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Living Texts: A Perspective on Published Sources, Indigenous Research Methodologies and Indigenous Worldviews

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Abstract

This article explores and extends one aspect of the research theories and methods defined by Lester-Irabinna Rigney (1999) as 'Indigenist research', namely, published sources. We view published sources broadly as incorporating poetry, life histories, community histories, creation stories, scholarly articles and books. This article seeks to operationalise Indigenist research in the context of the sources that are central to academic work and critically engage with how the ontologies that inform knowledges are valued in the academy. We aim to explore the relationships Aboriginal people create with the parts of their knowledges that have become translated into text. Whilst acknowledging that oral traditions and processes are fundamentally important, this article seeks to situate sources published by Aboriginal people as a key part of the 'contestation of knowledge' that lies at the heart of Indigenist research (Rigney 1999: 116). Our aim is to start the conversation about the issues that are raised in framing how primary and secondary sources might be constituted within Indigenist research.

We are two Aboriginal scholars of the Palyku people, and one non-Indigenous scholar. Writing in this academic space requires openness, sharing and profound trust between collaborators, which we have had the privilege of developing together over many years.

Introduction

There has been a 'quiet revolution' in Australian Aboriginal scholarship over the last 50 years that has been driven by the works of Aboriginal writers across a diverse range of genres, from the academic to the creative. This revolution is defined by the strong positioning of Aboriginal voices in published texts and of Aboriginal people speaking about Indigenous knowledges, communities, histories, experiences, logic, worldviews, laws, hopes, dreams, loves, grief, traumas and frustrations. It has seen the development of Aboriginal research theories and methods that privilege Aboriginal voices, articulate responsibility and accountability to community, and the importance of honouring Indigenous worldviews (Rigney 1999; Kuokkanen 2000; Moreton-Robinson and Walter 2009). Collectively, these research theories and methods are defined by Rigney as 'Indigenist research'—a body of knowledge constituted by Indigenous scholars using Indigenous research theories and methods (Rigney 1999).

In the 1990s and 2000s we have seen an expansion of scholarship, mainly by Indigenous scholars but also some non-Indigenous scholars, about Indigenist research methodologies and their relationships to both teaching and research in the academy (for example, Bishop 1998; Rigney 1999; Rains, Archibald and Deyhle 2000; Kuokkanen 2000, 2004, 2008; Martin 2003; Kovach 2005; Arbon 2008; Denzin and Lincoln 2008; Moreton-Robinson and Walter 2009; Tuhiwai Smith 2012). As Sami academic Rauna Kuokkanen states, 'Indigenous epistememes have to be recognized as a gift to the academy' (Kuokkanen 2008: 65).

What is missing from the Australian academic literature on this topic is a consideration of how these methodologies will be operationalised. We seek to start the discussion in relation to one (small) part of this gap. In this article, we will extend the current discussion on Indigenist research by focusing on published texts and the principle of privileging Aboriginal voices that has been particularly advocated by Rigney (1999) (but also many others). This article seeks to explore the relationships Indigenous writers create with the parts of their knowledges that have become translated into text and how this is then experienced by Indigenous readers. We will first discuss 'living texts'; secondly, we will examine the importance of using Aboriginal sources in framing Indigenous knowledge positions; and, lastly, we suggest an approach for how primary and secondary sources might be constituted within Indigenist research.

We acknowledge that Sami academic Rauna Kuokkanen has produced some insightful work in this area and start with a quote from her work:

... there is a pressing need to take Sami literature seriously and not only by those [who] identify themselves as 'literary types' ... but everybody in Sami society as well as in mainstream societies. We need to rid ourselves from narrow understanding of Sami literature and even more so, its role in Sami society (2004: 100).

The nature of 'living text'

In many ways, this 'revolution' of publishing by Indigenous authors is in its infancy. From the 1960s, a body of work, in many disciplines and genres, began to emerge from Aboriginal writers in Australia, starting with writers such as Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1964), Jack Davis (1970), Kevin Gilbert (1973) and Sally Morgan (1987). The first Aboriginal publishing houses were also established within this broad era with Aboriginal Studies Press (1964), IAD Press (1972) and Magabala Books (1987). The establishment of Aboriginal publishers was in part a response to the legacy of reproduction of Indigenous stories by non-Indigenous people, in ways that did not allow Indigenous communities sufficient ownership or control of their knowledge. As Thompson explains:

One of the ... reasons for Magabala being set up was that people were a bit worried that for a long time linguists and anthropologists were coming into the community and collecting stories and taking them away and that no-one ever knew what was happening to them. The Aboriginal people had no control over the material they had given, sometimes the material was published, yet they weren't going to get royalties. Magabala was set up with those two aims in mind—to preserve Aboriginal language and culture and to teach Aboriginal people about copyright (1990: 49).

The impact of Aboriginal publishing houses has been significant and provided a community-driven and 'authorised' platform for the publication of knowledges and stories by Elders and communities (we will return to the notion of authorisation below). These writings have been built upon by Aboriginal academics, Elders, communities, poets, philosophers, playwrights and artists. As a whole, these works provide a deep and complex base of source material of Aboriginal voices speaking about their knowledges and experiences. Aboriginal scholars are now in a position to draw upon the fruit of this knowledge discourse from Aboriginal peoples that Aboriginal communities have produced, and authorised to be in the public domain in the form of published texts. However, we must consider, broadly, how Indigenous writers create texts informed by their worldviews and how those texts are experienced by Indigenous readers. As Indigenous academic Martin Nakata (2007: 8) notes, 'the way we come to know and understand, discuss, critique and analyse in university programmes is not the way Indigenous people come to know in local contexts'.

There is no single Indigenous view. Indigenous Australians are not homogenous and their views are informed by the specific country that they are from as well as their individual and collective experiences. This has given rise to specific works in Indigenist research such as Karen Martin's work (2003) developing an Indigenist research framework informed by Quandamooka ontology; Rauna Kuokkanen's work (2000) articulating a research methodology from a Sami perspective; and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2012) work with respect to Kaupapa Maori research. However, within Australia and internationally, Indigenous peoples have some common overarching similarities in their worldviews (as expressed by Vine Deloria Jnr: *Youngblood Henderson* 2009: 259-60; also see *Little Bear* 2009: 77 and *Kuokkanen* 2008: 65). These worldviews are vital in understanding how Indigenous peoples understand texts. Indigenist researchers, and also Indigenous readers, use 'interpretative strategies and skills fitted to the needs, language and traditions of their respective indigenous community' (*Denzin and Lincoln* 2008: 11).

The work of two of the authors of this article has drawn attention to underlying principles in Aboriginal knowledge systems and some of the characteristics of Aboriginal logic and legal systems (*Kwaymullina A.* 2005; *Kwaymullina B.* 2011; *Kwaymullina and Kwaymullina*, 2010). Three Aboriginal concepts which emerge from this research and that bear upon an Aboriginal view on texts are: everything is alive, everything is related, and everything is participatory. These concepts are built into Aboriginal logic as base assumptions. We are not specifically discussing Indigenous knowledge or knowledges, but exploring 'Indigenous ontologies, philosophies and presuppositions or conceptual frameworks through which one looks at and interprets the world' (*Kuokkanen* 2008: 62).

Before moving on to consider these concepts, it should also be acknowledged that they do not exist in isolation but are related to and informed by underlying ideas relating to time, space and context (*Kwaymullina and Kwaymullina* 2010). It would be trite to say that this article must draw a boundary around its considerations; rather, it is more helpful to acknowledge that the considerations identified here assume and demonstrate those relationships without specifically acknowledging them. A further aspect is the intersection between these principles and Indigenous languages which this article cannot delve into (*Kovach* 2005: 25 and following; also see for example *Youngblood Henderson's* notion of 'a translated life', 2009: 264).

Everything is alive

Aboriginal systems do not ask *if* something is alive because there is nothing that is not of creation; there is nothing that is not infused with the creative power of the Dreaming Ancestors. As Nyungar scholar Professor Len Collard writes:

In our Nyungar cosmological theory, the *Waakal* is the Creator, the keeper of the freshwater sources. He gave us life and our trilogy of belief in the boodjar—the land— as our mother and nurturer of the *Nyungar moort*—family and relations—and our *katitjin* Law—knowledge so that we could weave the intricate tapestry known as the ‘web of life’ (2008: 62).

Everything is related

Similarly, the notion that everything is interconnected and related is a primary assumption of easily observable fact. In nature, nothing exists in isolation; life depends on other life to exist, fundamentally and inextricably intertwined and interdependent. Stories of law handed down by the Dreaming Ancestors explain the blueprint of how these things came to be and to interrelate:

All things in the world have *Galharra*—plants, animals, the sun, rain, wind, all sacred sites and permanent pools—all belong to one of the four *Galharra*, and so are in relationship to us in the same way as an uncle, cousin or parent. Through *Galharra* relationships our community is one big extended family (Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation 2007: 104).

Thus, the question is not *if* you are related, but *how*. As Leroy Little Bear notes, ‘interrelationships between all entities are of paramount importance’ (2009: 77; also see Youngblood Henderson 2009, particularly 258). Relations may also change over time and at different life stages (as described by Martin 2003).

Everything is participatory

Lastly, because everything is alive and interrelated, to ‘come to know’ involves participation in relationships. In an interconnected holistic world nothing, including knowledge, exists in isolation. All knowledge interconnects through relationships and to ‘come to know’ is what emerges from these interactions or experiences—to live is to exist in negotiation with life:

So there are varying types of knowledges, having different levels that have to be operational for group function. This keeps the Entities known to and in a network of relationships. Without this knowing we are unable to ‘be’, hence our Ways of Knowing inform our Ways of Being’ (Martin 2003: 209).

Further, as Aboriginal scholar Mary Graham observes of differences in Aboriginal and Western thought:

The Western question, ‘what’s the meaning of life?’ is answered by the Aboriginal question, ‘what is it that wants to know?’ (1999: 113).

Working with text and working with ‘living text’

These understandings and experiences of reality as a living and interconnected web mean that for Aboriginal writers and readers, the process of working with text sources has particular features that are often markedly different from Western approaches to gathering and interpreting ‘data’. Indigenous writers and readers ‘must learn to create

models to help them take their bearings in unexplored territory' (Youngblood Henderson 2009: 250). We acknowledge upfront that non-Indigenous scholars also bring their own varied worldviews to interpreting texts but the focus of our article is specifically on Indigenous writers and readers.

First and foremost is the extension of Aboriginal notions of what is alive to source material that is considered non-living in a Western sense. Pursuant to Aboriginal worldviews, published texts, archival material, images in art, digital mediums, artefacts or otherwise are not lifeless data waiting to be collected, interpreted and reconstituted by perceptions:

Someone told me just recently that 'rock art is dead'. If 'Art' was dead, that would not matter to we Aborigines. We have never thought of our rock-paintings as 'Art'. To us they are IMAGES. IMAGES with ENERGIES that keep us ALIVE – EVERY PERSON, EVERYTHING WE STAND ON, ARE MADE FROM, EAT AND LIVE ON.

Those IMAGES were put down by our Creator, Wandjina, so that we would know how to STAY ALIVE, make everything grow and CONTINUE what he gave us in the first place (Mowaljarlai, Vinnicombe, Ward and Chippindale 1988: 691).

Here, respected Indigenous thinker David Mowaljarlai is talking about rock art images. However, this can be extrapolated. One of the consequences which flows from the principles that everything is alive, inter-related and participatory is that Aboriginal stories, however expressed or embodied, hold power, spirit and agency. Knowledge can never be truly separated from the diverse Countries that shaped the ancient epistemologies of Aboriginal people, and the many voices of Country speak through the embodiment of story into text, object, symbol or design. As Yanyuwa elder Mussolini Harvey comments:

In our ceremonies we wear marks on our bodies; they come from the Dreaming too. We carry the design that the Dreamings gave to us. When we wear that Dreaming mark we are carrying the country, we are keeping the Dreaming held up, we are keeping country and the Dreaming alive (Bradley 1988: x-xi)

In the context of the quote above, it is pertinent to refer back to the term 'authority'. In this article, we do not intend to address this complex area in any detail. However, John Bradley's book provides some food for thought with respect to issues of authority. John Bradley, a non-Indigenous anthropologist, tells of how he came to be involved in the work that resulted in his book *Yanyuwa Country: The Yanyuwa people of Borroloola tell the history of their land* (1988). He notes that he was instructed to speak to the senior guardian of the Tiger Shark Dreaming as '[i]t was this man who would give the story the final seal of approval' (Bradley 1988: xiii). Bradley further states that after amendments were made by the senior guardian, the story was circulated throughout the Yanyuwa community and that the community provided comments, texts and discussed what should be done with the illustrations and texts (1988: xiii-xiv). Further, and importantly for this article, it was agreed by the community that it should be 'put into a book'. Even though the limitations of translation were realised and understood by the community, '[t]hey saw their texts and the accompanying illustrations as a vehicle by which they could begin to educate people' (Bradley 1988: xiv). Finally, the capacity of the community to assert control over their knowledge in the context of Western intellectual

property law is protected by the copyright in the publication being jointly held by John Bradley and the Yanyuwa people.

'Living texts' connect to Dreaming and Law and influence as much as they are influenced. They are *Story*—in the sense that they are part of the bigger flow of learning that emerges from creation and country: 'Everywhere he looked, he saw a world made of stories' (Indigenous writer Leslie Silko, quoted in Youngblood Henderson 2009: 266). Aboriginal voices and stories continue to connect to Country and hold power even when translated into text, told outside of the contexts of the Country where the knowledge is lived, and potentially circumscribed by Western understandings. Researching texts, whether published or archival, creates a relationship between the knowledge and the reader that intersects and finds its embodiment in many realities, laws and relationships. It is a complex process.

Much of the scholarship relating to Indigenist research comes from the discipline of education. Whilst this is, in itself, an interesting observation, it clearly demonstrates that it is academic institutions where Indigenous students and scholars most often face the phenomenon of 'epistemic ignorance' referred to by Kuokkanen (2008: 62). This 'epistemic ignorance' flows both ways—from the research produced with an ignorance of Indigenist methodologies and from the inability of Aboriginal people to "speak through" their own epistemes' (Kuokkanen 2008: 62) due to academic conventions.

Inextricably related to these questions of sources, positions and decolonisation for Aboriginal scholars is the question of what dialogues Indigenous peoples *choose* to engage in. While no one can control the debates others have about them, Indigenous peoples can and do choose what debates they inset themselves into. Rather than only moving to Western knowledge debates, Indigenous writers and readers should be encouraging Western thinkers to engage with Indigenous methodologies. As Sefa Dei (2008: 6) writes: 'How shall we transform the institutions within which we reside? How shall we actively reproduce those core Indigenous values?'

For Indigenous scholars, Indigenous knowledge systems and the writings of other Indigenous people can serve as a vital 'reference point', as the place that Indigenous peoples return to in testing ideas, theories, methods, concepts, thoughts and feelings before they adapt and insert them into their work. Indigenous academic Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (2006: 149) stated with respect to the work of Vine Deloria Jnr that it 'gave Indian writers and thinkers the language to defend ourselves against the merciless 'Westward Ho!' mentality we faced in the past and continue to face today'. The work of the Indigenous authors of this article is shaped by a diverse spectrum of Indigenous stories, but, perhaps most enduringly and profoundly, by the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders. We frequently return, for example, to the words of Gagudju elder Bill Neidjie (2002: 39):

I feel it with my body,
with my blood.
Feeling all these trees,
all this country.
When this wind blow you can feel it.
Same for country,

You feel it.

You can look.

But feeling ...

that make you.

This is a constant reminder that our understandings as Indigenous people are shaped and informed by our living Countries; that, in the end, it is not isolated terrain of the intellect but connections of the spirit and the heart that make us, and the world.

Shaping knowledge: Using Aboriginal sources in shaping Indigenous knowledge positions

Now we come to operationalising how these worldviews impact on using Aboriginal sources. When we speak of operationalising, we mean this in two ways. First, the importance of Indigenous writers being able to publish their stories in manners which may not 'conform' to Western research paradigms; and secondly, how Indigenous scholars and readers can then use these sources. We consider an approach based in application of the logic of Indigenous worldviews that extends into Western theory, rather than the other way around. In this context, Kuokkanen (2008: 69) has written of the potential for 'fear' within the academy of recognising diverse research and writing methodologies. She notes the 'fear of interruption and ambiguity, loss of control, erasure of boundaries (e.g. disciplinary), excess of endless relativity', in particular, the Western approach to 'de-humanizing' stories into 'theory' (2000: 421).

We begin with a summary of an experience of one of the Indigenous authors of this article:

I was researching in the state archives when I came across an historical artifact that referred to an incident of accidental poisoning that occurred in my Country in 1897. Some Aboriginal people who worked on a station died and they were most likely close relations of mine. I searched for more historical data on the incident, but none appeared to have been documented. I was left with a hollow feeling of something unresolved. Weeks later I dreamed. In the dream I stood in the red earth of Palyku Country and a man stood before me and I knew instantly that he was my relation. He smiled at me and raised his arm and put it on my shoulder. Then his other arm reached forward and he placed a hand over my heart. Then he cried, not in great sobbing heaves, but as tears of release. He was free. When I awoke the hollow feeling was gone. Something that been broken was fixed. A broken cycle had corrected itself and was turning again. The fragment had rejoined the whole. This is not a resolution that makes sense according to any kind of historiographical logic. Where my feeling and dream would probably be viewed as something fundamentally subjective, a product of my own mind. But for me, it's part of the research process of action and interaction in Country.

We offer this experience as an example of the way in which an Indigenous person interacts with, interprets and resolves knowledge in a way that is grounded in a specific Aboriginal country and knowledge system. It is of course very different to the traditions and methodologies of Western academic institutions. Many writings have brought attention to the important topic of the challenges for Indigenous peoples of:

... traveling an academic path, whereon lies the difficulty of equilibrating their need to be true to who they are as Indigenous people, honoring the Ancestors'

teachings and balancing these with their need to be 'good researchers' (Rains, Archibald and Deyhle 2000: 340).

Each Indigenous voice is unique and must be true to his or her own experiences and knowledges. In this regard, there is a fundamentally important interrelationship between the kinds of sources Indigenous scholars draw upon and the positions they occupy in shaping and extending Indigenous logic, arguments, thoughts and feelings into academic discourse. Robert Warrior, an Indigenous scholar from North America, offers much wisdom here:

... using my own self-understanding as a starting point, I decided that our critical practice needs to be suffused with an awareness of the work of other native intellectuals. This was not merely a gesture of separatism or an announcement on the superiority of the work of native writers. Rather, it was and has been an attempt to listen to these neglected voices free from what too often has been the noise of comparativism and influence arguments (Warrior 1999: 49).

Further, in forming these relationships between Indigenous writers and readers:

And as we continue this dialogue, we are not professing that there is only one way, but we are sharing our relationship to what we are seeing, feeling, or knowing. It is true that we have many different depths in our relationships to knowledge (Cardinal 2001: 181).

Aboriginal texts bridge Aboriginal and Western realities and show many models for Indigenous peoples in how to persist, endure, maintain and extend who they are (Rigney 1999: 118). Although we are not focused here on the extensive literature on research methodologies as mechanisms for resistance, of course, this research informs this dialogue. Take, for example, the last verse of a song by the Ngarla people (from the Pilbara region in Western Australia) that was published in a book of songs (Brown and Geytenbeek 2009: 29):

Wuju-wujungurala palu
Wampakalya wayi marrinyuru
Waya ngunanykarrangurala yulu
Kalya yijarrinyuru

In spite of all that and the parallel wires
We'll still find a way
Of continually exchanging little things
Through the gaps and the cracks

This song is about a lock-hospital, built to hold Aboriginal people in Port Hedland (Western Australia). It can be read on multiple levels. We see a subversion of the colonial order physically, in the exchange of goods through gaps in the walls, and metaphysically, in the power of the song that records this resistance and declares the agency, cleverness and cunning of Ngarla people. They will not be confined, not by walls and barbed wire, nor by false ideas of themselves as victims. The song is

knowledge, and it too creeps through gaps in walls to forge a bridge between two worlds. This song is contained within a published, bilingual text, copyright to which is held by the Ngarla people and by Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre on behalf of the Ngarla people. This song can usefully be incorporated and explored in an academic paradigm, like the poems by Indigenous academics Martin Reinhardt and Faye Lone-Knapp in the special edition ('Through our eyes and in our own words') of the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* (2000).

It is important for Indigenous scholars to draw on and be inspired by a range of Aboriginal sources, not just ones that appear to be heavily analytical. While Aboriginal systems have important intellectual and analytical components, at their heart they move from a position of creativity—the creative drives and enfolds the analytical: '[t]here is never a barrier between the mind and the Creative; the whole repertoire of what is possible continually presents or is expressed as an infinite range of Dreamings' (Graham 2009: 76). The universe itself is the creative expression of the Dreaming beings, and as part of their creation, Indigenous peoples hold that imprint and power. Creating or extending new Aboriginal research theories and methods is not just about developing base rules that guide the operation of processes which are then used to produce knowledge. This is a byproduct of a series of more important questions—does this research reflect who the author is? Does it reflect the author's worldview and experience? Does it maintain and extend the knowledge legacy Indigenous peoples have inherited from their old people and Countries?

Published sources by Indigenous authors include, but are not limited to, poetry, life histories, community histories, creation stories and scholarly articles and books. All of these are valuable sources for Indigenist research. Published sources by Indigenous authors may or may not 'satisfy' conventions of Western notions of academy. Whether they do or do not is relevant to the Indigenist researcher as it impacts on the prism through which they will be viewed (for example, other paradigms that may be 'acting upon' the source). However, regardless, the source is useful for an Indigenist researcher. How, then, are Indigenous people to make use of this wealth of knowledge?

An Indigenist research approach is in part based on the principle of privileging Aboriginal voices (Rigney 1999). This naturally extends to the sources we collect, privilege and analyse. In the context of encouraging broader discussion of this article, we offer a simple structure of primary and secondary sources that might be adapted or applied in Indigenist approaches to published sources in the context of scholarly investigation into subject matter that bears upon Aboriginal knowledge. We do not intend this to be prescriptive—in fact, quite the opposite. We see this as the beginning of a continuous journey of Indigenous writers and readers defining ways of knowing that value Indigenous experience and where 'Indigenous perspectives ... infiltrate the structures and methods of the entire research academy' (Rigney 1999: 114).

We acknowledge that the question of unpublished works is also raised in this context. For example, unpublished works by Indigenous authors that are available in libraries. These also form part of the 'gap' in the operationalisation of Indigenist research which requires exploration.

Primary sources

Primary sources include published texts by Aboriginal Elders, communities and scholars where it is clear that they are knowledges that have been 'authorised' to be in the public domain by the communities where the specific knowledge originates.

We suggest the first priority for Aboriginal scholars in Australia—and indeed for any scholars dealing with Indigenous material—is to begin with the texts of Australian Aboriginal Elders, communities and scholars. These sources include, but are not limited to poetry, life histories, community histories, creation stories and scholarly articles and books. In short, any authorised published text that contains an Aboriginal perspective preferably with the least amount of mediation. How we assess the level of mediation is open for debate. These sources can be, and often are, collaborative with non-Aboriginal authors with some mediating the Aboriginal perspective (with their own views) more than others. This harks back to the concept of authorisation, particularly of non-Indigenous collaborators. Bradley's work, for example, shows an explanation of how the work came to be, who authorised the work and an explanation of the limitations (from the communities' perspective) of translating the stories into text (Bradley 1988). Importantly, the copyright is held jointly by Bradley and the Yanyuwa people, ensuring the community retains control and authority over their knowledge in the context of Western intellectual property law. This may be seen as a way forward.

Once a base of data has been collected from these primary sources then the work of Indigenous scholars in other jurisdictions is gathered in a similar manner. Unless the specifics of a particular topic demand it, these primary sources should also form the bulk of the referenced material.

Secondary sources

Secondary sources include published texts by non-Aboriginal scholars and writers that are relevant to the topic. Cook-Lynn (1997: 21) points out that '[n]o thoughtful Native scholar suggests that the primacy of the Native voice should exclude any other'. Secondary sources should not overpower the primary sources or else the approach is no longer one which privileges and centres Aboriginal voices in a meaningful way. However, they should not be ignored. Rather, they should be assessed on the basis of the author's ability to 'stretch' their mind which has been 'condition[ed] in the Eurocentric ways of knowing ... into the narrative nature of Indigenous peoples' being and knowing' (Kuokkanen 2000: 417).

Conclusion

Aboriginal peoples come from diverse knowledge systems, and yet they are all connected through worldviews, stories and experiences. Aboriginal scholars are also all grappling with the same questions of source, position, community, representation and translation. We live in an era where, paradoxically, some Indigenous knowledges are flourishing and re-emerging while others remain under severe threat. We are at a critical juncture in time and space where words and actions carry meaningful weight and where all Indigenous voices and perspectives are unique, precious and very much needed.

Published texts by Aboriginal peoples have been placed in the public domain for Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people to listen to. For Indigenous people, they offer invaluable, and diverse source material to draw on, built upon, explore links between and be inspired by. We have sought to start the conversation in this important area. In this spirit, we leave the final words here to Sundown Ellery of the Kukatja

people who offers us much wisdom in thinking about the value and meaning of these published stories:

It's a good one. Little word. When they see this book, good, small world. Might be a good one when you see it. From everywhere people can have a good look. When they see this book, big mob of stories, you've got a lot of stories. Now you've got to listen to my stories. Good. Little word. Maybe you might think it's good. Little word ... You've got to hear this. Maybe Maybe you won't see, this good word. You can't look around for any more words. Good words. These words will stand up. People will see them. That's what I'm saying. This small word (Greene and Tramacchi 2007: vii).

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