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"They taught us Jesus Christ and Captain Cook and everything": Exploring Koori Identity at La Perouse

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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Amanda Katherine Lambert entitled ""They taught us Jesus Christ and Captain Cook and everything": Exploring Koori Identity at La Perouse." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Anthropology.

Faye V. Harrison, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Benita Howell, Rosalind Hackett

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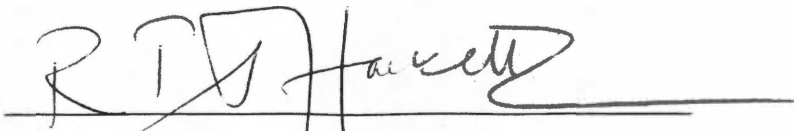
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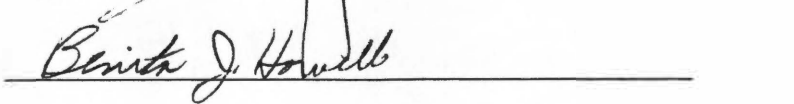
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Dr. Faye V. Harrison, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:





Accepted for the Council:



Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

**“They taught us Jesus Christ and Captain Cook and everything”:
Exploring Koori Identity at La Perouse**

A Thesis
Presented for the Master of Arts Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Amanda Katherine Lambert
May 1997

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Abstract

Identity politics, the social construction of identity, is a phenomenon which affects many people worldwide. Indigenous Australians, however, are unique because of their indigenous, racial, and ethnic status. The construction of Koori identity, then, has its roots in a colonial and post-colonial history of cultural and racial devastation and discrimination. At this historical moment, Koori people are voicing and identifying themselves, consequently, contesting the externally imposed dominant paradigms of their identity. This text is a study of the construction of self-construction of Koori identity at La Perouse. The overall purpose of this thesis is to explore the day-to-day meaning of the social construction of Koori-ness in Australia. More specifically, three themes in the formation of Koori identity are discussed in this text through the use of narratives collected during 11 weeks of fieldwork conducted by the author. First, how do personal life narratives contribute to the formation of Koori identity? How does a Koori in La Perouse define her/himself? Second, how do personal narratives intersect with, contradict, and contribute to a community narrative and community identity via the family? Finally, how does the physical place, La Perouse, contribute historically and contemporarily to the identity of individuals and the community living in that space? The narratives and themes offer an avenue for exploring, deconstructing, and understanding the on-going internally derived re-invention of Koori identity.

Preface

This thesis represents a preliminary case study of the construction of Koori identity in New South Wales. It is not meant to be representative of all Koori people, although there are elements herein which are part of the experience of being an indigenous person in Australia. In addition, the people whose voices are recorded in this text are not necessarily representative of all people in La Perouse. Each voice is connected to an individual with personal experiences, opinions, and ideas which are not meant to speak for the experiences, opinions, and ideas of the rest of the community. Concurrently, this thesis also represents only one researcher's collection of Koori narratives and those narratives included here are limited by my age and acceptance in the community. In addition, some things have been omitted at the request of the participants or in order to protect members of the community who trusted me with their stories. I am not a Koori woman, nor do I claim to know how it feels and what it means to be a Koori. Nonetheless, this text is my attempt to explore and deconstruct dominant notions of race and ethnicity in order both to empower Koories and to better understand the ways the concepts of race and ethnicity operate in Australia and perhaps by implication the United States as well.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: A Portrait of La Perouse – lines that divide, ties that bind

The faded black-and-white photo tells a story that an Old one could have told about the first mission. Probably taken just after the turn of the century, the photograph captures a view of the past, a portrait of memories experienced and passed down — described in bits and pieces over the course of my stay, nearly three months. The sea and the people living along it appear to be one, as the tin shacks they live in dot the beach where the bay curves inland. A fence winds around the outer edge of the community creating a dividing line between the "natives" tin homes and a larger building which resembles a church. Behind the shacks stands a large building separated from the mission by the bush that borders the beach. Several people captured in the photograph walk along the shore, perhaps picking up shells or getting ready for a swim. Boats fill the bay -- some with people, some without. At the far end of the beach several boats remain on shore, unused. On the other end, a small group of men are hunched over another such boat possibly preparing it to catch a feed of fish for the evening meal.

Alma: *La Perouse Mission. The mission was nothing like it is now. We didn't have any running water in the house. The toilets were outside and it was really hard in those days. We had a hard life growing up, didn't we?*

Bel: *But we had a good life....*

Alma: *We had a good life loving, caring life. You know? Because, in those days everyone helped one another. But now it's all changed. Everyone is sort of to themselves.... You know, I say to the kids, I wish you was in my life when I was growing up. It was hard but....*

Bel: *But we didn't feel that it was hard -- everyone shared.*

Alma: *It was happy, happy.*

Bel: *Because if you didn't have any sugar, you could go up the hill and get some sugar off someone or butter or whatever we needed. Everybody seemed to share and that is what*

made it easy. But, not now. They shut the door on you when they see you coming. The people have changed in La Perouse.

K: What do you think caused that?

Bel: *Well, I don't know what it is really.*

Alma: *Well, I think that everyone is trying to keep up with the Joneses. You know that's just a saying, "Keep up with the Joneses."*

Almost a hundred years after that photograph was taken, no houses dot the water's edge; the mission of old has been relocated away from the shifting sand. Yet, the beach is still populated with people, but these people are visitors. The sun is shining overhead and the sand is barely cool underfoot. For the middle of winter, this weekend afternoon is warm. An almost invisible fish line extends from the water onto shore, connected to two tall poles which anchor their casts. A couple sits on towels behind the poles intermittently playing with the two children and watching for movement on their line which would indicate a catch. Cars line Scenic Drive, and hungry middle class people fill tables at beach side restaurants or wait for their turn on the adjoining beach. Others are walking along the beach and, like myself and my 9 year old companion, are picking up shells. We walk past the break wall toward Yarra Bay where my companion, Ellen, says the best shells are found. We are collecting shells for her Auntie who does shellwork to sell to tourists. Although it is tempting to explore the faint bush tracks (paths) which connect the Koori reserve with the beach, we stay close to the shore line, heeding her grandfather's warning about the dangers of the bush. Ellen jumps onto a thick pipe, walking it like a balance beam until it ends; then she jumps down. Another family is fishing off the rock shelf here. As we round the corner into Yarra Bay, the sailing club comes into view. The verandah is full of diners, but the beach is empty. From here you can see the old cemetery where the Chinese Gardens used to be. The place now looks like a section of Arlington National

Cemetery in Washington, DC, except that these stones vary in size and shape, and it would be highly unusual to see a national flag flying here.

The slope from the beach, aided by scrub bushes, forms a buffer between what is seen and unseen in La Perouse. Unbeknownst to most visitors to Frenchman's Bay's restaurants, beach, and museum, just over this slope is La Perouse. It is the weekend, and while the tourists and the curious fill the areas "down the bottom," the streets of La Perouse that are daily crowded with children playing games or riding bikes are empty. Houses whose three, four, and five bedrooms are usually brimming with people are relatively quiet. The door is open at Auntie Alma's house, and I can see her having a "cupper" (a cup of tea or coffee) and a piece of toast at the kitchen table while one of the "men of the house" stands at the kitchen window. I wave and she waves back. From the house, they watch the parade of children in their "footy" (rugby) gear hurry to catch a ride to the football oval for their game. The dogs lie about in the sun on front porches and in driveways watching for cars and people coming down the road, only moving to chase a teasing child. It is a windy day, and hexagonally-shaped laundry lines filled with clothes, towels, and linens spin slowly in the breeze. The Aboriginal flag flies at full mast in front of Yarra Bay House and most of the noise on mornings like this comes from the increased weekend tourist traffic on Anzac Parade. Soon, the reserve will be almost empty as mothers, fathers, nans, aunties, sisters, and girlfriends go to see their "boys" play footy. Later in the afternoon, "barbies," or barbecue grills as we know them in the United States, will be fired up in celebration (and sometimes in defeat), but always in the spirit of generosity and community. As young and old gather together, shared stories of the day's footy games will inevitably give rise to stories of the past. Laughter rings through yards as the older ones struggle to keep "yarning" through their own giggles and younger generations plead, "Tell us some more stories, Auntie." "Tell us again about your Nan." These "yarns" (stories) often go on well into the night, with people coming and going, listening, telling,

and slipping away in the darkness, down to the sailing club for a drink and a “press” (the colloquial term for gambling on the poker machines; the phrase “playing the pokies” is also common).

Meanwhile, back at the other end of the beach at Frenchman’s Bay, the distribution of people has shifted away from the beach to just over the hill. “The Snakeman,” Mr. Cann, has attracted quite a crowd for the first snake handling show of the day. Diagonally across the street from Mr. Cann’s stage, two men are talking. One wears a red, black, and yellow knitted Rasta-type hat, sweat pants, and a jacket, and the other wears a pair of navy blue pants and a flannel shirt. The two men stand between two displays of hand-made Koori artifacts and a woman about their same age sits in a chair. They are all family and the only identifiably Koori people in sight. One man is my companion’s grandfather (Tim), the other her uncle (Wes), and the woman (Bel) is her Auntie. On one side, Wes is using a table and his car to display hand made clothes and wooden objects. Bowls, painted gourds, dried seed necklaces, and carved walking sticks are only some of the things on display today. On the other side, several tall plywood boards rest vertically against a fence railing. Boomerangs balance on nails placed at intervals along the boards creating an open air show case of painted, burned, carved, and plain boomerangs for sale. Didjeridoos and shields lay on the ground along side the boomerang stand. When Ellen’s family started selling “traditional” wares here over 150 years ago, it was called “the Loop.” Now, the area is referred to by locals as “down the bottom.”

The majority of faces “down the bottom” are non-Koori, and the areas that once played significant roles in the community’s day-to-day survival now serve as a boundary between those spending the day and those spending their lives in La Perouse. This is not a new phenomenon, however, as La Perouse has historically been a location of segregation between “black” and “white,” an economic line between “poor” and “rich,” and a site of distinction between those who are “becoming civilized” and those who are “civilized.”

Although the physical location of the homes has changed and the laws which mandated segregation have been renounced, La Perouse, the place, remains a locus of isolation, resistance, and cultural continuity for Koori people. As the sisters, Alma and Bel, remarked, things have changed in La Perouse over the course of history. Technically, La Perouse is no longer “a mission;” it is a reserve. Nonetheless, the houses which still stand within the confines of the old mission are still referred to as being “on the mission.” Other houses in the community are identified in terms of street names. Over the years, government policies have played an important role in shaping and controlling intra- and extra-community interaction. Like many communities in the world, La Perouse is experiencing an influx of social conditions, such as petty theft, vandalism, drugs, greed, and television addiction, which can often be problematic and devastating to small communities. Despite these types of change, La Perouse still exists and the people who live at La Perouse are part of a continuous history in which cultural meanings and social relations have been transformed, but have remained part of an individual and collective cultural consciousness.

It was the discontinuity of traditional culture, the impact of British and Christian domination on racial identities, and the constancy of indigenous lifeways that first drew me to Australia. It was the irony of the simultaneous erasure and creation of the “aborigine” by Captain Cook in the late 1700s that led me to explore complex notions of racial and cultural identity there. The history of colonial interaction with Australia’s indigenous people is one of simultaneous denial and exploitation. Before the appearance of British settlers in Australia, there were no “Aborigines.” “Aborigine” is a label that was placed on indigenous Australians by the first colonists, and today it is a category that divides Australia. Using a false assertion, “*terra nullis*,” meaning uninhabited land, Cook claimed Australia for England. His settlement policy of *terra nullis* is a powerful symbol of colonial domination and disregard for indigenous existence. As a result, *terra nullis* was used to

justify the treatment of indigenous Australians as less than human -- disallowing them citizenship in their own country, dispossessing them of their land, and coercing them into subordination. In the process, the British eradicated peoples and cultures which had existed on the Australian continent for at least 50,000 years (and in the New South Wales region, where the settlers landed, for at least 35,000 of those years) (Flood 1995). Every action and non-action of colonial Australia towards indigenous people reinforced racialized ideas and stereotypes that Koories were inferior, savage, and less than human.

The cultural landscape of indigenous people in Australia today varies as much as it did when Cook landed in 1770. At that time in Australia, there were hundreds of thousands of indigenous people, speaking several hundred different languages, even more dialects, and practicing often drastically different lifeways and forms of culture. Today, there is still a great variation among indigenous communities, even within the same state. As in the past, much of this variation is due to environmental influences. In the pre-contact era, much of a clan's cultural and social structure was dependent upon ecological circumstances manifested in niche diversity. Today, much of the cultural, social, and survival practices of indigenous people is dependent upon the consistency, depth, and reality of colonial contact. Those peoples who live further away from points of early British contact have maintained a less acculturated sense of identity and lifeways, while those peoples living in high-contact areas have been consistently penetrated by "whitefella ways" for over two hundred years. Thus, the indigenous culture of areas such as New South Wales is drastically different from the culture of the Central Desert. Furthermore, the more remote areas of New South Wales have elements of Koori culture which are not immediately evident in urban or suburban Koori communities such as La Perouse.

The willingness of social scientists and the Australian government to ignore cultural variation between and among indigenous peoples and their communities has resulted in a narrow view of who and what an indigenous person in Australia is and does. Biological

explanations of race were translated into social categories of identity (Linneaus 1758, Smedley 1993). For those who adhered to a cultural evolutionary model which equated skin color with degrees of civility, Koori people were labeled “savage” according to the darkness of their skin. For others, especially anthropologists searching for the quintessential “native,” dark skin came to represent cultural purity and became the symbol of a dying race whose culture would be lost forever. In the same sense, whiteness in Euro-descended Australians was synonymous with superiority, while the appearance of white admixture among indigenous Australians tracked assimilation policies and gave State Governments hope that “breeding out color” would solve the “Aboriginal problem.” The physical boundaries between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples are compounded, complicated, and reinforced by a dominant culture which has imposed a homogenizing “ethnic” identity on indigenous peoples. Since the time of colonization, Australia’s indigenous people have been bound in the racial category “Aborigine,” which has commonly been associated with the category, “Blackfella.” Relatedly, the racial category “Blackfella” has an ethnic component which has also been constructed on the basis of stereotypic notions of traditional Koori cultural and social organization and contemporary social conditions. While in Australian society both terms refer to Koories and are at times used interchangeably, the words reflect the dual nature of the indigenous categorization. In the view of dominant Australian society, “Aborigine” is necessarily “Black” and “Black” is necessarily “Aborigine.” Stereotypes of Koories as being dark-skinned and clad in loin cloths with boomerangs attached to their waists or as violent political activists (see appendix II; James 1993:210) also reflect the dual identity of Koories as a “race” of people held together by a set of ethnic traditions. To be a “Blackfella” is to be an “Aborigine.” Accordingly, to be recognized as an “Aborigine” culturally and politically, means conforming to the dominant culture’s exoticized stereotype of Aboriginal culture, thus,

further revealing the contradictions, inaccuracies, and narrowness of racial and ethnic categories.

In the dominant Anglo perspective, the racial categories in Australian society are necessarily black and white, despite the fact that neither black nor white accurately describes the phenotypic appearance of most people, especially in New South Wales, and more particularly in my experience in La Perouse. This binary division is not meant to ignore the fact that thousands of people in Australia are recognized and recognize themselves as belonging to an ethnic group and not a racial category. Thus, being Koori has both racial and ethnic implications. While many non-indigenous Australians recognize their national affinity with their “homeland” without being placed in a subordinate racial category, indigenous people who identify themselves in terms of ethnic affiliations are racially categorized by mainstream Australia based on historical associations between phenotypic appearance and expected cultural practices. Significantly, both legal and local modes of identifying who is Koori rely on ancestry. Legally, one is considered Koori if one meets the following criteria: (a) s/he is of Aboriginal descent; (b) s/he claims to be an Aboriginal; and (c) s/he is accepted as such in the community with which s/he is associated. Locally, within their respective communities and among other Koories, indigenous Australians will identify themselves according to their family relations, where they currently live, and where their families originated. This mode of identification resists the dominant culture’s attempt to consolidate the variation among Koori communities. Contemporary local modes of identity formation are a transformation of the ways in which Koories identified themselves to other Koories in pre-contact culture which is intimately related to “the Dreaming.”

The word *indigenous* implies pre-existing cultural, social, material, and ideological norms. For Australia's indigenous populations, “the Dreaming” is the pre-existing knowledge structure that influences every aspect of Koori life. At the foundation of the

Dreaming are mythic deities, responsible for forming the terrestrial landscape, as well as creating humans. Berndt writes that "human time began with the emergence and appearance of mythic beings or gods, in human or other forms. They moved across the country, meeting other characters, changing the contours and shapes of the land and imbuing it with meanings" (1987: 530-531). Having created the first human beings (who are the ancestors of contemporary Koories), the mythic beings placed these individuals in specific geographic locations, and before leaving the physical world, left the first humans with customs, language, and rites, which encompass what is called "the Law." In death the mythic beings were transformed into something else, leaving evidence of their physical presence in rocks, paintings, hills, bodies of water, and animals. Such sacred locations contain the spiritual presence of the mythic being associated with it. Thus, deities can transform from human to non-human and inanimate to animate form. Deities are responsible for the processes of time -- the changing of seasons, the conception of a child, the death of an elder. The customs the deities bestowed upon the first inhabitants provide the basis for Koori social structure (kinship networks, "skin" names, avoidance relationships, and division of labor), land/resource use patterns, and ritual sequences. Just as mythic beings are embodied in the natural world of the Australian landscape which they created, they are also embodied (to a lesser degree) in the humans they created. Thus, since contemporary Koories are distant descendants of the first humans, they too are part of the Dreaming. An individual can be related to the Dreaming in several ways: first, by association with the first humans; then through his/her place of conception (or birth depending on his/her community's cultural practices). In life, an individual can be given multiple "Dreamings"¹ depending on his/her terrestrial, kinship, and ritual relations.

¹ Here "Dreaming" is referred to as a possession because each person and community has a Dreaming. Specific discourse on the Dreaming is limited by an individual's Dreaming, thus, s/he often speaks of the Dreaming in terms of his/her Dreaming.

In contemporary praxis of the Dreaming, the implications of such a discrete, yet transcendental doctrine are significant for both Aboriginal people and the dominant post-colonial culture in Australia. Negotiating "traditional" life in the presence of an unsympathetic dominant Anglo-culture often results in Koories having to either subordinate "the Law" to externally imposed and hegemonic social norms or suffer the consequences of breaking these norms. Historically, identification with a "Country" is further explained in terms of a geographic location or language group. In recent times, Country and geographic or language identifiers have been modified and dominated by identification with specific places, namely missions and now reserves. Thus, it is not uncommon for older members of indigenous communities to identify themselves as being ancestrally related to a people (denoted by a geographic or language affiliation) and immediately related to a mission or reserve (see Rintoul 1993). The shift from specifically indigenous ways of locating oneself, to a more narrow Anglo identification with a place, does not represent an abandonment of indigenous cultural consciousness; rather, it reflects the process of cultural change and survival throughout historical moments which has radically transformed indigenous lifeways over the last two centuries. An individual's or community's association with a mission locates a person within a particular historical memory of indigenous culture. It also locates a person in a subordinate position within a power structure dominated by colonial and Christian influences. Ironically, it also offers indigenous people a locus for cultural continuity, and a space for both community and personal history and identity.

Where is La Perouse? Who is La Perouse?

Like many other sites for "removed" peoples, La Perouse, the place, has become one context of Koori cultural identity in the Sydney area. First known as Aborigines Camp, the place was given the name La Perouse after the French explorer, La Perouse,

who came only a few years after Captain Cook to collect botanical samples and data for France. Today, there are people in the community who come from as far north as Kempsey, although, the majority of the population has its roots in the southern coast of New South Wales between La Perouse and Ulladulla (see Figure 1.1). These south coast communities make up the Tharawal linguistic group, and socio-geographically, people living in this area are known as coastal dwellers. Because of the influence of people from other areas through marriage and migration, other linguistic groups are represented, such as Gwegal and Karmigal. Despite these linguistic connections, today little to no reference remains that the people in La Perouse belonged specifically and singularly to one such clan.² Nonetheless, the people of La Perouse do assert that they belong to one place, La Perouse. As one elder told me, *“Myself and a lot of others, we belong to La Perouse and La Perouse will always belong to us, because that is our Country.”* This connection to La Perouse does not weaken the community’s familial connections to communities and individuals in the more southern coastal regions of New South Wales. Nor is it meant to imply that Koori people only live in La Perouse. Rather, it is meant to suggest that La Perouse represents a place where remembered culture and history, both pre- and post-contact, of indigenous people in the southeast coastal region of New South Wales have been and still are held, passed down, lived, and transformed.

A thirty-minute drive from metropolitan Sydney, La Perouse is located just south of Port Jackson and just north of the airport (Figure 1.2). Its geographical distance from the city has significant consequences for the cultural identity and practices which have and do transform the community. If La Perouse is known at all by outsiders, it is noted only by a side-line in tourist guides for the La Perouse Museum which recounts La Perouse’s personal history and journey to Australia to collect botanical information. Unlike Redfern, which is a well-known and stereotyped inner-city Koori community, the Koori community

² According to the text “the Darug and Their Neighbors” what anthropologists have previously referred to as Aboriginal tribes are really clans.



Figure 1.2 Map of Sydney and Surrounding Suburbs
 (from Atlas of the South Pacific. 1986)

at La Perouse remains largely invisible. Most white people who drive into La Perouse today are there to experience the sights of Scenic Drive or to learn the ways of the local reptiles from “the Snakeman.” Most are unaware of the history of the place nor do they realize that there has been and still is a Koori “mob” who live at La Perouse. Distinctions made by residents of La Perouse, between locations such as “down the bottom” and “on the mission” (referred to by some as “the Reserve”) impose specific physical boundaries which separate the people of La Perouse from outside visitors. Such boundaries have restricted much “official”³ Koori/non-Koori interaction for nearly two centuries. First it was the boundary between the colonists’ boats and the shore, and then it was the fence that separated the missionaries from their “followers.” Later, it was the road Anzac Parade, which runs parallel to the north side of the reserve. In the 1960s, the stretch of road that runs between the reserve and the National Park was the most northern boundary of the reserve. Despite the fact that the plants and animals living in the National Park were significant and necessary to traditional medicinal practices and food acquisition, Koori access was restricted. Anyone found on the National Park side of the road was subject to arrest and up to six months imprisonment. Today, the boundaries between La Perouse and the rest of Sydney are less rigid; however, they are no less real in 1996 than they were in 1936. Physical boundaries, such as the geographic location of La Perouse and the fences which demarcate the fringe of the reserve, reflect a reality which is and has historically been racially motivated.

More than physical boundaries, ideological and social boundaries from *within* and *without* the community shape and transform social relationships, power structure, and cultural history. Ideologically, the people at La Perouse are faced with a history which has combined accommodation to others with resistance to the imposition of the dominant

³ I use the word “official” here in quotes because the infiltration of communities such as La Perouse by miscegenation and other forms of Anglo domination have been documented in both primary and secondary sources.

Australian culture. In some instances Koories have appropriated the language and the stereotypes of the dominant society. People in La Perouse do use the words “Blackfella” and “Aborigine” in conversation, despite the fact that those words historically have had derogatory meanings. In addition, behaviors, such as truancy and unemployment, which have been used by the dominant culture to substantiate claims of Koori inferiority, can be viewed as sites of internal community struggle with and resistance to the values of dominant Australia. The confines of Koori social organization have been most affected by government policies which simultaneously denied indigenous people access to various parts of their own culture, and created a differentiated “reserve culture.” Restricting their access to opportunities in mainstream society, reserve rules stipulated who could come to and go from the mission, as both visitors and residents had to check in and out of the reserve. “Dog tags” were issued to identify a man as a Koori to people outside of the reserve. On the reserve, “dog tags” often represented someone who had turned his/her back on the community, because in order to qualify for a dog tag one had to agree not to associate with other Koori people, not to buy alcohol for other Koories, and to live as a “white man.”

Forced assimilation policies and tactics, such as the mission system itself, the removal of children from their Koori families, and restrictions placed on practicing traditional ceremonies and speaking in “the lingo,” served to disengage Koories from their own people and culture as well as reinforce “whitefella ways” in the community. Thus, the ways that people from La Perouse lived were contingent upon the social structure of the mission/reserve as well as the government’s policies toward Koori people in general. The imposed ideological and physical bounded-ness of Koori life in La Perouse were further compounded by internal boundaries which were devised as part of a defense and resistance mechanism in order to maintain a sense of culture and self-respect. Each member of La

Perouse has a personal history which necessitates bringing together “self,” community, and nation⁴ in order to understand Koori identity .

Purpose

“*Koories come in all colors,*” I was told time and time again by people at La Perouse. As one elder said, “*you don’t have to go to tribal areas or the outback or remote areas to learn about Aboriginal people....I mean, how black do ya gotta be? How black is black? Right? I was born on an Aboriginal reserve, to Aboriginal parents. All this half-caste shit, it is just garbage.*” Unfortunately, the quantity of social science research which has focused on indigenous peoples in the more remote areas of Australia where people are phenotypically darker, not only feeds the stereotypic image of Aboriginal people as dark skinned, scantily clad, “primitive” hunter-gatherers, but also implies by omission that only people who live in such remoteness and practice “traditional” life ways are “real” Aborigines. While social scientists and the general Australian population might adhere to this narrow notion of “Aboriginality,” indigenous people, themselves, do not. The elder went on to explain, “*They understand, the tribal people. They know what went on down here. And that’s why they are what they are. They’ve still got their language and everything out in their areas because they weren’t settled like we were. Everyone wanted to come to the east coast of Australia, you know. So, they can say what they like.*”

It is important to distinguish between the more general, pan-indigenous term “Aborigine,” and the distinct groups which, depending on their geographical location, identify themselves as *Kooris, Murries, Nyungars, Nangas, Yolngus, Yamadijis, and Wonghis* (see Fesl 1990). Eve Mungwa D. Fesl explains:

Koori is the name by which the indigenous people of Australia living along the eastern and southern parts of Australia are known to each other. In 1988 it was decided that the term ‘aborigine,’ an identityless label applied by colonists, would

⁴ Nation here refers both to a pan-Koori identity as well as the larger Australian nation.

be discarded and the term 'Koori' used publicly. The term means 'our people'; it is not a clan name (1989:30).

In particular, the term Koori is used to refer to indigenous Australians living in Southeastern Australia (NSW and parts of Queensland and Victoria). As the fieldwork for this thesis was done in the La Perouse community, the discussion which unfolds here will be specific to their experience as Koori people. This is not to suggest, however, that no common experiences exist among the Korries at La Perouse and other New South Wales indigenous communities. It does not deny that experiences are not always shared by indigenous people throughout Australia. Nor does it imply that this thesis is an accurate representation of every individual's personal experience at La Perouse. What it does suggest is that the individuals who related their experiences in this text have adjusted, adapted, and survived in unique ways. In general, this thesis explores the often contradictory, yet often appropriated, notions of Koori identity. More specifically, this thesis explores what makes a La Perouse Koori and how personal experiences shape community identity and inform personal identity. Exploring Koori identity at La Perouse can be broken down into three inter-related themes: the ways in which individual histories narrate identity and help to create internally maintained boundaries of "self"; the intersection of personal and community experiences of accommodation and differentiation in identity formation; and the ways in which the socio-geography of La Perouse reflects the externally created dominant culture's construction of Koori identity.

First, individual construction of the "self" as revealed in personal life narratives provides insight into what it means to be a Koori. Personal narratives can be heard in connection with other voices from the community, implying that common personal experiences contribute to the identity of Korries at La Perouse. While some of the stories differ from generation to generation, many daughters and mothers describe the same types of intra-community experiences. These inter-generational narratives provide insight into change in Koori culture at La Perouse, and demonstrate the uniqueness of each narrative.

In addition, experiences of “protectionism” have shaped the cultural life of people in La Perouse. Government policies and experiences with government agents, common to indigenous people in general, are also part of the La Perouse experience. Further, a life history becomes an often unconscious commentary on political history. From stories of times when there were no shoes to wear to school to having to get permission to leave the reserve, each person’s experiences offer insight into the way that national policies of assimilation and control have pervaded and ultimately shaped the ways in which Koories at La Perouse view themselves.

Secondly, patterns of accommodation and differentiation inform the ways in which Koories identify themselves to other Koories and to the dominant culture. Family defines this community, but some forms of assimilation such as choice of clothes, acceptance of Christianity, and employment show evidence of accommodation to dominant culture. However, other significant elements of day-to-day cultural praxis shape and differentiate the people at La Perouse, not only from other communities in the Sydney area, but also from mainstream Australia. Such elements as family structure, maintenance of relationships between Koories who live on and off the reserve, and people’s general adherence to a Koori identity regardless of mixed ancestry and phenotypic appearance serve to consistently inform inter- and intra-community Koori identity. Individual family histories interweave to create the cultural fabric of the community. Many people share a common ancestor, however not necessarily in the immediate sense. Family is not necessarily restricted to a name; rather it plays a key role in maintaining community integrity and ties to more distant family members, as well as to the reserve itself.

Finally, there is the place, La Perouse. From the shores of La Perouse, indigenous people witnessed the landing of Captain Cook on the shores of Botany Bay. Eighteen years later they experienced the arrival of La Perouse, a French explorer, and Governor Philip, the presence of the former having had the most lasting impact. Thus, the history of

colonial settlement is also partially theirs. The history of *terra nullis* is also partially theirs, as it is likely that some of the indigenous people that Cook recorded seeing and then later denied by declaring Australia *terra nullis*, were some of the ancestors of those living in La Perouse today. At a later point in history, belonging to La Perouse meant belonging to the La Perouse Mission and to some who still remember those times, it still means residing on “the mission.” For others, being from La Perouse means being born and raised there (or at least raised), but not necessarily living there now. In some instances, it means conforming to a dominant culture’s expectations and social norms. Conversely, it also means distinguishing oneself from other Koori communities in the Sydney area. Finally, the geo-social politics of La Perouse has significantly transformed the community’s lifestyle. Specifically, instances of obvious environmental racism, such as designating the reserve as a hospital garbage dump and polluting the area’s waters, have altered not only land use patterns, but also changed the dietary habits of the community. In addition, the placement of a large maximum security prison and an AIDS ward in close proximity to La Perouse demonstrate the devaluation of community members health and safety by local government officials.

This research is meant to begin to fill a gap in the literature between external, dominant representations of Aboriginality and the agency of indigenous people themselves to shape, resist, and recreate their own cultural reality and identity. This thesis offers a portrait of a suburban indigenous community that employs Koori prehistory, community history, and personal his/her-story as a means through which culture is passed down and refashioned from generation to generation. The issues raised as a result of my fieldwork are meant to engage in and become part of a critical exploration of hegemonic racial and ethnic categories from an emic perspective. Furthermore, this thesis looks at the ways that dominant cultural practices penetrate and transform a community’s culture, and the ways

that day-to-day survival strategies and agency, as recounted in personal narratives, constitute the contemporary cultural community of La Perouse.

Chapter 2

The Why and How of the Text

Over the last decade of anthropological discourse, the issue of ethnographic authority, and more specifically the anthropologist's authority, has been explored in terms of re-inventing and reconstructing anthropology (Clifford 1986, 1988; Marcus 1986; Harrison 1991; Jackson 1994; Wilson 1995). Rather than authoritatively dubbing over the voices and agency of the people whom we study with the categories, explanations, and conclusions of the anthropologist, an attempt has been made not only to write ethnographic texts which embody the spirit, sentiment, and polyvocality of the culture being studied, but to also place the author within the text itself, exposing his/her role as cultural recorder and immediate cultural constructor (Jackson 1994; Wilson 1995; Trinh T. Minh-ha 1989). This form of anthropology has been given the "postmodern" label, which has been expanded upon by feminist, phenomenological, critical, and indigenous (meaning here, people from within the culture being studied) theorists⁵. The shift from modernism to postmodernism is the result of resistance to the representations of "the Other" as static, fixed truths which have created a gap between agency and theory, between what really happens in people's lives and anthropological portrayals of the "truth" (Friedman 1992). Unlike modernism which seeks to ask a question and find an answer – the "truth," the objective of postmodernism is to raise more questions, to accept and explore the discontinuities and transformations of culture, and to reveal subjugated knowledges (Foucault 1977, 1980) through methods of polyvocality and self-reflexivity and an "archaeology" of knowledge and power. Postmodernists recognize that culture is like a kaleidoscope whose colors and internal shapes transform and change as it is turned. Postmodernists make space for revision and multiple views (voices) as the viewer of the kaleidoscope changes. Time can

⁵ By indigenous theorists I mean subaltern or third world, non-metropolitan anthropologists studying their own societies.

be equated here with the turning of the kaleidoscope, while culture (and all its components) is analogous with the ever-transforming shapes and shades of the internal ingredients which contribute to the shapes one perceives when looking through it. However, unlike a kaleidoscope which is a bound instrument with limited relation to the world around it, a culture is only one part of a larger system of cultures, histories, and processes which combine to (re)create the world in which we live. Specifically, relations of power come to shape and transform the socio-cultural spaces of knowledge and identity.

Postmodern paradigms demand inquiry into and serious consideration of the global network of circumstances which shape and often redirect peoples' lives. Although not a postmodern theorist himself, Eric Wolf's deconstruction of power provides a useful paradigm for postmodern social anthropology (1982, 1990). He asserts that all people are involved in global systems of power. Whether it be economic, political, personal, cultural, or social power makes little difference; his emphasis is on forms of power and the ways in which societal history is a part of this larger network. Wolf (1990) further stipulates four types of power relationships: (1) **Personal power**, the potential, "potency and capabilities" of a person in "the play of power;" (2) **Interpersonal power**, the ways in which individuals impose their will on others; (3) **Organizational power**, the "power that controls the setting in which people may show forth their potentialities and interact with others" by employing instruments of power. Instruments of power or, as Foucault calls them, "apparatuses of power" (1980: 102), which at times can be characterized more accurately as weapons of power. Finally, **Structural Power** is the power which directs behavior, "render[ing] some kinds of behavior possible, while making others less possible or impossible" (1990: 586-587). Structural power produces the settings of power and commands the distribution and direction of energy fueling political economy.

Intellectual ideologies can have an immediate impact on power structures and lasting consequences on policies which shape organizational and structural powers. The pervasive

nature and insidious potency of typologies and models in anthropology testify to the influence that the discipline has had over the ideas, ideology, and practices of many societies. Typologies of race, kinship, and social organization have become embedded in the “normal” socialization process. Typologies have come not simply to provide a way of understanding the world, but in many cases they have become the way we understand ourselves and “the other.” Despite the pejorative discourse that has developed around such typologies, it is important to consider that such typologies are externally constructed categories rather than internally derived explanations. In the past, modernist approaches have accepted such categories as givens, and sought evidence which demonstrates the seeming authenticity of racial, class, ethnic, and gender categories. Aware of the limitations of modernist categories, postmodernists are continually deconstructing categorical boundaries by demonstrating the dynamic nature of culture and thus, problematizing static categorical understandings of the world. Modernist ventures into “Aboriginal” anthropology have relied on and reinforced stereotypes of “Aboriginality.” As a result, modernist accounts of Koori culture are partially responsible for the dominant Anglo-Australian perception of “Koori” as a singular, rather than a heterogeneous, phenomenon. Postmodern anthropologists concerned with indigenous Australia, however, are attempting to deconstruct stereotypic notions of “Koori” by exploring the multiple meanings and implications of being a “Koori” and by focusing on the diversity of cultural practices between Koori communities in their work (Jackson 1994; Cowlshaw 1987; Bell 1993; Langton 1981; Trigger 1986).

The reality of static categories is that they do not make space for the agency of individuals and groups; rather, they inscribe homogeneity. The most problematic aspect of categorical representation of “the other” is due to the relationship of homogeneity to differentiation. Acculturation is an homogenizing tactic; however, the result is the divergence which exacerbates human differences, and thus creates an “us” and “them.”

These oppositional forces presuppose the domination of one over another, effectively creating “the other” while simultaneously erasing “the other.” The ability to understand and identify oneself as part of a particular community, culture, nation, and global system is a form of power. Erasure of “the other” by homogenizing processes is a demonstration of power by the dominant culture. Thus, as Sider suggests, history and identity are “nearly synonymous names for the imposed and chosen struggles of dominated ‘ethnic peoples’” (1994:115). Demonstrating the connection between ethnohistory and culture, Sider explains, “‘culture,’ in sum, names a locus of struggle—*necessary* struggle—just as much as ‘class’ names a locus of struggle” (1994: 116). When the ability to acknowledge oneself within larger historical, political, and social moments is gone, then one’s culture is trivialized, one’s identity is erased, and one’s power is diminished. Thus, as Foucault suggests, power produces subjects which are understood in terms of dualities of subjectivity/identity and subjection/subjugation.

Postmodernism demands that researchers reflect upon the disparities in power relations between dominant and subaltern peoples, as well as challenges them to explore subjugated knowledges (Foucault 1980). In the same way that a familial genealogy would identify individual members of a family within a family tree, Foucault has suggested that researchers must construct a genealogy of subjugated knowledges. A genealogy of subjugated knowledges identifies individual voices and agency within a larger network of cultural, historical, social, and ethnic relations. This map of subjugated knowledges is parallel to what Hill (1994) and Sider (1994) refer to as ethnohistory or ethnohistory. Both researchers suggest that in order not only to deconstruct categorical constructions of the world, but to explore more fully and perhaps even understand the ways and reasons that such categories are problematic, researchers must be committed to exposing the struggles of dominated peoples to construct their ethnohistory.

The eye/I of Fieldwork

After two years of intense immersion in the theoretical and methodological discourses of cultural anthropology, I embarked upon my first ethnographic fieldwork experience in May, 1996. I headed to Sydney to find the community called La Perouse, a place that I had read about in the bibliography of a book of photography that celebrated the survival of Aboriginal people for over two centuries of European occupation. I had told no one in or related to the community that I was coming. I had made no arrangements with the local University or with indigenous groups to do interviews, volunteer time, or participate in their various activities. While not necessarily an orthodox approach to fieldwork, it was one that ended up serving me well in a culture that does not deal in written appeals or phone conversations, but in face-to-face, day-to-day impressions. In many respects, my first interaction with people in the community exemplifies this respect for “on your word” relationships and set the research tone.

On my sixth day in Sydney, I sought out the 394 bus route to La Perouse. I didn't know what I would find when I got there, as no one I had met and talked with knew anything about the place besides “the Snakeman.” I rode the bus for at least 40 minutes until I reached the end of the line. It was a Wednesday, and the grounds around the La Perouse Museum were empty. I walked into the museum and inquired about the existence of an Aboriginal Affairs Office. I was corrected, “You mean the Lands Council? See that big building up on the hill? That's the Lands Council. Just walk out here, and go up the main road. You'll see it,” the Parks and Wildlife employee said. So, I walked, a solitary American woman from a white bred middle class neighborhood into “the reserve.” I did not know what to expect. I had done so much reading about the exploitation of Koories by anthropologists that I had prepared myself for the worst: rejection, scorn, and dislike.

I don't think, as I walked up the road that day, that I fully understood where I was. When I reached the white church on the corner, I suspected that it was part of “the old

mission,” but as for the surrounding area, I didn’t know if the houses there were inhabited by Korries or not. Behind the church, the houses fanned out in a staggered semi-circle and the middle of the area lay open. At one corner was an old oil drum and on the ground sat three people. They took no notice of me, and for that I was thankful because I hadn’t decided how I would explain why I was there. Just past the south edge of “the old mission” stood a huge red brick house with an Aboriginal flag flying. I knew that was the building to which the man at the museum had been referring. I started down the long drive, passed the first building (which I later learned was Gujaga, a pre-school) and an old green tin building which housed the health and nutrition office.

A group of women was sitting around a table on benches and in chairs. Some of the women were old, some were young, some were dark and some were light, and although I had intellectually prepared myself for a scenario such as this, the experience was still disquieting. As I got nearer to them, all faces and eyes turned toward me, and I tried to smile and look calm, to give the impression that I knew what I was doing. Finally, a young woman who was pushing a stroller (baby pram) walked in my direction and asked, “Can I help you with something?” I told her I was there to talk to someone at the Lands Council. She inquired about whom I wanted to see, and I told her I didn’t know, that I had just gotten off the bus at the Museum (“down the bottom”) and the man there had told me to come here. We went to the Lands Council office, but no one was able to see me. We stopped for a bit, and she introduced herself. She asked if I was from Canada. When I said, no, that I was from the States she asked what I was doing out here in Australia. “Are you at Uni on a student exchange or something?” she asked. “No,” I replied, “I am here on my own. I have been doing research on Koori people, and I wanted to come out here and see for myself what Koori culture is all about. I don’t believe that you can always understand things just from books.” Satisfied with that answer, she suggested that I go upstairs and talk to the Coordinator.

Immediately, images of the old mission or reserve managers came to mind, and I wondered if the title “coordinator” was a euphemism for oppressor or government spy. To the contrary, I came to find out that the coordinator directs the Community Development Aboriginal Corporation (CDAC), which educates, trains, and employs about 50 Koori people from La Perouse. The CDAC, although ultimately controlled by the community council and employing many people from the community, is an entity unto itself. The coordinator asked me what I was doing out here, and when I explained in more specific terms that I was interested in recording the life experiences and life histories of women in the community, he suggested that I write a letter to him proposing that I do just that for the summer. He explained to me that everything related to the community, either lands, development, or otherwise, has to be approved by the community council, “the Board.” He would take my letter to the Board, see what they had to say, and he would let me know. I sat down on the spot and wrote the letter out in long hand (a change for my computer accustomed hands). When I finished, I presented him with the letter. He read it over and said that he would contact me with the Board’s decision the next day. I returned downstairs to the dining area, where the women who had been sitting outside were now shuffling around, clearing plates off the table and cleaning up after lunch. One of the women said, “sit down and have something to eat. We’re having buffalo coins, asparagus and potatoes for lunch today.” So, I ate. Having been a vegetarian for the last 8 years, the taste of red meat was foreign, but all I could think about was how much I hated asparagus. Still, I ate. Each person came over and asked me how I liked it. I smiled and nodded. In all truth, I did like it, except for the asparagus.

I had gone to La Perouse to collect stories, narratives that more fully described and gave faces and flesh to the pieces of history that I had uncovered in the library. I had committed myself to listening, but, most importantly, to hearing and allowing these unfamiliar voices to be heard. During my stay at La Perouse, people did not think of me

primarily as a researcher or “their anthropologist.” Members of the community were quick and ready with explanations and stories to help me understand their culture and to bring me up to an appropriate level of cultural knowledge. They treated me as they treated others in my age-group and educated me accordingly. Most of my exchanges were part of social, friendly, familial interactions in which I was grateful to participate. The community in general and individuals treated me with the utmost kindness, respect, and curiosity. In part, this is the reason that this thesis is written and organized in this way. First, I have chosen a more narrative style than is customary for a thesis; however, this is a conscious reflection of the oral tradition of Koories at La Perouse. Second, this thesis is concerned with people, individuals who have agency, voice, and talents. I wanted the people of La Perouse actively present in the text. As a result, I have chosen to include a whole chapter of interview excerpts and have placed quotes throughout the text in places where Koori voices have historically been omitted from the “text.”

Methods

Although classroom study of ethnography forces students to think through theoretical, practical, and ethical issues before entering the field, no classroom can teach a researcher how to handle the unique idiosyncrasies of the culture in question. It is up to the individual researcher to think on her feet, recognize boundaries between herself and the people with whom she is working, and negotiate those relationships appropriately. Theoretically, my interest in polyvocality, empowerment, and gender led me to turn to a feminist paradigm for guidance (Collier & Yanagisako 1987; Cook & Fonow 1984; Denzin & Lincoln 1994; di Leonardo 1991; Haraway 1988; Zalk & Gordon-Kelter 1992). I was particularly interested to see if such a paradigm, parts of which are also found in the discourses and paradigms of postmodernist and critical theories, worked in a live field experience. While feminist paradigms have various facets, the general commitment to non-

hierarchical research relationships was paramount to me in my search for polyvocality in the field. In the immediate context, this type of research paradigm meant that gathering information would be slow, at times ambiguous, and as unintrusive as possible.

I was encouraged by a veteran ethnographer, Dr. Michael Jackson, a man who has spent his career living and working with Koori people, to be patient and willing to learn. He said, “you’ll probably find that they have a way about them. They will say nothing until they are ready, but all the time, you will be learning. Be patient and the day will come when they will tell you all that they want you to know.” To remain as unintrusive as possible and to exist in a way culturally appropriate to my age group, I initially asked few questions, made few assumptions, and trusted that what I needed to know would be revealed to me over the course of my stay. The day I had met the coordinator, I volunteered to write grants for CDAC projects. He immediately gave me two assignments and made it my “job” to go to work at the CDAC every day just like everyone else. Over time, my presence became expected both inside and outside of work and people began to make a concerted effort not only to include me in community activities, but also to invite me into their homes, and to their children’s birthday parties. Many people went out of their way to explain words, places, and stories to me as they arose in conversation. Many of the observations, informal conversations, and interactions with people in the community took place inside and around Yarra Bay House, the home of the CDAC. Guided bushwalks to areas and sites significant to the history and culture of the people at La Perouse, gave me an opportunity to record a running dialogue of my guide’s personal history, as well as an oral history of the area. The pub became another important source of stories. Out of respect for my “hosts,” I never brought out my tape recorder or my field journal in a public place; however, I would hurry to write everything down when I got some time to myself.

During the day I split my time between the office of the Community Development Aboriginal Corporation (CDAC), where I wrote grants for the community, and shared

“cupper”/ smoke breaks with various CDAC participants, listening to conversations and stories. As people got more and more comfortable with me, they would often approach with something more specific to explain. Never did they say, “Get out your notebook and take this down,” but from time to time they would ask if I had my “little tape recorder.” Eventually, members of the community either acted as liaisons, arranging for me to have a “yarn” (interview) with someone other than themselves or identified themselves to me as wanting to have a “yarn.” “Yarns” were told in the company of at least one other person in addition to myself and began by the person asking me what I wanted to know. My response was always the same, “whatever you want to tell me.” They would usually press me to ask specific questions, but the only request I had was “tell me about your life.” Sometimes this request led to a pregnant silence which eventually gave way to a stream of stories about growing up at La Perouse, family, and community politics. When there was a pause, and I was asked, “What else?” I would restrict my questions to the issues or topics that were raised during the previous dialogue. The majority of the interview transcripts read like streams of consciousness, where the person interviewed is saying whatever comes to mind about her/himself. One story leads into another, sometimes without background context, which follows several dialogical paragraphs later. When more than one person was present, stories were often told in relay style, one person beginning and the other ending it or filling in the details. All of the interviews were taped and transcribed. Each individual was then given a pseudonym to provide participants with some anonymity.⁶ The transcripts from each interview were given to the individual for approval. In some instances, the interviewee made corrections or asked that a paragraph be omitted or if they could change that sentence. I made all the changes requested and only the revised transcript material was used as data.

⁶ All interview transcripts and other fieldnote details from my field experience used in this text employ the pseudonyms listed in Appendix I, except where otherwise noted.

Just what makes a La Perouse Koori is not something that I could ask, only something that I can infer and interpret from interviews, field notes, and personal experiences. What I have written in this thesis represents only one woman's perspective and is limited by the voices that are present in the text. The defining themes are ones that I see recurring in what I was told about people's life experiences and the history of the area. This may not be how people who live in La Perouse identify themselves, and, in the sentiment of one of my friends perhaps they don't need to see themselves in any particular way. Or as she said, "*...again you're not identifying what it is...it's there and you're not putting a tag on it. But you shouldn't have to either.*" It is my hope that this thesis demonstrates how there is not one label that fits Koori people, but rather it takes a multi-layered, culturally, and historically sensitive approach to fully appreciate the process of Koori identity formation.

Chapter 3

The History of a Nation, a State, and a Community

“As long as you remember that every time you take a step in Sydney, you are walking on Aboriginal land, then I welcome you here”. -- a local Koori Elder and Musician

The colonization of Australia began in 1788 when Governor Philip landed in Botany Bay (specifically Yarra Bay) with a ship full of first settlers and convicts. Eighteen years before, Captain James Cook had declared New Holland *terra nullis* and claimed it for the Queen. Seventeen eighty-eight was also the Year that the French explorer, La Perouse, landed at Frenchman’s Bay, another inlet of Botany Bay. The arrival of these two ships, although unrelated in purpose, had a common consequence -- the devastation of indigenous people and the transformation of indigenous culture. According to local Koori history, a French priest on La Perouse’s ship who died shortly after arrival is believed to be responsible for bringing the deadly smallpox disease to the continent. During the early years of European invasion, smallpox was responsible for wiping out thousands of indigenous people up and down the coast of New South Wales.

From the beginning of colonization, most indigenous people lived on the outskirts of English settlements. Curious, yet suspicious of European ways, there were certain indigenous persons who gained notoriety as brokers between the English and local indigenous people. Later, when liaisons did not come willingly to aid Governor Philip, he would have them kidnapped and held captive until they learned the English language and would agree to negotiate with other local indigenous people. Men such as Arabanoo, Bennelong, and Bungaree were among those who earned a place in Australian and Koori history for representing indigenous people in the State. Another legendary, but less historically recognized, figure of the early settlement years was Pemulwuy.⁷ A member of

⁷ A historically accurate, yet fictional account of Pemulwuy’s militant resistance to the English settlement around Port Jackson, is described by Eric Wilmont in **Pemulwuy: The Rainbow Warrior**.

the Bidigal clan on the north side of Sydney, Pemulwuy devoted his life to organizing and carrying out violent maneuvers which disrupted settlement life. He is remembered admiringly by many Koori people who dispute the popularly held belief that Australia's indigenous people did not resist colonization. Despite resistance efforts such as Pemulwuy's, by the turn of the century the settlement around Sydney was expanding to accommodate population increase and an interest in agriculture. Dwindling numbers of indigenous people, either due to the smallpox epidemic or to violent encounters with settlers, made British expansion into inland New South Wales less difficult.

While destructively impacting the traditional socio-political organization of indigenous people in New South Wales, the smallpox epidemic did not completely erase the indigenous presence in the region. Rather, the epidemic resulted in a reorganization of indigenous clans into a social network which forged together clans whose numbers had decreased below the ability to survive as distinct units. Thus, remaining Koori people in the Sydney area were forced into unofficial fringe communities or moved onto homestead farms as unpaid laborers. During the third, fourth, and fifth decades of the nineteenth century, reserves were set-up for Koori people in close proximity to homestead farms, making it convenient for farm owners to once again draw indigenous labor. Conditions on reserves were less than adequate, and Koori people were looked upon as less than human. Although slavery was never an official policy, or a formal part of the Australian labor economy, indigenous people were treated as slaves and their labor provided the backbone of early colonial infrastructure. As the nineteenth century wore on, indigenous people began to seek recognition and payment for their labor. Some indigenous people in the Paramatta and Blacktown areas around Sydney walked off reserves and demanded the return of their land.

For Koori people in the Sydney area in general, the years between 1788 and the early 1900s were marked by severe land and labor exploitation, violence and death, the specifics of which are only now being uncovered. For those living in the Botany Bay area:

It is difficult to know the fate of the Aboriginal people of the La Perouse area during the ninety year period, 1788-1878. We know that the people had strong links with the south coast as they still do today. We can only guess that the people spent more time further south away from the white settlement. Some may have stayed and lived on the fringes of the white settlement. Either way their pattern of life was disrupted (La Perouse Community, 1988:84).

It was during the mid-eighteen hundreds that missionaries began to formally exert a Christian influence on indigenous people in Australia. Some have argued that it was not only the colonizers who created "Aborigines," but that missionaries and mission life "made" *Aborigines* (Attwood 1989; Hollinsworth 1992). During this time, missionaries played a dual role in the lives of Koori people. Missionaries sought to safeguard indigenous people from opportunistic, exploitative colonists through Christianity, while at the same time teaching them to cope with encroaching "white ways" through "civilizing" measures -- those equated with instilling in Aboriginal people Western values of capitalism, economic exchange, and the "Protestant work ethic." Missionaries accomplished this by enforcing a sense of immobility, time, and space that was unfamiliar and incompatible with traditional indigenous lifeways. Every aspect of life on a mission was highly structured and controlled. Attwood, in writing about missions in Victoria, suggests that missionaries tried to transform everything from the way Aboriginal people viewed time and space to how they viewed themselves. In general, missions were set up so that the church was the focal point of the community. A school customarily accompanied the church, as did housing for both missionaries and their "pupils" either in the form of shacks or a boarding house, a public laundry facility, and a public bath house. The day on the mission was structured so that activities and events took place at given times. Attwood writes of a day at Ramahyuck mission:

The day began around daylight, in the summer at 6.00 (in the winter, half an hour later) with the ringing of the church bell 'as a sign for all to rise'The first task for all Aborigines was to wash; the men then gathered at the storehouse to receive daily rations of food, while the women made the beds, swept out the houses and yards, and prepared breakfast; in the boarding house, the boys and girls had their small tasks also, the girls assisting the matron in cooking and washing, the boys milking the cows and cutting firewood; at 7.00 sharp they all sat down to breakfast; at 7.30 the bell rang again to call them into church for a short and simple service.... (1989:23).

After the morning church service adults were sent off to perform their specified tasks and children were shuffled off to school. There was a break in the day for lunch at around one in the afternoon and then work resumed. Children were allowed one hour of play after school and chores were completed, while the adult workday lasted until around six in the evening. At seven there was an evening church service and a mission curfew was observed (summarized from Attwood 1989:23-25).

In 1883 the creation of the Aborigines Protection Board (the Board) secularized missions, and although missionaries were replaced by a reserve manager and a police officer, the infrastructural control of the mission remained in white hands and the structure of mission life remained the same. As reserves, former missions became loci of officially recognized and condoned segregation. Parbury writes:

The Board's policy was that all Aborigines should live on reserves. In 1883 there were 25 Aboriginal reserves totaling 1,414 hectares. By 1900 there were 133 reserves. Aborigines were encouraged to farm these reserves and implements were supplied. Most of the reserves would have been considered insufficient to support one white family, but they were expected to support whole Aboriginal communities (1986:86).

Once again, all aspects of life on a reserve were subject to the scrutiny of the reserve manager and the police officer on site. Since rations had been cut off, Aboriginal men and women were forced to work in order to survive. For those who lived on land appropriate for agriculture, Aboriginal residents were expected to farm the land. For others who lived in the more arid areas and along coasts, work was either sought in the natural resources of the sea or outside of the reserve on docks and in factories. In addition, a policy of cultural

genocide or ethnocide was put in place by the Protection Board. Said to have been implemented by Europeans who worried that their part-European descendants were over-represented on reserves, only “full-bloods” and “half-castes” over the age of 34 (persons with one full-blood indigenous parent and one European parent) were allowed to stay on reserves. This policy forced the remainder of the Koori population off reserves with the hope of “breeding out” their color and making part-Aboriginal people subject to European laws. A second form of cultural genocide, the forced removal of children from their Koori families and communities, was enforced by the Aborigines Protection Board and later by the Aboriginal Welfare Board. The impact of forced separations (currently used in place of “forced removal”) has recently been exposed through the 1996 Royal Commission Inquiry into Forced Separation. The inquiry publicly revealed what thousands of indigenous people of “the stolen generations” already knew: that Koori children were being removed from their homes under the false pretense of neglect and sent to girls and boys “training homes” or adopted into white families, where they often worked as domestics or farm hands. Disassociation from their Koori families and communities was only one cultural and racial assimilation tactic.

While missionaries had surreptitiously discouraged residents from seeking their former lifeways by attempting to structure life on the mission so that there would be no time and space for traditional practices, the Aborigines Protection Board used threats and punishment to deter such behavior. In addition, the Board established the Aboriginal Protection Act (the Act) to set legal standards for behavior and consequences. Under the Act, Aboriginal people were legally bound to a specific location. In order to work or travel outside of their reserve an Aboriginal person had to be able to produce permission papers which explained where s/he was from, where s/he was going, and when s/he was expected to return. Any non-resident of the reserve who wished to visit or move into the reserve had to have the written permission of both the resident reserve manager and the Aborigines

Protection Board. Reserve residents recall stories of having to check in with the manager before leaving for work and after returning to the reserve in the evening. Others who were children during this time, remember having to get permission from the manager to participate in interstate athletic competitions in other New South Wales cities. Those who did not abide by the rules and expectations outlined by the Aborigines Protection Act were subject to punishments which included temporary expulsion from the reserve, beating, imprisonment, or removal of children from the home (see Bowden & Bunbury 1994; Rintoul 1993; Miller 1985).

An official government inquiry was made into the policies of the Aborigines Protection Board in 1938, following a Koori demand for citizenship and protest over the living conditions and treatment of Aboriginal people under the Board. In 1940, the Aborigines Protection Board was abolished and replaced by the Aborigines Welfare Board. Australian involvement in World War II provided work opportunities for Koori people either in wartime industries or as servicemen. Since the Commonwealth Government expected that Koori people would eventually live like white Australians (albeit low status whites), policy adjustments were made to expedite the assimilation process. The resulting monetary prosperity of wartime laborers meant that Koori people had the means to leave reserves and move into cities. The Commonwealth Government further encouraged Koori people to move away from reserves by extending government benefits to all those Koori people who agreed to live a non-nomadic non-reserve life. In another assimilation scheme, the Welfare Board amended the Protection Act in 1943 to exempt certain Koori people from Act restrictions. Those exempted were forced to wear dog tags (much like United States servicemen wear for identification) which proved their exemption. Along with wearing dog tags, those exempted from the Aborigines Protection Act had to agree not to associate with or buy alcohol for other non-exempt Koories. The Commonwealth thought of exemption certificates as a way to ease Koori people into citizenship. Although

government benefits had been extended to more Koori people than ever before and despite the employment “freedom” that an exemption certificate provided, the standard of living for Koori people was still insufficient for survival. Racial prejudice and lack of access to education and/or training made finding and keeping work difficult. Many Koori families suffered from inadequate housing, a lack of steady income, and poor health. Once again, conditions resulting from the Commonwealth’s maintenance of the Aborigines Protection Act, were used against parents whose children were removed for “neglect” due to an unclean home environment. The removal of children continued as late as the mid-1980s, despite the fact that the Welfare Board was abolished in 1969 (Parbury 1986).

The 1950s and 60s marked the beginning of an era of formal protest and resistance, which continues today. After the 1940 inquiry into the Aborigines Protection Board, public awareness of Koori issues was at an all time high, but real progress was slow. The late 1950s marked the beginning of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines, the FCAA (later known as the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, FCAATSI), which ultimately led to Koori involvement in the 1970s labor movement. Just as the Aborigines Protection Board had come under scrutiny, the 1960s saw a rising Aboriginal awareness of the inherent racism and segregation in Welfare Board policies. Dog tags, curfews, and the Summary Offenses Act were but a few of the Commonwealth sanctioned practices of racial discrimination. The Summary of Offenses Act (1988, NSW) was created to set legal standards of behavior and criminalize behaviors outside of the perimeters of the Summary of Offenses Act (The Summary). Aimed specifically at controlling Koori behavior, the Summary was a legal and politically sanctioned way to force Koori people into language and conduct patterns determined by dominant culture. In addition, Aboriginal people were restricted from entering certain places of business, were often forced to sit in the rear of theaters, were denied access to education, and were forced to remain in the peripheral, secondary labor

market. In the 1970s, Koori people began to seek the support of trade unions in order to secure equal opportunity for employment and equal wages.

All along, land rights had been the festering issue. Resistance to Welfare Board policies and the Summary Offenses Act had resulted in the Commonwealth's revocation of the reserve infrastructure. Thus, land and homes that had once been guaranteed to Koori people were being sold off by the government to the highest bidder. When government programs could or would not affect the changes that Koori people demanded, Koori people began doing for themselves. Looking to African-Americans involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States as role models, Koori people began their own version of an equal rights movement. Freedom Riders sought out businesses and other sites of discrimination, such as RSL clubs (military veterans' clubs) and swimming pools, which would not allow Koori people admission, and held protests and pickets. Also concerned with exposing the reality of living conditions on reserves, Freedom Riders visited reserves to record living conditions and talk to residents. Organizations such as Tranby, which began educating and training Koori people in 1958, played a pivotal role in the Aboriginal quest for equality and recognition as did other Koori education centers such as the Aboriginal Education Assistance Program, and, more recently, the Koori Centre at the University of Sydney. Dulcie Flower, a Koori woman who has spent her life in the Sydney area recalls:

Tranby College, in Glebe was an important meeting place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait activists at this time [the 1960s]. I guess that that place, despite its physical shortcomings, gave birth to the development of a lot of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people. All sorts of meetings were held there. Land rights meetings, referendum meetings used to be held there. We were always able to use Tranby and get a cup of tea in the bargain (Plater 1993:7).

For Bruce Clayton, as well as many other Koori people, Tranby was a springboard from which connections to a larger Koori network are made. In an interview with Clayton, the current regional Director of Link-Up (an organization which reunites families estranged by forced separation), he tells of his experience at Tranby. Clayton remembers:

I was at Tranby, that 's an Aboriginal college which you know, and I went there to learn to read and write at the age of 23. And I was trying to find my natural father. And um, I met Carla Edwards who was the founder of Link-Up.

In 1969, Koori people were finally recognized as citizens and given the right to vote. The next year, as Australia celebrated the bicentennial of Captain Cook's landing, Koori people held a day of mourning at La Perouse in 1970. National protests became internationally recognized in 1971 when Koori people from across Australia appealed to the United Nations for support on land claims. Ongoing land claims battles resulted in the Tent Embassy in 1972. Once again indigenous people from across Australia banded together on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra to protest failing land claims negotiations and to demand equal access to housing for Koori people. It was during this time that the Aboriginal flag -- black for the people, red for the blood shed, and yellow for the sun -- became a symbol of Koori nationalism and the collective struggle for equality and recognition.

In response to the activism of the 1970s, the 1980s were marked by the beginnings of joint government and Koori programs and a continued emphasis on land rights. Organizations such as the Department of Technical and Further Education and the Department of Youth and Community Services were created in order to assist Koori people in educational endeavors, as well as in community development projects. Other projects, such as Koori dance troupes and Koori cultural centers were also part of the cooperative efforts between the government and Koori groups. In New South Wales, the activists' spotlight was on land rights in the mid-1980s. The newly established Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs ruled that since New South Wales had undergone such extensive development, and that Koori culture had become so fragmented, the government would offer compensation rather than return the land (Parbury 1986). When Australia celebrated its bicentennial in 1988, Koori people from all around New South Wales once again joined

together to mourn the destruction of traditional Koori society and culture. Another protest was held at La Perouse, while across the bay at Cronulla where Cook landed, the local government sponsored a reenactment of Cook's arrival.

Struggle for recognition, equality, and cultural revitalization continues into the 1990s. The Mabo Case of 1992, a landmark land rights decision, determined that the British declaration of Australia as *terra nullis* was false and, therefore, those indigenous groups who could prove their traditional relationship to a certain area of land were eligible to reclaim it (for a more complete explanation of Mabo see Poynton 1994; Rowse 1993; Stephenson 1995; Amankwah 1994). The Mabo decision has inspired a multitude of land reclamation cases all over the continent. In response, the government has been busily creating legislation which weakens the efficacy of the Mabo decision and complicates the land rights process. Nonetheless, Aboriginal people have not been discouraged; rather, Koories in New South Wales have made a move to reclaim not only their land, but their culture and traditional ties to the land as a way to legitimate their claims. In addition to Mabo and Native Title legislation, recent Royal Commission inquiries into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and Forced Separation are exposing the historical and contemporary treatment of Koori people. Not only have such inquiries led to the Commonwealth having to become accountable for its actions, but also they have enabled Koori people to "rewrite" history by explaining their own experiences.

Out of the Nation and State and into the Community

In many respects, the history of the English invasion of Australia -- colonial policies as well as the resulting post-colonial circumstances -- is the history of La Perouse. The place, La Perouse, the mission, later the reserve, and presently the buildings and grounds "down the bottom" are the sites of remembered history in the community. According to local oral history and living memory:

1878 marks the beginning of the La Perouse Aboriginal community as we know it today. It is recorded that some Aboriginal people from the south coast came and camped permanently on the shores of Botany Bay about this time. They had probably been visiting the area regularly because it was known as a good fishing spot. The opening up of the south coast to dairy farming was forcing the Aboriginal population away. The camp became recognized as a government reserve in 1883. It was known as Aborigines Camp. The people living at La Perouse today are the descendants of those people (The La Perouse Community, 1988: 84).

At the end of the 1870s “twenty-six Aborigines camped permanently at La Perouse,” ten of whom were full bloods (Ibid. 1988:7). Around 1880, a land grant was made to Queen Emma Timbery, one of the 26 permanently camped Koories, and although it was illegal, the land along La Perouse Beach was recognized as a permanent Aboriginal settlement. Until 1883 when the Aborigines Protection Board established the camp as a reserve, it was maintained as a mission by missionaries and a police officer. Iris Williams, a member of the La Perouse community, recalls:

Tin houses were erected. [They] were on the shore of Botany Bay where the original camp was. It was an area of seven acres. The land was set aside for use by Aborigines but was not officially gazetted until 1895. At this time it was called Aborigines camp. The Board's policy was to make reserves economically self supporting and independent by establishing farms on them, but this wasn't possible at La Perouse because the soil was too sandy. Instead they had to be self supporting fishermen at Frenchman's Bay beach adjoining the reserve. The Board provided boats and nets. Males over eleven years old were to participate. This plan wasn't successful because fishing was seasonal (Ibid. 1988:7).

The first reserve houses, built on the sands of La Perouse Beach, were tin shacks with one room and sometimes a kitchen, although most of the cooking was outdoors (see Figure 3.1). Almost fifty years after the first reserve houses were built, the reserve was moved off the beach land that Queen Emma had been granted to the area where it is today. The second set of houses built in the early 1930s were constructed of fibro and timber and had one or two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a fuel stove. Iris Williams recalls:

[that there] was a communal laundry with two sets of cement tubs, two coppers and everyone had to share days to do the washing. At one end of the laundry there were showers for the men, and at the other end there were showers for the women.” (Ibid. 1988:7).

Gloria Ardler remembers:

my mum and dad got land at Elaroo Avenue in about 1937-38. My father built a little tin shack out of pieces of tin and wood they found around the dumps. Also, hessian bags were put in the place. This was the first little home of our own. As children we thought this was very exciting” (Ibid. 1988: 8)

During this period, an economic depression hit Australia and an unemployment camp was created on the fringe of the reserve where whites and Koories lived side by side. Bel recalls:

I used to live there first [Happy Valley, it was called]. I was only a little girl when I moved over to La Pa, when I moved on the mission. We had a little tin shack over there, but it was very clean. My mother and father, they used to go up the bush and get the white clay. We had a big old fire.... and my mother, everyday she would get on her hands and knees and scrub the boards on the floor Yeah, it was hard over that way. And when the war came, they sort of moved everybody out because the army took up over around the golf links and that. And that's when they got the houses

Remembering the second set of houses on the reserve, Alma and Bel recall:

Alma: *My place was um, only a kitchen and two bedrooms...and my father built a verandah....*

Bel: *...a long verandah, the full length of the house to make it bigger, to make more room.*

In the 1950s ten new three-bedroom homes were added to the reserve. These had five light switches and a fuel stove. During this time some people began moving off the mission to Tasman Street or off the reserve altogether. A third set of houses was built in the 1970s which, according to Iris Williams, had “*three, four, and five bedrooms and were built up to Housing Commission standard. In these houses we have thirteen or more light witches, an electric stove, a power point in every room and separate toilet and a bathroom*” (Ibid. 1988:8). Today Alma lives in this third set of houses, while Bel lives in a house on the main road of the reserve. In the early 1990s, a fourth set of houses on the reserve was constructed on dormant land along what is now called Goolong Road. The fifth housing project began in July 1996 to replace some of the houses on the mission built during the 1970s. In addition to the residential areas of mission/reserve, other areas around La



Figure 3.1 La Perouse Beach Today

Perouse have significant meaning to both individuals' memories and to the collective consciousness and local history of the community. Some areas "down the bottom" mark the continual presence of the people at La Perouse. La Perouse beach represents not only a locus of living memories, but also a connection to the past. Other places like Little Congwong Beach, the wharf, and the Loop are sites of contemporary Koori history and experiences. Most importantly, community and individual connections to places "down the bottom" demonstrate the disparity between the externally imposed boundaries of the reserve and the community's sense of cultural and social space (see Map of La Perouse).

Chapter 4

Voices of La Perouse

Narratives, voices, or ethnohistories, as Sider (1994) and Hill (1994) would call them, play a predominant role in the organization of this text; further, life histories play an integral role in the construction of personal identity. The events in one's life, one's life experiences, shape and transform who one was, is, and can become. Thus, individual identity becomes a semi-permeable confine which is set apart from the world of the "self," but is also a part of that world. Beyond the individual "self," individuals' life experiences, through common threads, contribute to a larger story of community identity, thus contextualizing identity within the community. Community becomes the outlet for the "self," and the collective selves which contribute to the community in turn contribute to the "self." Thus, community becomes the locus of identity exchange, where both internal and external notions of identity are resisted, appropriated, and transformed. Further, individual and collective histories reflect the more general trends of identity construction on even larger city, state, national, and even global levels. At this general level of identity construction it is tempting to discuss Koori identity as if it were a singular phenomenon. Although there are some experiences which are shared by Koories across geographical and linguistic barriers, shaping a broader understanding of "Koori-ness," there are as many Koori identities as there are Koories. The voices in this text are not simply representative of all Koories at La Perouse; rather, the narratives come from individuals with personal and often painful stories about themselves, and reveal the ways in which "times have changed" and Koori culture has been transformed.

Who a person is, a person's identity, is not necessarily a deliberate construction on the individual level. People live day-to-day and often do not necessarily ask themselves, "Who am I?" However, how one is allowed to act in daily life and/or allows her/himself to act -- waking in the morning, going to work or not, preparing meals, living with family,

loving children, visiting a neighbor, going to the market, taking care of an ailing elder -- contributes to the individual "self" and the "selves" that make up a community. While the construction of Koori identity -- racial, cultural, or otherwise -- is not necessarily part of daily consciousness, where and how individuals at La Perouse live, become elements of their identity. Each voice in this chapter tells multiple stories. On one level, each voice tells an individual history. On a second level each voice recounts an aspect of the history of La Perouse. Finally, each individual voice represents parts of a national Koori narrative. These multiple level ethnohistories reflect the constantly changing and sometimes contradictory identity boundaries between the self (the individual), the community, and the dominant culture.

Memories from the Mission

Alma, Bel, and I sit around a long table at the Yarra Bay Sailing Club, the tape recorder between us. Alma and Bel are both around sixty years old, Bel being the older of the two. Waiters scurry around, clearing plates from the dining room and cleaning up after the lunch rush. Although the sun is out and shines through the bay windows, the verandah of "the Club" is empty today. The speed and intensity of the waves along the shore outside warn of coming rain and an accompanying cold front. Alma and Bel have a "schooner" of beer while we talk. Two other people from the community, a husband and wife, have joined us to listen to Alma and Bel tell yarns. I ask the two sisters to tell me about their lives. As they talk, they giggle and their eyes sparkle with reminiscing. Their lives are examples of the continuity of family and community through many social and governmental changes affecting La Perouse. Their experiences span the eras of the Aborigines Protection Act, the Aborigines Welfare Board, and the present social configuration of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC). Their collaborative way of narrating speaks not only to their own sisterhood, but makes evident how individuals contribute to a

community story. In some respects Bel and Alma's stories are their own, while, in other respects, they are the stories of a community and a nation of Koories. Specifically, however, their narratives describe the changes they have experienced at La Perouse, the way Christianity has influenced their lives, and the importance of family to their own lives and the life of the community. Further, their experiences as Koori women, mothers, and workers evince the simultaneous tensions between agency and the social construction of Koori femaleness, the impact of the Commonwealth's policy of removing children, and the segmentation of the labor market. What follows are excerpts from three hours of yarns (33 pages of transcripts), edited together according to the expressed wishes of the speakers and to the need for consistency.

A: *You're going to be surprised what we tell you on this tape about where our family comes from (giggle). Go on Bel, you're the eldest you get started. I got nothing.*

B: *I don't know where to start.*

A: *Well, start with great grandfather.*

B: *Oh, well our great grand father he come from Boston MA. He come out here on a ship. I won't say what he done, but he stayed here, and he got married and Alma's mother and my mother -- we grew up as sisters. I am the mother of 9 children, 21 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.*

A: *Just about how we was growing up.... Yeah, Bel come to live with my mom and dad when I was young. She was always my big sister. I couldn't go anywhere unless she took me. And she would say, no. If she didn't want to go anywhere, I couldn't go. And I would start crying cause I couldn't go out.... And um, we played sports together. We had a good young life. On Saturday morning.... one would stay home and clean the sand shoes or iron the uniforms while the other went shopping with mom. And we would take it in turns. Come home and have some lunch and off we would go to play our sports. Come home and we would go out to the movies in the night. Sundays we would go down to the wharf and dive for coins on Sunday. We would get enough money to go buy a bag of chips and some of the boys they would dive and we'd look after the money and they'd share the money with us. What else Bel?*

B: *Whenever we went out we had stockings. You had to wear stockings.*

A: *[talking about her mother] Sometimes she would go to the races and she would have a hat and gloves and a hand bag....dressed up very nice. Bel used to work in the chocolate factory and bring home all of the chocolate. Then mom had.... I'm 13 years older than my brother, so we used to mind the baby when mom went to church or out. And Bel used to*

frighten him all the time. And it must of stuck in his head and he thought I'm going to pay you back one day. So he did pay back. He stopped her.

B: *He would walk in and he'd say... I'd say, "What do you got?," he'd be pretending to eat something. He'd say, "Oh, it's in me pocket." So I'd put my hand in his pocket and it'd be a snake in his pocket.*

A: *He used to go to the swamp and get the black eels and come home and I used to chuck him out of me kitchen. "Get out, Get out.... you're not coming here. Cooking black eels in my kitchen."*

Oh, Yeah. Caddying. [The men] they used to caddie for the golfers, for the rich golfers. If they got a bit desperate they'd have to carry two bags for extra money. You know, but we survived. And it was nothing for me brother to go and get a box of widgey grub and bring em home and cook em. If we didn't have any money to buy any meat or anything, we'd come around the rocks and get some pennywinkles or conks. Lucky if we found mutton fish, that is what they call abalone, we call it mutton fish. We were lucky.... that was a delicacy, wasn't it?

B: *Yeah.*

A: *That was our delicacy. Now, Aboriginal.... that has been taken away from us. The divers have got all of that now. We are only allowed to take a couple off the rocks. If you take anymore, you get fined.*

A: *...Bel's dad, he used to fish. And when he brought the fish in, everyone had fish. We didn't, they didn't sell the fish. Everyone come and get a feed of fish. You know everybody helped each other.*

B: *If you haven't any money all the time to buy meat. Well, we lived practically on fish, seafood.*

A: *We'd throw a line in and bring a fish home for a feed. Or we'll have a big pot of pennywinkles...*

B: *... you had to have a safety pin to open them. You'd get a safety pin, like a snail, but more tasty.*

A: *We went down, this is when we was young....all the girls and the boys, went down and we got a big load of crabs and we come up to cook em. You know, I say to the kids, "I wish you was in my life when I was growing up." It was hard, but ...*

B: *...But we didn't feel that it was hard but everybody shared.*

A: *It was happy, happy.... Bel and I had a terrific life.*

B: *Yeah, we did. You know, we grew up.*

A: *Mymom, she was a great believer. A beautiful Christian lady. And um.... never drank, smoked or even said a bad word about anyone. But, she used to go around to conventions. We'd be there and sheds say to Bel and I come on, pack your bag, you're*

coming with me. We would not have a cent, not even enough to buy a drink on the train, eh Bel?

B: *And she'd pray.*

A: *She'd pray and I believe in prayer. We'd be on that train with money to spare to buy food on the way, we'd go right up to Lismore. That is nearly to, um Queensland border. We'd be on that train.. Where the money come from, it just came just before we was leaving. Our bags would be packed at the door ready to walk out and the next minute the money would be there.*

B: *She was a great believer. Every night, she would play the ukulele and [our] uncle used to play the harp. And uh, we had tea and before we washed up you couldn't move in our kitchen for the...everybody want to come in and have a sing song. Oh, lovely.*

A: *Yeah, and if they couldn't get in the house they would sit outside....*

B: *....on the grass and they would sing too.*

A: *We used to go to church a lot. We don't go to church enough now and that's sad. We were good church goers...*

B: *All the young people used to go to church. Sunday night, you couldn't move in that little church and now there is not... they would have to put extra chairs down the corridor...*

A: *...and the children would have to sit the floor, that's how many people used to go to the little mission church.*

B: *Everybody used to go to church, but not now I don't know why. It has changed so much in La Perouse. It has, it has changed heaps.*

A: *It has.*

B: *We didn't have to get belted.*

A: *Nah.*

B: *We didn't know what it was to have a hiding.*

A: *Although I got a few cracks with a walking stick.*

B: *We didn't do anything to get hit.*

A: *I got hit with the walking stick... My father hit me because I got drunk and I had a child. And he said to me, Don't do that....*

You know what, when we were growing up, and in sports, we had to get permission to leave the mission to go on our, like if we were picked in State [to participate in sports] by the manager....we had to get a letter to say that we were taking part in interstate games in

Brisbane. We had to get consent from the Aboriginal Welfare Board to be able to go up and play in those games.

K: Did you know then that people on the mission were treated differently than other people?

A: *Oh, yes. Like us kids on the mission, we were called the mission kids. Those kids off the mission, their parents never ever wanted them to mix with the mission kids. Some of the kids [girls], had hair way down to here (pointing to long down the back). When their mother found out that they were on the mission playing with us, she cut their hair off. And it was all the way down their back.*

K: Were these Koori girls?

A: *Yeah, they were Koori girls. What are you doing, playing with the mission kids? That was it. And the only time we ever ever got together was when we went to school or if we went to the pictures. We could go to their house and play, but they wouldn't come on the mission to play with us. Don't go down there on that mission and play with those mission kids. But they had houses off the mission, hey Bel. They thought that they were a bit higher than what we were. And now the same people are trying to get a house on the mission. They had the long hair and as soon as their mother found out they were on the mission, she cut their hair.*

If we had anyone over night staying with us, we'd have to go to the manager and tell that manager that a certain person is staying that night or two nights or whatever. And we had to get permission for them to stay there. They had a gate up here. Even here in La Pa, they never wanted you to marry outside of your own mob. It was particularly a strange thing for white boys to marry an Aboriginal girl, eh Bel?

B: *Umhh.*

A: *That was a no no in those days.*

B: *All my boys friends was white. I never ever had a black boyfriend. Yet, I married a dark boy. But it never lasted. I should've married a white boy.*

K: When you were growing up, did you feel any of the racial tension that you read about? In terms of discrimination ...

B: *It never ever worried us. We were accepted wherever we went.*

B: *I didn't go to high school. I went to work. I walked out of school one day and walked into Prince Henry and started work the next day.*

K: What were you doing?

B: *Ward maid.*

A: *Yeah, I repeated in 6th class and I never went to high school, couldn't afford it.*

B: *I was lucky to get a pair of shoes. Cause when we first started going to school, we used to go with no shoes on because we couldn't afford it.*

A: *My mother, after having my brother, weakened her heart very bad, you know. So someone had to stay home with mom. So, I did and Bel went to work. We were never short of chocolates.*

B: *I always bring chocolate home. Auntie would want rock, someone else would want rocky road... chocolates, you'd get sick of em. But one of the other girls used to work at Veetoy Biscuits and on the way home in the tram, we'd exchange. We'd give her chocolates and she'd give us biscuits. You don't see them now.*

A: *No they are gone. I used to work at Veetoy and I thought it was the biscuits making me sick every time I would go to work.... I was pregnant.*

B: *It was real funny....*

A: *Every morning I would get there, ohhh I would start feeling sick.*

B: *It was real funny when Auntie found out she was pregnant.*

A: *We all started crying.*

B: *She came in, she said, "Bel, come in I must speak to you." Cause everywhere I went, I'd have to look after her and I don't know how she got pregnant because I was supposed to be looking after her. But, you know what we used to do.... We'd start off from home, when we got to the bundi to catch the tram, we'd split up. We didn't know where.... and we'd have to wait there for one another to go home together. So they would think we were together all the time. Oh, tricky. We used to dance a terrible lot. Go to Redfern, Newtown.... I wouldn't be game enough to go to Redfern now, or to Newtown. We used to go in there for pictures even (Redfern). We had lot of friends in the area. They were really good, not like now. It's not the old mob that's mucking up, it's all the new ones that are coming in.*

A: *I got married in 1951, but my husband died when he was only 39. Heart attack. One heart attack took him.*

B: *Must have been a massive one.*

A: *(nodding) He lived long enough to say, "tell my wife and my daughter I love 'em." That was it.*

It was funny, when Bel was getting married I was getting married and I wasn't to get married before her because she was my big sister. The eldest had to get married first.

B: *And I was a virgin; you must remember (smirking).*

A: *And was getting married the next week. Well, my mother and father, well me mum said, "to save expenses, they will have to get married together." And Auntie said no, we can't have that, Alma is expecting a baby and Bel a virgin and we can't let her get married with Bel.*

B: *Now she'll disgrace her.*

A: *That will disgrace Bel's wedding. So anyway, she got married and I got married the next week and our kids are only two months difference.*

B: *The virgin (smiling).*

A: *And Auntie thought that she was a virgin and she had to get married in white and Bel didn't want to get married in white cause she knew what was wrong with her, but she couldn't let Auntie down.*

B: *I couldn't let Auntie down because she thought I was just sick.*

K: How old were you when you got married?

B: *20 and I had my first baby when I was 21 on her birthday....*

A: *On my birthday.*

B: *Valentine's Day. And what a baby. Still a baby.... _____, you know her? And after that I had 6 boys and 2 girls.*

K: 9 all together?

A: *I've got extended family.*

K: Was there a fear here about children being taken away?

B: *Yes. It was always told to the parents and the kids that they were unfit parents. That was the word that the white man always said when they got the kids.*

A: *And where they took those kids away, was to be a slave in the white man's house. See some of them, even today, they were still doing it in the seventies. Now those kids when they find their way back again, they don't know where they are. And they done a survey on it and that is part of them, the Aboriginal boys taking their own lives. Because they don't know where they are coming from or where they are going. You know they are in the middle.... They don't know whether they are in the white man's world or the black man's world. And they don't know where they are.*

See I didn't have to go through that with my daughter because she's legally adopted in _____'s name. And um, her mother she just come and dropped a 6 week old baby on to me. And just left me with her. No clothes, no formula, no nothing.

B: *Poor little thing was only 6 weeks old. She was only tiny. But she had that many mothers to look after her. That is why she is spoiled today.*

A: *The mother came back, but my daughter said, "What am I going to talk to her about? We've got nothing in common. What will I call her?"*

B: *We went looking for the mother at one stage and we couldn't find her anywhere, eh? Because A, we didn't know what to do with the baby. She just left her there for one night and never come back. She had no clothes so, everybody was going down*

A: *So we went over to the second hand shop to get all the clothes for her. And Alma, and now she won't even look in a second hand shop.*

B: *If you say you're going, she'll say, "don't go in there, don't go."*

K: Have Koori women always been this tough?

A: *Yeah, I think so.*

B: *Yeah.*

A: *Well, I've got to be tough because I am the eldest in the family, I'm the protector of my family. I think that women have to be tougher than men.*

B: *Well, I had to be tough. I had to go to work and come home and cook and wash for me kids cause I didn't have a husband to get me through it, to help me. So, I just had to do it meself. I was lucky that I had me father to help me out. But it was hard and I done it. They all grown up now and they appreciate it.*

K: Do you think that ... what do you think that the old people would say about how things are today?

B: *Well I don't think they could cope with the way things are today. I don't think they would, cause there is a different kind of lifestyle here in La Perouse, a different kind of lifestyle.*

A: *They don't live off the land like they used to.*

B: *But everybody was so friendly. It didn't matter that you stopped. You'd go in anybody's house and you'd be there all day and the first thing they would do is put the kettle on. But now, you're lucky if they say hello. And if you was short of anything, you'd just go borrow it from the next one.*

A: *You're frightened to go to anyone's house now....*

Another Generation on the Reserve

It is a windy day and the windows rattle with agitation. The normal gathering spot in the garden, just outside the kitchen door at Yarra Bay House, has been abandoned today because of the weather. There are six of us all together, sitting around a rectangular table that is regularly used as a lunch room for CDAC workers. Noises emanate from the kitchen, where other members of the La Perouse CDAC catering mob are washing and putting away dishes from the day's meal. The women gathered here today range in age

from 30 to 45. Their voices are less reserved than those of the elder generation, expressing their curiosities about and frustrations over racial issues. While their stories of childhood games reflect the care free days of childhood and friendship, the “unspoken transcript” reveals moments of economic struggle, discrimination, and communitas. They are another generation removed from the mission years, yet some of their experiences echo the stories of Alma and Bel, demonstrating how slowly things change from one generation to the next.

J: Well, we lived on the mission, just across the flats on the beach. And we had a tip next to us, a garbage tip. We used to swim nearly 7 days a week, either down the beach or on the wharf or bear island or little Congie. We'd have some deadly fights, I mean mud fights. We used to get mud, bring it back, we'd roll around in it and throw mud at each other and then when we'd run down to the beach to wash it off; all the gubba's [white people] would think we were stupid.

On the weekends and that, people used to come out to the wharf and they used to chunk coins in the water and if you weren't a good swimmer, you'd get sharked or get bashed by the older kids for your money.

N: They would pull you under and take the money out of your mouth....

What about, um, the bonfires we used to make on the mission. All the kids one or two weeks before, we would go all over the place looking for wood and trash and stuff for the bottom, and make a big scarecrow to stick at the top.we'd go on for two weeks making it and we'd crack a knife and we'd have the deadliest [great]fun, everyone would be around it.

C: And....then we used to get up in the morning; it was freezing cold and we had no shoes and go out and put our feet in the coals to warm them up We used to walk all over the place.

N:we'd go around and get fish ...mutton fish and conks to chuck in the hot coals.

C: It was a fun time, we made our fun. Our mothers used to bring us down lunch and that and we'd say, "But mom we already had a feed of fish."

N: Wouldn't go home until dark, eh? What about the lad that owned the Paragon there. He leave a big bag of fish and chips for us everyday. All the kids would have a feed every day.

J: Yeah, because we brought business there for him. They came down to watch the black kids jump off the wharf.

K: So tell me about what you think your three most important things that have ever happened to you and how they affected your life.

C: *The day I went to jail was the day I stopped thieving. I wouldn't go to jail for anything.*

J: *I done all week and that done me too.*

N: *I did six months and I didn't thieve....*

J: *Oh, when we were kids and we used to go to the football and that on trips...*

N: *Another load down town, what's that black organization called? -- Christmas parties. They'd get a couple of buses and all of La Pa would go and we'd take a picnic.*

C: *Oh, that manager and that.... a special trip for the blacks... it used to be in the paper all the time. "The Aboriginals have the day out for the day, aren't they lucky?" But you know, what.... the old mission, they had the tip there. We was living on the tip. And in the summer time, the smell. I don't know how we ever used to*

N: *I don't see why they should've put the tip there.*

C: *It's because we're black and they put it there.*

N: *It used to have the rejects from the hospital, the needles and syringes and everything. These were the days when they never used to take the needle off. They used to stay on there and go in the bin.*

C: *We used to walk around playing and we used to have to walk through there to go down the beach.*

K: *Other important moments?*

N: *Our graduation day [referring to graduating from a series of catering courses].*

C: *Oh, Yeah. I gave you that picture, eh? You know, on the book. That one at Helen's?*

K: *How far did you go in school, like primary, secondary?*

J: *Fourth and I had to leave....fell pregnant.*

N: *I went to fourth class at high school. Got put in the homes for uncontrollable. What do they call it now? Year 8?*

J: *No, 9.*

C: *I got kicked out at year 10, no 9, no 10. The welfare used to chase us all the time in there.*

J: *I think that was why we was fast runners.*

C: *We used to get called blacks and ... all the time. So, it happened that way. Sheila's coming saying, ahh look at the black kids. We went after her.*

N: *It was funny that they was always out in the sun trying to look like us.*

C: *Yeah, that's exactly what she said that.That's what makes you think, why do they go out there just to look like that and they want to go home and run us down?*

C: *We're a different generation to what they are (referring to their children's generation).*

N: *We was brought up very strict and we was taught to respect our elders, never answer back.*

J: *I remember sitting around the table growing up listening.*

C: *Nan used to make me go to church. Eh, she used to sit there and make that you know, say hallelujah. I said hallelujah and I got slapped to the ground. I was like, what was I doing? What was I doing? Don't even ask! Oh, mate I remember that at church. I went back to church, but I didn't do that.*

More than a Reserve

Although houses on the mission and on the reserve provide the infrastructure of the La Perouse community, La Perouse and life experiences there are not restricted to the reserve. Simon, a well respected Koori elder and spokesperson for Koori people, is a local "bush walker," regularly taking groups of school children around La Perouse. Knowing that I wanted to learn about the history of La Perouse, Simon offered to show me around the community. He explained that despite the fact I had been working and at times living in La Perouse, I needed someone who knows the area to point out the Koori connection between local history and the significance of sites and landmarks at La Perouse. One morning in early July, Simon picked me and a friend visiting me from the U.S. (denoted in the transcript by the initial F) up in his car and brought us out to La Perouse. Simon's narrative is politically and personally ignited in part because his role in the community as a spokesperson, a public Koori figure, and culture broker for others at La Perouse. While local history was the primary purpose of our trip around La Perouse, his-story was fully a part of La Perouse history. This connection not only evinces the relationship of Koori history to Australian history, but also demonstrates how the political is personal. The

politics of boundaries, both literal and figurative, are apparent through experiences including miscegenation (“white business”) and land claims.

The trip began with a “cupper” and a piece of toast at his cousin Alma’s house. From Alma’s yard, Simon pointed out the old fig tree under which he was born. Our trip continued onto historic sites “down the bottom” and around the bay, taking us from history back into pre-history. He provided the following commentary about La Perouse (refer to figure 4.1) and included in his descriptions of sites and landmarks around La Perouse his own experiences in these places.

S: All right. I can take a little glory in something out here Kathy, I was working the Dept. of Housing and I had a pretty big position. I got those houses built there cause that land was laying dormant for years, so I um, managed to grab one of the hierarchy in the Housing Dept. and said, “look, get off your butt and get out here and I’ll show you what can be done.” He said, “I didn’t know that this land was here.” I said, “you’re one of the trumps around there, you should have it on record of all of this.” So, that is the fruition of a lot of work and cajoling and they are there today.

Now, all through that area, which is now controlled by Parks and Wildlife right up to the heads. Now the only reason that they have got that is because they knew that the Land Rights Act was coming into effect, so they all connived and conspired together. And said, “Well, we’ve got to get in before these blacks claim all this land.” So, that is what they did. And all through this area over here....All through that area there is camping grounds. That’s one of the part of the camping grounds, as well as down there along the Port Hill Beach. So, the government said, “We’ve got to get rid of the blacks out of there.” And so, they started to move them out slowly and put them with the rest of the mob on the other side. So in the depression years, they had a big depression out here in the 1920s. So they brought all these people, non-Aboriginal people, out here and they put a big shanty complex right through that area there. And they got rid of all the blacks, pushed them out. That went through until about 1962 when they started to make hostels. And there was a lot of European migrants as well. So, when.... there was about 2000 European people living in there in shanty conditions until they got housed through the government. But that is an old camping ground. Over there is a medicinal source as well and up through there is a lot of bush tucker. And this is known as Congwong Bay, this area. That is little Congwong Bay and of course this is Big Congwong Bay. That is another golf club up there, you can see. That is very exclusive. I think an annual membership up there costs about \$15 thousand dollars. And, there was a time that we wanted to go out to the rocks to fish and dive and, so we had to sneak up the scrub. Cause if you went up the road, where that car is now, remember what I told you about the boundary thing. Six months without the option, so it wasn’t unusual to see 90% of the male population in prison because they went off the turn, they broke the curfew. So we had to sneak like mongrel dogs up through the scrub and go out to the heads to fish and dive and things like this. And they had a guy up there on a horse with a great big stock whip too, if he saw blacks, he was told to whip them and keep them off the property. And, it wasn’t unusual to see some of the blokes my age sneak on the course and collect golf balls to sell. For every golf ball found you get a

month detention. So, if you found 6 golf balls you do 6 months either in the juvenile detention center or a male would do 6 months in prison. And they were still doing that in 1969. And you have to consider that we only got the right to vote in 1967. That is really stupid.

This stone building was put up as Australia's first customs tower and watch house. They used to watch out for the rum runners and the smugglers coming into the bay. So that is the reason that was put there. Later on it was they built in an extension on it for the caretaker and his wife. And they had a little room there and they taught.... It was the first educational go ahead for Aboriginal people. They built a little school there. But they couldn't enter into the mainstream education system for many years. Up until 1973, a teacher or a principal of any school in Sydney, mind you, didn't have to admit any Aboriginal child. If the white parent objected, then the black kid, couldn't get into school. And this was in 1973. And, all those archaic laws existed. You know that has just been.... when we were kids it just meant something to us. We would go over there, boys and girls, and we would go out all through. But we had to sneak out through the track, you know because of the police. There was a policeman stationed here and he was here for many many years. And when he went, somebody else would come. But, in actual fact, he was put up.... he wasn't involved in crime. He more or less wore the uniform, but he was put in as an agent by the state and commonwealth government to assist the government. So he really had no dealings in crime control. He was just a... the uniform made him very official. That is why they lived in this area to assist the manager. To keep the blacks under the thumb and don't take a backward step and all this type of thing. It is just hard to believe that this happened. Yeah, it wouldn't be unusual to be in bed and they would come shining toward you in your face at two o'clock in the morning to make sure you are in bed. And my dad, he objected one night and he punched out at this copper. And he started to get the best of this copper so, the copper saw his chance and he bit his finger off. My poor old father, he said, "get me that tomahawk." We had a tomahawk to split the wood with. So, he said, "get me that tomahawk, I'll kill this bastard!" So, I said, "Oh, Dad, I can't do that." He said, "Oh do that for me, he won't come in here again and torment us, you know." So the manager happened to run down and he assisted the police and they got the handcuffs on my dad and he got 18 months jail. Eighteen months jail because he objected to the copper and the manager coming in at all hours of the morning. And we were caught up in a welfare system, me and my sisters, where we were taken away and split up. Because my mum got ill and they didn't think that dad could look after us. We recognize that aunties and uncles will take care of us, but they didn't see it that way. So, they put us into this institution, me sisters at one end of Sydney and the brothers at another end. And my mum had to go to court to prove that she was capable of taking care of us as she got better. Nineteen sixty-four, I'll never forget. So, that is what that is about.

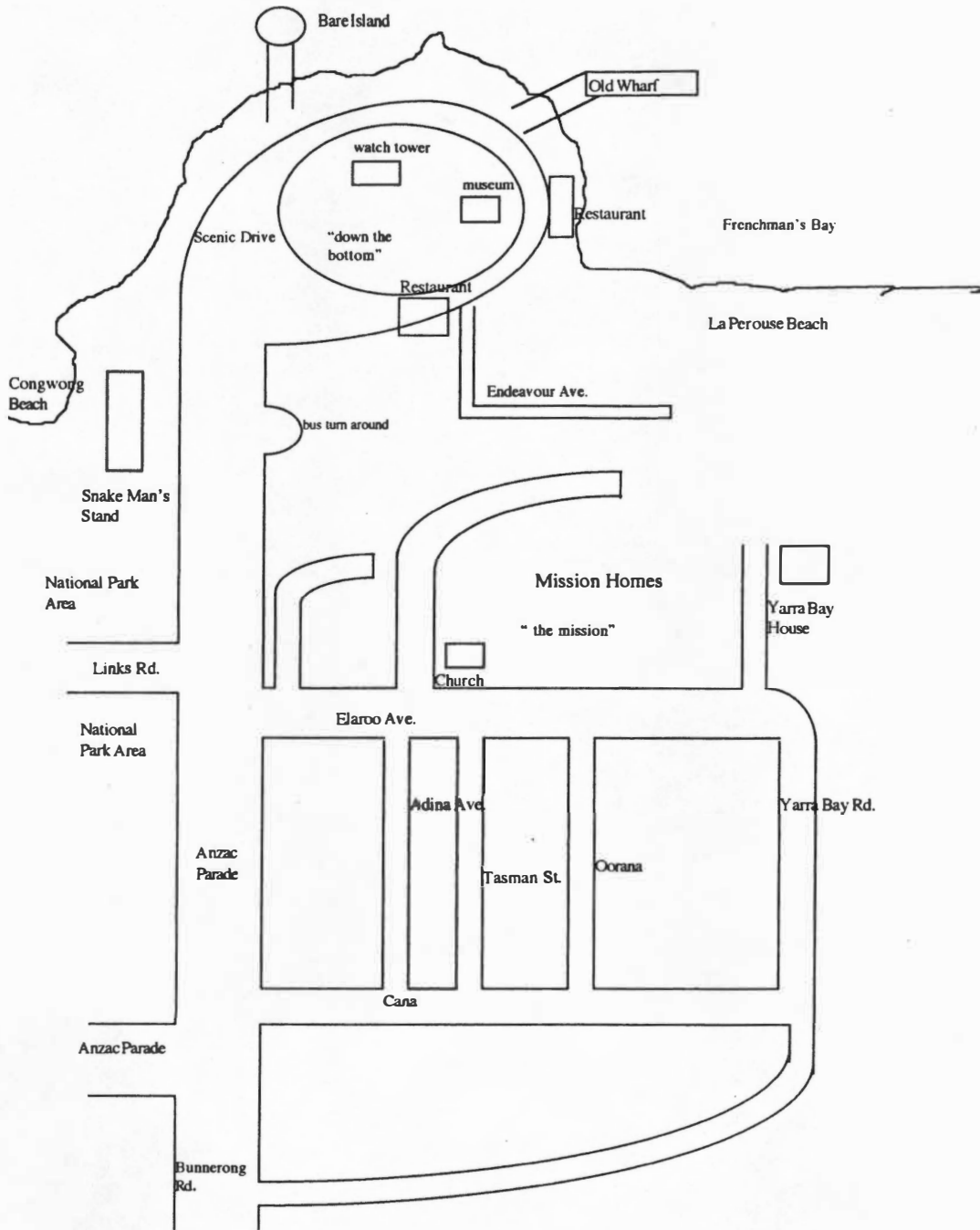


Figure 4.1: Map of La Perouse

Now, Bare Island, (see Figure 4.2) that fort over there was put about because of all things, mind you, here we are down under and away from everyone. They feared a Russian invasion. Jesus! So, they built that fortified thing over there. And... to suspend the flow of Russians coming into Australia. That's ridiculous, I know. But that's the way.... later on over the years it was used to house the doctors and nurses in the First World War. There was hostel accommodation over there. Later on, before it was became ruined and was used as a war veterans' home. Then national parks and wild life got a hold of it and turned it into a museum, as they have done with everything else. Those flag posts that you see over there on the other side of the bay was almost the beginning of the end for Aboriginal people. That is where Captain Cook landed. All right, that was his stronghold on Australia. But, he did walk around here, but Philip had more so to do and La Perouse, the French Explorer, had more so to do with this area. So, uh the absurdities of it as well. The comedy of errors that seem to exist in colonial times. It would be different if we were at Europe's back door, we would fear a Russian invasion.

See that was where we were the other day. See those buildings just over there?

K: Ummhm.

S: *We were just across the other side of the bay over there.*

This is a really summer month place out here, mate. You can't move when all the tourist and curious come out. I feel if people, the Lands Council did the right thing, we would become the benefactors of tourism in this area. Because we despise the hierarchy of the Parks and Wildlife service.

K: Why doesn't anybody get money to get the Koori end of this museum open again?

S: *Oh, I don't know. See, they say they had funds, but there may have been some amount of misappropriation, just going crazy with the money and spending, spending, spending without thinking about long terms. And it pisses me off to know that we belong to the area and yet, the French, you know what they are doing throughout the world, they are just creating havoc with nuclear things and what they are doing with Canaks in the Pacific Islands such as Tahiti and New Caledonia. See, there used to be a time, see this monument over here, that was put up by a very wealthy French aristocrat called de Bourganville. And every Bastille Day on the 14th of July the French Navy comes in and they play the Marseilles and all this type of bullshit. And all the French dignitaries, the consuls and all the flag wavers from the area converge on that. So before we became politically aware, and throughout our school days my sisters' and my mother's school days, they were brought down here to participate in France's national day. And the band would play and they would teach the kids to sing the Marseilles. And it become so much so that they thought, "We'd love to get these little darkies to sing in French." So they did; it happened for a time, but we weren't politically aware. So all the little black kids were; singing in this French accent. So later on, we seen, after the Whitlam government and the radicals started taking hold, we thought, "What the fuck is going on?" They took the land from us, now they want to brainwash us a little more. They taught Jesus and Captain Cook and everything. And so, they just stopped dead one day and they said, "We're not going down there anymore." We just didn't realize And the parents and*



Figure 4.2 Bare Island

that didn't know because they were saying, "send your kids to school because they are going to go to the monument today." And if you didn't go to school out here, they had a truancy act out here under the state government. And you were going to court just for not going to school and being put into institutions for up to 18 months. So, this is what they had to do, they had to come down here and be good little Jackies and sing along and smile as the French consulate took his pictures and all this type of thing. So one day, we just said, look get nicked. We're not going down there. So this is Frenchman's Bay.

F: That's what _____ [another man in the community] said. He said the only national anthem that he knew for a long time was the French national anthem.

S: *And along with that "God save the Queen." And now "Waltzing Matilda" and "Jumping Jum Back" and "Sprang into the Billabong" and all that bullshit. It is just garbage, it is. So, that is Frenchman's Bay. Now, we were going to put in for that land as well because that is where the old mission was along that foreshore. But, in the act, in the Land Rights Act, it says that Aboriginal people can't claim that land if the municipal council intended to develop it later on. So when they moved all the people back later on, we have the, we still have the traditional pictorial evidence, that designates us as belonging to that area there. Because that was the first attempt at government housing even though that was only tin shacks. So in 1984, Randwick council, they all got wind of these things before the Act came into effect and they said, "Look you better get as much land as you can around here before the blacks take control of it." So that is what they did. So when they, their idea of development was go and get all of these natural native plants and put it along there. Because that was all clear along there and just hills and middens and things like this. So, that was their development. That stopped us from claiming that land. So the development of putting a few wattle trees and things in along there. But, we've got all that land up top there where the mission is. We shouldn't say the mission because.... see how it is still inbred in us? Cause the missionaries came in and said, "Well, this is known as the mission." Good little children come along and sing "Jesus Loves Me" and "The Old Rugged Cross" and all this type instilled in us.... And then we had the welfare system. Further around the point there is Philip Bay which is sometimes called Yarra Bay. Philip, of course, was the admiral that came in with all those ships and convicts and everything. They anchored just out here. See in the middle of that boat there, there's a post out there, well that is supposed to signify where he anchored his ships while he went in. There was a stream running in here and he went in just up past the sailing club there to replenish his water supplies. So, of course that is Philip Bay. Where this fancy restaurant is, and this fancy retaining wall here, this concrete retaining wall just on the edge of this rock and that was some of the last known carvings in this area of La Perouse. And they came in and concreted it over and took away the proof. So, we can't very well go in there with jack hammers to get away the concrete cause we'll destroy what they have already set out to destroy anyway. Where that fancy restaurant is over there, Danny's restaurant there is some beautiful rock carvings there on the foundation. So Randwick council gave them permission to come and to jackhammer all these things away, carvings and thousands and thousands of years of history. Cause this is where you have got to think about it. This is where it all began here. It might have been the discovery of colonialists, but it was also almost the Armageddon for Aboriginal people, the beginning of the end. And we fought back; we survived, and for the sake of a lobster mounrey (??) they put that fancy restaurant in there and took away thousands and thousands of years of history. Now, the street that is going to the left up there and goes along that way, was called Aboriginal avenue. So all the red necks around here said, "Why call it after those black bastards?" And they took a petition around and said, sign this because we don't want the blacks to have recognition in this area. So they turned around and they called it Endeavor Avenue after Captain Cook's*

ship. So that was Aboriginal Ave. Same as Blacktown, out in the Western suburbs, that was Blackstown. It was known because it had a big populous out here of Aboriginal people. So, rather than keep that connotation with the "s" on the end, knowing that it pertained to Aboriginal people, they changed it to Blacktown. And all these little....

Now this building up here, with the museum, was an old cable station that was used to house the cable workers between, who laid the first cables between Australia and New Zealand. Over the years, it became a doctor's quarters again, same as Yarra Bay house was doctors' and nurses' quarters in the 2nd World War. Then it became for many years, the Salvation Army took it over as an unmarried mom's home. That was used.... and it was, for about 10 years or so toward the end of the 70s, early 80s it just laid dormant, starting to go to wreck and ruin. So when they had this big bicentennial celebration to commemorate the founding of Australia, 200 years, they got a grant through the Bicentennial Committee to refurbish and do it up a bit. So they gave it over to Parks and Wildlife to administer the old building. Parks and Wildlife administer that side, anything that side of the road, anything this side of the road is Randwick Council. They have got these silly boundaries, you know. So, the left hand side going up that way is Parks and Wildlife. That is our 4th attempt at government housing up there where the mission is.

Now you had a look at that little monument the other day.... Le Servian, he was a French Priest who came out on La Perouse's ship. La Perouse came into the bay. He was a French admiral, very well to do money wise in the French aristocracy. He came in with 3, uh 2 ships. While he was in the bay replenishing water supply and doing minor repairs, this guy (the priest) died. And of course they glorified him in that little tomb there. But Aboriginal history has it that he was the perpetrator of the smallpox germ that wiped out so many people. Parks and Wildlife won't tell you this on their grand tours of the area. But, you know a lot of people had to move away. A lot of people were dying, so a lot of people shifted down the coast and when the sicknesses and that went...

That man's people [pointing to Tim, who is in his usual weekend spot "down the bottom" selling Koori made artifacts] was here when Cook sailed into the bay. They are still here today, through him and his family and people like this. He is one of the Timberys, the La Pa Timberys.

S: A lot of the people were reared, like Tim said, by different families. Some people have died, but they have retained the name. Could be a Simms by charge, but you're not a Simms no more, you're a Timbery, now. We're looking after you for the rest of your life. You're family, you're our family and the blood line stays together. This is where the extended family is very strong with us, right. And 90%, 95% of the La Pa people are all one mob and that blood line is from here to 300 - 400 miles down the coast. But it doesn't go any further north. This is where it stops. It doesn't go north; it stops here.

F: Well how did you get names like Simms or Timbery, how did you

S: Well, Timbery is a tribal name. Dtimbery, Dtimbery.... With that guttural effect. Dimbery. Someone I was telling about Bondi and Coogee. Coogee is Googie and Bondi is Bundi. But Simms came in, there is a bit of white business there, because Simms is a typical English name. Because of the introduction here of the Simms family, but on the other side -- one side is Timbery, but they introduced because not all of them. See there is a lot of um..., uh, see there was no marriage, say all right you just take the name of

Simms because it ... they could have been out here doing a little tip toeing in the moonlight, you see? But, I think it was just a given thing to say, look you're a Simms, same as.... See, when Tim talks about Kings and Queens there were just given that thing by the colonists to say you're the community leader so you become the Queen. It wasn't a bestowed thing, you know? Cause the elders carried the rules and the laws. Simms is sort of a white man's name, but I think it was just palmed on, given to someone by an early settler.

F: I guess classic genealogy models wouldn't do much good.

S: Oh, Jesus we're a mixed up mob. Cause, you know, in some areas, my son is thinking an affair, this thing with this young lady who is a Timbery. I said, no Jesus, you can't do that it would be incest all over again, you know? And that is a very strong point too. Don't mix up the families. There is a red line. You can marry outside, someone coming into the family, but further down the line. I always used to come over here [referring to the National Park] We all came over here when we were kids cause under this ledge here was a great rich source of honey. And every Year we would smoke all, they would get under here and they would layers made for years and years. The good thing about when you come looking for this honey, you always... don't look straight under straight way because there are snakes. So you get a distance back, because you can see the.... Bend down a little, you can see how far that honey comb goes back. And there are layers and layers of honey. It was beautiful. Parks and Wildlife, because people complained, and they were only navy bees. Navy bees don't sting ya. So, they come here with the sprayer the bastards and ruined all our honey pot. There were heaps there. We used to come over, smoke them out and scoop up all the honey. We've been doing it for years. I was telling Kathy, remember the pippies Tim was talking about? They are a shellfish. But you've got to find them on the surf beaches. The best technique is to dig in the sand (demonstrating twisting the foot back and forth) and you feel them and there are clusters underneath. When that is in bloom (pointing to a tea tree plant, the tick tree) that is when the pippies are out, the shellfish. But it is always pretty dangerous too because there is a tick in there. You know the tick that gets into your skin and paralyzes you, very dangerous. Parks and Wildlife have installed this little bush track now, for tourists.

Continuing our "bushwalk" around La Perouse, we take a short car trip. As we travel down Anzac Parade, into the vicinity of Prince Henry Hospital and Long Bay Prison, Simon gives me and my guest an introduction to local Koori pre-history. However, before we can actually begin, the three of us must cross several holes on the golf green. As we walk toward the edge of the beach side cliffs, some golfers glance our way in curiosity; others pay us no attention.

S: All right, that's one course, that's another course, and there is two more further over. So, there is no shortage of golf courses in the area.

(Turning away from the golf course, Simon points back toward the hospital behind us)
This is a hospital complex here. That whole golf course is done by prison labor from the

Long Bay. I was telling you the other day Kathy, I sat up on the hill over there and there was about 30 whales coming up. Beautiful.

The gun tower, right? There were all gun towers around here....People used to come up the coast and from the other side of the harbor. Paddle over in canoes and some may have come down the coast in canoes. And they met over there. Well that area there before they developed it this golf course was a borrea ring (see Figure 4.3). Now a borrea ring is a corroboree initiation ceremony. And that was held in that area right over there. But, ignorance and not being educated into Aboriginal culture destroyed that as well. Now, the premier of the State, Bob Carr, when he was minister for environment, he's got a great habit of bush walking all around this place. So, I brought him over here one day and said, "Look you're the minister for the environment of the opposition in the government, so what are you going to do about this?" He said, "No one will ever destroy this." Just this little thing here. These little rock carvings (see Figure 4.4). They're not things like you see carved in, the animals and things like this, but they are significant holes. Now this, Greg Norman, a golfer and another guy, a big developer from up at the resort up Queensland somewhere, they came down here and they were going to put a club med set up right along here which would encompass the beach along here...

F: They would have taken these rocks right out.

S: *Yeah. So they could have come up with a jackhammer and took away this. But you know it is recorded for all times. Just this and this (pointing to the carvings) stopped that multi-million dollar project. And so they had a big meeting over there, all the environmentalists and friends of save this and save that. They said you know, what do you blacks got to offer. Well, we said Yeah, get off you asses and come up here and I will show you what we've got. And this stopped that multi-million dollar development. So uh, just little things like this in the years of time, as I have shown you the other day. These would be a lot older than what I showed you down the coast the other day, which is obvious because the levels of erosion over the years that took it away. Even down there, what you seen the other day that is almost gone. But, this is a lot tougher rock as well. It was specifically put here for the purpose of people to see.*

K: Well, how deep are these originally? Because these have to be worn down, but they are still deep ...

S: *Yeah, obviously they were cut down pretty deep, but time has just eroded them a little bit more. Now, when the bloke showed me this, the old bloke, he said, "I can't say how old they are, but they are hundreds and hundreds of years old." And you don't know what this undergrowth is covering as well, you know? And back up into that bush there. So, under the moss and bush and the growth there could be more. Now, just over the hill and up a little bit is where they rubbed the axes into the grooves in the rock. And uh, and down that other foreshore here there are caves and shelters. But people didn't necessarily live in caves. They put up a wind break when they were here at the time. The western wind blowing across here is freezing cold. So, Aboriginal people weren't cave dwellers. It just was a shelter at the time to cook like you seen the other day. So, they are down there. The archaeologists has recorded this and this uh, they will never take this away. And you know, if we were to put in a land claim tomorrow, and they know this very well.... that's why they have the "friends of Prince Henry or the friends of the environment" have become friends of the blacks so they can have us on side because they know while we've got this proof, they can't develop it.*



Figure 4.3 Former Ceremonial Meeting Place



Figure 4.4 Meeting Circle Carving

F: Cause you've got the goods.

S: *And this is all scrub and all that comes from not long back. They developed this in the late 60s. And there was nothing here. We just stopped 'em. Stopped millions and millions of dollars for going ahead. And they are really pissed off that they destroyed that initiation area. See they came from Karingi on the north side. They came from as far away as from a place called Ulladulla, down the south coast about a 130 miles south at a place called Pigeon House Mountain. So between there and here and Karingi they were the three known meeting places, say between here and another two hundred miles north. So, uh, you know probably a lot of people and people I bring here just to admire the view which it is beautiful....*

F: Well, how did they call a meeting?

S: *Well, the tribal grapevine so to speak. So we're all affiliated. I was telling Kathy, that all the tribes in this area as far away has the affiliation. It is a thing that has been developed for thousands and thousands of years. And they just know when the meeting time was because through generations they say, "well, the meeting is at La Pa this Year or they may go to Pigeon House Mountain" But they came here. Where that outcrop is over there, on that point, all that foliage over there. Remember the middens I showed you?*

K: Yeah.

S: *All the deposits of shells over the years where they feasted and danced in this area, fished and dived around here. And this has always been a good tucker, food source for us around here. Even for us through the 60s we would come around here and there was never any want for getting a feed from the sea. Cause, as I told Kathy, we had the best of both worlds living the east coast because we could either live from the sea or live off the land. Where our brothers from the desert, they are just hunters. And we've got the best. You haven't had the mutton fish yet. See, I showed Kathy these the other day. These, we call them pig face cause the plant, well the berry has two ears sticking up on it like a pig. Inside is a nectar, a very syrupy sweet nectar. And uh, they come out 2 or 3 times a Year. This here is just pain in the ass, this. This is introduced by Parks and Wildlife to uh help install growth in the area. It is a South African called bitu bush. Bitu, and it has just taken hold of everything. They are trying to destroy it further over, but it has just taken hold of everything. But it has just taken hold it just strangles the natural undergrowth.*

F: It's everywhere.

S: *Yeah, well they regret it now. A lot of it was done by helicopter drops. But they didn't realize the effect that it would take. So just this....*

F: It strange to see a green right there and here....

S: and here is history.

F: Doesn't it feel weird though to come out here and play golf on the lands of your ancestors?

S: *Oh, well we come out here knowing quite that this is our area and that we are free to walk on it. We could come here if we wanted and make a hullabaloo about it but we don't.*

This is our land, but you know It works both ways. See, some of the golf courses we could go and gather up golf balls to supplement a little money. Some of the kids are starting to become aware now they say get off this land you kids and they say look, this was our lands first and the green fees you are paying is just part of the rent.

F: Do you think that there will ever be a time when you will take it back. Take it back all the way, like take the golf course away?

S: *Oh, we may. I think the time will come that they will really recognize that the Aboriginal people do own the land and they will compensate. So, that's ok. It is sort of play as you pay plan, you know? But this is all coming back and it would be very hard. Because it was such a minority that, you know they screamed about the Mabo thing when that came into effect. They thought we were going to take their yard if you found a chicken bone and the blacks would claim that saying that it was a bone of their ancestors. I mean, they just got carried away with it and they didn't understand the significance of it. But people are standing up, the trendies and all that in the Vaulcluses on the north shore and all of that and saying, oh well you know the proof is.... See when they had this thing called terra nullis, land belonging to no one, it was just a great deceit because the Cooks and the Phillips and the first fleets came out here and they recorded all of this. For the life of me, I can't see how they went back to England and these artists drew up these pictures of the natives hunting kangaroos and declared that the land belonged to no one, claiming that there was no one there. It is just absurd. And this is when court judges stood up and said who are we trying to kid. But we still have our little klu klux klannish type things going on around here.*

Being Aboriginal on the inside and on the outside

Not only do the physical boundaries of La Perouse extend beyond the reserve, and even beyond Frenchman's Bay, they extend out into local suburbs including Botany, Matraville, Little Bay, Mascot, and Malabar. Due to a limited amount of housing at La Perouse, as well as extra-reserve social activities and employment, some Koories who grew up at La Perouse have moved off the reserve. All regularly return to visit family, work, or enjoy the company of friends at Yarra Bay Sailing Club. Some people return to La Perouse to take care of an aging parent, and remain there after the parent passes on, as most homes on the reserve are passed on from one family member to another. The following are excerpts from interviews with two different women. Although the interviews were conducted separately, they have been integrated into one another here by issues or comments common to each interview. Each woman's interview relates her own unique experience of what it means to be a Koori; however, their narratives come together around

the issues of health, education, and employment. Helen and Liz's lives convey the ways in which blatant racism has been translated and socialized into more subtle, but just as insidious, forms in contemporary society. Helen and Liz reflect on their experiences as they (respectively) talk about their lives both on and off of the reserve at La Perouse.

H: *Well, I'm a 45 Year old Koori woman. I've lived in Sydney all my life, La Perouse. I have 3 children and 4 grandchildren. All my life I lived on the Aboriginal reserve. And it wasn't until I had my children that I moved away from there. And I found it very difficult to move out into mainstream community because my neighbors have always been black and um, I ... I found a lot in my younger years, outside of the Aboriginal reserve, to prove myself. I was young andI wasn't stupid, but I was young and I didn't know. What I realized later, when I got older, that I done a stupid thing I shouldn't have done all those... lived like white people expected people to live. Like, because of otitis media⁸ we used to yell and every time we'd yell at one another in the house because that was all the go on the mission see, on the reserve. You just automatically done it for people to hear. And I used to say to the kids SHHH all the time. And that was no good for them mentally. And uh, they used to say mom you're always telling us to SHHH!. And I'm really sorry that I used to do that now. And I would sort of shield my kids from the neighbors and say play here or play there, don't go.... Because I was frightened by white people. That's the effect they had on us in those days, you know, years ago And I'm sorry I done it, but I didn't know what it was like to live out among white people. The only time I used to talk and mix with them was at school and then we'd come back to the reserve and mix with one another.*

L: *Like with otitis media, if that isn't picked up, then Like if a child comes in here and they've got some might consider as a behavioral problem, the first thing to be done is that their ears have to be checked out. Because if you can't hear, then you really can't learn. And if you're just in a system that you have to stay in, and um, until it's time to leave. Now, I was talking about Glen earlier, my youngest son. He had it. He's still got it. So he didn't he stayed in school as long as he had to and then he left. And that makes a difference to the rest of your life. So, physically, that child has to be well in the first place to be able to learn anyhow. And I think that that's one of the main things that they need to learn in the school. Where a non-Aboriginal child will have it maybe for 2 months of their life, an Aboriginal child will have it for at least 2 years. Now, he's had it from the time he was 1 and he's still got it. So you know, he hasn't got much hope, has he? Because you're not going to learn anything. And, you can play up in school. So I think, first of all and I know that they're busy and that they've got a lot of big classes and things, but that needs.... And that's one of the great things about a place like this, is that we find out about most of them before they get to school so that something can be done. And I've never ever done a, um, I've never ever kept a I mean it's all there, but it's not put into one, compiled into one thing on just how many children did have it and how many we did find out about. And others that followed up at the schools and things like that. Cause we didn't know Glen had it until he was in 3 class. He was sitting in the back of the class, but*

⁸ Otitis media is an extremely painful ear condition which not only impairs a child's hearing, but also often contributes to behavioral problems. Otitis media effects a disproportionately high number of Koori children.

he also needed glasses. So you know, they found out through this sister that came around to the I mean, I knew that he had it when he was a baby, but they said he'd grow out of it. And uh, oh he'd missed out. You're in third class, you're history. Already, you haven't learnt anything between there and there, so you know, he was never interested in school. They got rid of him as soon as, not that he didn't want to go.... But this is what happens so the child can't learn. And I think there has to be a special attention given to....

K: Helen, are you glad that you moved?

H: *Off that reserve? Yep. Seeing what it is today. Years ago it used to be lovely. There was all the sharing and caring and support. Um, there were no factions like you got now. And um, we were all one people. It's just shocking now. I don't think I could ever go and live back there now. And I'm independent. I'm not reliable on my people; I'm reliable on me. And I think that it has made me a much better person. And I realize that because since I've moved off the reserve and made a go of it, that I have a knowledge and my people come and ask me a lot of things because I know a lot of things. When I think about it, I do a lot more for my people than some because of my knowledge. Even though I'm not in a job, I'm talking about my people that I've grown up with, where I'm a community person and I should go help them, but they do come to me for things. They ask for me to write letters for them to keep em out of jail and uh, just tell them how to go about doing things. I do that a lot come to think of it. I just realized it, people come to me all the time. You don't realize what you do until you really lay it down to them. I've told them all anyway, but.... They bypass some of the workers that are in the community and come straight to me. It's probably not what you know, it's who you know. Because even though I've moved off the mission and I've made a go of it. I earn good money, but I still don't separate myself from my people. I still do the same as they do, drink with them, swear with them, growl with them. So, I didn't change me ways. I'm just a little better off than they are.... not that much, only living conditions.*

Our biggest, our biggest....people are dying from drug and alcohol, mainly alcohol. It is one of our biggest killers. And AIDS is on the rise and not much is being done about AIDS. Of course black people have this system, you had to have this system years ago, we kept everything to ourselves and we didn't share anything outside of our own people because the welfare system would take our kids away. But now we have got the freedom to speak, we should be able to go out and say these things, but the so-called representatives won't do it like they should. Cause if they did, we should.... we can get the assistance and help that we need for communities to fix up the health problem for Aboriginal people. We never have enough trained workers. We need lots and lots of training, and most of the people around, out in the communities, um, the selection criteria used to be just practically someone who can read and write and who lives in the community. And that is not good enough.... It's the best way to go, but they got to be training in associated with the position. And uh, the training of Aboriginal people, they are not utilizing the services around like they should be. Mainstream Australia too has to be accountable for what happening to our people. Racism is the biggest obstacle for our people in this country.

If an Aboriginal person is sick and needs to go to the doctor they won't until they are nearly dead. I don't know why. An Aboriginal person does not know what an emergency is. Pains in the chest are an emergency, but they don't think that. And they're embarrassed to ring an ambulance. But then again, they've had dealings with ambulance officers in the past who, if the diabetic is having a hypos, they say that they're drunk. But they always have said, no matter what is wrong with an Aboriginal person, they've always said that

they're drunks. It actually.... so we've changed all that, but even.... I'm sort of going around in circles, changing from one thing to another....

Diabetes has made a huge impact on Aboriginal people and it's getting out of control. Aboriginal people never experience those types of illnesses years ago because we lived one of the healthiest lifestyles in the world. We ate all the proper red meat like kangaroo and it had all the vitamins and we ate berries and all of that. But we did eat the right food. But now we're into all this greasy stuff, fast food stuff and so diabetes has just gotten out of control. Our main killer is heart disease and always has been. What else is there.... injuries caused by alcohol - drinking and driving and fighting and whatever they do. There's lots of suicide amongst our people. In one, I know of one community where in a Year there were about 86 suicides and um, when we spoke to one of the health workers there, as if it was nothing, she said we had 86 suicides but we had about 90 births. And how do you compare that? Warped, eh, way of thinking. Many, in remote areas, many if a housing project was set up in a mainstream society, the first thing they would do is they would get in and put roads in, water on, sewage, and everything else. But when an Aboriginal community develops, none of that happens. Now why? Why aren't we given the same treatment by councils as a white project that is going up? You know why? That's the question that we need to ask the government.

K: They don't understand [referring to the people who make budget and policy decisions affecting Koories] how it works and they don't want to understand.

L: *Nope, That's right, they don't. They've never been there, they don't know. I guess, there's a big need in this area, but I would have to say that there are bigger needs in other areas. And how people can say, like, hey make comments like "It's just the same a dole bludgers" and all this sort of thing, right? You know, some people, um, you know they.... some people can work.... other people.... You need a lot of things, we were talking about self-confidence for a start, being able to do the things you do. You know, like you have got to have that, to be able to go and mix with other people. Um, you know, when somebody says to ya, they don't want to go into the bank cause if they ask me a question I can't answer them. Or they won't go into the social security office, it's the worst place on earth you think half the time it's coming out of their pocket. I mean the attitudes of the people that are working in these places, that you have to go to a bank, you have to go to social securities and unemployment. You have to go to the CES and you have to do.... You might even have to go and see the doctor. So these things are there and for a person to be able to get up and go and do these things.... If you haven't got any self esteem, it's been knocked out of you, then how are you going to go and going to do these things? You know, it's not only about not looking for a job, but you can't even get yourself motivated to do it.*

I only ever went once to, you could go in where you can get you light bill paid or a food order or whatever from the Dept. of Community Services was then called FACS -- Family and Community Services -- in Maroubra. And somebody said, go on, you can get it done. So I was on the pension and I went in and this young girl about 24 was there, she saw me. And she said, well you know you really should learn how to budget. Now look, I reared 6 kids on mince, sunshine milk, and sausages and that's why they won't eat -- he hates sunshine milk and he hates mince because that's virtually.... That's what you got. But it went around and it made a solid feed and the milk lasted for 2 weeks until you got your next pay. And uh, so that was the lifestyle. And uh, I never asked them for anything. I'd do without and I'd get me light bill paid and I'd get whatever. And there's this young girl around 24 telling that how I should.... And she was going to sit down and tell me how to

do it. And I looked at her and said, "Come on it's time to go." And I asked her, "are you married?" She said, "yes." "Does your husband work?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Well let me tell you something, don't you dare sit there and tell me how to budget." I said, "I wouldn't get in two weeks what you would get for 2 days, so don't sit there and tell me how to budget my money." "Come on," I said, "I'm going." "No, No....," she said, "don't go." I said, "Yeah, I'm going. Come on out the door." She chased after me and said, "Look please come back" and she gave me the thing like that. I didn't want it. I said, "No I don't want it." She said look, "will you please take it." So, I took it. I didn't want to take it, I wanted to tell her to shove it, but you know. This is the attitude that you get from people there because she didn't have a clue, right. She did not have a clue. It was her and her husband and no children and I guarantee between em for two days I would have gotten less in two weeks that they got between em for two days. And that down there, to tell me how to budget. That was the first and last time. I never went back. And now you know why people won't go there; well people feel like, you know, there are the staff that are in these places are intimidating. So, that was it. I wouldn't, no way.

K: What type of experiences have you had personally with racism?

H: *Many indigenous people have 8 senses, and the 8th sense is when you can feel if someone doesn't like you before they even know you, feeling of hate, that just sends a shiver up your spine every time you feel it. So I haven't experienced much of it lately, but when I was a kid I did? You had to sit up at the back at picture theaters. We were called blacks and we were always put down because of our color. It was hard to find jobs. The worse racists are the British....*

When they talk about Aboriginal people, when I was in school, um, we were embarrassed when they talked about Aboriginal people but they only talked about an only small part of our history. Aboriginal people were never included in the education, uh, earlier in years they knew was background, history. It was always white people and because in their history books they say the first, for instance, the first man to cross the blue mountains was the three fellows, uh, Lawson, Wentworth, and somebody else, I don't know who they are. But, they weren't the first, uh, the first men over there were the Korries. But that was never recorded in history and it took a long time to make them aware of it. You know, and uh, but we used to feel really embarrassed about it, that's actually why they had um, what else?

L: *Well, sometimes when you look at the way the system is set up, although they've got in the curriculum now; there's Aboriginal studies and things that people do to learn, I think that some of it.... Some of it is true education, I mean You have to have education to be able to survive today. You have to have education to be able to get the jobs that, any job to be available you have to have an education, by the looks of things now. But you'll need to have degrees and things before you'll be employed and things. In, in, it's getting to be that way now. So, unless you go on through and you've done a really big but that's survival now. At the same time, while you're going off into those things, people tend to get away and get off into this, take them off into this area of where you're losing that back there. Now, anyone who wants to go anywhere, I believe, has to go back before they can go forward. When they do that, they know who they are, where they're from, and what it is that they have to do. They already know, so you're not missing anything. And that.... and the things missing out.... I'm an Aboriginal person, but I can't, I don't really know what I am or who I am, all I know is that my skin is darker or fair or I know my*

parents, I know where they were growing up as an Aboriginal person. But you have to go back to it. Really you have to find those roots before you can go ahead with confidence and be able to.... Once you do that, you can do anything. Anything at all that you put your mind to do.

H: *Yeah, but why should we do that? Why should we prove ourselves? Why should we? We know we can do it. I've said some things about education.... We've got some old people doing the same things with no education. But um, I don't think we should have to prove things. We know we can do it. Did it ever occur to anyone that we don't want to do those type of things?*

K: *One of the things that I have been asking people is if you ever knew that you were different growing up? Did you ever feel different from everybody else?*

H: *Only so, because we were restricted from accessing any of the mainstream services and things. See, I grew up on an Aboriginal reserve; that's where they put our people, and uh, I only knew my neighbors as being black. And uh, even though in this area, we -- because La Perouse School was the first school to accept Aboriginal people, uh, we mixed with the white people. We used to get called everything and that, but we used to bash em. So, we stood up for our rights. Because there was about 600 Korries in the school and uh, about 400 white kids it was much better for us.*

Well, I'll tell you what, I've got three kids and I encouraged them to go right through school. And the whole three of them said to me, "Why? We're not going to get a job." And I said, "What makes you say that?" "Well, who's going to hire a Blackfella?" that's what they said. I said, "Well I'm working." But then again, I'm employed by an Aboriginal, being paid through Aboriginal fund. So I guess, I might never have had a job if I didn't have this chance. But that is the perception of a lot of black kids. Because they can't get employment in mainstream services, only government departments You ever see many black people working in shops, banks, and um even garages.... you ever see it?

K: *No, and you don't see them on TV or in commercials or anything.*

H: *No, you don't see them anywhere. So, there is no real opportunity out there for black kids to get jobs in mainstream Australia. They just won't employ them.*

K: *Why do you think that is? Do you think it's ...*

H: *Because it's a racist attitude. And they've got this idea, they probably feel if they put a black fella in there no one is going to come into their shop.*

Chapter 5

In Reflection of Life Experience: A Discussion of the Formation of Koori Identity

Ethnohistories

Self-constructed identity begins with the individual. The life experiences of the individual, the narrative of her/his life, provide the backbone of who one is. The root of life experiences can be internally derived, such as the handing down of stories from mother to daughter, or it can be externally dictated by persons or systems which overpower one's life. For people at La Perouse, self-determined identity is constructed by negotiating internal and external forces. Life narratives reflect the ways in which people transfer externally imposed ideologies for being in the world into the internal constructions of self. Recounting one's ethnohistory is a method of identity exploration, creating a space where one can narrate one's identity without directly responding to the inquiry, "Who am I?" For instance, Bel and Alma's story of getting married can be heard as a story about family beliefs regarding virginity and marriage. Carlie's recollection of going to church with her Nan is a memory of the role that church played in her life. Simon's telling of his being separated from his family is part of his family's history. Helen's personal experiences living off the reserve provide insight into the ways that dealing with "white" people has influenced her life. For Liz, her personal experience with her son who is afflicted with otitis media illustrates how a health condition which dramatically effects Koori children can shape individuals' and families' lives and ultimately contribute to larger socio-cultural experiences.

Mention of feeling personally discriminated against did not typically come in the form of a discussion of racism. For the older women, Bel and Alma, their stories shied away from a direct discussion of discrimination in their own lives. When asked to talk about feeling discriminated against Bel responded, "*It never ever worried us. We were accepted wherever we went..*" Yet, both women talked about having to get permission

from the manager to travel away from the reserve and having to notify the manager if they had a visitor. In addition, they both told the story of how they were labeled “mission kids.” These elements of their personal narratives could be heard as incidents of discrimination, but they were not told in the specific context of narratives of discrimination. Rather, they can be understood in the context of a “protected” reserve life where contact with the dominant world was limited and being accepted anywhere one went was dependent upon the fact that the places one went were most often other Koori communities. Further, Bel and Alma’s preference to recount the treatment of Koories in general and their subsequent reluctance to frame their own experiences in terms of discrimination demonstrates the gap/gaplessness between self and community. Rather than recount their own experiences, they spoke in terms of how, in general, children were taken away from their families to become slaves in white homes. Alma recounts the story of adopting her daughter, but does not actively acknowledge that by adopting a six week old baby that was “dropped” on her, she was able to keep the baby out of the hands of the Welfare Board. On the other hand, she does acknowledge that by adopting the baby, she is not one of the many Koories searching for her “stolen” child.

The narratives in this text which are part of Bel and Alma’s life histories also reflect their generation. Bel and Alma lived in the shadow of a previous generation of Koories who were stripped of their traditional Koori identity and forced to acculturate in order to survive. As a result, the experiences of the next generation (Bel and Alma’s age group) reflect the ways in which Koories at La Perouse culturally and socially coped and survived in the face of assimilation. Discrimination was not something separately identified in Koori experience, but was Koori experience. As a result, the differentiation between being discriminated against and being accepted -- connecting discrimination, racial categories, and racism to the events in their lives -- becomes a defining agent in the narratives of the next generation of Koories at La Perouse.

Although Koori demand for recognition and equal treatment began in the late 1930s, it took more than thirty years for Koori people to be given permission to speak. Becoming citizens in 1967 was the first moment of “official” recognition and many changes in government policy were promoted following Koori citizenship. Citizenship was like giving a megaphone to people who were previously only heard in screams and shouts. The “daughters” and “sons” of Bel and Alma (i.e. Simon, Carlie, Nicole, Jean, and Helen) are part of this generation. The shift in identity consciousness among these individuals is illustrated in many of their personal narratives. Not unlike the narratives of Bel and Alma, Koori identity for their “daughters” and “sons” is constructed by “knowing one’s place.” For instance, Helen recalls quieting her children in order to blend into the white neighborhood in which she lived. Simon’s refusing to get the tomahawk for his father so that his father could get the reserve “police” out of their home is another example of more than just knowing right from wrong, but living the differences between being “black” and “white.” Shifting from “knowing one’s place” to determining one’s place is an important moment in the lives of this generation. Simon’s recollection of being paraded around Frenchman’s Bay for French diplomats on Bastille Day is a vivid memory of how he and other Koories were forced into the role of “good little black children” by the reserve managers. Accordingly, his family’s decision not to send him and his sisters to the monument for Bastille Day marks a moment of Koori consciousness for him. Simon explains, “*We just didn’t realize.... And the parents and that didn’t know because they [the reserve managers] were saying, ‘send your kids to school because they are going to go to the monument today’.... So one day, we just said, look get nicked. We’re not going down there.*” For Carlie, her memory of diving for pennies off the old wharf conjured an awareness of her Koori-ness. In the course of the group dialogue among Jean, Carlie, and Nicole, each takes turns pointing out how being black influenced their childhood experiences. In one instance, she reasons that the garbage tip was on the mission “*because*

we're black and they put it there." A second time, when Nicole talks about how the owner of the fish and chips shop gave them food everyday, Jean reflects, *"Yeah, because we brought business there for him. They came down to watch the black kids jump off the wharf."* These and other examples demonstrate how individuals' lived experiences can come together on a collective level to form a strong sense of community identity.

Common childhood experiences like those shared across genders and generations also become part of the ethnohistory of La Perouse, the people. Some of these commonalities are the result of cultural knowledge being handed down from one generation to the next. Such knowledge as which plants grow during which season or knowing what it means when the ti-tree blooms are part of a collective knowledge that is still passed down today. While there are few people who go through the stages of attaining "the Law" (the knowledge of the Dreaming which accompanies initiation rites), other ways of assuring cultural continuity are evident in the actions of people like Simon and Liz. Simon's commitment to sharing the oral history (both pre- and post- contact) of La Perouse with school age Koori children and adults contributes not only to a community consciousness, but also to individuals' ability to identify themselves and their history. Inside the classroom, Liz once again reinforces "traditional" Koori values by making sure that the toddlers in the community learn the often cited Koori principles of generosity, sharing, and community living. More than the formal dissemination of culture, a sense of community identity, meaning a sense of being from and of La Perouse, develops out of the overlap of life stories. Most common to all of the women interviewed is the experience of being single mothers for at least part of their children's lives. Women have looked to one another for support, love, friendship, and help no matter whether they had one child or nine. They are all collectively responsible for each other's children, in protecting and correcting them, as well as encouraging and raising them. Particularly true of the generation of "daughters" and "sons" discussed in this text, the presence of the Welfare Board and the threat of being

sent to an institution has united them in ways often unspoken. Furthermore, and most recently, political issues such as land claims and related areas of cultural reawakening have created an even stronger sense of community identity. Despite family factionalism, land claims for areas “down the bottom” (including the National Park around the golf course, the La Perouse museum, and Scenic Drive), have served to bring many individuals together in trying to find ways to use their cultural resources to strengthen the community’s economy and their individual talents.

Belonging to La Perouse, the place, means belonging to a particular set of social conditions, collective experiences, and internal relationships, all of which are determined by the interaction of ethnohistories. Bel and Alma’s recollections of life on the mission are part of the living history of the reserve. They have lived through the years of reserve managers, dog tags, and Welfare Officers. They have experienced the days when having food meant fishing off the rocks around Bare Island, having a job meant going to the biscuit factory, and having a family meant being a single mother among a network of friends and family. Many of their personal beliefs about Koories, spirits, and themselves reflect cultural continuity, as such beliefs and stories have been handed down to them from Nan to mother to daughter. Each of their lives has been affected by the personal tragedies that have impacted so many Koori lives across Australia. Yet, who they are in relation to the original inhabitants of the La Perouse area, their personal connections to the south coast and to the Timbery family legitimates their specific connection to La Perouse. Relations to the Timbery family also make family factionalism an important marker of community identity, as membership in the family is divided into Timbery or Timbery/Simms origins. Therefore, not only does being a Timbery authenticate one’s relationship to La Perouse, but being a Timbery also has its own familial politics.

The resurgence of cultural identity is not unique to people at La Perouse; rather, ethnogenesis in La Perouse is part of a larger trend among Koori communities throughout

Australia. Disclosure of individual experiences of “Koori-ness” has developed into collective community identities, and as such contributes to and forces the reconsideration of larger notions of Koori identities. Individual and collective identities of Koori reserves or communities, such as La Perouse, contribute to a national Koori identity. This does not mean that all Koori people or communities are the same, but rather that despite their varying geographical locations, similar social and cultural circumstances have resulted from their comparable structures and purposes. Thus, experiences of being forced onto a reserve, and having to leave one’s traditional land and ways of life connect most Koori people together. Further, personal narratives of being chased by Welfare Officers and taken away from one’s parents, like those shared by Simon, Carlie, and Nicole, are shared by thousands of Koori people all over Australia (see Edwards & Reed 1989; Morgan 1987; Simon 1978; Gilbert 1994). The importance and need for such organizations as Link-Up and the growing numbers of books, songs, art, and dance that have become so integral to self-constructed identity are testaments to the destructive impact of colonial and neo-colonial policies on Koories in general. Being Koori, being able to offer proof of Koori-ness, as Simon does by sharing his cultural knowledge of medicinal plants, bushtucker, and important physical markers of the history of Koori presence in La Perouse, brings a prescriptive, personally informed, yet often unexplored understanding of Koori identity into a public forum. The individual voices in this text describe the ways in which Koori identity has been and is determined not only by culturally specific knowledge, but also by external forces related to La Perouse, the place.

Survival: Accommodation and Differentiation

La Perouse, the reserve itself, represents a colonial attempt to separate Koori from non-Koori. It represents the Commonwealth’s efforts to take care of the “Aboriginal problem” by creating loci of control where assimilation policies set the standard of

behavior. Ironically, while the reserve was an externally imposed location for the construction of “Koori-ness,” it also created a space for the internal construction of Koori identity. Helen’s words go far in explaining how and why Koories had to adapt and differentiate. She says:

Of course black people have this system, you had to have this system years ago, we kept everything to ourselves and we didn't share anything outside of our own people because the welfare system would take our kids away. But now we have got the freedom to speak, we should be able to go out and say these things...

The reserve, while structurally an Anglo-Christian domain of assimilation, over time became a Koori domain for cultural continuity, differentiation between themselves and the dominant culture, as well as a site of differentiation between themselves and other reserves or Koori communities. The geo-social context of the reserve fostered an environment where a dual strategy of cultural survival in the form of transformation and exterior behavioral adaptation could co-exist. Adoption of assimilation strategies, such as avid church going, conservative Anglo-style dress, and employment in unskilled mainstream jobs, occurred alongside a specifically Koori kinship system and a more community-centered economy. These seemingly contradictory lifeways were significant to the formation of Koori community and personal identity. In addition, in the larger scheme of reserves, La Perouse -- the place -- was created by the Commonwealth as a “window dressing” reserve (see Parbury 1986), the Commonwealth’s example of how well Koories were treated. This notation served as a stigma which differentiated La Perouse from other Koori communities in Sydney, such as Redfern, Blacktown, or Paramatta.

Missionaries and reserve managers valued and rewarded behaviors and appearances which promoted and evinced assimilation. Christianity, or at least the missionaries, was the primary marker of La Perouse when it began, despite the fact that there was never mention of the missionaries’ denominational affiliation. Although La Perouse was a mission for only three years before it was secularized into a reserve, the church and Christianity remained a strong influence on the community. In addition, identification with

and distinction between the mission and the reserve has remained strong. Both Simon and Helen, in their narratives, suggest the shift in language (or lack of shift) from “mission” to reserve. In the midst of our bushwalk, Simon notes, “...we’ve got all that land up top there where the mission is. We shouldn’t say the mission because.... See how it is still inbred in us? Cause the missionaries came in and said, ‘Well, this is known as the mission.’” In a less direct way, Helen also carefully abandons the term “mission” for the term “reserve” when describing life at La Perouse. In conversation, the words “mission” and “reserve” are often used interchangeably when referring to La Perouse. However, when one speaks of a particular residential location, a distinction is made between homes on the mission and on the reserve. Nonetheless, the Christian ideologies which were fostered both in the time of La Perouse “the mission” and La Perouse “the reserve” remain part of the living memory of the community. Bel and Alma recall that their mother was a very Christian lady. She, like many Koori women of her time (circa early 1900s), not only attended church regularly, but also traveled to revival activities in various parts of Australia. Bel and Alma recall being taken along on trips and the power of prayer that brought them the money to travel. The influence of Christianity and the role that the church played in the community was still significant in Carlie, Nicole, and Jean’s young lives (circa mid-1900s). The dynamics of the church changed through the years, as the missionaries’ denomination was replaced with the Aboriginal Christian Church which sits on the corner of Elaroo and Adina streets today (see map of La Perouse figure 4.1). Most people who grew up on the reserve can, like Carlie, recall going to church with their Nans and mothers. Some were married in that church, while others’ children attend Sunday school regularly.

Today, as Bel and Alma suggest, people don’t go to church as much; however, the church still plays an important role in La Perouse’s community structure. Ironically, the church, which is at its root a “whitefella’s” way, is also a place of escape from other destructive “whitefella’s ways.” The church, the programs it offers, and the buildings and

grounds connected to it have become a haven for children who have few other places to gather, and for those trying to combat the use of drugs and alcohol. The lack of a community center or funding for youth organizations leaves the youths of La Perouse without an outlet for social activities. As a result, children between the ages of four and eleven gather in the yard of the church or on the street in front of the church to play ball, ride bikes, and meet up with friends. The church and the associated buildings become not only a haven for children who have no other safe gathering place, but also a substance-free zone. Connected to the church is a building which serves as a home for the former pastor's wife and daughter and various members of their family. Their daily presence at the church and their prohibition of vices such as gambling and alcohol help facilitate the security of the community's children. Like the former pastor's wife and daughter, those involved in church related activities are typically those who do not regularly participate in the pub social scene.

In small ways, such as style of dress, and in larger ways, such as ideas about chastity, virginity and employment, Christianity and dominant British traditions serve as mechanisms of social control at La Perouse. Bel and Alma tell of how their mother used to dress up to go shopping or to the races. Despite the lack of food and clothes that often accompanied life on the reserve, hats, gloves, and stockings were part of the standard fashion for "ladies," and any "respectable woman" during that time would have been ashamed to leave the house without such accessories. This type of dress gave the outward appearance that Koories had adopted "whitefella" ways and was necessary in order for Koories to be allowed to function in dominant society. Other such markers of adaptation to white ways can be seen in Alma and Bel's recollection of their weddings. Their mother's emphasis on virginity and her fear of the shame that a pre-wedding pregnancy might bring are a reflection of values reinforced by Christianity, weddings were rarely formal affairs before contact. According to Simon, a man and woman might get together and have a child

and they may or may not marry, but the child's father would be recognized and the child would often be given the father's surname in order to assure that a particular name line would continue. In addition to the "moral values" which were reinforced by the church, certain social values were encouraged by the structure of reserve life. One element of reserve life was a time structure unfamiliar to Koories. The day was divided into times to work and times to rest. Work, however, did not imply performing the subsistence activities as it had before contact, but rather it translated into hours of manual labor, while subsistence activities were performed during rest times. This sense of time translated into a generic Protestant work ethic which defined work via a capitalist economy, money as reward for work done. In reality, however, money owed to Koori workers was often paid into a reserve trust rather than given as payment in hand, and often workers received only a fraction of that money. Fractional payments did little to offset the cost of living and other needs of families; yet still, some form of work for wage was a requirement of the reserve.

In order to receive rations and remain in one's home, all able bodied members of the household had to be involved in some form of labor. Due to racist hiring practices and lack of Koori access to education, employment opportunities often take the form of menial labor. Like Bel and Alma, many women took jobs at local factories or at the hospital. Men, on the other hand, took jobs on the docks or on city construction crews. Many people at La Perouse can identify someone in their families who worked on the Sydney bridge project, as well as other city public projects. Others worked on fishing boats, traveling away from the reserve for many months of the year. Today, as Helen and others suggest, many young people who are of the age to work cannot find suitable employment. Although some Koories have been able to penetrate mainstream employment opportunities, most people who choose to work are still forced to participate in the secondary labor market as unskilled, semi-permanent, and nonessential workers. With few exceptions, the disparity between those who work in the specialized job market and those who participate

in the secondary labor market can be segmented along racial and ethnic lines. Not only does this contemporary pattern of employment for Koories mirror the past, but the continuity of Koories in peripheral jobs is largely responsible for the general class disparity between Anglo-Australia and Koories.

In many respects, Koori resistance to the employment opportunities available to them is part of a vicious cycle. The lack of suitable jobs for Koories provides little impetus for school age children to learn or even attend school. Many children leave school as early as possible, around the age of 16, claiming that it does not help them get jobs and they do not learn anything of use to them as Koories. As Liz points out, it is almost imperative that one have an education to be eligible for any type of job today. Not only do limited employment opportunities have socio-economic consequences, but they also demonstrate a continual underestimation and devaluation of Koori abilities. While some members of La Perouse work in the mainstream (meaning for non-Koori employers), most people are employed by other Koories, work for themselves, or are employed through ATSIC funded Community Development Employment Programs (CDEPs). Types of employment include work as musicians, journal editors, caterers, construction workers, office staff, and artisans. Employment is an arena where the internal and external constructions of identity often come head to head, as people must choose whether to stay within the community for work or take a job in the mainstream.

Adaptation to the dominant culture does not necessarily equate with assimilation. Rather, as Sider (1994) and Hill (1994) suggest, loci of assimilation, such as the reserve, often serve as loci of differentiation. By binding Koories to La Perouse for residency, the Commonwealth created an environment where Koori culture could be transformed and continued. With controlled access to mainstream services, employment, and social activities, La Perouse developed into a community where Koories could, within certain restrictions, be Koories. Evidence of La Perouse's differentiation from the dominant

Anglo world is revealed in explanations of kinship, maintenance of ties with the reserve, and the predominant identification of bi-cultural children with their Koori heritage. Contemporary kinship ties can be viewed as a transformation of “traditional” extended family social relations; however such an analysis is not the purpose here. Rather, present day kinship structure can be explored as both a response to an oppressive Commonwealth assimilation policy, as well as a means of maintaining a sense of Koori family and community identity.

Many contemporary Koori households are headed by women, either mothers, aunts, nans, or some combination of these categories. Women tend to be the child rearers, the home keepers, and the bread winners. Households are commonly composed of multiple generations of extended family, and even distantly-related family who are without other accommodations until a house is designated for them. In one case, two families live in a four bedroom home. Each family consists of a husband and wife and two children. In addition, members of the extended family live there as well. Since housing on the reserve is limited and there is an extensive waiting list for Koori designated housing off the reserve, multiple generations and families living under one roof are not unusual. While this type of arrangement is less than optimal, it does attest to the strong sense of community belonging and commitment to one another. The husband in the second family was born and raised in La Perouse, thus community sensibility dictates that he and his family always have a place at La Perouse despite any overcrowding problems.

Another important aspect of contemporary family organization is the “adoption” of children. Alma and Bel refer to one another as sisters, yet they do not have a common parent (they are distantly related). Alma tells of how Bel came to live with her and how Bel has always been her big sister. Intra-family “adoption” was not unusual during Bel and Alma’s generation, as it served as a method for protecting a child from being taken away to an institution for “neglect.” During the most oppressive decades of assimilation tactics,

children were often taken away from their family and put into institutions or white homes. Welfare officers, as mentioned by Nicole, Carlie, and Jean, were common “visitors” to La Perouse, and a good deal of time was spent evading them. However, evasion was not always possible and almost every Koori at La Perouse has been either directly or indirectly affected by the forced removal of children. In response to the Commonwealth’s policy of removing children, Koories at La Perouse began to take care of their own, meaning that if a child was at risk of being taken away, an alternative was found before the Welfare Officers could come for the child. Sometimes, children were sent from other communities to La Perouse to live with grandmothers or aunts, while at other times children were sent to family down the coast. In addition, if one member of the family was experiencing problems, such as legal, health, or personal problems, another member of the family would step in and become the primary guardian of that child in order to keep the child out of the Welfare system. Despite all efforts, however, some children like Simon and his siblings and Carlie were still removed from their homes. The removal of children has had dual effects on the community. On one hand, removal broke up families, devastated community and cultural continuity, and more fully acculturated Koori children into “whitefella’s ways.” On the other hand, for some, it has created a stronger sense of identification with La Perouse. In addition, inquiries made by Koories, who were “stolen” and are now returning to find out who they are, have prompted a resurgence of interest in Koori culture in the community.

In addition to the expansion of familial relations, lifetime maintenance of ties to the community is also a significant element of Koori identity at La Perouse. For people like Helen and Simon, who neither work nor live on the reserve, staying connected with La Perouse is very important. Helen and Simon, respectively, play pivotal roles in the community as culture brokers. Both have extensive experience in dealing with “whitefella” ways and as a result, other members of the community often go to them for advice or help.

Despite their living off of the reserve, both Helen and Simon are often found visiting their families or being with friends. Helen was emphatic about the fact that living off the reserve does not make her different from anyone else. On-reserve/off-reserve relationships are only one aspect of community solidarity. A second, which runs counter to the Commonwealth's plan to "breed out" color is the lack of phenotypic conformity on the reserve. While Anglo-Australia distinguishes "black" from "white" or Koori from Australian in a binary fashion, Koories at La Perouse only distinguish between Koori and non-Koori. These distinctions have both intra- and extra-community political and legal significance. A child born of a Koori woman and a non-Koori man (or visa versa) is a Koori, as far as other Koories are concerned, despite the child's physical characteristics and mixed biological heritage.

As discussed in the introduction, descent or ancestry have both legal and local consequences. Although membership in a community and the praxis of being Koori are important to determining one's identity as a Koori, having a Koori parent is a major determinant for legal government purposes. Being a descendent of a Koori woman or man makes one eligible for housing, financial aid, and other social services not necessarily available to the larger Australian population. Locally, however, a second mode of cultural identification which can be understood in terms of ethnicity, meaning the cultural practices one chooses to follow and ways in which a person chooses to live is the most important criteria. Most people who inter-marry do not move off of the reserve; rather, the non-Koori spouse comes to live at La Perouse. On the level of day-to-day cultural praxis, the moving of the non-Koori spouse into the Koori community is a symbol of her/his acceptance of the ethnic component of Koori identity. Family operates on several inter-related levels, the individual and his/her family, one family to another, and the community family as a whole. Acceptance into the community at La Perouse is accompanied by a set of fictive kin relations that reflect the way in which the boundaries of community identity

are flexible. In addition to the internal self-construction of Koori identity among the people of La Perouse, the place -- the reserve and beyond -- reflects the contradictions between an externally constructed identity and a self-acknowledged ethnohistory.

Negotiating and Deconstructing the Socio-Geography of La Perouse

Just as “Aborigines” were named, categorized, and distinguished by colonists, so was La Perouse. While the Koori name for La Perouse was not shared with me, information gathered on my bushwalk with Simon suggests that Koori people have been using the land and natural resources of Kamay, the Koori name for Botany Bay, for a very long time. The physical evidence of early Koori use (see figures 4.3 and 4.4) still exists, and their whereabouts and significance are known to men who have received some part of “the Law.” In addition, the cultural significance of specific sites in and around La Perouse, the location of those sites, can be seen as loci of resistance to the dominant culture’s attempts to erase local Koori history. The area around La Perouse, according to local history, has always been known as a good fishing location and was a place seasonally visited by clans of Koories traveling from down the coast either for subsistence or ceremonial purposes. There are other sites aside from the two in figures 4.3 and 4.4; however, for various reasons they can no longer be seen. Several rock carvings in the area were carved on water-level rock shelves which are now submerged due to a rise in the sea level. One of the oldest known carvings in the area now lies partially destroyed, underneath the cement foundation of a tourist-attracting restaurant. The destruction of markers such as these, as well as the account that Simon gives of his participation in halting the potential Greg Norman golf club, are issues that are almost daily being taken up all over Australia under the Native Title Act.

Native Title was the basis of the Mabo decision which ultimately declared *terra nullis* a false legal framework for the occupation and usurpation of indigenous lands by

non-indigenous people. The result of the Mabo decision was that indigenous people who could demonstrate a historical and continuous connection to the land were entitled to either be compensated for non-indigenous use of the land or to have the land repatriated to the community demonstrating “ownership.” Native Title is similar in purpose to Cultural Resource Management legislation, such as Native American Graves and Protection and Repatriation Act in the United States. It is under Native Title laws that lands can be both protected and legally destroyed, and more importantly, local Land Councils are given a voice in which to request the return of traditional Koori lands. Native Title has given Koori people all over Australia a legal vehicle for speaking out against mis-use of land. Beyond fighting for the return of the land itself, the Mabo decision and Native Title law give Koori people a legal mechanism for resistance to dominant culture. This resistance is directed not only to environmentally unfriendly and culturally destructive uses of land, but also against Anglo-constructed notions that Koories only exist in the outback.

In addition to the legal modes of resistance, personal narratives evince the ways in which the community and individuals in the community have pushed the boundaries of what is legally recognized as Koori land. While the reserve technically belongs to the Koori members of the La Perouse community, other significant areas in Kamay do not. One such land negotiation continues in La Perouse, as the founding families -- the Timberys and the Simmses -- are trying to set aside family factionalism in order to put in a joint claim for the area “down the bottom,” including the museum, and the Parks and Wildlife area which is north of the reserve and across the road. Contrary to the external, legal boundaries of La Perouse, which are marked both literally and figuratively by Anzac Parade, the community’s sense of “ownership” of and connection to the land is much more vast. As a result, non-Koori controlled lands become sites of resistance. Despite the fact that Koori “ownership” of culturally significant land has been mainly restricted to the reserve and the area between Yarra Bay and the cemetery, people at La Perouse are in some

respects fortunate. Unlike many Koories who were removed from traditional lands by several hundred miles, the reserve around La Perouse was built on traditional lands. As a result, many local Koories have been able to maintain some relationships (although restricted) with the land and with familial and cultural relations down the coast.

La Perouse, while it is considered a suburb of Sydney, has remained peripheral due to its limited resource possibilities and distance from urban culture. In the early days of settlement, when colonists were focused on agriculture, La Perouse had little to offer due to the sandy nature of the soil. As a result of unsuitable soil, the reserve jobs revolved around fishing rather than agriculture. However, as the fishing industry grew into a national business, Koori access to fishing as a way to supplement their diet, as well as a form of employment, was restricted. While those who knew which tributaries had an abundance of aquatic life still were able to supplement their diets with fish, those who had depended on fishing for employment were forced to find work in the unskilled labor market as factory workers, construction hands, boat loaders, and ward maids at the local hospital. Today, aquatic life around La Perouse is virtually non-existent due to water pollution. In addition, the collection of marine life for subsistence is strictly controlled by the government so as not to pose a threat to the national fishery economy.

La Perouse was established on land associated with the cultural tradition of the South Coast people who were forced to reside there. As Iris Williams, Gloria Ardler, Bel, and Alma's descriptions suggest, housing on the mission and in Happy Valley did not provide adequate space or conditions for the number of people inhabiting each home. Living conditions on the reserve were brought up to code in the early 1970s when the third set of mission homes were built. As the housing boundaries shifted up the hill from the beach and out of Happy Valley, and more land became available, Koories began building their own homes around the periphery of the mission on land that was set aside by the Commonwealth for the Koories at La Perouse. These "squatter" type homes were

fashioned out of hessian sacks [sack cloth], scraps of corrugated iron, and timber. Being given a piece of land and maintaining a housing structure was vital to a family's proof of ownership. The fence that separates the mission from the reserve is symbolic of the division between the "mission kids" and the other children at La Perouse. While Alma and Bel's story of how their friend's mother cut her long hair because she was playing with the "mission kids" could be read as an economic differentiation between those on and off the mission, it is most importantly an incident which reflects the intra-community politics of La Perouse. While those living on the mission have a permanent residence which will remain in the family from one generation to the next, they do not have the freedom to buy or sell their homes or the land upon which their houses rest. However, since those living off the mission in the early years were eventually granted specific parcels of land, there is potential for intra-community differentiation, as those tracts can and have been sold to non-Koories. Not only does the selling of property invite non-Koories into La Perouse, it also can be the source of intra-community economic division, as those families selling their properties have an economic opportunity not open to those living in mission homes. Thus, internal factionalism is heightened by intra-community economic divisions. Disputes over housing, who sits on the community council, and what should be done to make La Perouse a healthier environment for the children can be traced along family lines.

Regardless of internal factionalism and intra-community politics, externally constructed and maintained bounded access points, such as Anzac Parade and the gate at the front of the reserve, served as reminders of Commonwealth control over Koori behavior and culture. Ironically, crossing Anzac Parade to walk up Links Road, despite the criminalized repercussions, became a form of opposition to the reserve structure that was set up by the government and enforced by the local reserve manager and his police aides. Simon explains that as children, they used to sneak up Links Road into the Parks and Wildlife area. He remembers that "*when we were kids it just meant something to us.*

We would go over there, boys and girls, and we would go out all through.” Just as there are reminders of pre-contact culture around the Botany Bay area of La Perouse, there are also loci of cultural transformation for those who grew up on the reserve. Places such as the wharf, Congwong Beach, Bare Island, the Paragon, and other non-residential areas, most of which no longer exist (except for Congwong Beach and Bare Island), were markers of their life and culture on the reserve. While some of their memories include places away from the general area of the reserve, the majority of events and experiences that people recall take place within the internally constructed confines of La Perouse. It is not only land off the reserve that has been appropriated by the dominant culture for its own economic benefit; it is also land on the reserve. Today, small heaps of various refuse still surface between the scrub that grows on the southern beach side of the reserve. Everyone reminds each other to be careful walking through that area because there have been HIV contaminated needles found out there. The needles do not come from the spoils of local drug use, but rather are remnants of the garbage tip that Jean, Carlie, and Nicole can so vividly remember smelling on summer mornings during their childhood.

Despite the well documented pre-contact connection with lands and areas beyond the reserve, both the reserve area and lands around it have been used and controlled by non-Koories since the time of colonization. The first mission was built on the beach of Frenchman’s Bay, and subsequent reserve housing was built in two separate locations away from the beach. Alma, Bel, and Simon all recount stories of how the area now controlled by Parks and Wildlife was used by the government either for unemployment housing, army barracks, or to control Koori access to historically significant and culturally important areas on the grounds. Other uses of land such as the four golf courses which fill the coastal inlets of Botany Bay, a cemetery, a chemical packing plant, an oil refinery, a jail, and the Sydney airport have all impacted not only the ability of Koories to access certain areas but have also transformed their use of natural resources as dietary supplements

and their cultural activities. More importantly, such externally determined uses of land represent the general disregard for the needs and wants of Koories at La Perouse. In places where there were once enough mutton fish, conks, and pennywinkles to feed anyone whose weekly rations fell short, now there is little to be found. Parks and Wildlife, according to Simon, now controls an area of Koori land which was significant to local medicinal practitioners for the plants that once grew there, as well as to the passers through as a traditional camp ground. Sand taken out of one area of the National Park was used to build the third runway at the Sydney airport. According to Liz, the removal of sand destroyed an area of the National Park where wildflowers and other significant bush foods used to grow. For a time, the boundaries of Koori residences were extended to include Happy Valley where some Koori families like Bel's lived until housing became available on the reserve. Land has always been important to indigenous Australians, as it has been a consistent reminder of the Dreaming for thousands of years. However, for the people of La Perouse, boundaries, memories, and experiences with/on the land are more than mere connections to the Dreaming. Land on the reserve, La Perouse -- the place -- is a significant element of local Koori identity. Land in and around La Perouse represents Koori contestation over the bounded-ness of the category "Koori" and establishes the past and present of Koori connections to this southeast coastal region.

Chapter 6

Bringing it All Together

The Colonial Legacy

The present day identity of Koories in La Perouse has its roots in the emergence of the British colony in Sydney. Perhaps then, it is significant to begin this conclusion with a discussion of Koori identity formation by examining the impact of colonial settlements, policies, and ideological constructions on “others” outside of Australia. The “settlement” of Australia by the English in the early 1800s is only a small incident in a colonial “story” that the British spread to continents across the globe. Smedley (1993) has suggested that English colonial powers imposed the world’s most rigid and lasting racial orders. Like Australia, submerged nations in South Asia, Africa, India, and even pre-American Revolution United States have paid and, in some cases, still are paying the price for English domination (see Fesl 1993 for a further discussion of the connections between Australia and the global political economy of British colonialization). Domination implies power of one over another. It implies that one country, society, culture, or individual has the power to make value judgments about what are the “right and wrong” ways to live.

The common colonial heritage of Australia and the United States distinctly marks the parallel social and cultural histories and consequences in the two nations. The worldview that British colonialism imposed upon indigenous Australians is not unlike the colonial vision of racial order in the United States. Upon learning that I was from “the States,” Koories were quick to describe themselves as similar to “the Indians” in my country. On the other hand, Koories shuttered at my suggestion that their social and cultural status is also similar to African-Americans in the U.S. This was not surprising though, since what Koories in La Perouse knew about African-Americans tended to be derived from Hollywood depictions of gangs, “the hood,” police shows, and inter-racial conflicts. I would suggest, however, that both countries’ preoccupation with defining

“indian-ness” and “blackness” as “otherness” has not only reinforced rigid racial categories, but also contributed to the understanding of “whiteness” as defined in opposition to non-white categories. With this in mind, one can find many socio-historical and socio-economic parallels between Koories and Native Americans and Koories and African-Americans.

The mention of Native Americans to Koories in La Perouse brought not only questions about how Native Americans have been treated by the U.S., but also prompted them to explain to me the similarities between the two indigenous populations. The examples they cited included not only the high rates of unemployment, alcoholism, domestic violence, and poor living conditions, but also noted both countries’ inclination to disregard the cultural heterogeneity of both Koori and Native American cultures. In addition, legal and political struggles over land, return of sacred artifacts, and self-determination were points of common experience. As in Australia, Native Americans suffered from cultural intolerance and insincere colonial promises. Neither the colonial regime of Australia nor the United States was committed to assimilating its indigenous people. Each country treated its indigenous people as “dying breeds” to be captured for all posterity by social scientists and encouraged through warfare, “assimilation” policies, and government laws to adapt to the dominant way of life or die quickly. Indigenous Americans were removed from their land, and like Koories suffered from “assimilation” policies were meant to convert them to colonial ways rather than syncretize or accommodate their already established complex cultural patterns. Language, physical boundaries (reserves), and education were the predominant means of acculturating both indigenous populations. Reserve life for both populations has resulted in similar social conditions and circumstances which include inequitable housing, insufficient medical facilities and educational institutions, and poverty. On each of the two countries’ cultural landscapes, government and social science’s inattention to the growing population of urban and

suburban indigenous communities have contributed to the invisibility of Koories and Native Americans in contemporary society. In addition, similar health problems such as diabetes, otitis media, heart disease, and suicide suggest that colonial culture has not only transformed the socio-cultural circumstances for indigenous people in Australia and the United States, but also seriously impacted the physical well being of these groups.

The parallels between Koories and African-Americans are both historical and contemporary. While there are seemingly few similarities between the two groups on the surface, they each have historically and presently struggled over many of the same issues. While there was no formal slave economy in Australia, the early economy of the colony was built upon Koori labor, just as the agricultural economy of the United States was built upon the backs of Africans stolen from their homeland. The post-colonial era in each country has brought about a matrix of neo-colonial social and cultural circumstances. Both countries have been left with rigid racial categories which have meaningful consequences in the lives of the subaltern non-whites. Experiences, such as legalized segregation and inequality under the law, which led to the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., also prompted Koories in Australia to demand equality. It is no coincidence that Koori civil rights uprisings followed shortly after the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. Nor is it an accident that the Koori movement followed many of the same patterns, as Koories looked toward African-American Civil Rights leaders for examples and movement strategies.

In addition to the historical connections between Koories and African-Americans, each group shares many similar experiences in the communities in which they live. Race and class are not mutually exclusive phenomena; together they have consequences in the everyday lives of people. While white Americans, like many Anglo-Australians, have been economically prosperous, non-white status has in many cases become synonymous with poverty (meaning both Native- and African- Americans and excluding groups who Brodtkin

Sacks [1994] and Morsy [1994] have termed honorary whites). For many Koories and African-Americans alike, socio-economic status creates a physical, cultural, and social bounded-ness. Like Koories, many African-Americans live in neighborhoods where there is a critical mass of people like themselves. Like Koories at La Perouse who suffer from environmental racism, many urban African-American neighborhoods are considered “undesirable” spaces by the city because they are close to factories or other environmental hazards. Due to lack of jobs, inequitable hiring practices, and insufficient educational opportunities there is often no immediate way out of such living conditions. Both populations have suffered from the criminalization of certain behaviors including the use of slang, the donning of certain styles of clothing, and the use of certain body language. Further, both Koori and African-American spaces are over policed and the men of each population are at a high risk of incarceration.

For Koories, whose lives have been shaped by the colonial legacy of British imperialism, the present era is a time of heightened cultural, social, and political consciousness. Like Native and African-Americans, Koories are finding their voices legally, literarily, musically, politically, socially, economically, and culturally to contest not only the socio-cultural conditions of their communities, but to resist and problematize the socially constructed categories which have for so long bound them to a lower status. Koories, like Native and African-Americans, are demanding not only lip service from their respective governments, but commanding action. Most importantly, each group is experiencing an ethnogenesis which is disrupting the status-quo and requiring dominant culture to deconstruct and re-think not only racial categories themselves, but also the cultural and social consequences of socially constructed notions of race, class, and ethnicity. Subaltern identities in both Australia and the United States are in a constant state of negotiation via categorical contestation, social transformation, and cultural revitalization. The re-negotiation of identity, however, is not limited to Australia and the United States;

rather, as the increasing influx of journals such as *Identities* and “ethnic” studies programs suggests, subaltern ethnogenesis is a global phenomenon. Thus, this exploration of Koori identity formation in La Perouse provides a micro-cosmic window through which to examine the ways in which the global political economy of race, racialized ethnicities, and other socially constructed categories (class and gender) are being lived, accommodated, and contested in both theoretical and real ways.

Koori Ethnogenesis, Why Now?

As Sider (1994) suggests, people often show reticence in exploring who they are unless externally motivated to do so. Thus, one makes momentary attempts to give structure and form to experiences which inform a sense of self, providing an ethno-history. In the past, Koori ethno-histories have had little legitimacy in the eyes of researchers and members of the dominant Anglo-society, which has been placing labels on and making decisions for Koories for over two centuries. However, a Koori ethnogenesis is underway as Koori voices are spoken, sung, written, danced, painted, and recorded. As a result, historically constructed notions of Koori identity are problematized and are being reconsidered. The chasm between the Koori and Anglo worlds both grows and shrinks in the face of a strengthening Koori self-constructed identity. Thus, the bounded-ness of “Koori” becomes dependent upon Koori people’s personal and interpersonal power to recreate themselves. The contradictions present in the narratives of this text demonstrate not only the multiple consciousness of Koori people, but also underscore the complexity of the boundaries of “Koori.” Borders are both erased and created, and each group has to come to terms with its own history. Most significantly, however, in the process of negotiating the erasure/creation of identity, each group encounters and, in some cases, becomes accountable for constructing “the Other’s” history.

Anglo people must come to terms with the ways that they have used their organizational and structural powers to disempower and transgress Koori cultural identity. Furthermore, Anglo-Australia needs to reflect on the ways in which its behaviors, ideas, and stereotypes have created, or more accurately, externally constructed widely accepted notions of Koori identity. A rising awareness of Koori people in general has forced Anglo-Australia and the Australian government to, at least in a historical sense, be held accountable for their treatment of Koories. Such things as the Royal Commission's Inquiry into Deaths In Custody and Inquiry into Separation have made public a history of domination that until now non-indigenous Australia has been able to gloss over by silencing Koori voices. These voices have gained power and have become both tools and weapons for recreating notions of "Koori." These voices contribute to the acquisition of Koori power not only to reclaim their identity on individual and community levels, but also to gain recognition of their own history and the country's indigenous cultural heritage on a national level.

At this moment in the transformation of Koori culture, tracing, legitimating, and exploring one's individual or collective sense of Koori identity are necessary to the process of reclamation of land and more importantly to the process of broader public recognition. In the face of Native Title laws which stipulate and define who is a Koori and how an individual or community must proceed to be recognized as such, the need to prove, explain, categorize, and define oneself and/or one's community becomes paramount. For people in La Perouse, this has led to an interest in recording the remaining Tharawal words still in use and known to the older members of the community. It has also led to a local interest in providing bushwalks and river tours of the La Perouse and southern coastal areas in order to inform both Koories and non-Koories about the indigenous history of the areas, and the connections between them. Raising awareness of Koori heritage has also peaked the interest of mainstream Australia in the realm of material culture. Koori-made

artifacts, including boomerangs, paintings, carvings, and other wares, have been incorporated into the trendiest households of the mainstream. In addition to land claims and mainstream recognition of Koori cultural artifacts, the reuniting of separated relatives has also contributed to an interest in revitalizing Koori culture. Those returning “home” after years of separation from their biological Koori families have posed questions about community and culture which have prompted communities like La Perouse to begin thinking about their own cultural and historical networks and features. This reinvention of culture for the purpose of re-educating the “stolen” generations not only serves to strengthen community identity and cultural awareness, but also contributes to the community’s overall base of shared knowledge and promotes further Koori recognition in cultural, social, political, and personal arenas.

Responses to colonial domination -- accommodation and resistance -- have shaped Koori cultural identity both inside and outside of the “cultural boundaries” of reserves and missions. Identity formation is a two way street. On one side of the street, stereotypes of Koories as a lazy, drunken, dying breed are reinforced through descriptions such as “black bastard,” “dole bludgers,” and “gin.” Even seemingly benign commonly used words such as “Aborigine” and “Blackfella” connote an externally applied judgment and a categorical stereotype which suggests the domination of Anglo-Australia over indigenous culture, “white” over “black.” On the other side of the street, the word “Koori” implies a cultural awakening and an active reconstruction of socio-cultural identity by Koori people. Other familiar intra-community phrases such as “hey, sis,” “my baby,” and “my brother” are aspects of a continually transforming kinship and fictive kinship systems which contribute to community and cultural solidarity in spite of the politics of the country. It would be inaccurate, however, to omit the appropriation of Anglo-Australian references to Koories by Koories themselves. In some respects, the use of terms such as “black bastards” by a

Koori could suggest her/his understanding of how s/he is perceived by members of mainstream society.

In other respects, the use of such terms as “Aborigine” and “Blackfella” by Koories are part of the incorporation of Anglo-Australian categories into Koori identity construction. Importantly, however, using the term “Blackfella” (which by implication alludes to the presumed stereotype of black skin), to refer to other Koories exemplifies how subaltern peoples appropriate and oppose Anglo-determined categories. Significantly, when Koories use such terms to refer to themselves or each other, they reconstruct and subvert these hegemonic categories, thus, resisting the categorical and essentialized meanings organizing the relations between Koori and non-Koori and between “black” and “white.” The language used by Anglo-Australians to refer to Koories suggests a bio-politics of race which presumes erroneously that there is a discrete and transparent way of discerning Koori from non-Koori based on color and phenotype. Such labels are powerful linguistic symbols of how categories of race are imbedded in everyday language and how language reinforces social inequality. Certainly, the popular icons of the “Aborigine” might lead one to believe that there is a typology to Koori-ness. The invisibility of “unremarkable” Koories in the media and the hyper-visibility of certain “exceptional” Koories, such as musicians, athletes, and political activists, further demonstrate the dialectical nature of categorical assignments for Koories. It is for these reasons that Coral Edwards, the co-founder of Link-Up says:

It took a long time to get over that thing of black not being a colour of your skin. I'd been taught to believe that to be black you have to have really dark skin. That's partly why, growing up, it was harder for me to identify as Aboriginal, see myself as Aboriginal, because I thought that I didn't look Aboriginal enough to be Aboriginal ... (Bowden & Bunbury 1993: 10).

Colonial culture physically divided Koori from non-Koori and ideologically bound Koori to the category “Aborigine.” The contradiction between assimilation and segregation reveals the duplicitous nature of colonial attitudes toward Koori people. By

literal definition, assimilation ideally promotes equality between groups of people; however, while colonial policy employed the rhetoric of assimilation, their practices demonstrated acts of discrimination. For colonial Australia, assimilation meant coerced acculturation. Equality was never really the goal of colonial policy. Rather, policy praxis reinforced the belief that Koories were inferior and only capable of participating in society as secondary social and labor forces. In addition to the praxis of assimilation policies, the ideologies and practices of colonial and colonially derived intellectual communities valued a Western, white-dominated approach to culture, social structure, and “otherness.” In Australia, “the other” strictly meant the “Aborigines,” and it is upon this mirror of “the other” that the colonial culture could reflect on what it was not. The power of the administrators of the socio-political structure of colonial Australia took insidious, pervasive, and blatant forms.

The colonial legacy lingers in the lives and minds of Koori people, and continues to shape their cultural and personal identities. The voices included in this thesis have been brought together in one place, La Perouse. They reveal some of the ways that the colonially created place, La Perouse, became an anchor for their identities, as well as how La Perouse over the years has been the site of Koori political struggle in both symbolic and literal ways. La Perouse has traditionally and historically been a regional gathering place for Koories. In pre-contact days it was a place of ceremony and in more contemporary times it has been a place of formal protest and contestation over dominant versions of history. Symbolically, La Perouse represents the survival of Koori people, and their ability to acculturate to the Anglo world while still maintaining a unique Koori identity. The lives of people at La Perouse make evident the inequalities of “assimilation.” The ethno-histories around which this thesis is written also demonstrate the ways in which assimilation policies permeated Koori culture and, whether consciously or subconsciously, have altered behaviors, beliefs, and intra- and inter-community constructions of what it means to be a

Koori. Further, the life narratives in this text expose the perfunctory facade of the “assimilation” rubric in Australia, revealing it to be little more than an insidious form of social control and a method of securing a secondary labor market. Significantly, however, these personal histories illuminate the ways in which the La Perouse community has survived through accommodation and differentiation with the aid of internally motivated commitment to one another. Self-determined community commitment poses a threat to Australia’s dominant power structures, and causes internal community choices to become a matter of external deliberation.

Today, in the post-colonial and, some would argue, neo-colonial (see Bird & O’Malley 1989) culture of Australia, assimilation policies have been replaced by the rhetoric of reconciliation and equality. Even in this moment of “reconciliation” between Koories and the dominant Anglo-culture, the deconstruction of the social, ethnic, and racial category “Koori” is slow. Further, cultural transformation has made room for political activity and social change in response to a government whose actions do not necessarily demonstrate a consistent commitment to the rights, needs, and recognition of the indigenous component of Australian cultural heritage. While the transformation of some traditional Koori cultural practices might suggest a loss of cultural integrity or identity, it more accurately evinces mechanisms of cultural survival at work. After over two centuries of survival, cultural and otherwise, Koories seem even more committed to reasserting, reconstructing, and reinventing their respective personal, community, and cultural heritages with or without the financial, legal, or moral support of the Commonwealth. It is this sort of self-determination, reinvention, and ethnogenesis that will bring Koori self-construction of identity face to face with the dominant Anglo understanding of national history and Koori culture.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Complete List of Participants

Alma
Bel
Carlie
Ellen
Helen
Jean
Liz
Nicole
Simon
Tim
Wes

* Please note that Participant's name is often represented by the first initial throughout the text.

Appendix II

A Contemporary Icon of "Aboriginality"



(from James 1993: 210)

VITA

A. Katherine Lambert was born in Memphis, Tennessee on November 5, 1972. She attended Immaculate Conception Grade School for her elementary education, and graduated from Saint Agnes Academy in 1991. She attended Miami University in Oxford, Ohio from August 1991 through May 1994, and graduated from Miami's School of Interdisciplinary Studies (Western College Program) with a Bachelor of Philosophy with a concentration in Cultural Anthropology and African-American Literature. In August 1994 she entered the Master's program in Anthropology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The Master's degree was received in May 1997.

She is currently seeking employment and applying to doctoral programs in Anthropology.