax, made lip balms, facial scrubs and pain relief balms.

“We wanted to take it one step further and make our own clothes out of bush material.” (Leela Watson, pers. comm. Jarlmadangah, WA 2009). Stories created in the context of the workshops were frequently positive, celebratory narratives. This story demonstrated significant innovation by using the available cultural material at hand to improvise, experiment and create something new, and to draw together a work which might be considered to be comprised of “contrasting or even contradictory elements, creating and modifying meanings to suit the context” (Weber & Mitchell 2003: 43). The script communicates ways in which traditional knowledge of plants is being drawn upon to produce contemporary products, which respond to new influences and potential markets. The story is far removed from “someone else” showing “the way we are. control[ling] how we are seen” (L McKain West 2010: 39). Research fellow Inge Krals’ current research is engaged with exploring the impact of digital technologies and new media practices on the social, cultural and linguistic ecology of remote Indigenous Australia. I would agree with her suggestion that media production by Indigenous youth tends “to express humorous, joyful, love of life and validate their contemporary Indigenous identity” (2010c: 11). Leela’s story is uplifting, demonstrating an innovative juxtaposition of fashion and bush materials, potentially marketable beauty products and local ethno-botanical knowledge. Comments on the site in response to the media include:

36 These processes extend to an exploration of ways of marketing traditional medicines in contemporary packaging such that cultural knowledge can support economic autonomy and extend healing practices.
Ninna said: Hey Leela, you got it going ON! Bush fashion is awesome ;-) Such a beautiful expression of old ways and new together.

Jayde said: Hi Leela, your family sounds so cool. And your videos of your country where you live look so beautiful.

Claudia said: This is such a great idea. Those clothes are beautiful.

Megan Benne said: Leela, This was wonderful. The way the photos, music and talking all came together. And how about that fashion. It looked awesome!! Good on you.

It shows young people to be resourceful, engaged, innovative, productive, and visionary and sits in sharp contrast to the images constructed by the pervasive “visual and intellectual pornography” of the mainstream media (Langton 2008a: 1). On the contrary, Leela says that this story “is about us mob using bush materials to make fashion and beauty products, learning, and having fun together”.

Figure 17: Serani in the skirt made of bush materials.
Workshop participants in Jarlmadangah worked with Nyikina Elder Annie Milgin on a story about preparing traditional bush medicines to use in a contemporary clinic environment. Annie is committed to passing on knowledge and finding ways to help young people generate an income while ‘living on the land’. Young people were often being ‘learned’ during the course of the workshops. “This story is about going out with Annie and learning about the bush medicine you can make from sap, it’s really good for sores and boils” (Holly, workshop participant, Jarlmadangah, 2010). Participants documented the collection of a red tree sap, bilwal, its preparation and finally the pouring of it into containers in which it could be kept at the clinic for use. These processes and those described in the prior story involving oil extraction and the creation of balms, extend to an exploration of ways of marketing traditional medicines in contemporary packaging such that cultural knowledge can support economic autonomy and extend healing practices. As discussed, management of knowledge, in this instance, ethno-pharmaceutical and botanical knowledge, is subject to ownership and rights to tell.

37 http://sharingstories.org/content/bilwal-medicine
Michael Christie articulates the dilemma in relation to the CRC’s research in the context of Australian Aboriginal Desert Knowledge,

[concentrating on uncommunicable embodied aspects of Aboriginal knowledge tradition drew attention away from the commercial potential. Concentrating on the potential of ethno-pharmaceutical knowledge to produce sustainable livelihoods for desert Aboriginal people drew attention away from the everyday knowledge practices that keep knowledge traditions alive from one generation to the next. (Christie 2008: 283)]

At Jarlmadangah, where the Bilwal story was made, there are concerns regarding theft of knowledge, not only by pharmaceutical companies but also by other individuals who might use the knowledge without the permission of senior Elders. The information shared in the Bilwal clip and in a book I produced in collaboration with Annie as part of the ‘Living with the Land’ series, is knowledge she feels comfortable with making public; however, there is a great deal more not revealed. This is not, in this instance, because it is restricted by Law, but because of legitimate concerns regarding theft, patenting and lack of acknowledgement or related royalties. Some communities or organisations reject the idea of participating in these structures in relation to their traditional knowledge. The Indigenous position paper for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) 2003 states that:

Our collective knowledge is not merely a commodity to be traded like any other in the market place. We strongly object to the notion that it constitutes a raw material or commercial resource for the knowledge-based economy of the Information society. (Ginsburg 2008: 288)

In this context the group also strongly reject,

the application of public domain concept to any aspect related to our cultures and identities” and further “reject the application of IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) regimes to assert patents, copyrights or trademark monopolies for products, data or processes derived or originating from our traditional knowledge, or our cultural expressions. (Christen 2005 in Ginsburg 2008: 288)

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38 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).
The Indigenous communities I worked with generally did not take this position and were instead keen to ensure the stories and knowledge they chose to reveal, when made public, were recognised as their intellectual and cultural property. Again, this issue is one that needs to be determined on a local, community based level and that is the way I worked in the context of SharingStories.

My People, The Karajarri People.

Wynston Shoveller, a Karajarri participant and great grandson of Wittadong Mulardy, created a digital story called ‘My People’. Wynston recorded a song Wittadong had sung about a massacre that took place at Mowla Bluff in the Kimberley. The massacre involved his people, Karajarri people. Numerous official accounts dispute the story of the descendants of those murdered: “In 1918 Broome police investigated the story of the survivors. They found there was no evidence of a massacre” (http://monumentaustralia.org.au/search/). Wynston’s story tells of his ancestors being made to light a large fire after which they were shot and killed. They either fell from where they stood, or were thrown, into the fire. Out of their bones rose a song, which told of what occurred. ‘The Massacre Song’ travelled to Wittadong’s father’s Dreaming and he passed it on to Wittadong. Wynston recorded the ‘The Massacre Song’ with Wittadong and included it in his slide show with an explanation from his uncle Mervin Mulat Mulardy of the white man’s justification for the killing - the theft of a sheep. Wynston’s script mixed with the voices of his uncle and grandmother speak unequivocally of his pride in his people’s strength in the face of adversity, of survival and hope for the future. The piece is both Wynston’s own personal narrative about his family, his people as well as an important account of a historical event little known of (certainly rarely heard from a Karajarri perspective).

39 Retrieved October 2012
40 See http://www.sharingstories.org/content/my-people-karajarri-people.
This interpretation and the disparity between official and ‘unofficial versions’ of historical experience is similar to that of Jupurrurla’s film about the Coniston Massacre as recounted by Michaels (1994 {1987a}: 98-125), in which Jupurrurla tells of the experience of the massacre ‘the killing time’, from a Warlpiri perspective which differs considerably from the official version:

Official records at the time stated that 31 people were killed. The then-owner of Coniston station, Randall Stafford, was a member of the
punitive party for the first few days and estimated that at least twice that number were killed between 14 August and 1 September. Historians estimate that at least 60 and as many as 110 Aboriginal men, women and children were killed. The Warlpiri, Anmatyerre and Kaytetye believe that up to 170 died between 14 August and 18 October. (Wikipedia)\(^{41}\)

There is often a “struggle between official and unofficial discourses that seem always to be stacked in the state’s favour” (Michaels 1994[1987a]: 101). *Whispering in our Hearts*, a documentary about the Mowla Bluff massacre, cites correspondence which director Mitch Torres received from the WA Police Department during the making of the film which stated: “We have reason to believe the massacre allegations are false” (WA Police Dept in Martin 2005). As journalist and academic Adrian Martin goes on to explain:

The incident, to this day, is covered over with official denials and lack of documentation, an absence of ‘hard evidence’. Moreover, the story has re-emerged as a topic of debate within the contemporary context of the so-called History Wars led by revisionist Keith Windschuttle. The argument is often reduced to a melodramatic opposition: whitefella word (with its documentation records) against blackfella word (with its living, orally transmitted memory). (Martin 2005)\(^{42}\)

When communities “acquire digital technology, they can become producers and keepers of their own history, integrating it or not with the social history of other communities” (Worcman 2002: 3). From the perspective of Karajarri and Nyikina Mangala community Elders, three or four hundred people were killed during the Mowla Bluff massacre; it was from the community’s perspective “a dirty war, an undeclared, secret and illegal war in the style of European colonial invasions in many countries around the world in the previous centuries” (http://www.jarlmadangah.com/mowlabluff.html). In Wynston’s account, like that of Jupurrurla, his digital story is based on oral transmissions and his story serves to acknowledge the perspective of the descendants of those massacred. From Wynston’s perspective, the story celebrates resilience in the face of the injustice and oppression on which the events are predicated as well as countering the official “discourses that seem always to be stacked in the state’s favour” (Michaels 1994[1987]: 101). Just as Adrian Martin

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suggested, “Whispering In Our Hearts is a tremendous film about the responsibilities of remembering” (Martin 2005). Self-representational digital media stories in the context of Wynston’s story contribute to a remembering, a redressing of official versions of history. They are part of “rendering visible Indigenous cultural and historical realities” not only to the communities involved but also to “the broader societies that have stereotyped or denied them” (Ginsburg 1993b: 378). ‘Lest we forget’ has been reserved for officially sanctioned discourses, which all too often ignore or downplay the thousands of Indigenous people who died defending their Country and their rights. The hearing of these voices and the acknowledgement of the stories they tell allows for a healing not only for Indigenous but also for non-Indigenous people, who, I would suggest, often carry the wound of a legacy unacknowledged. As Langton (2008b) suggested in reference to the apology to The Stolen Generation:

The nation would be healed if we could consign this history to our past by admitting that it was wrong to take children from their families in order to prevent Aboriginal ways of life and traditions from continuing. I ask that all Australians understand this part of our history and recognise that such terrible wrongs must never be repeated.

As Langton posits, perhaps only then is the burden of carrying unacknowledged atrocities alleviated. Digital stories support the ‘democratization of history’, allowing for the construction and presentation of marginalised perspectives. The historical narrative of ‘collective memory’ in both the instance of the Coniston and Mowla Bluff massacre are documented and shared, and in this way ‘memory and digital technology’ become tools with the potential to participate in ‘social transformation’ (Worcam 2002: 4).

In conclusion, I would note that digital storytelling programs like the Israeli ‘Kids for Kids’ works with the medium as ‘narrative therapy’, to “provide a platform for youth traumatized” by war (McWilliam 2009: 61), a form of storytelling she identifies as ‘recuperative’. There is vast historical trauma in Australia that continues to be rendered invisible. The giving of voice to that, the making visible, has healing potential, both for those with
the story to tell and those whose consciousness the telling becomes a part of. I would argue that,

> [i]nsertion of these voices in spheres of public life and democratic institutions, and the recovery of memory both individual and collective, hitherto suppressed or forgotten under authoritarian regimes and ‘official’ versions of history (Clarke 2009: 148),

is imperative. The insertion of these images into the ‘national imaginaries’ (Ginsburg 1993) is of considerable importance to the well-being and psychological health of the nation and community building therein.

The representations apparent in the work of Razac, Leela and the poetic depth embodied in what initially, to the unknowing eye, may appear as little more than a mound of earth, produce both other ways of seeing and knowing, as well as a powerful alternative to the relentless and pervasive narrative of dysfunction. These stories rupture the ‘national imaginaries’ constructed around the dominant discourse, they defy the manifest fictions and demonstrates that young, Indigenous media producers “are imaginative, vital bodies from which life grows” (Slater 2008: 9).
This chapter discusses questions relating to the self-representational digital storytelling practice in educational environments. I will examine difficulties with infrastructure including Internet access, limitations in relation to skills of staff and duration of tenure, lack of vision in the application of media literacy, educational agendas and filters. I will also address why, despite compromise in that context, I have come to the conclusion that embedding a digital storytelling practice within the educational space has the potential to revolutionise learning and engagement for young Indigenous people in the school environment.

Technology and Effective Integration

When working in schools equipment was provided as part of the SharingStories digital storytelling program, which remained with participating communities for the purpose of ongoing creative practice. Only some of the schools I worked in had cameras, audio recorders and video cameras for student use but even if they were available, they were not often used. The kit we provided through money raised from grants included two or three Tascam D1 audio recorders. Participants were shown how to avoid noise from handling and the wind and how to follow basic audio recording protocol. They were encouraged to think about sound as a richly expressive part of the story-making process. The kit also included two laptops, hard drives, rechargeable batteries, a pelican case, five stills cameras and initially a Sony X1P film camera.

We replaced these in the second year of the workshops with Kodak Zi6 hand held video recorders which were much smaller and simpler to operate and encouraged participants to use the film function on the stills cameras,
both of which were more conducive to establishing self-sustainable practice as they were considerably easier to use. Generally there was great enthusiasm when it came to taking a camera home and filming. This enthusiasm extended to importing and sorting through clips; however, enthusiasm often waned when it came to a lengthy or complex post-production process. This seemed to be exacerbated by lack of equipment. If each participant was able to follow instructions on their own laptop using their own images or video clips, frustration diminished when facilitators assisted with difficulties. When participants had to share machines while being taught and were unable to be ‘hands on’ in a classroom environment, distraction was often rapid. To work in this situation effectively requires considerable resources and one machine shared between two or three participants was inadequate. An important objective was introducing a skill set that allowed participants to produce content independently so the technical process needed simplifying. I determined in discussion with Indigenous community facilitators that, rather than trying to teach film editing skills -- unless a participant expressed particular interest -- we would work predominantly with still images and the creation of slide shows which is a medium often used by global digital storytelling programs. SharingStories facilitators also worked, on occasions, with the creation of simple animation techniques and photography as public installations.

Figure 21: SharingStories facilitator Tom Murray working with participants in Wilcannia on an animation about the Ngatji and the Paddlesteamer.43

43 See http://www.sharingstories.org/content/ngatji-and-paddlesteamer
Figure 22: Wilcannia workshop participants pasting portraits in the community.

Figure 23: Wilcannia Portrait Project, community pasting, Wilcannia.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{44} http://vimeo.com/4175340 - Retrieved October 2012.
The lure to explore the special effects of new software such as Adobe Photoshop Elements quickly detracted attention from the photographs themselves. Participants quickly focused on the frame that could be constructed around the image or the flashing icons that could be attached to it. In discussion with facilitators I decided to ask participants to focus on exploring their photographic stories in depth before manipulating images. This decision was made in order to encourage further exploration of what images were communicating and what participants considered they were conveying through their photographs. We endeavoured to stimulate discussion around images made. Some group members were customarily extremely shy about discussing their work and a culture of feeling ‘shame’ or embarrassment was strong. It was a new experience for participants to talk about their work, to discuss if, or in what way, images were meaningful to them, what responses were evoked in those viewing them, and so forth. This kind of inquiry is an important aspect of media education. If discussion around imagery were more familiar within the educational space then this form of dialogue might be more engaging and have the potential to support media producers in developing their awareness, aesthetic and critical literacy capacities in the context of broader media production.

A number of teachers and community facilitators expressed concern that it would be useful for students to have experience with both Apple Macintosh and PC platforms for capacity building and employment opportunities. For this reason we included MacBook Pros in our kit. We generally worked with Picasa, Microsoft Movie Maker, iPhoto and Audacity. One of the most challenging aspects of the workshops was that, invariably, remote schoolteachers work with their students using their preferred software. This meant that in one school students worked with Picasa, at another the secondary boys with iPhoto, the secondary girls class with Moviemaker, and at another, they worked with IrfanView. Staff changes are not uncommon in remote schools and each time this occurred, new software invariably introduced and implemented.
These technology issues make the capacity building process for young Indigenous students particularly challenging. If we introduce a group of young people to software with which they are unfamiliar and ask a teacher to support this implementation and the teacher is more comfortable using different software, the likelihood of their supporting an ongoing practice in the school environment, but outside the context of the workshops, is diminished. If instead we respond to the individual teachers’ preferences and run the program using their personal preferred software and they are replaced by another teacher who works with their preferred software, the same issues apply. Either way participants’ capacity to develop and evolve their skill set is challenged because much of their attention is involved in learning about new interfaces and their specific navigational requirements. This situation became an issue particularly as the participants with whom we worked thought that technical learning was the least appealing part of the process of digital storytelling. This difficulty is ongoing yet could be alleviated by a more discerning approach to software implementation by education departments.

The government’s somewhat idealistic ‘Digital Education Revolution’ (DER) for every child is not effectively supported by training programs for teachers who are responsible for implementing that revolution. In many instances teachers are engaging with digital media in response to the interest...
of young people but have neither training nor appropriate resources to enable them to work with digital media technology effectively or creatively. This reality conflicts with a growing body of research which argues that, “[w]hat is most important is not so much the physical availability of computers and the Internet but rather people’s ability to make use of those technologies to engage in meaningful social practices” (Warshauer 2003: 53).

One of the most pressing enquiries in the context of this research is how technology and digital media might be embedded effectively in a manner that will best support a sustainable, self-representational creative practice. The relevant discussion for remote Indigenous young people engaging with digital media is not one of gaps to be overcome by provision of equipment, but one of a participatory culture which focuses on “social development challenges to be addressed through the effective integration of technology into communities, institutions and societies” (Warschauer 2003). Expanding or ensuring access to new technologies does little to ensure the capacity to participate, to create “to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content in powerful new ways” (Jenkins et al 2009: 8). At a Victorian Information Technology Teachers’ Association (VITTA) conference in 2011 at which I gave a presentation, national and international presenters spoke of digital media and ICT in the context of social affordances, collaborative consumption and immersive learning strategies in school environments. These considerations are far removed from current teaching focus, intentions or capabilities in remote Indigenous Australian schools.

Protection or Preparation

During the course of this research, the Education Department in the Northern Territory as endeavouring to write basic guidelines regarding what was initially termed ‘cyber-safety’ and now, ‘cyber-culture’. The former, considered too negative in connotation, was actually indicative of a fundamental mindset or approach to media or online educational practice. Much of the discourse around cyber-culture is designed to promote responsible and safe online behaviour. In the educational environment, this often places considerable emphasis on cyber bullying and online predators. When working in the educational space we were required to adapt to
departmental online behavioural guidelines, as they were developed and implemented. These guidelines do little to address the concerns raised in relation to training teachers to implement technology in innovative ways or to support media literacy education as addressed by Buckingham. The cyberculture guidelines, as outlined during discussions I held with staff in the Northern Territory Department of Education in 2009 and 2010, largely focused on controlling engagement in the online environment as opposed to enabling informed usage and capacity to discriminate in relation to content, modes of usage and manners of interactivity. Such an approach lends itself to the ‘protection’ rather than the ‘preparation’ model as discussed in the work regarding media literacies by David Buckingham (2003). Within the context of SharingStories we did discuss the potential for the SharingStories platform to work to some degree to support education department concerns creatively, such that children could learn about ‘safe’ online behaviour as they interacted in a creative, networked and moderated online space.

I suggested to the department that SharingStories implement a series of pop up panels which provide relevant information or departmental protocols as participants created their profiles; however, guidelines were still taking shape at that point and it was difficult to move forward with this approach.

Figure 25: Sample page through which participants create their profiles.
SharingStories workshops were unable to address this issue at depth but it is an important aspect of dialogue in relation to a ‘Protection’, i.e. restriction and heavy, agenda driven filters, as opposed to a ‘Preparation’ approach to the online space which relies on effective transmission of digital media critical literacies as discussed in Chapter III.

The SharingStories platform was built with functionality to allow a moderated online dialogue between content producers themselves and the broader public. Moderation in such an environment is a requirement in the educational space. Passing the responsibility of releasing cached comments online to local facilitators and teaching staff has been problematic. The turnover of teaching staff is frequent and effective transmission of instructions required to complete this task does not always take place. This would be different were the practice embedded effectively. There was discussion among SharingStories facilitators as to whether it would be easier to disable the possibility for dialogue between students and viewers in the context of Education Department concerns. However the feeling amongst community members was that it was important for young people to hear from others interested in their work. This capacity is an important aspect of the process, which contributes to and participates in, the construction of identifications. It allows for self-representations to be “negotiated and tested in the context of circles of relationships” (Weber & Mitchell 2008: 44). The stories also clearly impact on the viewer as was demonstrated through online comments (reviewed in Chapter VI). In order for this to occur effectively and for dialogue and exchange around content between students and young people to be supported, well designed literacy resources would provide a useful foundation for written dialogue with young people from other communities as a practice for achieving certain cross curricular ICT, Literacy and Standard Australian English outcomes.
"This story is about what you should do when you enter a waterhole, how you should let the spirits know that you..."

Other video or slide show stories about: country, family, Jills, law, spirit.

Figure 26: Sample of comments pertaining to particular stories.
In addition, content itself requires moderation in an educational environment. For example, one participant produced a striking image of a young man with a sickle shaped knife. He had set up a theatrical shot in which the subject was acting out a scene in which he held the knife to his throat. It was a strong photograph in both content and texture, the light was soft and colours muted, and the image provided an intimate insight into the young men’s lives. The content producer wanted to publish it online.

The school’s head asked the facilitators to remove the image from the site. He explained that there had been a number of suicides in the community in recent months and he believed it was inappropriate to publish images, which may evoke, suggest, provoke or incite violence associated with harm or self-harm. The form of creative self-expression in the photograph was strong but we responded to the concerns of the institutional framework and removed the image. In hindsight, it would have been appropriate and useful to have the content producers involved in the discussion or to have asked the principal to discuss his concerns with the group of participants because it was important that students understood
clearly the source of the instruction. In that way the process could have created a forum for valuable dialogue and negotiation between students and the educational infrastructure.

There were many occasions relating to photographic content which had to be addressed in terms of drug related paraphernalia, bongs in the corners of rooms, cans of Victoria Bitter (VB) beer in photographs made in dry communities. To protect the individuals who had created these images we were instructed by the head of school that they were not to be put online. In discussions regarding this and the fact that many of these images were strong, intimate observational photographs of peoples’ lives and experiences, it was suggested by the head of school that they could be part of a personal blog or that students could upload them onto their own personal social networking pages which were not bound by an institutional framework. The issue is relevant in relation to working with youth regardless of institutional frameworks. In producing self-representational media, producers may well have a bong or a Victoria Bitter (VB) can in a dry community at the foot of their sofa. What facilitators do in relation to censoring these self-representations is a point for discussion between facilitators and program directors, principles, teachers, teacher’s assistants, cultural facilitators and young content producers themselves. In facilitating the creation of the image and its sharing on a public platform I believe facilitators have a responsibility to prepare participants by making clear the implications of putting such imagery up against their own profiles. In these instances I explained to participants that an image with this kind of content could not go online in an educational context, because it was incriminating and could cause problems. There was immediate understanding and certainly no resistance. In hearing of this perspective, no media producers suggested that they still wished to load the image.

Technical and Bureaucratic Issues

Internet speed and connectivity in the communities I worked in was poor. Connections were regularly tortuously slow and dropped out so often that content producers frequently lost interest in efforts to upload stories or download audio samples. In order to show content from the SharingStories
site to a group of students we usually had to pre load stories or they continuously stalled. On some occasions the modem connections themselves were not as slow but by the time they’d been bounced around the school or community to reach the room in which we might be working, they were either weak or non-existent. Despite the significant focus on the National Broadband Network (NBN) as a panacea for remote communities’ connectivity, it will not reach the majority of remote communities within which I have worked in the first three years of its roll out. The most effective and fastest way to approach sharing of digital stories online in a remote educational context currently would be through use of dedicated modems. Most participating communities have a strong Telstra 3G signal. We were hindered by budgetary restraints in this regard because we would need to provide the modems and data plans in all participating communities.

Where to store media is another issue. In some instances schools preferred the material to be stored on their networks. However this meant producers had to download content each time they wanted to work on it and save it back to the server. A central repository for storage accessible from anywhere in the institution would be theoretically ideal, yet in practice time consuming and often exceedingly slow, depending on the traffic and set up. The most effective way to work was with large, dedicated external hard drives on which content was stored and could be accessed with greater speed by individual content producers.

In addition to storage at the school it was suggested by cultural facilitators and community members that it would be beneficial and desirable to have content stored concurrently at community based Knowledge and Cultural Centres. I did dialogue with some of the relevant Cultural Centres regarding the idea of their holding the content and potential for some of the stories produced to be available on a screen located in the gallery. These ideas generally met with a positive response, however ultimately this is a dialogue, process and practice for community schools themselves to engage in with respective Knowledge and Cultural Centres themselves. In Jarlmadangah content is already held on a hard drive at the Jarlmadangah Burru Aboriginal Corporation Cultural Centre as well as at the school. Jarlmadangah is an independent school, initiated, controlled and
managed by the community itself. As a result integrative practices are well established between the school and the Cultural Centre and these connections have been easy to support. The issue in Jarlmadangah is that Internet access is often problematic and so it would be more effective to create a collation of stories that are not dependent on online access for viewing by community members, as well as some of the many tourists who visit as part of a community driven eco tourism initiative. Ideally the proposed creative practice in the educational environment has the potential to significantly strengthen relations and exchange between school and community in a number of ways.

Many community Cultural Centers already have effective knowledge management systems and there are organisations like Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways (TKRP) and their database developed with the Kulu Thaypan Traditional Owner Elders in Cape York Peninsula.\textsuperscript{45} TKRP offers customized training in, and implementation of the database. The methodology behind the TKRP template offers strategies rather than structures for appropriate ways to hold and manage knowledge and is responsive to individual communities’ needs and cultural heritage. Similarly Ara Irititja is a digital project that has evolved around the Anangu communities’ complex cultural information systems. It exemplifies how Indigenous ontologies are re-shaping digital technologies. Databases are tools embedded with assumptions about the world, encoded with specific structures of information management. Ara Irititja re-imagines how knowledge and language are preserved and transmitted among Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara, and Yankunytjatjara communities in Central Australia. (Dallwitz et al 2010: 15-16)

As Wilton Foster, Chairman, Pitjantatjarra Council suggests,

Today we live in the computer technology time. The computer has a huge brain and is very clever. It can hide things if necessary, and then

\textsuperscript{45} http://tkrp.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=0&Itemid =139) Retrieved October 2012. Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways is an organisation committed to empowering communities to record and store their knowledge. The program operates a number of projects including a mentorship program with digital media training for the purpose of recording living culture and access to a database built and designed to reflect traditional knowledge systems. TKRP works to strengthen traditional knowledge for the benefit of Community and Country.
bring them back later. The Ara Irititja computer is clever like a dingo. (http://www.irititja.com/)

The relevant software is now offered to other communities to adapt and implement with the support and expertise of the Ara Irititja team.\(^4^6\) It would be potentially useful for schools and education departments to consider working with these ideas, organisations and Content Management Systems in the storage of digital media produced in the context of digital media education for remote Indigenous young people. According to Victor Steffensen, one of the founders of TKRP and instrumental in the development and design of the database, the organization is now working with the Queensland Education Department to find effective ways of storing and making Indigenous knowledge in a digital form, produced by Indigenous people, accessible within the educational framework (pers. comm. 2012). Such an approach would undoubtedly impact on the way perceptions of Indigenous people are constructed in the educational space, and, in a dialectical model of identity, those modified constructs will feed into the available cultural material from which content producers form their own identifications. I will look at this in more depth in Chapter VI.

Permissions

Online behavioural protocols include permissions and copyright issues of which young people I worked with generally had little understanding. In the course of the workshops these issues were introduced and participants were shown how to find copyright free audio samples on the net using sites like freesound. Selected samples were treated and manipulated in Audacity and incorporated into their own sound scapes along with original recordings.\(^4^7\) It was explained that, if using copyrighted music in slideshows or with single images, it is illegal to upload these onto public sites like Facebook, You tube, Bebo or MySpace. Indigenous youth in remote communities often use their mobile phones for photography and, when they have phone credit or are able to access computers with Internet connection which are unrestricted by the Education Department’s filters, upload them to

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\(^4^6\) A video demonstration of that model was retrieved from http://www.irititja.com/the_archive/demo/demo.html October 2012.

\(^4^7\) See http://sharingstories.org/content/lightning & http://sharingstories.org/content/le-laines-track
social networking sites. The Pew Study suggests that engagement in production and distribution of content contributes to consciousness, “young people who create and circulate their own media are more likely to respect the intellectual property rights of others because they feel a greater stake in the cultural economy” (Jenkins 2009: 12). As part of the workshop process we discussed the implication of loading material to the Net, the extent of the distribution network and the capacity for viewers to download material. The latter is a particularly sensitive issue for Indigenous communities in which photographs have been taken and used in ways people have had little control over until relatively recently. The SharingStories program implements a system in accordance with community advisors, whereby, once students have determined which images they would like to upload to their profile, those images are printed on a colour printer. Initially this is done with supervision and guidance from a facilitator who walks around communities with participants carrying their photocopied images, visiting the people who feature in them.

![Figure 28: Workshop participants preparing images to return to community members for viewing and approval. Wugularr.](image)

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The permissions process is another opportunity to talk with participants’ families and community members about what is taking place and is often an extremely enjoyable forum for discussion and sharing. If the person or people in the photograph are comfortable with the image being put online they are asked to sign the back of the photocopied print as evidence they have seen and approved it. This is a time consuming process, particularly when, on occasion, there might be ten or more people in an image; but it is an important practice in the framework of self-representational digital story telling in a remote Indigenous community context. The practice may be considered a contravention of young people’s culture, which is to upload freely to the Net, however I consider that anyone who has worked in an Indigenous context would respect that many of the Elders have little understanding of the Internet or the extent of its distribution network. It is their right to be informed about what is occurring with their image and to provide permission for its use. Subjects must be given an opportunity to convey their position in this regard and their decisions respected. Young people may have a different relationship with media and are certainly already taking photos on their phones and putting them online, however, in accordance with the guidelines of community Elders, I have considered it necessary to introduce them to these issues. There is no doubt that the securing of permissions was perceived to be a
more tedious aspect of the process of uploading to the World Wide Web, however, if media producers are to post images of others in a platform designed for self representational story telling, then consultation with, and approval from, those being represented in the work, not just the content producer who pressed the shutter button, is appropriate.

These issues are part of the ethics challenge (Jenkins et al 2009) inherent in media education and are in keeping with traditional ideas regarding knowledge as a form of property; and violation of “highly structured rights that restrict general access to information … [is] regarded as theft” (Michaels 1994 [1986b]: 2). Rules exist “for the production, distribution and ownership of any image” just as they do “under traditional law for sacred designs which … refer to ancestors and ancestral mythology” (Langton 1993: 65). In the context of photography, and the fact that the ‘taking’ of a photograph is regarded by many of the older generation as a kind of theft or capturing and taking away of something essential to the subject, it is important that there is consultation in relation to the creation and distribution of images. Certainly much has been written in relation to rights, permissions and protocols regarding media production in Indigenous communities, mostly in relation to non-Indigenous filmmakers making films with or about Indigenous communities. Whilst most major funding bodies insist on rigorous permissions and evidence of willingness to participate, and preferring to see Indigenous editorial involvement with approval on completion, others do argue that a “mounting surge of protocols and guidelines” has the potential to put a “stranglehold” on both white and black filmmakers and their capacity to tell effective stories (Peters-Little 2002: 6). Whilst Frances Peters-Little, an Aboriginal Historian and research fellow at the Centre for Indigenous History at Australian National University, is speaking of “A Legitimate Role for White Filmmakers Making Black Films” (Peters-Little, 2002: 1) the inquiry regarding permissions is relevant to all media production in this context. While community-based digital storytelling is quite a different practice from the filmmaking that Peters-Little is addressing, it still involves the depiction of community members in a medium that can be broadly distributed. Seeking of approval in this particular context is not, I contend, an over regulation but a courtesy, and in line with communities’
directives. All community members need to be active and empowered participants in the creative practice and in the representations therein, particularly when those representations are to appear online.

Many of the stories produced through major programs like the BBC’s Capture Wales and the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS) are often not available for public viewing or only in specific geographies. This is a result of the licensing and permissions garnered by the organising bodies. Digital storytelling practices have often been criticised by those who feel they fail to have impact as a result of poor distribution practices. John Hartley and Kelly McWilliam, Deputy Director at the Public Memory Research Centre suggest:

As a movement, its propagation and dissemination strategies are hopeless - most digital stories persist only as unused archive, and it has a very low profile on the Net, making little use of interactivity and social networking. (Hartley and McWilliam 2009: 14)

Similarly Jean Burgess, a Chief Investigator on the ARC Linkage Project ‘Digital Storytelling and Co-Creative Media’ (2011-2014) argues that:

The mere fact of productivity in itself is not sufficient grounds for celebration. The question that we ask about ‘democratic’ media production can no longer be limited to ‘who gets to speak?’ We must also ask ‘ who is heard, and to what end? (Burgess 2006: 201-214)

Young Indigenous media makers create plenty of stories with a local audience in mind (Kral, pers. comm. 2012), however numerous participants I worked with also expressed an interest in making the work available more broadly and were certainly engaged when responses to their own work were posted by viewers.

In the case of SharingStories, agreements are drawn up which allow the work to be hosted and shared on a website maintained by SharingStories organization, if content producers wish to share it online. In line with not only my own experience and what I consider to be the underlying ethos of facilitating self representational media, but also in line with community wishes and most established protocols in the area, copyright in content produced is held by content producers and their communities, unless a work is a significant collaborative process in which case copyright may be shared.
However, these questions need to be addressed at a local, community-based level in each instance.

Filters and Institutional Agendas

Certainly the educational system is not an ideal vessel in relation to truly self-representational expression. The issue of educational agendas and filters which restrict online access means there is a very real danger of digital storytelling projects being hijacked such that the principles of self-representation are significantly compromised.

The theme of institutionalisation is important because organizations are ‘agents’ in their own right, with purposes that may differ from those of either participants or facilitators. These institutional realities and how practitioners navigate them may determine the success or otherwise of digital storytelling initiatives. A question always to be faced is how emancipationist intentions can be pursued using the agency of large-scale institutions, which also have their own, control imperatives. (Hartley & McWilliam 2009: 13)

The issue of Internet filters is considerable in the educational environment and is particularly relevant to Indigenous participants. These filters often reflect educational concerns regarding cyber-safety as well as specific educational agendas and perspectives. In the broader community many young people work with the constraints of educational filters in the school environment but have a much broader online experience at home. As a result of very low incidence of online access in homes of remote Indigenous participants these young people have considerably less capacity to explore the Internet freely. This is not dissimilar to global trends. In South America media educator and journalist Antonio Lopez suggests that reports demonstrated only 40% of Latino households owned personal computers which was 16% below national average.

More affluent students in the mainstream have computers at home that provide them with more unrestricted access; Native students by contrast, are constrained by the policies of those who provide access and host the computer systems. (Lopez 2008: 112)

Henry Jenkins identified that wireless Internet is provided free of charge for low-income residents in some communities.
Philadelphia will allow low-income families, families that are on the cusp of their financial capacity, to be fully and completely connected. We believe that our public school children should be – their families have to be connected or else they will fall behind, and, in many cases, never catch up. (Philadelphia Mayor, John Street 2005 in Jenkins 2009:16)

Similarly, Philadelphia’s Emergency People’s Shelter (EPS), a non-profit group, provides shelter residents and people in the surrounding neighbourhood with Internet access free of charge which suggests they consider that low-income students would certainly fall behind mainstream and be disadvantaged as a result (Jenkins et al 2009: 16). In addition to learning potential, an easily accessible online delivery model offers other possibilities for distribution of remote Indigenous content. While some of the communities I have worked in do have access to the Net in informal environments - youth, tele and art centres - many do not, and those that do regularly have connectivity and hardware issues. In addition, suggests Daniel Featherstone, while,

“[a] lot of communities currently have community access Internet facilities they are often only available during work hours or in limited spaces so they don’t necessarily enable people to access media when they choose to, or it feels like a space not controlled by community” (Featherstone, pers. comm. Alice Springs 2012).

In five years of working in the eleven Indigenous communities involved with the SharingStories program, with hundreds of children and their extended families, I could count on one hand the homes in which there was either a personal computer or a landline phone and internet connection. In some instances this is related to the bureaucratic process of getting a line put. In addition, I was also told on numerous occasions, when asking people why they had neither landline or Internet connection, that they were reluctant to have a landline because of the number of people likely to want to use it and related cultural obligations. Frankie Tango Lane, a senior Mayali man living in Wugularr suggested, “If I have private phone in the house everyone want to use it, cost you too much money… you got no choice, it’s culture, but who is going to pay the bill”.
There is significant research suggesting that a great deal of learning occurs through informal engagement with the online environment: “the more radical challenges to existing learning agendas are happening in domains such as gaming, online networks, and amateur production that usually occur in informal and non-institutional settings” (Ito, et al 2008: viii). Even so it is questionable whether the Philadelphia approach is desirable from the perspective of those who might hold a position similar to that of Jampinjinpa’s. As his perspective makes clear there would be varying opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of such access being made available in remote communities. This is relevant and an issue to be negotiated and discussed within communities. Overall it is clear that State and Federal governments need to allocate funds to communities who request them for ongoing costs related to maintenance and Internet service provision in appropriate, accessible environments as well as training and employment of community members who can maintain those technologies, and facilitate access to, and usage of, the resources by the broader community. In addition, and vitally, there needs to be increased recognition that the issue of cultural inclusion is not only about allocating funds necessary for infrastructure costs as outlined in the proposed NBN roll out but the need to effectively support practices which will enhance capacity for cultural inclusion in the realm of digital literacies for remote Indigenous communities. Technology alone will not deliver improved capabilities for engagement and effective integration.

Whilst digital storytelling per se does not necessarily rely on significant online access or freedoms therein, the issue of filters or agendas is relevant to the discussion of digital storytelling within the domain of education. Much of the digital storytelling or content production I have witnessed in remote Indigenous schools, in response to current educational curriculum resources, has resulted in the creation of media tools made by children designed to support learning within the dominant knowledge system and pedagogy. I have seen numerous multimedia or PowerPoint presentations made by students in which they present content related to scientific experiment, slide shows about measuring objects with rulers and tape measures, weighing those objects and distributing and measuring liquids in a variety of measuring cups for example. On occasions educational environments within
which I worked insisted the practice we were implementing include or respond to what were considered critical school objectives at the time. For example, we have been asked to help students: create stories as part of an anti bullying campaign; make media relating to the kind of job they’d like to find on leaving school; utilise the workshop process to build profiles which might be developed to support applications to boarding schools, and so forth. I am not suggesting these exercises do not have value, however, what I am proposing is an entirely different practice which does not currently exist within the educational framework but which I argue would support learning, strengthen identity, community building and self representational creative practice in a manner that could significantly improve learning in both a culturally relevant context as well as within the current educational pedagogy. Given educational infrastructure and agendas, it is extremely challenging to ensure that digital storytelling practices are not commandeered in a fashion, which simply supports a Western curricular paradigm.

Why Schools?

If this is so, it is reasonable to ask why I determined to establish the creative practice in the remote educational space? In the early stages of this research I identified community members who were interested in supporting a community based digital media practice. On several occasions people were willing and had the technical skills to fulfil such a role, however they were in huge demand in a number of other contexts. In one community I secured a wage through the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) for two potential facilitators, but ultimately the people involved were unable to maintain the role because of numerous other demands on their time. In another instance, a young person who was interested and had the skills and capacity to run the program wished to return to university to continue studies; another was already over committed with her work as a teacher’s assistant. Similar stories unfolded in other communities.
Whilst community owned and controlled endeavours supporting creative practice, such as those reviewed in the Lifespan Survey \(^49\) are ideal, programs of this kind need ongoing support if they are to be sustained. In the context of digital media production, support is required in the form of funding, provision and maintenance of technology and ongoing skills training. Kral’s research speaks volubly of young people’s engagement in creative digital media practice in informal ‘community-based domains’ suggesting that,

there is freedom for individual specialisations to emerge and individuals are setting high skill goals for themselves that are not assessed through a programmatic system of institutional learning, but through self-monitoring. Young people are thus experiencing non-directed learning, practicing that learning and producing meaningful cultural artifacts through a process of control, internal monitoring and self-evaluation. Moreover they are choosing to participate because these cultural production roles are in the domains of knowledge that matter to them—culture, arts, country, and new technologies—within a framework of social relatedness. (Kral 2010a: 14)

For media production processes like those evidenced at these sites to be sustained there needs to be an income generating strategy, either through grant applications, corporate, philanthropic or government funding or revenue raising activities.\(^50\) Regular funding is required to support outside and local facilitators, provide equipment, and ensure maintenance and repair of it, vehicles, fuel and other general running costs. All the sites involved in the Lifespan survey are supported by fairly significant and well-established organisations, Daniel Featherstone points out,

most of them have pretty much full time on the ground support and so those sites do have more outcomes simply because there’s someone there to help. You go to a similar community without someone there supporting it, if there’s a technical problem pretty much people walk away until someone turns up to fix it. When things work well people

\(^{49}\) Research based on The Lifespan Learning and Literacy for Young Adults in Remote Indigenous Communities is a three year (2007-10) Australian Research Council Linkage Project between CAEPR at ANU and The Fred Hollows Foundation. The six research sites included “music recording at Ngaanyatjarra Media, digital archiving at Libraries and Knowledge Centers, Ngapartji Ngapartji intergenerational arts project, Djilpin Arts youth media and arts project, and youth centers supported by the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust” (Kral 2010: 10).

\(^{50}\)There is the potential for communities to arrange for licensing and distribution of content through the mainstream media and receive a fee, if content producers wish to do that, however the logistics, the networking and the delivery mechanisms would be challenging to sustain.
are fast to uptake technology and use it but where technology isn’t as user friendly and accessible it breaks down very quickly. (Featherstone, pers. comm. Alice Springs, 2012)

There are many communities not served or supported by organisations or infrastructure, nor are they served by Indigenous owned and controlled media production houses. They may receive Indigenous produced content via the ICTV distribution networks or Indigitube or distribution channels of PAKAM, PAW Media or other Indigenous media organisations however; their capacity to produce is limited. In discussions with Rita Catrioni (Manager ICTV), Daniel Featherstone, Project/Policy officer for Indigenous Remote Communities Association (IRCA) and Neil Turner (Manager PAKAM), all made clear that there is inadequate funding available to ensure that a creative digital storytelling practice actually takes place on the ground in the numerous communities which sit under the umbrella of these respective organisations.

PAKAM for instance has about twenty five communities it’s meant to service on a budget of $400,000 a year and it’s previously been a lot lower than that.

Their primary activity is running their radio network and they can only get a video trainer in for a period of weeks or months each year and generally that’s associated with specific program outcomes. They just cannot get out to communities on an ongoing basis and support them in any sustainable way. A trainer would need to get out to ten or fifteen of those twenty five communities for a few days, try and get whatever outcomes they can and move on to the next, you can’t sustain community activity with that lack of resource (Daniel Featherstone, pers. comm. Alice Springs, 2012)

Given that digital literacy is no less important than conventional literacies, an imperative aspect of Indigenous learning in the educational space, finding ways to ‘skill up’ a greater number of Indigenous young people when it comes to digital literacy would be worthwhile. Currently this largely remains the domain of independent organisations like SharingStories, Community Prophets and the Wakakiri program which run intensive media training workshops in the educational environment but often expend

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considerable creative energy in the raising of revenue to do so through a combination of Government, Corporate, Educational and Philanthropic funding pathways. My research suggests that this issue could be addressed in a manner, which simultaneously responds to a number of the issues raised in prior chapters by embedding an effective digital storytelling practice in the educational space. The practice proposed, and which I have implemented and trialled during the course of this research, involves the development of innovative resources which support culturally relevant learning while achieving curricular objectives, incorporating domains of knowledge that matter to the students and their communities, working with ‘culture, arts, country, and new technologies—within a framework of social relatedness’ (Kral 2010a: 14) inside the educational space.

There have of course been critics of “the insertion of traditional forms of education into school curricula” (Batty 2005: 178) from a variety of perspectives. The practice is believed by some, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to detract from success in conventional learning, which is seen as a necessary acquisition for future employment, something I will address in more detail in Chapter V. On the contrary I have observed that place-based educational approaches have been demonstrated to make a significant contribution to Indigenous engagement and meaningful employment potential in a remote context often in the area of Youth Ranger Programs and Indigenous Land & Sea Management, employment opportunities which are strongly connected to Country. This would certainly support the perspective of David Zandvliet, an Associate Professor of Education with a particular interest in environmental education,

educational concern for local space (and community in the broad sense) is sometimes overshadowed by both the discourse of accountability and by the discourse of economic competitiveness to which it is linked. In my opinion, place becomes a critical construct to its opponents not because it is in opposition to economic well-being, but because it challenges assumptions about the dominant ‘progress’ metaphor and its embedded neo-conservative values. (Zandvliet 2007: 5)

Philip Batty, who works closely with the communities, material culture and history of Central Australian Aboriginal people, has argued that this “
insertion” of culture in the educational context potentially gives credence to a state supported endeavour which “incorporates certain reconstituted versions of Aboriginal culture into the administrative practices of government” (Batty 2005: 175). Batty argued in the early 1990s that within such an approach cultural traditions “were deployed to accomplish particular governmental ends and as such should be understood more as ‘artefacts’ of rule than as separate or essential cultural attributes (see Hindess 1996)” (Batty 2005:178). Nancy H Hornberger in her research into educational policies and practice in South America, particularly Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, similarly observed the seeming paradox inherent in “transforming what has been and continues to be a tool for standardization and national unification into, simultaneously, a vehicle for diversification and emancipation”, a practice which inevitably results in “tensions and contradictions” (Hornberger 2000: 174). Institutionalisation of culture in the form of curricula involves, without question, participation in the dominant educational framework and, as such it could be argued that it produces Indigenous agency “imbued with the ability to undertake a variety of projects on behalf of the state”, from Batty’s perspective. I would argue, however, that currently such a position is something of an ideological luxury. In the face of ongoing disengagement from learning in a school environment as demonstrated by Indigenous youth in remote areas, endemically poor relationships between school and the communities they are designed to serve, as well as ongoing alienation and disenfranchisement young people experience because of the manner in which schools construct knowledge and correspondingly success and failure, there is every reason to engage with these structures, despite the difficulties therein.

I would also suggest that for Indigenous young people, the capacity to participate in the media space and in the production of media and representations of themselves, should they wish to do so, is also of great significance for many of the reasons outlined in prior chapters. Media production in the context of youth learning programs, which sit outside the educational infrastructure, are a wonderful opportunity for those involved, however the possibility for participation through Independent workshop practices only reaches a certain number of remote Indigenous children as do
Indigenous owned and controlled media organisations. For these reasons I argue that embedding a well thought out, well-implemented digital storytelling practice has the potential to make a significant contribution to learning and engagement for Indigenous students. Usually the discussion about technology for underserved communities begins with access, but rarely is it contextualised in terms of wisdom. There is the capacity to develop a wise pedagogy in this regard, one that incorporates media, ICT, art, ecology and community (Lopez 2008) in the context of education. In the next chapter I will present a brief overview of the historical context of place based learning pedagogy, the principles of which underlie the creation of resources I have been involved in developing, and subsequently, the results of trialing these resources.
Indigenous children have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State. All Indigenous peoples also have this right and the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own language, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. Article 15 of the United Nations Draft Declaration of Indigenous People’s Rights.

In this chapter I shall discuss the educational pedagogy in Australia in relation to bilingual and ‘both-ways’ Schools, Homeland Learning Centres (HLCs) and ‘Learning through Country’ programs and their inclusion of culturally relevant education for Indigenous children. I will critique the lack of adequate fiscal and policy support by government and education departments for these approaches to learning and examine the manner in which the philosophical foundations underpin the resources that I went on to develop in collaboration with communities and teaching staff as part of the SharingStories practice.

Educational Pedagogy

The conventional educational pedagogy based on acquisition of Western knowledge is promoted as the key to success and rarely takes into account other knowledge systems or other languages which lie outside the dominant culture. The arrogance and efficacy of the assumptions which underpin this approach have been challenged for decades by educational experts working with Indigenous communities globally (Cajete 1994; Hornberger 2000; Nakata 2003; Lopez 2008; Simpson et al 2009). These issues are ever more pertinent as increasing numbers of languages and the knowledge systems held within them are passing with the loss of Indigenous Elders. In his excellent essay ‘Circling the Cross: Bridging Native America, Education and Digital Media’, Antonio Lopez (2008: 112) is critical of the homogenizing of culture, an inevitable result, he suggests, of the intention of education in the Information Age to ‘reproduce hegemonic power structures’, working as a training ground for a very particular form of logic.
It is a logic which is “more about forgetting: forgetting your culture, your identity and values” (Anangu Tjuta Nintirrikupayi Aboriginal Corporation in The Guardian 1999). Terrie Seddon, Professor of Education at Monash University, suggests standard curriculum has served as,

a means of regulation, an instrument of control and construction, wrapped up in nation-building rhetoric, which welded and organized ‘the people’ into a collective productive force to advance the nation, consolidate national identity and realize national destiny. (Seddon 2001: 308)

The late Vine Deloria Jr and Daniel Wildcat, both American Indian scholars and activists, make a similar argument:

Almost all Indian education studies, reports and commissions, have described, analysed and bemoaned a Western-inspired institution built on curriculum methodologies and pedagogy consistent with the Western worldview. This much-studied educational system was, and sadly remains too often directed toward cultural assimilation into the dominant society. (Deloria. Jr & Wildcat 2001: 19)

The dominant educational model does not acknowledge multiple types of intelligence, nor does it generally cultivate creativity. Curriculum has been manipulated and moulded and ‘increasingly contested as different groups have vied to shape this powerful technology in ways that benefit and/or represent their identity and interests’. This ‘powerful technology’ (Seddon 2001: 308) very clearly has its own ‘bardic function’ namely to denote what is useful and/or valued learning (Fiske & Hartley 2003 [1978]: 64-66 in Hartley 2009: 19). It is a social product ‘constructed within historically specific social relations of possession/dispossession and advantage/disadvantage’ (Seddon 2001: 309). The ‘technology of curriculum’, like the technology of media, is intricately bound in the construction/politics of meaning Creativity expert Sir Ken Robinson argued in his extremely popular TED lecture53 that schools kill creativity, because the current system of education is modelled on deductive reasoning. Designed, conceived and structured he argues, for a different age, “based upon an intellectual model of the mind formed amidst the economic circumstances of the Industrial Revolution”. The current model of education, Robinson

argues, represent an attitude to learning “driven by the economic imperative” (Robinson 2006). In this framework, the arts have suffered and cultures whose knowledge systems were embedded in ceremonial process, song, dance, visual arts, sophisticated systems of zoology, biology and the sciences, have been rendered largely irrelevant by the ‘modern’ educational pedagogy. As Seddon suggests, “[c]urriculum determines both students’ learning and teachers’ work in ways which institutionalize hegemonic conceptions of what it means to be an educated person (Wexler 1992; Levinson et al 1996)” (Seddon 2001: 310). In an Australian context, educator and activist Richard Trugden, who has lived and worked with the Yolŋu community in Arnhem Land for decades, argues that non-Indigenous teachers of Indigenous children often “have little or no real understanding of the rich social, legal, economic, biological, zoological, philosophical, religious and linguistic academic history of their students” (Trugden 2008: 6) -- an academic history which could be validated and incorporated in learning (Fogarty & Schwab 2012).

As Djuŋadjuna Yunupiŋu suggested during a conversation on Elcho Island, Yolŋu children need to be taken out of the classroom into Country as part of their educational experience --where “they can experience a life, a real life, where the wind can speak to them, where the land can speak to them, where the water can speak to them, the environment of the nature can tell them who they are” (Djuŋadjuna Yunupiŋu pers. comm. Naŋinyburra Homeland, Elcho Island, NT 2010).
Bilingual and ‘Both-ways’ Education

The plight of culturally relevant learning in Indigenous schools, a teaching pedagogy that honours and incorporates this rich history of Indigenous students into the educational experience, is important to discuss here. According to researcher Helen Hughes who is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Independent Studies, “Indigenous parents are no longer prepared to be cajoled and bullied into second rate, separate Aboriginal education for their children. They argue that they speak vernacular languages at home and that their communities teach children traditions and culture” (Hughes 2008b). This observation is utterly contrary to my own findings. Almost exclusively, the Elders and community leaders I have worked with over the last decade have been vocal in their desire for culturally relevant or ‘both-ways’ learning to be used as a model for teaching in their community schools. This is not a new concept and there is mounting global evidence...
demonstrating the efficacy of both culturally relevant and bilingual approaches to learning. I cite just three of numerous instances:

Now they [the kids] are at school there’s no time for culture, so we have to bring culture into the school and teach it. Then kids from other tribes might see Ndjebbana kids doing Middjarn dance one day, and the next day those Ndjebbana kids might see the Cockle dance by kids from the Burrara tribe. Then they can dance together. They’ve got to learn for the future, to make it alive. (Debbie Mabbindja, Ndjebbana Clan, pers. comm. Maningrida, NT 2008)

We are now living in a modern world, in two worlds, Balanda (European) and Yolŋu, if we learn Balanda system all the time and teach the children Balanda westernised culture that is very difficult for them. Our expectation is for Yolŋu to hold their heritage, their culture, their song and dance, how to play yidaki, they should be taught. I want to see culture in schools as often than literacy. They can learn, Yolŋu and Balanda, white man’s law and Yolŋu law. (Djuŋadjuna Yunupiŋu, pers. comm. Galiwin’ku, Elcho Island, NT 2009)

You have to bring your culture with you when you walking, keep both-ways, white fella way and black fella way. Black fella way should come into the school. Plenty time they are in the same boat rocking. (Beverly Pascoe, Umpila Clan, pers. comm. Lockhart River, Qld 2010)

Figure 31: Senior Songman Jimmy Bungurru singing the Middjarn (Turtle Dreaming) Song. Maningrida.

There is a breadth of research and analysis on the efficacy of this approach (Marika 1999; Hornberger 2000; Cajete 1994; Deloria Jr & Wildcat 2001; Howard et al 2002; Grunewald 2003; Nakata 2003; Matthews et al 2005; Lopez 2009; Schmelkes et al 2009; Simpson et al 2009; Dickson 2011; Harrison & Greenfield 2011; Fogarty & Schwab 2012 amongst many others)

The issue for many remote Indigenous communities is that there are children from a range of cultural and linguistic groups attending the same school. From this perspective the implementation of culturally relevant learning can be challenging, however an exchange and sharing of culture as suggested is one way to work with that complexity when it exists.
Rates of knowledge and language attrition are of considerable concern to all the senior Indigenous facilitators who have been involved in this research. In the course of this work several significant cultural custodians have passed away, often taking with them a depth and breadth of knowledge not transmitted to the younger generations. During the creation of the *Sharing Our Stories* book series, mentioned in my introduction, the desire to create material that would allow for an incorporation of culture in the educational space was frequently articulated by Indigenous collaborators. Whilst creating *Middjarn - The Turtle Dreaming* storybook, Ndjebbana contributors and collaborators Stephen Gawulku, Alistair Djalolba James, Joseph Diddo and Debbie Mabbindja, unanimously expressed concern that the culturally important Middjarn Song Series had not been passed on in its entirety. The Songman responsible for holding and caring for it, Jimmy Bungurru, was growing old “that old man Jimmy, he knows the story, but it’s like some of the pages are missing. So we’ve already lost some, now we’re trying to hold onto the rest. That’s why we’re writing it down” (Gawulku, Djalolba & Diddo in Thompson 2010: 5).

At the time of the books creation Alistair Djalolba James, Joseph Diddo and Debbie Mabbindja were all actively involved in the Bilingual and both-way educational approach implemented at Maningrida School. The Bilingual education program was formally implemented in the Northern Territory by the Whitlam government in the 1970s. From an educational perspective in keeping with ‘the history of white settlement’ marked by “the appropriation of land and by government policies, which sought to manage settlement and assimilate (some would say destroy) Indigenous cultures (Beresford 2001)” there had been no presence of, nor place for, Indigenous cultures or languages in the curriculum prior to that (Seddon 2001: 311). Despite the implementation of bilingual programs, Michael Christie has argued “much of the earlier educational philosophy remained completely unchanged under bilingual education...Literacy and literature under bilingual education persisted with the notion that printed text was the window into an enlightenment.” (Christie 2000: 8). It was not until the 1980s that there was a move toward an ‘Aboriginalisation’ of education. Staff at Batchelor College in the NT were exploring ‘both-ways’ approaches, a term for which there are
“many different interpretations and meanings... depending on the social, cultural and educational context” (Ober 2009: 34). Mandawuy Yunupiŋu, who became the well known leader of the band Yothu Yindi and the first Indigenous principle in Australia, Nalwarri Ngurruwuthun, now a senior cultural education advisor, the late Dr R. Marika and Mrs Joshua and researcher Robyn Ober, represented a growing number of Indigenous educators who were “breaking new ground in developing school curriculum based on the Indigenous knowledge system” (Ober 2009: 36). In response to this intensifying dialogue, The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies funded Towards a Gaŋma Curriculum in 1987. The Gaŋma model, implemented by the Yolŋu community school in Yirrkala, at which Mandawuy was teaching, worked to embed Indigenous culture and perspectives in the pedagogical approaches of the Australian education system.56

The Yolŋu word Gaŋma was arrived at in consultation with Elders, community members and school staff in dialogue with Mandawuy Yunupiŋu and other Yolŋu educators. It served as a metaphor for a both-ways approach:

Gaŋma is the name of a lagoon where salt and fresh water meet. Water is a symbol of knowledge in Yolŋu philosophy, and the metaphor of the meeting of two bodies of water is a way of talking about the knowledge systems of two cultures working together. (Living Knowledge, http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/)

Aaron Corn, who has worked closely with Mandawuy Yunupiŋu for many years, explains how the meeting of salt and freshwater produces,

a brackish yellow foam on the surface of the water that’s a by product of their meeting and so this is translated in Yolŋu law to a kind of metaphor for human group interactions; that when two independent sovereign groups meet in social discourse – whether it be in ceremony or in the case of cross-cultural interactions in Australia – that they shouldn’t necessarily need to assimilate each other and yet something productive should come from their meeting. (Corn 2010: 2).

56 Mandawuy extended his educational ideas into his music with Yothu Yindi is explored in Aaron Corn’s article, Land, song, constitution: Exploring expressions of ancestral agency, intercultural diplomacy and family legacy in the music of Yothu Yindi and Mandawuy Yunupiŋu 2010c in Popular Music 29: 81-102.
As Ober puts it, the meeting of the two knowledge systems in the context of Gaŋma results in the foam that rises to the water surface. This foam represents “the new knowledge and learning that has formed by the two knowledge systems coming together on that particular meeting place” (Ober 2009: 36). The Garma Maths curriculum, also established at Yirrkala, incorporated another metaphor used by Yolŋu Elders in relation to education. Garma refers to a ceremonial area:

It is not for secret ceremonies, it is for ‘open’ ceremonies in which everyone can participate, learn and enjoy. If a ceremony is negotiated and produced in full view of everyone, the ceremonial area in which it will be performed will be called Garma… Educationally, Garma means the open forum where people can talk and share their ideas, differences can be talked through and everyone can work to reach an agreement. (Christie 2000: 13)

The Garma Maths curriculum established correspondences between the “Yolŋu kinship system (Gurrutu) and aspects of numeracy, and between people’s connections with place, (Djalkiri) literally ‘footprints’ or Ancestral imprints on the land⁵⁷… and concepts of pattern and space in western maths. (http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/)

This methodology is not just a living side by side of two different systems of knowledge but an endeavour to arrive at a ‘collective definition’ of what maths is. The differing knowledge systems meet in the context of Gaŋma and, through dialogue, exchange and exploration come to a place whereby the interaction of those two systems produces something “quite different from either” (Christie 2000: 13). Dr R. Marika succinctly explains that both-ways education is a move away from the “Three Little Pigs in Gumatj” idea and is instead a move toward bringing “proper cultural knowledge into the school” (Marika 1999: 112). Ober makes clear that “both-ways is a continual question rather than a definitive answer” (Ober 2009: 34). She contends that it is more than a philosophy; it ‘informs our work… it is a state of mind’ (Ober 2009: 35). While bilingual and both-ways education models are theoretically and experientially two quite different practices, they inevitably inter-relate, just as language and culture are inextricably inter-

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⁵⁷ Djalkiri is often interpreted as ‘foundation’
woven. As such, when the bilingual program was axed in the NT in 2008, it had significant, if not directly stated, ramifications for the both-ways teaching approach that had been evolving in the NT since the 1980s. This is directly relevant to the pedagogy developed in the context of the SharingStories practice and research.

The justification for the axing of the bilingual program by the NT government was that students were not achieving in standard literacy and numeracy as defined by NAPLAN testing. Various reports and articles disputed the government findings, and suggested this was, on the basis of all evidence, a manipulation of data and a strategic move implemented on the heels of the Intervention (Devlin 2009; Northern Territory News 2008b; Simpson et al 2009). Brian Devlin, associate professor of Bilingual Education and Linguistics at Charles Darwin University, referenced ‘extensive empirical evidence’ which demonstrated that students in bilingual programs were “attaining better results in literacy and numeracy than their peers” (Devlin 2009: 9). A subsequent study by Greg Dickson at ANU in 2010 showed attendance had declined dramatically since bilingual programs were

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58 Terri Seddon’s paper “National Curriculum in Australia? A matter of politics, powerful knowledge and the regulation of learning”, Monash University, Australia, provides an excellent historical overview of approach to curriculum development in Australia during the period of bilingual, ‘both-ways’ implementation and subsequent government interventions.

59 “Cultural and economic bias in standardized testing regimes is well noted in both the international and Australian research literature, particularly in regard to Indigenous and/or minority students (e.g. Carstairs et al. 2006; Hambleton & Rodgers 1995). More recently, there is a particularly strong body of evidence and analysis of the ‘NoChild Left Behind’ policy in the United States which shows that ‘high stakes’, standardised testing is becoming a major factor in further disadvantaging minority students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The main reason cited for this is that such testing pushes students into educational programs emphasising only basic skills; rote learning and teaching focused wholly on test preparation rather than higher level cognitive development (Amrein & Berliner 2002; Nichols & Berliner 2007; Wright 2002)” (Fogarty and Schwab 2012: 9)

60 The Northern Territory National Emergency Response, the Intervention, was a package of changes to welfare provision, law enforcement, land tenure and other measures, introduced by the Australian federal government in 2007 in response to the ‘Little Children Are Sacred’ report regarding child sexual abuse and neglect in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities. Whilst there remain some Indigenous and government advocates for the Intervention, it has come under significant criticism from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, numerous Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders, and the United Nations by which it was condemned for the necessary suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act by the Australian government in order to implement a slate of new powers. The powers that received most criticism included those that allowed for the compulsory acquisition of an unspecified number of prescribed communities and the lifting of the permit system in some areas. The permit system had ruled that visitors to traditional lands held by Indigenous communities required a permit. These powers undermine key principles involved in the land rights of Indigenous Australians.
axed. According to journalist Lisa Waller reporting on the effects of the ban on the bilingual school at Lajamanu, Dickson’s findings suggest that in reading and writing categories “last year’s NAPLAN tests were half what they were in 2008 and this year [2011] attendance rates fell by 37.2 per cent” (Waller 2011: 3). As Devlin makes clear, “the net effect of marginalising vernacular language and culture programs in the school was dispiriting, it was disempowering, and it had impact on the ability of schools to continue negotiating a both-ways approach (Devlin, pers. comm. Darwin, NT 2012).

Impositions of a dominant ‘cultural consensus’ upon Indigenous systems of governance and knowledge has dogged the ‘developmental process’ in the last century and has contributed to the fact that, in many communities, young people are unable to speak either their own traditional languages or standard English, with confidence. Without access to traditional languages Indigenous children are unable to access their own heritage and the vast libraries of knowledge that is their birthright. As Steven Jampijinpa puts it:

Language is like a tree: it makes you stand firm in country, gives you a sense of identity …. I was born Warlpiri and I will die Warlpiri but if you lose language then you are gone. Language is a defence; it is kurdiji (a shield). It is strength. (Steven Jampijinpa Patrick: Patrick, Holmes and Box. 2008: 24)

Traditional languages spoken in the Northern territory are some of the most endangered on the planet, identified by the Enduring Voices project as one of the most linguistically significant areas in the world to be under severe threat. In Wugularr, one of the sites for this research, a workshop participant, though unable to speak language himself, determined he wanted to make a digital story about young men singing in language with Wagilak Songman, Roy Wunyumbi Ashley. In his script he articulates, “I’d like to

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61 Michael Christie, non Indigenous Yolŋu speaker and original architect of the Yolŋu Matha language course available at Charles Darwin University suggests, that on learning to speak Yolŋu, “[a]fter a while you have to start using different verb forms and tenses that simply make the world a different place—and so you have to start acting a different way” (Christie in Rothwell 2005: 2). Similarly, Waymamba Gaykamangu deeply involved in the development of the syllabus and a member of the Yolŋu community explains, “If the language is learned, then you can start to understand. The language itself, in fact, is just a tool for understanding. It is the beginning, not the end” (Waymamba in Rothwell 2005: 2).

sing but I don’t know the language because it’s too hard for me to say the words, but I’d like to sing the song. Jason and Damien [young men] can speak the language and sing the song and I’m proud of them” (http://sharingstories.org/content/learning-songs).

Figure 32: Dennis recording with Roy Wunyumbi Ashley, Wugularr.

As a precursor to the axing of the bilingual program, Indigenous leader Noel Pearson argued, “[s]chools are not the places for cultural and linguistic transmission”. He went on to criticize what he identified as the ‘soft left’ for “an over reliance on ideals of creativity, self-esteem and critical analysis at the expense of skills” (Pearson 2007). In the context of this research, my findings suggest inclusion of cultural and linguistic transmission in schools has little to do with a notion that Indigenous cultures can only be kept alive by denying children a mainstream education, but rather supports increased youth engagement through meaningful learning practices which have cultural and linguistic relevance to them. I would also argue that critical analysis in terms of comprehension, self-esteem and creativity are vital aspects of an education. Such an approach does not, nor should it preclude necessary literacy and numeracy acquisition, but allows for a transfer of these skills in ways which “have immediate or localised utility, and are connected to the lived experience of the student … something highly prescriptive, nationalised literacy and numeracy approaches are unable to achieve” (Schwab & Fogarty 2012: 10).
From numerous conversations I have had with a large number of Indigenous community members over the last six years it is clear that without such an approach, schools and education systems can all too often become environments from which remote Indigenous students and their parents feel alienated, in which the knowledge conveyed fails to resonate as meaningful, and through which prescriptive assessment systems result in families being told that their children are failing. All of these situations have a significant impact on students’ confidence and a deleterious impact on well-being and positive sense of self for individuals, families and communities. A lack of cultural relevance in schools compounds young Indigenous people’s struggle to feel proud “in a world that is making them feel that their culture is bad, unimportant, irrelevant in the contemporary world” (Yunupiŋu 2008).

Homeland Learning Centres (HLCs)

It was also in the 1980’s that Homeland Learning Centres (HLC’s) were set up in conjunction with the Homelands movement, which today takes the form of approximately 560 communities with nearly 10,000 Indigenous residents living on their own Country at remote locations in the Northern Territory. With the evolution of the nearly 50 HLCs, Aboriginal teachers began to explore culturally appropriate pedagogy, curriculum content, delivery methods as well as put strategies in place to increase the number of qualified Aboriginal teachers on staff. (Ober 2009: 35)

This was in keeping with the evolution of the both-ways educational approach. Yiniya Guyula suggests it is at his homeland Mirrŋatja where he has learnt “who I am, where I belong”. He goes on to explain, “I gained my full strength of education, an education that I learned from my family,

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63 Between Dec 2006 and December 2007 there were 13 Aboriginal youth suicides in Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley. These statistics identified the region as having one of the highest per capita suicide rates in the world. (Hope, A 2008 Findings Report, Coronial Inquest, Western Australia in Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALAC) Business Plan for Yiriman: Kimberley ‘At-Risk’ Indigenous Youth Pathways Program 2011-2014, 2011: 5), Cultural identity was outlined as integral to improved self esteem as was “their people and culture being held in high esteem in the general community” (Larkins 2010 in KALAC 2011: 8-9)
parents and the land here” (Guyula 2010). Guyula worked for several years as a lecturer at Charles Darwin University teaching Yolŋu language and culture but left that position to commit himself to cultural maintenance for his community in Millingimbi and to support efforts to ensure children are able to learn from, and on, their own land at the Homeland Learning Centre (HLC) at Mirŋatja. At much the same time as the axing of the bilingual programs, the already inadequate funding of Homeland services suffered in the wake of the Intervention and its successor, the ‘Stronger Futures’ Legislation64 with its focus on investment in 20 ‘hub’ or ‘growth towns’.65 A policy designed to bring people off their land into areas with more substantial infrastructure, Western education and housing, or as Michaels may have surmised, ‘lifestyle’ rhetoric. As Djuŋadjunŋa Yunupiŋu articulates “Homelands have bāŋu (no) road fixing, bāŋu (no) help for airstrips, all houses are built [outside them] in town” (Solidarity 2012).66 There is a moratorium on new housing or significant infrastructure investment for the homelands and despite the Commonwealth government recently committing to ‘invest’ $221 million in essential services this is certainly not enough to support HLCs effectively.

At Mirŋatja, Guyula’s homeland, “the community’s been crying out for more than two decades for a new school building and a teacher to go with it” (McLaughlin on The 7.30 Report, ABC, 24/02/2010). The current school building has had two whirly birds [roof ventilators] fitted by the department whilst a similar non-Indigenous school, catering to, on average, less than a dozen children, has “computers, Internet access, distance learning, teacher accommodation, resourcing, all the things you find in normal schools” (Greatorex on The 7.30 Report, ABC, 24/02/2010).

64 ‘Stronger Futures’ legislation effectively allows for maintenance of the Federal Government’s Intervention for another ten years. The passing of the legislation in June 2012 has been widely condemned by many human rights advocates and Indigenous leaders.

65 The Northern Territory government announced its plan to develop twenty Growth Towns into regional economic hubs with extended government services including education, housing, and clinics with significant investment in infrastructure. The policy may well push Indigenous people off their ancestral lands into growth towns, significantly undermining the homelands movement.

Reports authored by Helen Hughes for the Centre for Independent Studies, suggested HLCs are “Pretend Schools” and that they are a failure partially because “they do not have the same standards of classroom, teaching aids and materials as regular primary classrooms” (Hughes 2008a). An online article which appeared at www.news.com.au cited Hughes in the context of the upcoming report as concerned some children at HLCs were unable to find Canberra on a map. The result, according to the title of the article, of “a second-rate curriculum in make-believe schools”. In fact Hughes report fails to adequately reference the ongoing fiscal reality that has given rise to this situation and the “well established causal relationships between systemic neglect, socio-economic disadvantage, geographic isolation and poor health with educational outcomes” (Fogarty 2012). A Submission to the UN Committee of the rights of children entitled ‘Children of the Intervention’ poses the following question:

In 2008, the Henderson NT Government spent over $20M and provided new distance learning infrastructure to 250 sites across the territory, including cattle stations and ‘normal’ schools. It is estimated that only two of the 45 homeland schools were included in this provision. Why is it that cattle stations with as few as one child were included, while homelands, some with well over 40 students were not? (Harris & Gartland 2011: 27)

Hughes argues, “[i]f mainstream schooling is not deemed to be viable in very small communities arrangements will have to be made to board children or assist their parents to move so that they can attend school” (Hughes 2008b). As Bill Fogarty, a researcher in the areas of Indigenous education and development suggests, rather than acknowledging the well established causal relationships “as key barriers to be overcome in partnership with communities”, Hughes research and subsequent report “denigrates the efforts of people involved in education and community development” and does so “through a naïve attribution of blame ” (Fogarty 2012).

Bilingual, both-ways and HLC models of education have allowed for an approach which honours local input and works to evolve relevant and meaningful learning frameworks which build strength and identity through sustaining and maintaining strong cultural and linguistic connection to
heritage and capacity for inter generational transmission. These models have been poorly served from a fiscal and policy perspective whilst strongly supported by a national and global research base. As I suggested at the outset, the principles that underlie these approaches are relevant to the principles underlying my own conclusions regarding implementation of digital literacies and self-representational digital storytelling practices.

Media and Education

Antonio Lopez argues passionately for the value inherent in incorporating media literacy “within a community education model that honors local input as a way of balancing the issues related to new digital media and traditionally underserved communities” (Lopez 2008: 111), an argument supported and reflected in my own work in the field. To focus on the classroom experience is not enough: “the collective historical experiences of the community must be used as the context for all learning in the school” (Cummins 1994: 7). A digital storytelling practice of the kind I am proposing for the educational system would provide significant opportunity for the collective historical experiences of the community to become a context for learning and community based content. It would in addition ensure provision of cultural resources that support the formation of individuals with strong linguistic and cultural identities, as well as achieving Western pedagogical curricular objectives and ensuring Indigenous children become digitally literate. As Chris Sarra, head of the Stronger Smarter Institute and Australian of the Year in 2010, has suggested, ICT’s are the new literacy: “Our people got left behind on the old literacy and we are not getting left behind with this one!”.67

This is a particularly pertinent statement in light of the unparalleled and rapid rise of digital media technologies as an increasingly imperative learning environment for cultural participation in the twenty first century. Despite government rhetoric espousing the ‘Digital Education Revolution’ for every child there is extremely poor infrastructure support for implementation of most of the ‘revolution’s’ aims in a remote Indigenous

educational context. These stated aims included: deployment of quality digital tools, resources and infrastructure which would help support the Australian Curriculum; increased support in information and communication technology (ICT) proficiency for teachers and students which would in turn support the use of ICT in teaching and learning and the development of projects and research which would assist and support the use of ICT’s in learning. In my experience, effective professional development for teachers has been particularly poor for the teachers who are supposed to be implementing the revolution. This is even more profoundly felt in a remote Indigenous context where there is a narrow focus, on conventional literacy and numeracy acquisition to the detriment of a wide range of other learning outcomes including participation and inclusion in the Digital Education Revolution.

The depth of potential for youth engagement with digital media and digital literacy acquisition “tied to meaningful community projects” has been demonstrated at informal learning sites as evidenced in ‘The Lifespan learning and literacy for young adults in remote Indigenous communities’ research. Researchers David Sneath, Martin Holbraad and Morton Axel Pederson address the depth of engagement demonstrated by Indigenous youth when working with digital technologies, the uses of which are, ‘deeply embedded in wider social concerns that reach far beyond their immediate interaction with the technological implements themselves” (Sneath, Holbraad and Pederson 2009: 18 in Kral 2010c: 15). A growing body of research sits around these practices. As yet there is a dearth of research in Australia exploring the strategic fit which exists between the acquisition of digital media literacies and meaningful or both-ways approaches to learning in the remote Indigenous educational space.68 This is the area I will address in the following chapter and within which I argue for an embedded self-representational digital storytelling practice supported by place based

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68 Thus far, in my experience there are rare occurrences in which digital media studies have been implemented in innovative ways in remote Indigenous schools in Australia. This is usually the result of passionate staff who conduct independent dialogue with education departments in order to develop resources or have the strength of relationships with community that afford independent creative dialogue regarding approaches to teaching and implementation of digital media practices.
pedagogical resources, adequate professional development for teachers and ICT support for remote schools.
In this Chapter I will provide examples of the resources I have developed in collaboration with a curriculum consultant, community based teachers, cultural facilitators and community members. In the process, I hope to further clarify why such resources have the potential to support participatory culture in the context of media literacy and production, enhance meaningful learning and engagement in remote Indigenous communities and intervene in the construction of stereotypes.

The kind of curricular resources SharingStories developed and implemented, was part of a creative practice built on a ‘two ways’ approach to learning. This approach required considerable time in dialogue with community members, determining which cultural narratives would be incorporated - which stories, which songs and whose knowledge - and how those narratives would be managed in the context of digital media exploration. The ‘pedagogy of place’ (Arenas 1999) approach, with which I was working, is often challenging in large scale curriculum frameworks, as it is concerned with people and their immediate socio-cultural and linguistic realities. However, it has been demonstrated to be not only entirely possible, but, when well implemented, highly successful. For instance, Steve Jampinjinpa Patrick 69 who worked as an assistant teacher at Lajamanu School received the Innovative Curriculum Award from the Australian Curriculum Studies Association. This award was in “recognition of his pioneering work in the application of Warlpiri Ngurra-kurlu (the inter-relationship between Land, Law, Language, Ceremony and Kinship) to the task of helping Warlpiri people make sense of mainstream education” (Gosford 2011).

The process requires well-established relationships, the capacity for Indigenous educators and community members to sit down with non Indigenous teaching staff, curriculum writers and, in the case of this work,

digital media facilitators, for substantial periods of time “meeting, discussing, negotiating, planning, agreeing and acting” (Christie 2000: 14) in order to develop effective resources. It also requires a cross checking of developed resources with community and cultural advisors, teachers and teacher assistants, as well as effective implementation. It is possible but it is neither quick nor easy and requires as Antonio Lopez suggests, “patience, ingenuity and a spirit of committed experimentation”, as well as considerable care (2008).

SharingStories teaching resources were developed in a dialogue between myself, Krista Scott, the SharingStories curriculum consultant, the non-Indigenous and Indigenous teaching staff, Indigenous community members and cultural custodians. SharingStories staff along with teachers, teachers’ assistants, Elders and cultural facilitators then implemented the resources which built on the knowledge and experience which students and communities already held, in a manner that supported intergenerational transmission, learning through and caring for Country and contributed to both capacity and community building in a number of important ways.

Jilkminggan

A resource relating to rivers, which we developed with Jilkminggan Elders, evolved from the non-Indigenous teachers’ intention to implement a unit on rivers during the semester we were to run a workshop. His plan had been to explore three major river systems: the Mississippi, Amazon and Ganges. Jilkminggan community identify as ‘Biginini bilong Roper’, or ‘Children of the Roper River’ and live upon its banks. In response to the discussions that occurred between the teacher, myself and Mangarrayi Traditional Owners Sheila Conway and Jessie Roberts, the curricular consultant developed a work unit that supported the creation of a series of digital stories relating to the Roper River. This unit was built around the creation of slide shows and photographic narratives with audio scripts and recordings about: the Dreaming stories which belong to the river; the food and medicine found in and around it; the language words relating to it; the recreational activities that take place within it; the songs that brought the river into being, as well as community members memories and oral histories.
relevant to it. These digital stories involved script writing in which participants wrote about their various perspectives, experiences of and relationships with their river. In addition we designed some simple literacy exercises in which participants took photographs relating to the river, then as part of a group lesson plan, searched for adjectives, verbs and nouns in those images. The group then used the word lists to formulate descriptive captions relating to the image. These were assembled as a written description or recorded and compiled as single-image-with-audio digital media vignette.

The resources we developed included further study for participants using the initial Roper River related outcomes as a comparative study base for learning about the Ganges, Amazon and Mississippi Rivers. Participants in Jilkminggan were encouraged to write to young people involved in the SharingStories program living on the banks of the Amazon River in Iquitos, Peru and on the banks of the Ganges in Varanasi, India. These young digital storytellers had uploaded media relative to their own experience of the rivers beside which they live. Jilkminggan students related this to learning they had done in relation to their own river, making meaning from building on previous knowledge and connections to their own world in order to scaffold new learning. As Ober suggests in the context of a both-ways approach,

it’s about our way of telling stories; it’s about our way of making meaning in our world. Both-ways is about going from the known to the unknown, using current knowledge as a springboard to gain new conceptual academic understandings. (Ober 2009: 39)

As a place-based pedagogy, the process at Jilkminggan supported experiential learning through the local landscape and went on to “link such experience to the experience of others in other places and to the cultural, political, economic and ecological forces that connect people and places on a global scale” (Grunewald 2005: 55).

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With assistance from the Australia India Council I was able to run workshop for underprivileged children in Sarnath near Varanasi and with personal funds implemented a small workshop in Iquitos run by two Peruvian Arts and Media workers.
Figure 33: Ganga nadi mein nahanaa - Bathing in the sacred River Ganges. An image and caption shared by workshop participants in India, speaking of the River beside which they live.

In the course of this particular digital storytelling project students engaged with script writing, song writing and descriptive captions all of which enhanced literacy in both English and first languages. Photography, film, audio recording, editing and storyboarding enhanced “meaningful literacy acquisition, maintenance and transmission” (Kral 2009: 1) and IT skills. The themes explored resulted in societal and environmental process learning. The resources allowed for a move beyond the classroom as a learning environment and for the collective historical experiences of the community to become a context for learning. It demonstrated a respect for language and culture and “integrated the learning occurring through modern education with the cultural bases of knowledge and value orientations essential to perpetuate its way of life” (Cajete 1994: 18). Elders participated in the pedagogic development of the curriculum resource and its teaching.
It is clear from extensive research conducted at the numerous informal learning sites involved in the Lifespan Survey that cultural connection is at the core of any enterprise venture. At learning sites where these kind of connections are engendered, young people are voluntarily involved in an integrated learning process, related to their lives, communities and cultural and linguistic experiences, here they are:

Engaging as the mediators and facilitators of digital literacy in collaborative, participatory, intergenerational activities. These activities positively affirm their contemporary Indigenous identity as well as their ‘belongingness’ to globalized youth culture. (Kral 2010: 15)

From my own extensive dialogue over the last six years with communities, workshop participants, parents, cultural facilitators, Elders and community leaders it is clear that education needs to reflect and respect the cultural, linguistic and social realities in which it is being embedded.

71 The need for training and educational development to be linked with community aspirations and development goals is cited by McRae et al. (2000), for example; while Miller (2005), Balati et al. (2004) and Catts and Gelade (2002) all concur. Much of the literature is also unequivocal in stating that Indigenous knowledge and local development aspirations must form a central component of educational and pedagogic design (e.g. Altman & Fogarty 2010; Anderson 2003; Ball & Pence 2001; Fordham et al. 2010; Henry et al. 1999; Kral 2010; O’Callaghan 2005; Schwab 2006). (Schwab & Fogarty 2012: 10)
In the context of the SharingStories Jilkminggan experience and associated resources, an embedded digital storytelling practice demonstrated the capacity to: function as a highly innovative tool for creative self-representation; work within the educational space achieving core curricular objectives in culturally relevant ways that strengthened identity and community building; extend the voice of marginalised Indigenous young people; and facilitate creative and experiential learning dialogue between young people all over the world. As Des Barritt, Principal of Jilkminggan School remarked in the workshop evaluation process:

I’ve worked for over 30 years in Indigenous schools in the Northern Territory and I’m really impressed with the way technology has linked up with the cultural aspect of the Indigenous community here. Bringing Elders into the classroom and taking the classroom back out into Country has strengthened the two-way aspect of our school in ways that hasn’t happened before. The SharingStories curriculum consultant tied the program in with our curriculum in a way we can use to strengthen learning outcomes we have for the students for oral language, written language and technology… the kids have been so engaged with the whole program that our attendance has increased. (Pers. comm. Jilkminggan, NT 2010)

The approach we implemented required teachers to develop strong connections with key community members and to engage with them in the process of educating, resulting in a strengthening of relationships between non-Indigenous teachers and the communities within which they teach. Several of the resources we designed assigned participants the task of going out and interviewing key Elders about aspects of community life and culture. Their non-Indigenous teachers went with them, learned from the interviews and discussions that took place and met parents and families of the young people they taught, often for the first time. As Lopez suggests in his own work process, spending time in students’ homes is critical to his own education and pedagogy, because “teachers must become participants in the community; they must observe and ask questions in a way that communicates a genuine care and concern” (Swisher & Deyhle 1992 in Lopez, 2008: 116). This process also ensures a degree of cultural orientation for non-Indigenous teaching staff. Many teachers receive little orientation in working within an Indigenous context and have little contact with the
community beyond the children in a school environment. As Trugden argues, “Two and four hour cultural awareness programs are an insult to Aboriginal culture ... Genuine cross-cultural understanding can only occur when there is competent intellectual appreciation of the other” (Trugden 2008: 11). A creative practice which involves community members in the teaching and learning paradigm ensures that teachers have a better understanding of the communities and cultural environments in which they are working. The methodology we implemented was demonstrated to have a significant impact on school and community relationships, which often suffer from what might best, be called seismic ruptures through lack of effective integration. For instance, one participating teacher made the following typical comment:

Over [the] last two weeks I feel like I have developed a stronger relationship with families of the eleven kids that were involved and if anything that was most valuable thing for us. Now we can build on those relationships and do more realistic learning, bring learning out into community and give it more context. (Participating teacher, pers. comm. NT 2010)

In almost all instances of collaborating and working alongside teaching staff, school principals and Heads of Curriculum, there was great receptivity regarding the intentions and efforts of the program’s focus. Staff often expressed a keenness to engage more broadly with community and culture but frustrations regarding the lack of tools, resources and knowing how to deal with those situations. The workload of teaching staff is often substantial and if there are no resources developed to support these approaches it is extremely difficult for them to know how to go about implementing such a practice. Another participating teacher in Queensland stated in their evaluation interview:

I’ve always had the desire to do all that but it’s been really difficult without the right support but the SharingStories crew just really got the ball rolling, started it off, got me inspired, got all the Elders into the school. The gap between the school and the community I definitely think has closed. At the weekend we had all the community come to look at the children’s work, slide shows and photographs, their stories, I want more of that. With my teacher’s aid and a few other Elders we’re going to get that going now. I have already felt really passionate about that but it’s just a question of getting it started and SharingStories has done that. (Participating teacher, pers. comm. Queensland, 2009)
The experience regularly demonstrated to teachers how creative digital storytelling practice could be used in an ongoing capacity to achieve their semester objectives. Sean Leatherbarrow, principle of Jarlmdangah Burrup Aboriginal Community School determined:

The experience has given teachers the confidence to understand that what they have been doing with digital media and storytelling can be integrated into curriculum and to see that there are strong links between SharingStories and the Western Australian curriculum guides so the program can be implemented on a daily basis. (Pers. comm. Jarlmadangah, Kimberley, WA 2010).

Studies of Society and Environment.

In several other workshops, participants created stories in response to a Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) unit. The semester plan with which we were asked to work required that we examine environment and health with students. Often the focus on health education included junk food and sports. A variety of initiatives, looking at litter awareness and excursions designed to clean up beaches or Country, were designed to stimulate discussion in relation to caring for the environment. The unit we wrote and implemented achieved exactly the same curricular outcomes but did so not only through the Western knowledge base but also by exploring connections between health and ancestral relations, being in and caring for Country ‘right way’, as well as enquiry in relation to bush tucker and medicine. Knowledge of these things, as previously articulated by Patrick Butcher, are intimately connected to well-being and the danger of becoming sick if you move in Country ‘wrong way’.

You can’t see it visibly but you can feel it, that totem bilong you, you feel it inside, it’s some sort of spiritual thing or puuya (heart) bilong you, makes puuya (heart) bilong you strong. When you feel it you can’t explain it but it’s that thing, that’s that totem. It’s connected to you spiritually, no mater how far out at sea or how far inland you are, it’s connected with you. Also got a very special healing power, so if you’re sick the totem can help you get back on your feet. (Patrick Butcher, young Umpila leader, pers. comm. Lockhart River, Qld, 2010)

At the beginning of these sessions many participants weren’t clear about which totems or Dreaming they carried. On occasion these confusions were resolved by the Indigenous teaching assistants and dialogue between
the students as a group. When it became evident someone did not know their totems, group discussions spontaneously and often vigorously resulted, in which people were eager to map connections in order to determine an individual’s totemic relationships. In one workshop, a cultural facilitator spoke to participants about the qualities of their totems, qualities of the fish or the particular leaf or plants or wind that they were related to, how if they were lost, and they carried the wind totem, they must ‘listen to the voice of the wind,’ which will care for and assist them. Each child’s totem was discussed, then drawn and painted on both paper and skin. Images of these drawings and paintings were used to illustrate a song written and recorded exploring these relationships. There is no question that participants’ understanding of the totems they carry was increased as a result of the creative practice and something of the meaning of those relationships conveyed to them. This knowledge could be conveyed without the production of digital media but as in many other cases, the structure of the workshops and curricular focus introduced by SharingStories, catalysed discussion and learning. The writing and recording of a song about totemic relationships was a source of great enjoyment and participants created their own beats, working independently, often in their own time. The knowledge gained and shared in the creating of the song and accompanying music videos found expression in what was considered by participants to be a cool/contemporary platform. Whilst the songs content\textsuperscript{72} was unique to the young people who wrote it, it was held and conveyed in a genre that was accessible and engaging to youth everywhere. It worked cultural references relative to determining one’s relationships with all things into a modern medium in a manner that could be communicated to Indigenous and non-Indigenous peers, with pride, enthusiasm and relevance. Whilst this resource was developed and implemented locally it was a module, which could be, and was, easily adapted from place to place. It included learning resources relating to Learning through Country and as such had widespread relevance, which meant there was the capacity for broad implementation with local adaptation (Fogarty & Schwab 2012).

\textsuperscript{72} See http://www.sharingstories.org/content/totem-rap
The sample unit of work we developed during the course of this research (detailed in Appendix 1) could be used as exemplar units by the various State Education Departments. The approach of the SharingStories workshops and related research transfers purposeful customised curriculum for the purpose of self-representational digital storytelling and culturally relevant learning to State curriculums across Australia. In a report based on research in twelve schools in NSW, the incorporation of ‘Aboriginal knowledge’ in collaboration with Indigenous parents and community members clearly demonstrated that “Aboriginal identities must be valued by teachers if schools are to be taken seriously by the Aboriginal community” (Harrison & Greenfield 2011: 65-76). Based on their success in the schools where this research was based, I would argue that the approach and resources I am suggesting in a remote context have validity and capacity for nationwide implementation.

In the Statement of Key Findings identified at the Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities (ITIC) Symposium in 2010, at which over seventy papers were presented on the use of information technologies by Indigenous people, it was determined that “access to IT is crucial to the success of a large range of social and economic activities. Lack of access has considerable implications, and is a serious barrier to successful engagement in the creative and digital economy” (ITIC Symposium 2010: 2).

The symposium findings also highlighted the need to recognise the critical importance and relevance of IT for Indigenous youth and the opportunities for meaningful engagement in learning, cultural production, enterprise generation and employment pathways, as well as personal career development”. The approach I am suggesting could make a significant contribution to ensuring access to and learning in ICT technologies and

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Queensland - Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting (QCAR) Framework: Art, English, Health & PE, Languages, Mathematics, Science, SOSTE, Technology & ICT.
capacities for remote Indigenous youth. In addition they develop learning approaches within an educational context which are culturally relevant, engaging and meaningful.

Technology and Cultural and Linguistic Maintenance

Because our resources have been limited as a result of available funds, technical experimentation in creation of resources has been difficult. However, whilst running a workshop in Wilcannia, one of the facilitators used a game engine to develop a language tool that participants could populate with their own digital media. Photos of things in and around the community as well as images recording actions like running, walking and sleeping were created. The facilitator worked with participants and Elders (one of whom is one of only a handful of Indigenous Paakantji speakers remaining) to record language words for things represented in the photographs. These recordings and images were then uploaded to the engine, and, with a virtual egg timer, participants tested their knowledge and ability to remember language words. The language speaker was visibly moved:

I know for a fact that out in western New South Wales and particularly where I come from Wilcannia we’re in a desperate race against time to get as much culture as we can back. Most of our Elders who passed culture on to us have gone and there aren’t many people left who can show us younger generation or teach us about our culture. So now is a very critical time, we should be recording our stories our language, for the benefit of our children’s future because once our Elders are gone that history has gone forever and we’ll never be able to retrieve it.

What’s happening now is our culture isn’t being transmitted in the traditional way. I don’t see why we can’t use modern technology to maintain it, put our stories into technology where our kids are able to walk comfortably and learn culture though that medium. We have to try and marry our ancient beliefs with modern technology: we have to show our kids we can be looking to our culture for positive things, to reaffirm their identity. (Murray Butcher, Paakantji Cultural Leader, pers. comm. Wilcannia, NSW 2010)

Figure 35: The ‘Create An Entry’ page of the Language Lightbox

Figure 36: Samples of the Language Lightbox interface.
Some global Indigenous communities have implemented progressive educational models combining a Learning through Country approach with digital media in a manner which makes a significant contribution to cultural maintenance. Native American Indian schools have used technology to connect the skills of students with the immediate needs of their communities in ways that are considered to be beneficial by the participants. For tribes along the Rio Grande a significant issue is the remediation of the river forest ecology. Several tribes have asked that students map areas of the forest with Global Information Systems (GIS). The students then learn how to embed that information into maps, which help tribes develop data and mapping systems to support their efforts.

Here we see a positive convergence of the school working in conjunction with tribal communities to provide technical expertise and training with digital technology to service the ecological needs of the tribe, and also to promote self-sufficiency by training tribal members to utilize cutting edge technology. (Lopez 2008: 117)

For a place-based pedagogy, questions of technology go beyond how to develop and use it and extend to how to understand it in Indigenous contexts, as Vine Deloria and Daniel Wildcat clarify:

Indigenous conceptions and practices of technology are embedded in a way of living life that is inclusive of spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual dimensions emergent in the world or, more accurately, particular places in the world. (Deloria & Wildcat 2001: 70)

Similarly I would suggest organisations such as the Indigenous Land and Sea Management (ILSM) and Yiriman (both of whom are engaged in Youth Ranger programs which involve mapping local ecologies using GIS, and data collection using cameras, audio recorders and editing software in the field could work well and find a ‘strategic fit’ with education and digital literacy acquisition. ILSM and other ranger programs have “seen the growth of small and somewhat disparate pedagogic developments” collectively called ‘Learning through Country’ programs (Fogarty & Kral 2011:4). There is significant potential to implement the kind of learning which takes place in this context in an educational environment where the combination of Western science and Indigenous knowledge,
allows for the engagement of Aboriginal people in the learning process, while simultaneously drawing upon high-level scientific concepts—especially in the areas of biology and the environmental sciences. (Forgarty & Schwab 2011: 4)

One of the justifications by state organisations for the increasingly narrow focus on literacy and numeracy acquisition within Indigenous education is that it offers greater possibility for long-term employment for Indigenous young people. However, other possibilities, in line with the principles of meaningful employment need to be considered. For instance, as Bill Fogarty and Inge Kral suggest, the fact that ILSM, if separated as an industry of employment from the census data, “would comprise the fifth largest industry of employment for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory” (Australian Bureau of Statistics in (ABS) in Fogarty & Kral 2011: 3) is of relevance in this context because it demonstrates that one of the most significant areas of employment occur when jobs actively incorporate traditional knowledge alongside new knowledge systems, involve caring for Country, and support the capacity to continue living on Country.75 Furthermore,

[The World Bank, the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund have all formally recognised the economic value of Indigenous knowledge in the alleviation of poverty, the creation of sustainable development, and in the provision of localised employment pathways. (Fogarty & Kral 2011: 3)

Yiriman works with Indigenous organisations in the Kimberley, giving young people the chance to participate in a range of programs, including: Land and Sea Management projects with the Kimberley Land Council; the Kimberley Regional Fire Management Project; the Kimberley Language Resource Centre; the Natural Heritage Trust; the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service; and Macquarie and Murdoch Universities (Thompson 2008). Through Yiriman Ranger Programs young people learn about dual knowledge systems, tracking threatened species, tagging swordfish in the Fitzroy, quarantine monitoring, aquaculture, working with GPS satellite

75People on Country Vital Landscapes Indigenous Futures (2012) tells a little-known story about Aboriginal people who are living on, working on and caring for the lands and seas that they own and manage, an Indigenous estate that covers over 20% of the Australian continent and includes areas of globally significant biodiversity and cultural value. (Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research – CAEPR)
devices and map reading as well as employing traditional tracking techniques, caring for cultural heritage sites, practicing traditional fire management procedures and conducting appropriate ceremonies for Country, amongst other skills. Through Yiriman this kind of work has led to participants expressing a desire to go on to further study at a university: “[t]hrough these types of projects they see sense, possibility and value for their community and their own Country in having a Western education as well as traditional knowledge” (Darrell Coombs, former Ranger Program coordinator, pers. comm. Jarlmadangdah, WA 2007).

Digital technologies are being utilised increasingly in these contexts such that young participants are able to not only document something of their own experience but also those transmitted to them by their Elders whilst on Country. Yiriman encourages participants to create “profiles of self, place and cultural context using art, music, videos, photo-stories (a slide show with voice over) and photo-journals” These recordings contribute to the ‘race’ to record culture “before it is lost, so it can be taught in new ways” (Hugh Wallace Smith, former Yiriman men’s project co-ordinator in Watson et al 2008: 86). There is not scope here to go into depth regarding these possibilities, but there is a clear correlation between engagement and culturally relevant learning. I would argue that Learning through Country programs should garner significantly greater fiscal and policy support and further research be conducted into how these programs might work well in an educational context and how they can be effectively combined, when appropriate, with digital literacy acquisition.
Figure 37: Elders and cultural bosses Peter Clancy and John Darraga Watson on a Yiriman walk.

Educating non-Indigenous children/rupturing stereotypes

There is considerable discussion regarding the learning and educational possibilities inherent in networked communities. There is immense, relatively untapped, creative possibility in the development of networked communities established around digital storytelling in the educational space. Connected classroom strategies have been in existence for years and young people communicate with each other in real time through the white board and computer cameras. The capacity for children to invite other children into their lives and experiences through online digital stories, and for children to learn from that sharing is considerable. On the occasions when teachers have engaged mainstream students in learning from content hosted on the SharingStories platform there has been great interest demonstrated. In response to a story about bush gum made by Lancetta, a workshop participant in Wugularr, a young student in Sydney wrote:

Dear Lancetta,

I am Brendan from St Aloysius College, which is adjacent to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Keep up with your dream of becoming a ranger and to look after your country. According to your pictures, Wugularr looks

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See http://www.sharingstories.org/users/lancetta
like a beautiful and interesting place to visit. I think this is a very beautiful picture! I never heard of this way of collecting bush gums. I also never herd of bush gums themselves, or what they taste like. (If you eat them). (Comment posted online on the SharingStories blog by student at St Aloysius College 2009)

The communication, from a student at a private school in Sydney, not only demonstrates a process of learning and further enquiry as a result of Lancetta’s digital story, it also demonstrates to Lancetta that other young people are interested in her experiences and learning from the information she has offered. The story has been seen, heard and clearly had an impact. The media produced, as previously suggested, often presents rich, celebratory, vital accounts of life, and, as such, has an impact on viewers’ perceptions and helps build and create other perspectives regarding the lives and experiences of Indigenous Australians. Another student wrote in response to a story by a participant from Jarlmdangah:

I think that it is really great that your community has no problems and has a TAFE course going on. I can’t believe that you can make so many things with native trees and plants. It is really good that you are teaching everyone about your culture and I think that your community is a real success story! Good luck with your further plans! I hope that you get the chance to reply to this message and tell us more! (Comment posted online on the SharingStories blog by a student at St Aloysius College 2009)

One participating teacher suggested that the digital learning and storytelling practice and the sharing of that work is a great resource for participating communities but the practice also served as a ‘right of reply’: “[t]here are amazing stories that get ignored because that doesn’t create media attention, it doesn’t create news, it doesn’t get votes in elections” and these stories provide other young people with “a realistic depiction of what Indigenous Australia is and what these young people are doing, their culture and their reality” (Participating teacher, pers. comm. NT 2010). Similarly, Faye Ginsburg sees self-representational media process as a crucial part of “helping to develop support and sensibilities of Indigenous actions for self-determination” (Ginsburg 1995: 134). Staff at NITV, Australian Broadcasting Commission and Sydney Morning Herald responded to content on line

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77 In the early stages of the SharingStories program and research, prior to the building of the website, content produced by participants in Jilkminggan, Jarlmadangah and Wugularr Communities was posted to three individual blog sites.
encouraging participants make contact if they were interested in mentorship, further training and being interviewed about their work.

A primary school teacher at my daughter’s public school in Sydney informed me that on being asked what they know about Indigenous people, the children’s most common responses were ‘black, drink alcohol, don’t have a job, live in the desert’. She suggested that in the arena of mainstream primary teaching this would not be unusual. During the storytelling project run by Community Prophets in Aurukun, teachers and trainers made clear that Indigenous children,

internalise the negative images and ideas about Aurukun: that it is a troubled and troubling place, and that little good comes from it: And they are right about how widespread these perceptions are. Usually when I mention Aurukun, if people know it at all, they assume it is a place without hope. (Slater 2008: 9)

Indeed, as mentioned earlier, I was advised to wear a bulletproof vest on visiting Wilcannia or, preferably, not to stop at all. Clearly, as Lisa Slater argues, this reinforces the very real need for self-representation:

Mainstream Australia and the public discourse of dysfunction are dominant components of the environment from which the young people’s identity is composed. They are subject to overwhelming negative images of their life worlds, which inform their sense of self and cultural identity. (Slater 2008: 9)

The kind of dialogue I propose needs an environment for the purpose of sharing publicly available, unrestricted stories and media. SharingStories has endeavoured to provide this platform and there are also a variety of other story sharing architectures like the innovative Story Places, developed by Not for Profit organisation Feral Arts, within which producers maintain all copyright in their content, there is a capacity for moderation and privacy, and there is no advertising. The Our Story database model installed as part of the Northern Territory Library’s (NTL) Libraries and Knowledge Centres (LKC) program at various sites in NT is similarly of interest in this context as is IndigiTUBE, an “online community for sharing and accessing media made by and for Indigenous people in remote Australia” (http://www.indigitube.com.au/ - Retrieved October 2012). There are also,
as referenced in Chapter IV, a growing number of innovative Cultural Information Management Systems (CIMS) and associated software that could be engaged with by education departments as a model for holding digital media produced by students within the educational space in dialogue with the community and, ultimately, fed back into already established community networks for storage of cultural heritage.

An exemplary teaching model designed for teaching Indigenous students but which could potentially be well adapted to a broad educational engagement with selected digital stories is the Holistic Planning Framework developed by Jirrbal Elder Ernie Grant. Implemented by the Queensland Education Department it is a module which counters assumptions made when teaching from one cultural perspective and “aims to provide a tool for teachers to extract and frame information in a way that is relevant to Indigenous learners and will make meaning for them” (Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment website for Queensland based teachers).78

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Figure 38: Diagram of the Learning Framework approach available through the Queensland Department of Education LearningPlace BlackBoard course for teachers, Essential Pedagogy for Teaching Indigenous Students.

Applying this kind of learning and enquiry scaffold, which supports a holistic way of viewing the world, when students come to digital stories created by Indigenous young people, could facilitate deeper insight into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island perspectives, identified as a cross curriculum priority area in the Australian New National Curriculum. Such an approach to learning has significant potential to contribute to a rupturing of stereotypes.

In conclusion, I was struck several years ago by Between the Flags, a finalist film at Tropfest. In the film two young men, one Caucasian and one from a Lebanese background, are at the beach waiting for respective friends. Whilst they are waiting they begin to talk to one another and find numerous points of connection around mobile phone technology, speaker systems and the play station game Suburban Riot. At one point they begin to play cricket until one of them receives a phone call from the friends they’d been waiting for. It becomes apparent during the course of the call he is at the wrong beach and had intended to participate in the Cronulla Riots. They had been playing cricket with the bat the Caucasian guy brought for the purpose of beating the Lebanese man to a pulp. When they realise their mistake, one offers to give the other a ride home. The short film is a wonderful glimpse at what might occur when people are no longer anonymously identified by social and media constructs which precede actual engagement, actual relationship. Self-representational digital stories function as a tool which helps facilitate a knowing of people beyond mainstream (non self-representational) media representations and, as such, they have the capacity to rupture pre-conceived, often rigidly held ideas as to whom a person or what a culture is. As Slater points out,

[e]nabling kids to tell their stories allows for the possibility of interconnections. Diminishing difficult lives to abstract, one-dimensional spectacles of suffering is yet another form of blindness and neglect. This practice evokes another meaning of ‘remote living’-- we are made too remote from one other…. Storytelling is an invitation to

80 The 2005 Cronulla riots were a series of sectarian clashes and mob violence originating in Cronulla, New South Wales, and spreading, over the next few nights, to additional Sydney suburbs. (Wikipedia)
make and renew forms of intimacy and interconnection. (Slater 2008: 12-13)

Some research addresses the potential difficulty of cross-cultural understandings through the medium of digital storytelling and effective agency in that context. The Children in Communication About Migration (CHICAM) research project was based around six media making ‘clubs’ in European countries set up by researchers – clubs which encouraged young media producers to share and respond to each others’ content online (Buckingham & de Block 2007: 148). The resultant data suggested that cross-cultural understandings were complex and the assumption could not be made that the media producers’ intent or message would always be grasped. While this is certainly true, I would, however, suggest that, given the paucity of self-representations by young Indigenous media producers, media produced and shared in this context would make a significant contribution to a knowledge that “can only happen as we enter into a dialogue with the other culture” (Langton 2003: 114). Such an ‘interruption’ will impact on the way perceptions of Indigenous people are constructed, and, in a dialectical model of identity, those modified constructs will feed into the available cultural material from which content producers form their identifications. The process of change itself is one which incorporates a both-ways reciprocity, just as in the garma context. It allows for a meeting and exchange, a production of media through which Indigenous young people are creating themselves (Slater 2008: 9).
Conclusion

This conclusion returns to my concerns, and those of the Indigenous Elders, which motivated this project and served as the catalyst for this work. These concerns relate to cultural attrition and self-representation and the need to engage with digital media in order to facilitate: cultural maintenance; self-expression and capacity to communicate in a broad social context; cultural inclusion and participation; meaningful and engaging learning practices and capacity building.

My research has shown that self-representational digital storytelling embedded through the SharingStories’ creative practice has the capacity to respond to these concerns. It has also become clear during the course of this work that to embed such a practice in a broad framework which is creatively dynamic, culturally appropriate and self sustaining -- and which has the potential to contribute to long-term capacity building -- requires significant commitment on many levels. From both practice based and traditional research, it is also evident that there is a serious risk of self-representational practices being hijacked by education department and government agendas.

The practice has the potential to make a significant contribution in the domains of: Indigenous health and well being; cultural maintenance; confidence and self esteem; identity formation; cultural inclusion, participation and creative self expression; Indigenous agency in the education of Indigenous children; school and community relationships and community building both locally and nationally. Implementation of the proposed creative practice, as evidenced by the results of this research, intersects effectively with all these domains. Another important outcome of an effective local, community based and consultative approach to the proposed practice is that it carries the potential for healing and community building in a national context. On a practical level implementation requires the development of appropriate resources, technical infrastructure, data storage methods, ethics and protocol guidelines in relation to knowledge management, as well as the development of critical literacies in the domain of media and effective professional development practices for teachers and facilitators. It would also be well served by focused work in the emergent
field of establishing effective evaluation frameworks. Such frameworks would make an important contribution to determining future impact and efficacy, not only in the context of academic and educational success and employment potential, but also, critically, to the health, well being and vitality of individuals and communities.81

These issues and outcomes require co-ordinated funding and support from state and federal education departments, schools themselves and educational policy makers. They also require engagement by Indigenous community based educators, teaching staff, cultural facilitators and elders as well as non-Indigenous teaching staff. These elements are a pre-requisite for the development and effective implementation of culturally relevant learning resources that privilege the local through place-based pedagogy (Fogarty & Schwab 2012), whilst taking advantage of the new opportunities for learning offered by digital technologies and building links to national educational outcomes.

This study finds that Federal and State governments and education departments, in response to the repeated articulations of community based cultural leaders, need to support the development of appropriate ‘place based’ pedagogical learning resources. Such resources would be developed in a manner which ensures Indigenous agency and contribution, i.e. localised ground-up and consultative approaches (Fogarty and Schwab 2012). This involvement needs to be appropriately renumerated and funding provision made in order to pay Indigenous collaborators involved in this practice for the time and skills necessary in both the creation of resources as well as their effective implementation. The resources I have outlined, implemented and trialed in this project have the capacity to achieve required standard curricular outcomes for literacy, numeracy and a variety of other core subject areas through innovative, culturally relevant and meaningful learning pathways which enhance student engagement. These resources and the approaches outlined in this thesis support cultural and linguistic

81 Disseminate, an action based research evaluation and publishing project, is working with numerous community based programs in both the arts and health sectors to develop effective evaluation methodologies. http://www.disseminate.net.au/about_disseminate. Retrieved March 2013.
maintenance and demonstrate respect and regard for traditional knowledge systems.

In keeping with this premise and with the underlying principles of this work, non-Indigenous teachers working remotely need to receive adequate professional development such that they are in a position to effectively and innovatively implement the Federal Government’s ‘Digital Education Revolution’ and the resources proposed. This requires effective orientation and training. Benefits would include an enhanced capacity to implement digital literacies as well as an effective education in relation to the knowledge Indigenous students bring to the classroom and the depth and breadth of knowledge held by senior community members, as well as ways whereby this knowledge may be validated and engaged with through classroom and Learning through Country activities (Fogarty and Schwab 2012). The Learning through Country practices, which I have explored, have been shown to significantly enhance potential employment opportunities as well as involving Elders as teachers with agency in determining the influences that shape their young people’s lives. Returning young people to Country, as part of a digital storytelling practice supports inter-generational transmission. It builds stories in young people and enhances community capacity to hold knowledge of Country and culture for future generations. The practice also develops skills which enable community based media production and contribute to capacity to generate important cultural archives and cultural maintenance practices. The approach to teaching, and the manner in which it depends upon cooperative community and school dialogue and engagement, supports important professional development and cultural orientation for teachers in a remote context.
In the context of a holistic approach to digital literacies and the issue of representations, it is important to teach Indigenous students who may be involved in the creation of digital media incorporating traditional cultural materials, about ICT and protocols. Young Indigenous media producers would benefit from an understanding of copyright and ethics issues relating to knowledge management in the context of new digital literacies. They would also benefit from an understanding of the ‘bardic function’ of mainstream media and that media’s role in the construction of a cultural consensus, cultural value-systems and cultural membership and the manner in which representations available in the ‘bricolage’ of identity construction are determined. Exploration, enquiry, and development of an effective preparation rather than a protection model of digital media literacy needs to be developed and effectively incorporated into learning.

My research suggests that it would be beneficial for education departments to dialogue with relevant bodies, such as The National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network Inc (ATSILIRN) and the Indigenous Knowledge and Resource Management in Northern Australia (IKRMNA). Such dialogues would support the development of guidelines and teaching materials which are informative and able to be implemented in an educational context. This would assist in assuring that content can be created and stored appropriately, in ways which recognise, support and strengthen traditional knowledge, cultural and information structures.

In this regard, there would additionally be value in education departments and schools engaging with some of the variety of Indigenous Knowledge Management Systems (IKMS) and cultural interfaces, such as Arq.

In terms of the logistics of sharing stories and media in an educational context, there are a variety of methods and platforms, which could potentially be adapted or utilised for such purposes. These methods and platforms need considered attention, because of the value in sharing stories, from a number of perspectives. They include: the capacity for often marginalised young people to extend their voices into the media space; the manner in which that supports the creation and distribution of self representations; the potential inherent in that process for the rupturing of stereotypes; the capacity for learning and educational impact. This capacity was effectively demonstrated, for example, when the students living on the banks of the Roper River in Jilkminggan learnt about the River Ganges from workshop participants living on the banks of the Ganges in Varanasi, India. There are a number of environments through which content, approved by content producers and known community facilitators and cultural custodians, could be shared online. Innovative free software like Place Stories (http://ps3beta.com/about) and/or the Our Story database model referenced and installed as part of the Northern Territory Library’s (NTL) Libraries and Knowledge Centres (LKC) program at various sites in NT could support this practice. The metaphor of garma would “suggest that an agreed site controlled by the knowledge owners would be a good place to start” in determining the most effective manner of holding and sharing

digital media cultural representations (Christie 2001: 9). Whilst this is a challenging requirement in the context of education departments, the foundation of the pedagogy, which my research has led me to propose, is Indigenous agency and contribution -- such that decisions regarding cultural material, when and how it is shared, would also need to be made locally by community stakeholders.

For this form of effective and culturally appropriate digital storytelling to occur in this context and in these ways, Federal and State Governments need to increase funding for communication technologies in remote Indigenous communities generally, in order to ensure adequate infrastructures and equipment costs, funds for maintenance and update of communication technologies, training and employment of community members to maintain technologies as well as facilitating engagement and access to these technologies for, and within, the broader community. Schools like Wugularr and many other remote schools of a similar size, or larger, would be well served by a dedicated ICT staff member who is able to work across classrooms and year levels. This also involves ensuring that equipment works effectively as well as assisting in the implementation of resources which require a reasonable level of digital media competency, imagination and innovation. In addition, funding needs to be allocated to afterschool and holiday programs which support digital literacy acquisition and media production and these programs, whenever possible, need to employ local facilitators.

An important further set of points to be noted is that the production of media which is recognized and appreciated, in both a community and national context, is often a source of pride for young Indigenous content producers and contributes to a strengthening of self esteem and confidence and a reinforcing of the value and importance of the stories they have to tell. Lisa Slater, a researcher in the field of Indigenous cultural studies with a particular interest in how Indigenous socio-cultural wellbeing is expressed through cultural events, such as festivals, describes accompanying a group of young Indigenous media makers from Aurukun to the Thursday Island Croc
Festival.\textsuperscript{87} They were there in order to be present for the screening of their digital media stories, made as part of a Community Prophets workshop. She recounts “witnessing the kids’ bloom with self-confidence as other kids from around the Cape and Torres Strait Islands acclaimed their films” (Slater 2008: 10). When ‘The Mermaids and the Mimi Spirits’ a story created by Wugularr Upper Primary students during SharingStories 2012 workshops, was awarded the prize of Winner of Best Youth Video at the 2012 National Remote Indigenous Media Festival, the media makers were, according to the participating teacher, ‘elated’. As Slater suggests, “It is no small thing to be received with respect and praise rather than shame” (Slater 2008: 10). Self-representational digital storytelling has the capacity to enable interconnections, through which young Indigenous media makers are able to construct competing ‘truths’ about their lives. These truths stand in opposition to negative dominant cultural fictions.

The creative practice which formed the basis of this research demonstrates that a well executed and implemented approach to the proposed embedding of a self-representational digital storytelling practice in a remote Indigenous educational context would be of considerable benefit. It facilitates capacity for dialogue and inter cultural understanding between Indigenous young people and the broader public -- supporting a process through which individuals are able to “test and adapt imagined models of each other to find satisfactory forms of mutual comprehension” (Langton 1993: 81), based on insight, understanding and respect for difference.\textsuperscript{88} As John Durham Peters, Professor in Communication Studies, suggests:

If success in communication was once the art of reaching across the intervening bodies to touch another’s spirit, in the age of electronic media it has become the art of reaching across the intervening spirits to touch another body. Not the ghost in the machine, but the body in the

\textsuperscript{87} The Croc Festival was a three-day 100% drug, alcohol and tobacco free event, held annually since 1998 in a number of locations in remote and rural areas of Australia before being cancelled due to lack of funds. Retrieved from http://ozoutback.com.au/Australia/vidcroc/index.html - October 2012

\textsuperscript{88} I would argue that the prevailing educational model needs to be examined in the context of not only Indigenous learning but generally, in line with the perspective of thinkers and educators like Paulo Friere, John Taylor Gatto and Ken Robinson; however that is beyond the scope of this thesis. In this study, I am negotiating a self-representational digital media practice within the existing educational framework.
medium is the central dilemma of modern communication. (Peters 1999: 224-225)

I would like, finally, to return to the discussion of the ‘national imaginary’ and the short film Between the Flags which explores what occurs when there is capacity to access the body in the medium. If, in the age of electronic media, the construction of the national imaginary relies on the ghosts in the machine, I argue that self-representational digital storytelling has the potential to present the ‘body’ in the medium, to make and renew forms of intimacy and interconnection based on engagement, not with self-representations, but with people. Responding to the ghost – the stereotypes which thrive when there is distance (hooks 1992: 96) -- the young men in Between the Flags had intended to inflict violence upon one another. On meeting in ‘body’, they engage, learn of each other, and, consequently, drive home together. In a similar way, the capacity to inflict violence upon a construct, the ‘Other’, a ghost, is tempered or countered by self-representational media production and distribution. Burgess suggests that many digital stories “are quite literally, touching”. “For the storyteller, the digital story is a means of ‘becoming real’ to others, on the basis of shared experience and affective resonances.” (Burgess 2006: 10). The SharingStories creative practice has the capacity to contribute significantly, in a remote Indigenous context as well as nationally, to our ability to become, ‘real’ to one another.
Appendices

Appendix 1: How am I connected to the river?

How am I connected to the river?
Years 6-8
Jilkmiggan Unit of Work
Program Design: Warren Bode & Krista Scott

Central Theme, Issue, Big Idea or Experience
Students will explore personal identity using their local river, The Little Jembray & Roper River. The NALP literacy text 'Journey to the River Sea' will be utilised as a platform to deepen this understanding and awareness of learning from students’ local context in Jilkmiggan to wider contexts including The Ganges River, India & The Amazon River, Peru. Under the umbrella of Identity students will investigate language, food, culture, song, dance, recreational activities, animals and plants associated rivers. This unit is an investigation into how rivers contribute to developing culture and identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What concepts will be covered during the course of this unit?</td>
<td>4th Oct – 10th Dec 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identity, Culture, Interdependence, Recreation, Language &amp; Sustainability</td>
<td>2 x 30min sessions weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Time, Continuity &amp; Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Indigenous Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Civics, Governance &amp; Social Justice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Values, Beliefs &amp; Cultural Diversity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What are the key understanding you wish your students to gain?
- Understanding that identity is dynamic and is connected to place, Country, language & culture
- Awareness that the Little Jembray is connected to their own culture & identity
- Demonstrate ability to compare and contrast individuals & groups from other contexts that have interdependent relationships with rivers.

Learner Context
Consider: LMQ1 What do the learners already know? LMQ2 Where do the learners need and want to be? LMQ3 How do the learners best learn?
- NTCF data
- Strengths/Gaps in Learning (Data Analysis table)
- Student Instructional Groupings (Waves of Intervention)
- NTCF Proficiency standards
- Target setting
- Pedagogical approaches
- Learning styles
- ESL Pathways
- Student diversity guidelines

Summary:
Check the boxes (left) to show what evidence you have considered and write a summary of the information here. Attach relevant documents to your plan.
- What have students already learned?
- How does your learning sequence link with students’ prior learning?
- Have you considered individualised needs of learners?
- Have you considered student’s personal learning goals?

Rationale
How will teaching this unit benefit your students? Students will benefit from this unit of study as an investigation into identity, culture and interdependent relationships with Country begins in their own local context. The unit seeks to engage students with an initial focus on local identity and then a higher order level of learning to compare and contrast with other groups of people.

Why do you want to teach this unit? The Little Jembray & Roper River are special places for Jilkmiggan students and many aspects of daily life and culture are interconnected with these places including: language; recreation; food; song; dance; Dreaming; sense of belonging; concept of Country.
Outcome
Students will explore personal identity in the context of their local rivers, Little Jembray and Roper River. The NALP literacy text 'Journey to the River Sea' will be utilised as a platform to deepen understanding and learning built from the students' local context - The Roper River in Jilkminggan - out to wider contexts including The Ganges River in India and Amazon River in Peru. Under the umbrella of Identity students will investigate language, food, culture, song, dance, recreational activities, animals and plants associated with rivers. This unit is an investigation into how rivers contribute to developing culture and identity.

Personal Professional Learning Goals
Consider: ☐ Professional Standards for Teachers
What aspect of your instructional practice would you like to concentrate on while teaching this unit? Teacher to complete...

Resources/supporting documents
School Strategic Plan
Katherine Group Schools http://www.katherinegroupschool.nt.edu.au/
The Ganges http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/qa/Ganges_River
Rivers www.maps.google.com
Dreaming Stories http://www.abc.net.au/dustechoes/
NALP: http://www.nalp.edu.au/
Dust Echoes (Dreaming Stories) www

Essential Question
'How am I connected to the river?'

Vocabulary
| Identity, culture, interdependence, recreation, language, sustainability & change |

Key Concepts
| Identity, Culture, Interdependence, Recreation, Language & Sustainability |

Exit Outcomes
Essential Learnings
In 3, In 6, Cr 1, Col 3, Constructive Learner
Teacher to choose 1 x Essential Learning & 1 x Learning Technology...

Learning Technology
Outcome and specific indicator/s
Teacher to complete...
Areas of Learning Outcomes

**SOSE**
- Soc 2.1 Time, Continuity and Change: research past events to evaluate why change occurs and their impact on the community
- Soc 2.2 Indigenous Studies: describe the diversity among Indigenous people and their traditional and contemporary cultures
- Soc 2.4 Values, Beliefs and Cultural Diversity: identify the diverse processes used to pass on cultural customs and other value based information within familiar social groups
- Soc 2.5 Enterprise: compare shared interests and common needs that link individuals to form groups and communities

**ENVIRONMENTS**
- Env 2.1 Place, Landforms and Features: investigate the distribution of natural/built features and natural/human resources and describe ways in which these features and resources interact and impact on one another
- Env 2.2 Environmental Awareness and Care: identify issues to do with value and care of places and collaboratively participate in an action project to address local community issues
- Env 2.3 Natural Systems: analyse the interactions between elements of natural and human systems and investigate flows and cycles.

Cross Curricular Links

Learning Areas: The Arts, HPE
Perspectives: Literacy, Numeracy, Indigenous, Studies of Asia, Vocational Learning

Catering for all Learners

Consider:
- Pedagogical approaches
- Learning Styles
- ESL Pathways
- Student diversity policies and guidelines

Assessment of Learning

**LMQ7 How will I check the learner has made progress?**

**Summative Assessment**
- How will you enable all students to demonstrate their understanding?
- How will students use their learning in a purposeful and contextualised way?
- Who is the audience for learners’ demonstration of learning?
- How will you collect evidence of learning?

Refer to the Principles of Assessment Design.

**LMQ8 How will I inform learners and others about the learners’ progress?**

Consider forms of reporting and feedback.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Teaching and Learning Sequence</th>
<th>NTCF Band 2 Indicators</th>
<th>Assessment for and as learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>4 Oct Baseline data &amp; introduce Sharing Stories</td>
<td>Values, Beliefs and Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>NAPLAN On-Demand Running Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Journey to the River Sea AL text</td>
<td>Identify some ways in which the media/ICT is part of our daily lives, eg advertising,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Are stories important? Refer to Dust Echoes</td>
<td>Indigenous Studies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.abc.net.au/dustechoes">http://www.abc.net.au/dustechoes</a></td>
<td>Identify the descendants of people and the places featured in Ancestral stories.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>11 Oct My Identity, My Culture</td>
<td>Values, Beliefs and Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>Evidence of completed profile on Sharing Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What makes me ME?</td>
<td>Explain their personal profile identifying likes/dislikes, strengths/ weaknesses,</td>
<td>(Take a photo of students profile &amp; print out for EoLF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- build profiles on Sharing Stories</td>
<td>values and beliefs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Which groups do I belong to?</td>
<td>Identify groups to which they belong and analyse/consider the effects of these groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Likes &amp; dislikes</td>
<td>on attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>18 Oct My River The Little Jembray &amp; Roper River</td>
<td>Time, Continuity and Change</td>
<td>5 Why's Thinking Tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What do I do there?</td>
<td>Compare their local area history with another area within or beyond the Northern</td>
<td>EoLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Who goes there?</td>
<td>Territory</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Who's in my community?</td>
<td>Values, Beliefs and Cultural Diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How is the land around me used?</td>
<td>Identify the range of cultural and social groups in their community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Example on Sharing Stories Wugularr School</td>
<td>Place, Landforms &amp; Natural Features</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research and report on how land is used in the local region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>25 Oct Bush Tucker &amp; Medicinal use</td>
<td>Indigenous Studies</td>
<td>Students create digital media related to their time at the river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing Stories Intensive</td>
<td>Collect and collate information on groups such as local language groups, Aboriginal</td>
<td>with senior Mangarrayi custodians Jessie Roberts and Sheila Conway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- River excursion Elders Sheila Conway and Jessie Roberts.</td>
<td>and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), land councils, and describe their</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What food is found around my river?</td>
<td>functions</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- What else are the plants used for? (medicinal)</td>
<td>Natural Systems</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Images &amp; written descriptions of bush Tucker on Sharing Stories</td>
<td>Investigate local bush medicines and how to find them</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Natural Studies</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenous Studies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reconstruct Indigenous ways of life in the local area by examining local histories</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time, Continuity and Change</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Listen and respond to significant stories from ancient and modern history</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>1 Nov Changes to my river</td>
<td>Time, Continuity and Change</td>
<td>Students collate media, prepare scripts, gather additional audio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Has my river changed?</td>
<td>Investigate the impact of change on the local community</td>
<td>recordings in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Is litter a problem?</td>
<td>Time, Continuity and Change</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Explain how Indigenous groups organise ways of life to fit in with natural cycles</td>
<td>Represent changes over time in the local/ broader community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use Sharing Stories to examine</td>
<td>Place, Landforms &amp; Natural Features</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>explain changes to land forms and features over time</td>
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<td>Environmental Awareness and Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8 Nov</td>
<td>Landforms</td>
<td>- Use Sharing Stories to develop slideshow or audio experience on landforms that relate to the Dreaming Stories of the river/land, refer to Dust Echoes site. - Rocks &amp; hills etc have stories as to how they came into being - Interview Elders about the different language groups that now live in Jilkminggan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Place, Landforms &amp; Natural Features</td>
<td>Investigate what happens when peoples’ actions affect other living things and places, eg pollution, overuse of resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Natural Systems</td>
<td>Talk to community elders about the local history of the community and how the building of the community/outstation has changed the local environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Natural Systems</td>
<td>Identify indicators of seasonal and weather changes in their local environment and how these affect people’s lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Natural Systems</td>
<td>Discuss and investigate natural cycles and flows, eg water, soil, carbon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Place, Landforms and Features</td>
<td>Investigate the link between land use and natural features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Place, Landforms &amp; Natural Features</td>
<td>Identify and locate major land masses, water ways and oceans using maps, atlases and world globes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Place, Landforms &amp; Natural Features</td>
<td>Identify and categorise things that people value, why they are valued and how they are valued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time, Continuity and Change</td>
<td>Use historical language to describe key lifestyle aspects of previous generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>15 Nov</td>
<td>The River Ganges &amp; The Amazon</td>
<td>Who else lives near a river? - Where are the Ganges &amp; Amazon River? - What do they look like? - Students to explore Sharing Stories website and gain insights in relation to the Amazon &amp; Ganges and the culture they contribute to (eg spiritual connectedness).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Place, Landforms &amp; Natural Features</td>
<td>Identify and locate major land masses, water ways and oceans using maps, atlases and world globes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Values, Beliefs and Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>Identify and categorise things that people value, why they are valued and how they are valued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time, Continuity and Change</td>
<td>Use historical language to describe key lifestyle aspects of previous generations.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Template</td>
<td>Demonstrating awareness of location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>22 Nov</td>
<td>Compare &amp; Contrast rivers</td>
<td>Use Venn Diagram to investigate similarities &amp; differences The Little Jembrey, Roper, Ganges and Amazon Rivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time, Continuity and Change</td>
<td>Source a wide variety of information such as photographs, local histories, artifacts to describe aspects of life in previous generations/eras and/or changes in a community or civilization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenous Studies</td>
<td>Compare aspects of two or more Indigenous people's life stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Venn Diagram to be scanned or take digital still &amp; upload to Sharing Stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>29 Nov</td>
<td>River Action Plan</td>
<td>Use Sharing Stories to view slideshow examples from Lockhart River community stories in relation to environmental degradation in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Values, Beliefs and Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>Represent common and unique social connections between class members and groups within in their community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental Awareness and Care</td>
<td>Identify a school or community issue and work cooperatively to formulate a solution, eg participate in a project to identify wasted water in the community and take action to have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time, Continuity and Change</td>
<td>Compare different views and perspectives of a local historical.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
order to determine action appropriate to ensuring the health of the Roper River.
- Alternatively, how can we modify existing classroom practices to better conserve resources, eg lights out, food scraps to compost?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Evaluation &amp; reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Dec</td>
<td>- Student and community engagement and student learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How did/can you measure?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Environmental Awareness and Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event or site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explain and consider options for current issues in the media related to Indigenous people, eg reconciliation, Stolen Generations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation to celebrate learning with wider school community

### Assessment of Learning

**LMQ7 How will I check the learner has made progress?**

**LMQ8 How will I inform learners and others about the learner’s progress?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LMQ7</td>
<td>How will you allow students to demonstrate their understanding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How will students use their learning in a purposeful and contextualised way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refer to the Principles of Assessment Design</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Teacher Evaluation and Reflection

#### Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Level of Engagement</th>
<th>High</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Challenge for students</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Achievement/progress towards goals</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low All learners catered for</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Future teaching suggestions:

#### Teacher Professional Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Achievement/progress towards goals</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What have you done so far that has been effective?

What kind of help would be useful to you?

What might your next steps be?

#### Tick appropriate level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Ease of use (plan)</th>
<th>Duration/Session times</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Too long/short</td>
<td>Appropriate length</td>
<td>Addressed the outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Too many</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unrelated to outcomes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to find</td>
<td>Easily found</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to use</td>
<td>Easy to use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult for students to use</td>
<td>Appropriate for students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to carry out</td>
<td>Easy to carry out allowed for range of student responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggested changes/adaptations/modifications:

If you were to use this unit again, what changes would you make?


Devlin, Brian. 2009. *Bilingual education in the Northern Territory and the continuing debate over its effectiveness and value. Paper presented to an


Gumbula, Neparrŋa. with Corn, Aaron and Mant, Julia. 2010. *Archival Discovery, Digital Media and new Recording Initiatives for Yolŋu Music traditions*. Neparrŋa Gumbula (The University of Sydney) with Aaron Corn (ANU) in Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities Symposium workshop schedule. Canberra. 2010. AITSIS.


Hughes, Helen. 2008b. Failures in education policy are creating a lost generation. ABC News Online. 07 April 2008.


Jenkins, Henry. with Purushotma, Ravi., Weigel, Margaret., Clinton, Katie. and Robinson, Alice. J. 2009. Confronting the Challenges of Participatory


MacCallum, Judith., Palmer, David., Wright, Peter., Cumming-Potvin Wendy., Northcote, Jeremy., Brooker, Michelle., Tero, Cameron. 2006. Turning to the old people and returning to Country: The Yiriman project and intergenerational exchange, in Community Building through Intergenerational Exchange Programs. Report to the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS). This chapter was written in collaboration with John Watson, Anthony Watson, Peter Ljubic, Hugh Wallace-Smith and Mel Johnson.


Martin, D. F. 2006. Why the “new direction” in Federal Indigenous affairs policy is as likely to “fail” as the old directions, Topical Issues in Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU.


Worcmann, Karen. 2002. Digital division is cultural exclusion: But is digital inclusion cultural inclusion?. D-libmagazine, 8(3).


Additional information

Storytelling practices and platforms

http://www.bighart.org/public/
http://www.insightshare.org/
http://www.museudapessoa.net/ingles/applications.htm
http://www.abc.net.au/usmob/
http://www.communityprophets.com/
http://www.storycenter.org/
http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/arts/yourvideo/queries/capturewales.shtml
http://youthvoices.adobe.com/youth-media-gallery/
http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/recent.html
http://generator.acmi.net.au/education-themes/indigenous-australian-voices-1
http://ice.org.au/project/digidiaries/
http://www.silencespeaks.org/
http://suburbancrossings.net/
http://gng.org/
http://www.divopproject.org/
http://www.photovoice.org/
http://www.kids-with-cameras.org/home/
http://therightsexposureproject.com/
http://lasfotosproject.org/about-2/
http://youthinfocus.org/
http://tizianoproject.org/
http://www.photovoice.org/
http://wideanglemedia.org
http://www.newlens.info

All Retrieved October 2012

Some references for Schools and teachers

http://facing.org/
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzfFecoRYng

Some reference points for Protocols