ABORIGINAL IMAGINATION

Aboriginal New Media Artists Promoting Health Education

Thesis Submitted for Masters of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies (Indigenous New Media Art Research)

Faculty of Law Business & Arts
Charles Darwin University
Northern Territory Australia

Date: 22nd July 2004

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Bachelor of Visual Arts, School of Fine Arts Northern Territory University
Diploma of Arts, School of Fine Arts Northern Territory University
Dedication

To my mother Coleen, grandmother Jessica and all Gurindji and Ngalakarn families in the Northern Territory who have provided ongoing support.

'You have the Power
To Achieve
In your Mind is all
The Answers to your
Dreams
Aboriginal Imagination'
Jason Davidson 2004...
Declaration

I hereby declare that the work herein, now submitted as a thesis for the degree of Masters by research of the Charles Darwin University (CDU), is the result of my own investigations, and all references to ideas and work of other researchers have been specifically acknowledged. I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Jason Davidson

Date: 22-07-2004

Plate 1: Jason Davidson
Acknowledgements

Firstly I acknowledge my own Indigenous identity. I use my Aboriginal name, Ngulliyangi, because it was given to me by a senior relative from the community of Kalkaringi in Gurindji country. The name identifies my traditional family and country, who I am and where I belong.

I would also like to respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal renal patients and the non-Aboriginal health staff at the Nightcliff Renal Unit for allowing me to interview them and examine their educational materials. I am grateful to family and friends for inspiring me to continue with this project. In particular, to my mum Coleen Davidson, thank you for your support and advice; and to Nancy Juan, thank you for your encouragement, inspiration and teaching me the power of prayer.

I express my appreciation to my Joji (grandfather) for his storytelling and to my uncles for making time to go hunting with me. Also, I thank my extended family for their support and feedback. I especially acknowledge Aboriginal elders from Gurindji country, Ngalakarn, Mara and Gija (Kija) countries for sharing their stories and inspiring me to help tell a small part of their shocking history of frontier contact through photography and new media technology.
The feedback from Aboriginal elders has inspired me to set out to prove that a positive message of health education can be accomplished through the continuing traditions of Aboriginal storytelling and knowledge transmission in contemporary hunting contexts. I would also like to acknowledge the following people for their academic support to my project: my supervisor Chris White, who provided me with advice and technical assistance in the process of developing my new media art package *Aboriginal Imagination*. A special thank you to my other supervisor, Kerin Coulehan for academic support, patience and encouragement to see me complete my Masters thesis. To both supervisors, thank you for supporting me. I also wish to acknowledge Byron Davis for his early supervision during the development of my thesis. Thank you for making time for me.

To my friends and Indigenous colleagues who have supported me along the way. Thank you. I am grateful to Wally Nickles (now deceased) and Mr Tony Lee for their time, training and discipline imparted to me through martial arts.

In appreciation of their support and talent involved in adding music to my DVD, I acknowledge Noeletta McKenzie and her husband Djolpa Mckenzie, lead singer from Wild Water Band. Guitarist Liam Kelliher, and his fiancé Debbie Hake and guitarist and talented singer Jeffrey Gurruwiwi, thank you for your support and contributions to my DVD *Aboriginal Imagination*.

Mark Strother, I appreciate your support and thank you for allowing me to make final adjustments to my DVD project on your computer. To all those Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who inspired me, with whom I networked and who enhanced my ability to use new media arts and communication technologies to develop my DVD *Aboriginal Imagination*, I say a sincere 'thank you'. I particularly acknowledge the advice of Lorna Murakami-Gold and the financial support of postgraduate scholarship from the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal & Tropical Health (CRCATH) and in kind support from the Charles Darwin University. I would like to express my appreciation for the advice and patience extended to me by the staff at the Higher Education Research Office and I particularly acknowledge David Parry for his support. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the Larrakia people, as my project was completed on Larrakia country at Charles Darwin University.
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ABBREVIATIONS

AHW... Aboriginal Health Worker
ATSIC... Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission
ATSIS... Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Service
BRACS... Broadcasting in Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme
CRCAH... Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health
CRCATH... Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal & Tropical Health
CAAMA... Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association
CDEP... Community Development and Employment Program
CD-Rom... Compact Disc - Read Only Memory
DVD... Digital Video Disk
ESRD... End Stage Renal Disease
NRU... Nightcliff Renal Unit
NAIHO... National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation
NT... Northern Territory
UWA... University of Western Australia
VHS... Video Home System
Imovie (video editing program)
IDVD (creates interactive DVD)
NISNMA... National Indigenous School in New Media Arts
## GLOSSARY

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<td>A Killer...</td>
<td>Cattle picked out for killing and butchering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joji...</td>
<td>Grandfather (Gurindji)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaja...</td>
<td>Grandmother (Gurindji)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardiya...</td>
<td>White people (Gurindji)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gija/ Kija...</td>
<td>Aboriginal people East Kimberley region/ Western Australia</td>
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<td>Mara...</td>
<td>Name of Aboriginal people (Limmen Bight region, NT)</td>
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<td>Ngalakarn...</td>
<td>Name of an Aboriginal people (Roper River Region, NT)</td>
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<td>Cross-discipline of artistic mediums</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multimedia...</td>
<td>Using broad range of mediums including technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morbidity...</td>
<td>Ill-health</td>
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<td>Mortality...</td>
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ABSTRACT

The project *Aboriginal Imagination* is a research project that aims to encourage Aboriginal artists to find ways to work with communication technologies to help improve Aboriginal health and education. My thesis argues that Aboriginal people must take advantage of current and future developments in new media art and multimedia technologies. The project *Aboriginal Imagination* provides an example of how it is possible for technology and culture to come together and be used for educational purposes to reach Indigenous audiences. The interactive DVD *Aboriginal Imagination* is a model of how the knowledge of Aboriginal elders, vision and skills of Indigenous new media artists may be bought together to design and produce culturally appropriate educational materials. Aboriginal people have vital knowledge and skills that must be encouraged and put to use back in their communities. The project highlights the importance of Aboriginal people taking control of their health and of the design, production and dissemination of health education materials. The focus of my thesis and multimedia DVD is the kidney function story that is designed to be meaningful to Aboriginal renal patients and their families.
Chapter 1  
Introduction

1.0  Introduction

To begin this chapter, I would like to give the reader a brief introduction to the story about my family background and myself. In doing this I hope to give you, the person who reads this thesis, an idea of who I am and where I am from. My Aboriginal name from Gurindji country of the Northern Territory Australia is Ngulliyangi. My grandparents and family are among the 'Stolen Generation' of Aboriginal people who were subjected to the Australian government's assimilation policies that were experienced in the Northern Territory of Australia. My Joji’s (grandfather's) country is located near the Roper River, Limmen Bight region of the Northern Territory, which includes Ngalakarn, Mara and Bundiyarng country. My Jaja (grandmother) is from Gurindji country in the direction of Inverway, west of Kalkaringi, an Aboriginal town that was formally known as Wave Hill.

I am a contemporary Aboriginal artist from the Northern Territory of Australia and I have developed my own design style by combining contemporary Aboriginal art with new media technology, also known as multimedia.

To help define the complex of media known as new media art, Jenny Fraser an Indigenous new media artist explains:
... New media art is generally a collaborative practice where artists engage with performance, digital technologies and cross-disciplinary artforms to produce a range of performance, installation and screen-based artworks. It can also explore the creative synthesis of art and emerging science and technology fields (New Media Cultures, 2002: 3).

I am passionate about my artwork and its communicative potential. I believe in combining Aboriginal art traditions and Aboriginal contexts of knowledge transmission with new media arts technology in order to create a new and very positive way to improve cross-cultural communication. In particular, there is urgent need for more effective health education messages to reach out to Aboriginal communities using new media arts and technology.

My DVD project Aboriginal Imagination is based on integrating western, biomedical knowledge and Aboriginal knowledge with techno-graphic and contemporary Aboriginal art and design elements in the production of health education materials. The project Aboriginal Imagination is designed to help promote Aboriginal knowledge and art and to encourage other Aboriginal artists to use their Aboriginal imagination, particularly to convey significant cross-cultural meaning.

In this thesis, white people will be referred to as Gardiya. This is the culturally appropriate word used by my family and the Gurindji, Ngalakarn and Mara Aboriginal groups. My thesis may appear to some readers to be unduly assertive, in its use of strong language and rough expressions. This language is acceptable in contemporary Aboriginal English. It is acknowledged that the use of colloquial English expressions and swear words have been adopted into Aboriginal English. Strong assertive language is how some Aboriginal people have appropriated the English language.

Academic and health education writing remains clinical and detached from its subject matter. This does little to alleviate the cross-cultural communication breakdown between Aboriginal Australians and the wider Australian community. The world of Aboriginal people and their health is not best represented in a language that is detached and clinical. The harsh realities of Aboriginal ill-health require the use of strong and plain English language to express the very real needs of Aboriginal people in a manner that we find culturally appropriate.
For this reason in the thesis and accompanying DVD, *Aboriginal Imagination*, I use plain English words including, piss, arse and shit, because dictionary words like urine, anus and faeces are not really used in Aboriginal English. Therefore my project has incorporated 'rough' English words. As an artist practising and further developing my skills in the areas of Aboriginal health research, I found myself becoming angry and politically motivated about the present state of Aboriginal health. Looking at the big picture of Aboriginal health, it appears to be an overwhelming disaster with many identified problems. I decided that it is important not to simply be depressed by the situation but to do something positive. I had to maintain my focus on how to effectively communicate the message about kidney function.

My argument is that the health system has failed to design appropriate health education materials. My thesis project is to create a multimedia package to deliver a strong message about how to apply Aboriginal knowledge and imagination to better convey an important health message. The real issue for me is the urgent need to design culturally appropriate educational materials for Aboriginal people. In my project, I set out to combine modern technology and Aboriginal knowledge, in order to develop a multimedia package on health education.

The combination of Aboriginal knowledge and imagination and of new media technology provides a new way of utilizing many art forms for the purpose of communicating health education messages. Multimedia is based upon many forms of communication and artistic expression including video, photography, graphic design, animation, music, theatre, narration, text writing, painting and the list goes on. The new media concept is based on incorporating different methods of artistic expression in order to produce a final product, which for example, tells a story or communicates information on a CD-Rom, DVD or VHS.

### 1.1 New Media Research

My research thesis and new media project began by my networking with health professionals at the Nightcliff Renal Unit (NRU) in Darwin to get an understanding of the failures in cross-cultural communication between non-Aboriginal health staff and Aboriginal patients, who are receiving dialysis treatment for kidney failure. The data that I collected was based on current, health education materials on kidney function.
My research led me to examine a broad range of educational materials about health issues that were used to educate Aboriginal people. These materials included academic literature, education manuals, posters and videos. Staff at the Renal Unit advised me about many issues that related to kidney function and current health educational materials. From discussions with healthcare staff, I became aware of the enormous complexities of the Aboriginal health situation, including the fact that Aboriginal patients had little or no understanding of the western, biomedical model of kidney function. This alerted me to the fact that serious changes were required in the design of health education materials for Aboriginal people.

After reviewing existing health education resources, I came to the conclusion that much of the existing Aboriginal health education materials are paternalistic and based on the assumption that Aboriginal people have childlike comprehension. In my project, the multimedia and new media arts components were first drafted into a storyboard layout on paper and then developed further through consultation with the non-Aboriginal health services staff and Aboriginal renal patients at NRU.

During the development of my DVD project, I had regular meetings with a small number of Aboriginal renal patients at the NRU. They showed an interest in helping me to keep on track and provided feedback on my design of the kidney image, which I had developed in graphical design and Aboriginal x-ray style. Aboriginal renal patients have influenced the course of the project by their encouragement and feedback, which has helped me to design a culturally appropriate, multimedia package for educational purposes.

My research thesis, which compliments and bears the same title as the new media arts DVD *Aboriginal Imagination*, examines new directions for implementing health education messages. Moreover, my project in total is designed to encourage Aboriginal people to use new media technology while helping them to learn about kidney function.
1.2 Talking Politically Through Art

The politicisation of my work has been a natural part of my development as a contemporary Aboriginal artist. The discrimination against our people and popular disdain for our knowledge and culture has made me want to fight back through my art. My work is about being strong for my culture. My thesis is that Indigenous contexts and ways of communicating knowledge are relevant and capable of conveying information of a high order of complexity. Aboriginal cultural knowledge has been objectified by western scientific knowledge and reduced to an area of study, with little or no recognition given to Aboriginal people whose knowledge is being appropriated (Dodson, 1997: 42).

Aboriginal knowledge and imagination are essential for cultural survival and part of the healing process for our people. If we really want to start getting the right messages and warnings out into the communities we need Aboriginal people with knowledge, imagination, empathy and skills in new media technologies. Kevin O'Loughlin, an elder from the Narrunga people of South Australia, talks about Indigenous knowledge and refers to Albert Einstein, as follows:

That ol fella, he says... 'imagination is more powerful than knowledge'. He knew what he was talking about... this imagination is about our understanding of the natural world and this is part of living. This imagination forms a bridge between the 'abstract' and the 'real'.... The 'real' is a sensual, intuitive experience... a sense of smell, a sense of feeling works to trigger memories of our knowledge. It is about our place, our country. Our knowledge is in our relationship with language... it is our identity. How you (as an individual) relate to this country, to its signs, signals and patterns, makes it 'real'. The animals in our stories only tell of their journeys to people who are listening. Nunga understandings work in harmony with nature... it is all about relationships. We must follow our imagination for continuous culture. (O'Loughlin cited in Cooper & McDonald Crowley, 2002: 7).

When I first saw the official artwork designed to inform Aboriginal people about kidney function I was provoked to be creative, because their kidney drawings were inappropriate. I decided to produce an Aboriginal ‘X-ray style’ image of how the kidney functions.
It occurred to me that Aboriginal people’s knowledge and imagination is the key to creating better educational materials, because we are the ones who should be designing and producing culturally appropriate, educational materials for our people. Aboriginal people need to be involved in developing appropriate health educational materials because we know how to communicate to our people both in text and image.

A major component of the communication breakdown in Aboriginal health relates to the inappropriate design of educational materials that Gardiya people have been designing and producing.

Richard Trudgen discussed with Aboriginal health workers and the Yolngu people of Arnhem, some of the intercultural communication problems he observed in health education were about kidney disease:

Two of the health workers approached us requesting a teaching session with all the health workers. ‘We want to talk about dinytity rerri (kidney disease),’ they said, ‘we had a workshop here a couple of weeks ago and we’re a bit confused’. When we sat down with the health workers, it soon became clear they did not have a very good understanding of the process of renal failure at all, despite the recent input. We asked them in Yolngu Matha what they wanted to know about kidney disease. They said they were confused about the whole subject. Someone got out the book they had received at the workshop. One section talked about ‘leaking kidneys’, showing (as I recall) a black and white diagram of a kidney and drops of something coming from it. We asked the group, ‘From this book and the workshop, what do you think ‘leaking kidneys’ mean?’ They
were all silent. Then one senior health worker, said, 'To me it means that the blood is leaking from the kidneys.' The others just said, 'Yuuu! (We don't know!).' My colleague, who has a medical background, said, 'You can have blood leaking into the urine, but that's not what they are talking about here. The 'leaking kidneys' here involves protein leaking from the kidney into the urine.' 'What's this 'protein' about?' Asked one of the health workers. We questioned whether anyone new what protein was; did it give anyone any meaning or picture? No-one had any idea. This left us with a problem. How were we to explain protein to the health workers? (Trudgen, 2000: 229-230).

My argument is that Aboriginal people are fully capable of understanding the complexities of kidney function and kidney disease provided they participate in the design of culturally appropriate health education materials. In the Aboriginal health context, Cross-cultural communication breakdown is occurring because of the inappropriateness of the education materials. A brief computer analogy is used in Trudgen's book *Why Warriors Lay Down & Die*, (2002) to provide an example of communication mismatch between cultures.

To process data on an IBM computer that has come from a Macintosh, we end up with gobbledegook. The reason is simple: although both IBM and Macintosh computers use the same hardware – silicone chips and so on – they use different operating systems or languages to encode information. So the only way IBM and Macintosh computers can shift information back and forward, and make sense of it, is through a 'translator' built into one of the computers (Trudgen, 2000: 88).

Taking this analogy of the translator device and applying it to Aboriginal health education, it became obvious to me that there is urgent need for Aboriginal health education designers. Why not employ more Aboriginal education designers to translate health educational stories so that Aboriginal people can understand them? Employing and empowering Aboriginal people to bring knowledge and imagination to focus on designing educational materials is one way to help restore the balance of power in the Aboriginal health context. My thesis project, including multimedia DVD, represents positive ways in which Aboriginal people are incorporating modern technology and Aboriginal knowledge and imagination to address the urgency of Aboriginal health education.
1.3 Hunting: Aboriginal Context for Health Education

Aboriginal people have traditionally practiced hunting and gathering for thousands of years. The hunting context provides the opportunity for elders to demonstrate and share stories about the environment including, botanical and biological knowledge. Aboriginal knowledge continues to be orally transmitted from elders to the younger generations and hunting and gathering contexts remain significant opportunities for Aboriginal knowledge transmission in many parts of Aboriginal Australia. For example, when an Aboriginal elder has caught and is butchering a kangaroo, magpie goose or a bush turkey, he is able to tell a story about the animals hunted by examining the major organs and by opening the guts and looking at what sorts of foods the animal has recently eaten.

In this way, elders continue to transmit important scientific and cultural knowledge through the hunting context. When hunting with my family, I was able to learn about what goes on inside the body from my uncles, who are experienced hunters and Aboriginal Health Workers (AHW). However, they taught me not in the clinic but when we went out bush to hunt, which was something I always enjoyed and still do to this day.

Plate 5: Author
© 1998: Photo, Uncle Jim
After hunting, we always came back home with a good story about the day we had out bush. Something always happened whether good or bad. On a good day we might have bagged a lot of magpie geese, which meant that we could share that food with family. On a bad day for example, the Toyota 4wd might get stuck in black soil mud for half of the day before we could get the car out. That was hard work and physically draining, particularly if the car was bogged as it meant some one would have to go for help, walking back home through rough country with limited amount of food and water trying to get the car out so we could get back home before nightfall.

Going out bush to hunt is something we young fellows, my cousins and I continue to enjoy because we always end up learning something from our elders and the environment we hunted in, even if it was little things.

The process of dividing the meat is also very important within the Aboriginal community. After hunting and killing animals such as kangaroo, magpie geese or wild pigs we would gut and clean them, we would prepare it for a meal out bush or take the meat home for dinner on many occasions we would keep the meat fresh and put in the freezer. The value of hunting in the Aboriginal way is about family being together and sharing in the activity. I learned many stories from hunting. In addition to acquiring the skills to hunt, we young fellas’ were also taught the biomedical story about how the body works.

1.4 How to Develop Effective Health Education Materials?

During the first stage of my project, I was looking at what may be a good way to get a message across to the Aboriginal community through Aboriginal art and education. It became clear, after much thought and time, that I would make a video about hunting with family and friends and also focus on providing brief biomedical information. I thought back to the many times my uncles took me out hunting for magpie geese, wild pigs, kangaroos and goanna, and realised hunting was the best way to get a message across, that related to the biomedical story. The reason for choosing hunting as the context for delivering the health message about kidney function was because hunting is something Aboriginal people relate to, its about culture, country and being with family.
From looking at the either oversimplified or text intensive educational materials that were currently being used to 'inform' Aboriginal people about kidney related issues I was able to expand, incorporate concepts and develop something original. I strongly believe that a more effective message could reach Aboriginal people and more appropriately using the hunting and biomedical stories presented in a multimedia format.

It occurred to me that when my uncles butchered the game we had caught they would talk about the heart and how it pumps blood through the body. We would also talk about kidneys and how they keep the blood clean and healthy. They always talked and joked around and taught stories about how the body works. For example, how food goes to your stomach and how all the nutrients and good things are absorbed to keep the body strong. We talked about how food is digested and how it travels through that big maze of intestines straight to your arse. We looked at the liver, (I can still see in my imagination, uncle talking away and his finger pointing and waving straight there to the liver) and I got lectures about how drinking too much alcohol will do a lot of damage to that part of your body.

Other lectures given were about how smoking effects the lungs. It was a practical way of being educated out bush, whilst it was also hands on experience. Hunting Aboriginal way is not just about killing and cutting up anything that moves. It's about taking time to learn stories. Learning how to hunt is an important skill, and to learn it takes a lot of practice. You have to watch, listen and understand what experienced people are telling you and then put it into practice yourself. When you learn this way you learn effectively. This learning in country is part of the notion that underpins an Aboriginal knowledge system that takes a holistic view of health and illness and takes the environment into account.

With the concept of holistic health in mind, and thinking back to the inappropriate and ineffective kindergarten drawings that were being used to educate Aboriginal renal patients, the ideas came together. The hunting story would be the key to introduce the biomedical story in the context of dissecting the animal, looking at where the kidney is located and telling stories about how the kidney functions and how it is linked to the rest of the body.
The animals that were hunted with family were to be used to demonstrate the biomedical story and to illustrate where the organs are in the body. At the same time my family also got to take home some fresh meat for food. The next stage was to envisage how the message could be created and delivered through new media arts and technology, which ultimately led to developing the DVD Aboriginal Imagination.

1.5 Thesis Structure

In Chapter 1, I introduce my research argument that a cross-cultural communication breakdown has been occurring in the area of Aboriginal health education in contemporary Australian society. My research is concerned with applying new media arts and Aboriginal imagination to health education and is based on Aboriginal practices of knowledge transmission, especially the lessons on biology, diet and lifestyle given in contemporary hunting contexts. As part of this project a DVD Aboriginal Imagination has been designed to run in conjunction with the thesis.

In Chapter 2, my literature review critiques examples of existing health education materials; focuses on Aboriginal use of new media technologies and on racism in the media. I also review a sample of the ethnographic literature that focuses on contemporary Aboriginal hunting contexts, diet and lifestyle.

The research context and methods used are outlined in Chapter 3. I describe the NRU context and my informal interviews with renal patients. I discuss the concept of hunting with family and sharing of knowledge, followed by the complex side of combining Aboriginal art and knowledge with new media art to create the kidney story for health education. I provide information on the positive and negative feedback I received about the DVD Aboriginal Imagination, followed by a description of my own efforts to engage in new media networks and to be empowered by the experience.

The holistic approach to health is contrasted with the biomedical approach in Chapter 4, where I discuss an Aboriginal cycle of life and how that has been broken by historical events including the violence of the frontier, and contemporary ill-health and social malaise.
In Chapter 5, I discuss new media arts and the importance of understanding and having appropriate protection for Aboriginal intellectual property in the areas of new media art. I further develop my argument that new media art is a frontier for Aboriginal people and they must take care not to be colonised again, but take charge of their new media opportunities for knowledge transmission. Chapter 5 sets out the argument that my DVD *Aboriginal Imagination* provides an example of how Aboriginal knowledge and new media technologies can come together to provide an effective educational package for Aboriginal people.

Chapter 6 concludes my research findings and argues that Aboriginal elders must work together with younger Aboriginal people, so that the wisdom and knowledge of the elders continues to be transmitted via the imagination and skills of the younger generation of new media artists who are starting to make their careers. My other argument is that new media art and communication technology is in its very early stages and non-Aboriginal people should encourage not colonise the potential of Aboriginal new media artists. It seems to me that the way forward is for Aboriginal people to take control of the many new media arts and communication possibilities opportunities at all levels, from ownership to design, production and dissemination.
Chapter 2  Literature Review

2.0  Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the relevant literature and also include a critique of current health education materials on kidney function, kidney disease and dialysis treatments that are being used to inform Aboriginal renal patients. My literature review critically examines relevant health education materials and focuses on Aboriginal use of multimedia, especially in contexts of health education and Aboriginal health. In particular, I examine the evidence on Aboriginal initiatives to regain health via attention to diet and lifestyle, and how Aboriginal elders transmit knowledge about biology and health in hunting and gathering contexts. In the literature review, I also discuss how racism, whether overt or covert, silences Aboriginal knowledge and stifles Aboriginal imagination.

As I reviewed the health education literature and imagery available for renal patients, especially Aboriginal patients, it became obvious that most of the available texts and images in health education materials were outdated and culturally inappropriate. Some of the images and texts were childlike, better suited to preschool education than to health education for adult Aboriginal patients. For example, the image below is representative of the oversimplified diagrams found in what I call the 'kindergarten' approach to communicating complex information about renal function, kidney disease and treatment to adult Aboriginal patients.

![Kidney Diagram]

Plate 6: Kidney Diagram
(Jacobs, Kelly and Hoy, n.d.)
By contrast, not all texts and images in the health education materials I reviewed were childlike. Some were very complex and included specialised scientific language and bio-medical knowledge. Both the simple and the complex approaches in health education materials are based on good intentions but in my considered opinion, the media and the message are not up to the task of effective cross-cultural communication. The Sharing the True Stories participative action research project has highlighted the lack of common understanding between health staff and Aboriginal patients about biomedical systems and limitations in communication and education in Aboriginal health (Cass et al 2002: 469).

There is a gap in Aboriginal health education which must be considered and that is the need to train more Aboriginal artists to bring their imagination and skills to design and produce appropriate health education materials. For this project, I have focused on the problem of how to communicate the health message to Aboriginal Australians. By using Aboriginal knowledge and imagination together with multimedia, I hope to set an example of how to overcome the communication breakdown in delivering health education to Aboriginal people.

My thesis project combines Aboriginal knowledge and mechanisms of knowledge transmission with new approaches in using multimedia in order to design and produce better ways of communicating health messages to our people. I take 'inspiration' from the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, whose work I examine in this chapter, as the pioneers in new media arts and communication technologies in diverse Aboriginal Australian contexts.

In this literature review chapter, and my critique of relevant educational materials, I take into account Aboriginal renal patients' perspectives on the education materials. Many of the renal patients I have interviewed stated that most of the educational materials are no good. My argument is that more sophisticated and culturally appropriate health education materials will facilitate an increase in understanding of and compliance with health care by Indigenous people who suffer from a high incidence of renal failure.
2.1 Health Education Materials

I critically examine a number of health education materials that are currently available to Aboriginal people on the topic of kidney function, kidney disease and dialysis treatment. As I focus on both illustrations and texts, I came to conclude that typically the materials underestimated Aboriginal renal patients capacity to understand biomedical facts.

I found an educational chart titled *The Kidneys. An educational resource for Aboriginal communities and health workers, (n.d)*, produced by the Australian Kidney Foundation and used at the Nightcliff Renal Unit in Darwin, to be a useful teaching tool. It is a flip chart that shows dialysis treatment options, including the kidney machine (haemodialysis) and bag dialysis (peritoneal dialysis). It is designed for Aboriginal renal patients and health workers. The images and brief stories describe what is involved for keeping kidneys healthy, for example by eating good food, drinking lots of water and keeping fit.

The chart also warns people about risk factors associated with kidney disease, including poor diet, high blood pressure and diabetes. The body signs for kidney failure are given in plain English and warn people about the symptoms that may lead to End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD). This educational material does acknowledge Aboriginal input as it is endorsed by the Derbarl Yerrigan Health Services and the artwork provided includes recognition of Aboriginal artists. However, this resource has some limitations. My evaluation of this material, and that of Aboriginal renal patients at the Nightcliff Renal Unit in Darwin, is that some of the images are frightening and some of the text is inappropriate.

Aboriginal patients have said that they understand the kidney story but they also say that some of the images and wording scares them. The renal patients find this image disturbing. The information on sniffing glue, paint or petrol appeared misplaced in this educational material designed to inform Aboriginal renal patients about kidney function, disease and options for dialysis.
Although this information relates to risk factors for kidney failure, it may have been more appropriately placed in a separate educational package on substance abuse. The association of kidney disease with sniffing and substance abuse offended the renal patients that I interviewed. Despite these limitations, the Kidney Foundation flip chart was reasonably well designed for its target audience of Aboriginal health workers and renal patients.

The Nightcliff Renal Unit in Darwin has a folder of educational materials designed for their purposes titled *Haemodialysis & Self Care Dialysis Training Education Manual* (Flack, Wagner and Kent, 1999). This resource is designed for health professionals and para-professionals and renal patients to give an introduction to the broad range of dialysis treatments. The folder is based on a written approach with some clip art images and diagrams. It relies heavily on a high standard of literacy. Technical terms are used to explain the minerals that are in the blood, medication, how to monitor diet and weight and how to prepare for the needle and full dialysis treatment. A cartoon stick figure is repeatedly used in the text to highlight problem solving on the machine, such as what to do when there is a power failure or when the blood leak alarm goes off.

Much of this information is beyond the comprehension of most renal patients, particularly Aboriginal patients from remote communities. Another image is of white men and women (with one black woman) dressed according to urban standards of dress. The message given here is to say that there are many people involved in the care of renal patients. Aboriginal patients from remote communities do not readily identify with this image. Included in the folder was a simplified drawing of the human body, focusing on the location of the kidney and the bladder. At one level this image was misleading, as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal renal patients might understand it as representing that the human body only has two organs, the kidney and the bladder. In fact I found the simple image to be useful when I came to design my Aboriginal kidney function diagram, but I included a more complete biomedical story of the human body that included other major organs.
The printed materials by Flack, Wagner and Kent (1999) included many technical words as well as simplified coloured images that focused on where the kidneys were in the human body, with other images of the kidney. Another image of the kidney could be described by saying that the right side of kidney could be seen as a whole organ, while the left side of the kidney was cut in half, giving the viewer a different perspective of what the kidney looked like on the inside. The kidney drawing also included the renal vein, coloured blue and the renal artery, coloured red. The diagram did not explain that the colours of the veins and arteries to demonstrate the direction of blood flow within the body.

The diagram of the kidney, urethra and bladder that demonstrated the flow of waste was technically sound but beyond the comprehension of Aboriginal people who do not have the bio-medical knowledge. In this health educational material, I found that there was significant room for improvement in order to effectively inform Aboriginal renal patients about kidney function. The complexity of the kidney is not just about what it looks like on the inside. The kidney has many stories in medical terms and is linked to the entire body.

The folder by Flack, Wagner and Kent (1999) also had further specialised graphic designs that combined complex technical terms, used to describe the minerals that are in the blood. For example, a graphic design was used to depict blood composition and minerals. This design is used to illustrate the dialysis-filtering story so that renal patients gain an understanding about how chemicals are being filtered from their blood by the dialysis machine. The mineral make up was given as follows: Iron, Urea, Calcium, Creatinine, Sodium, Water, Potassium, and Phosphate. This information on the mineral content in blood was complicated, and Aboriginal renal patients who have limited knowledge about biochemistry found these terms of no interest or too complicated to understand.

This kind of health education material is the norm and is largely not meaningful to Aboriginal renal patients who are being prepared for dialysis treatment. The *Haemodialysis & Self Care Dialysis Training Education Manual* (Flack, Wagner and Kent, 1999) covered a wide variety of areas, from good diet to correct medication, to blood leak detectors.
The manual was aimed at developing the understanding and skills of patients so that they are able to use the dialysis machine on their own. I found the educational folder to be of interest because staff at NRU were involved in the design of the material, and for me it was interesting to see how they interpreted dialysis treatment. Coming from an artistic background, I believe there is room for major improvements in this folder. Some of the materials included in the folder would be more effective if designed as a storyboard and then further developed professionally by Aboriginal designers.

By continuing to employ Gardiya people to design health education materials for Aboriginal people the same problems in communication will be perpetuated - the half way telling of stories. I argue that to improve Aboriginal health requires getting Aboriginal people involved in decision-making and the design of health education materials and not allowing Gardiya people to control the project and limit Aboriginal involvement. As an example of the marginalisation of Aboriginal people from the process of developing and publishing health education materials, I found that in Flack, Wagner and Kent (1999) there was no explicit acknowledgement of Aboriginal contributions to the manual. From looking at current health education materials, it became very clear to me that the designers had only been partly successful in telling the kidney function and dialysis treatment story.

I realised that I had to read more widely from books on anatomy and physiology so that I would have a basic understanding of kidney function in order to develop my health education story in a multimedia format. The idea was to research the relevant biomedical information so as to re-tell the story using my artistic skills for the purpose of educating Aboriginal renal patients. One text I used was by Carlo, Harley and Noback, (1992), and I found the bio-medical information and diagrams very useful. This text and accompanying diagrams explained how the major organs are linked and how the body functions as a whole. It is from this biomedical model, together with Aboriginal artistic expression, that I developed the concept of an animated diagram of kidney function as central to my multimedia project, titled Aboriginal Imagination.
2.2 Aboriginal Artists & New Media

New media or multimedia is a term used to describe different ways of communicating via many media technologies including computer and satellite communications and multimedia packages that include graphics, texts, video, sound and animation. Mark Poster in *The Second Media Age* (1996) discusses his concerns with the development of a critical social theory that accounts for the massive cultural reorganisations of the second media age (1996: 4). Poster states that his 'motivation is neither to celebrate nor to condemn these prospects but to indicate their importance for cultural change' (1996: 4).

My argument is also that the new media potentially gives Aboriginal people opportunities to decentralise media messages, and culturally reorganise as they take advantage of the new media. This opportunity is particularly important if Aboriginal people are to participate more fully and creatively in the design and dissemination of education and health education materials to Aboriginal people in remote communities.

In Muecke's (1986) review of Eric Michaels *The Aboriginal Invention of Television* he discusses the importance of encouraging Aboriginal people to use the media technologies as a strategy of empowerment. Muecke (1986: 94) states that Aboriginal communities will be able to make easier use of this form of communication rather than writing, and their creative skills could benefit the community enormously.

Morley and Robins (1997: 32) describe the constant changing process of globalisation in media communications as one of increasing monopoly by the big media networks and an erosion of nation-state boundaries. However, the new media is also about opportunities for increasing privatisation, localism and 'cultural tribalism' within the electronic global village. The authors have cautioned that localism and 'cultural particularism' can go either way, to benefit local people's access to the understanding and use of new media or to isolate them from it (Morley and Robins, 1997: 32).
In my review of Indigenous art and multimedia I would like to start by acknowledging a non-Aboriginal artist who had an art-based residency in the Warlpiri community of Yuendumu, located in central Australia. In the publication *Bad Aboriginal Art: Tradition, Media and Technological Horizons*, Eric Michaels (1994) looks at how the new technological advances of the western world have affected remote communities such as Yuendumu. Michael describes how a remote Aboriginal community has used new media technology to benefit the community and more effectively communicate culturally appropriate messages for Aboriginal people. The improvements in communication technology in remote communities of Australia have been very positive for Aboriginal community development.

Michaels (1994) argues that the use of new media is a tool kit for the empowerment of Aboriginal people, as the media gives them a political and social voice that has been silenced for too long in Australia. During his stay at Yuendumu, Michaels learned about discrimination within Australia. In one story, he relates some hard facts about how larger media corporations were reluctant to work with remote media producers. His argument is that such negative attitudes suppress a unique form of expression by Aboriginal people.

Michaels (1994) further argues that Aboriginal people need to be more involved in communicating messages to their own people via new media technologies. Michaels (1994: 24-45) makes the point that commercial media companies need to encourage Aboriginal production companies towards independence in creating and using new media to tell their stories. Michaels states that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are likely to be well heard via communication technologies including satellite broadcasting for and from remote communities.

In the Introduction to Michaels (1994) *Bad Aboriginal Art*, Marcia Langton, an Indigenous academic, reiterates Michaels’ call for Aboriginal people to be allowed more control over representing themselves in the media. She argues that this is part of 'a local revolution in the empowerment of Aboriginal people’ and is an issue of self-determination (Langton, 1994: xxiii). Langton believes that control over new technologies is a key issue for the self-representation of Aboriginal people.
She also states that Aboriginal controlled media is crucial for maintaining cultural knowledge production and to prevent the loss of Aboriginal knowledge systems via western influences (Langton, 1994: xxiii-xxxv). Michaels’ and Langton’s arguments inform my thesis that Aboriginal people must be encouraged to use new media technologies to create culturally appropriate and more effective health messages.

Michael Leigh in ‘A Note To The Reader’, in Bad Aboriginal Art, (1994: xxxviii - xliii) emphasises that control of new media technologies allows Aboriginal people to be heard and seen in ways that have been long denied to them in Australia.

In particular, Leigh acknowledges Philip Batty, a cofounder of Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA), for highlighting in the film Satellite Dreaming that the video camera is one of the most powerful tools ever used by Aboriginal Australians (1994: xlii). Leigh also points out that Eric Micheals’ insight into the connection between the production and representation of ‘Aboriginality’ is ‘of vital importance in arriving at an understanding of ourselves’ (1994: xlii).

Similarly, in my DVD Aboriginal Imagination I use brief video clips of hunting scenes to provide insights into contemporary Aboriginal contexts of Aboriginal knowledge transmission and efforts to regain a healthy diet and lifestyle. My argument is that Aboriginal control over the texts and images used for educating Aboriginal renal patients, will better the chances of getting the right messages across to improve the health and well-being of our communities. This also means allowing Aboriginal people to design and implement culturally appropriate messages for educational purposes.

In a website titled Power, Politics and the Internet, Gary Foley (2000) discusses how the Internet gives people more freedom of expression, because of the fact that no one owns the Internet. Foley (2000) states that the commercial media and those in power largely control radio, television and print media but there are, however, some media technologies, including the Internet, which are not yet monopolised and allow for more individual and community forms of communication. Foley argues that Indigenous people from around the world are networking and communicating with each other to share their stories and knowledge.
Foley also points out that media technologies are providing new opportunities for Indigenous people to be more creative and to distribute their stories online around the world. Foley (2000) gives a long-term vision of how the Internet can benefit the Indigenous communities around the world.

There is no doubt in my mind that if the Internet continues to develop in the manner it has to date, the prospects look good for a broader decentralization of power and control in both local and global communities. As a dispossessed indigenous person I can only welcome such a development if my community is able to have some control over our interaction with this new technology. With a new generation of Aboriginal activists who acquire the new skills whilst at the same time being alert for the cultural shifts in attitude that might compromise their 'Aboriginality', the future looks bright for our struggle for justice (Foley, 2000).

Multimedia is allowing messages to be re-told from an Indigenous perspective and it is giving Indigenous people new freedoms. Being a contemporary Aboriginal artist myself, familiar with the Internet and working in the area of new media, I acknowledge other Aboriginal new media artists who are working hard to develop their skills. There are Aboriginal artists who are established and those who are becoming recognised in the area of Aboriginal New Media Arts. Some of these new media artists use their creative skills on website projects that promote Indigenous issues and Aboriginal imagination.

For example, Aboriginal web designer and multimedia artist, Jenny Fraser, whose family is from Bundjalung country in Queensland, is an established new media artist. Her recent work is found on an Indigenous website titled Blackout: <http://www.fineartforum.org/Gallery/cybertribe/blackout/>

This website depicts emerging contemporary Aboriginal artists from all over Australia who are developing their skills in multimedia. The website is able to provide each Aboriginal artist an opportunity to have their artwork hosted and also provides contact details which are very important for networking. Fraser has exhibited both nationally and internationally. Jenny Fraser is a founder of the cybertribe, an Indigenous Online art gallery that can also be found at: <http://www.fineartforum.org/Gallery/cybertribe.html>
The website cybertribe aims to encourage Indigenous art and the new media technologies to help support emerging Aboriginal artists to develop their skills and establish new networks in the areas of new media arts. Aboriginal people working in this area are in the early stages of creating their stories and need to be appropriately supported and encouraged as they develop their skills. I believe there are new possibilities, and many great opportunities that new media can bring to Aboriginal people and remote communities. Aboriginal artists are recognised worldwide on a professional level in a million dollar art business. Aboriginal people should also be encouraged to professionally develop their skills with new media technology.

But while doing this we also need to ensure that we really do have control of how our stories are being told with new media. We also need to work hard so that non-Aboriginal people don't take over too much control of another important asset we have started to further develop. We need to expand our boundaries and we need to think of the big picture because there is a lot of talent out there in our communities that can be put to good use that can benefit our communities. If Aboriginal people become idle in the age of new media and information technology then we will end up getting left behind.

The future is a positive one with Aboriginal people developing new networks and utilising the media to advance Aboriginal knowledge and imagination and to get their messages heard. My argument in this thesis is that Aboriginal people need to design and control their own multimedia and product distribution networks as there is an urgent need to apply Aboriginal knowledge and imagination to Aboriginal health education.

2.3 Racism in the Media

I have found it relevant to consider racism in my discussion of how modern media has largely failed to deliver positive and constructive messages to and about Aboriginal Australians. For example Michael Moore's *Stupid White Men* (2001) highlights the frustration that black Americans feel in a racist society. I have found his insights into media racism in America comparable to the Australian situation. Moore himself a television presenter, identifies the alienation effects of racism as follows:
You may just get to the point where you can’t take it anymore — the harassment, the discrimination, the resentment, the utter sense that you don’t belong in a nation so deeply rooted in intolerance. You may just feel like it’s time to get the hell out and move to a place where being black doesn’t make you a minority— a place that feels like home (2001: 83).

I have found that many of Moore’s arguments are relevant to my thesis project due to the fact that there are many similar situations involving racism that occur right here in Australia. Moore (2001) argues that the American media has been used to depict the black community in negative stereotypes. Moore (2001: 59) describes television news as depicting negative images of African Americans. His argument is that racism, including popular and professional ignorance, is reflected in the media coverage of black American issues. Similarly in Australia, it is evident that the media predominately covers the bad news stories about Aboriginal people, including stories and images of appalling Aboriginal health and living standards. These negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people will be here with us forever unless the media changes the focus to more positive communications on Aboriginal people and issues.

Racism has a history of working from the outside leaving its mark, but in today’s changing society it is now working on the inside which is psychologically very challenging for Aboriginal people. Some of the negative representations of Aboriginal people have been internalised by Aboriginal people which leads to loss of self-esteem and to hopelessness.

My argument is that Aboriginal people need to design and distribute positive messages and images of Aboriginal people, and one of the most pressing messages is for health education. In *Binan Goonj: Bridging Cultures in Aboriginal Health*, Eckermann, et al., (1994) refer to institutionalised racism, social stratification and class and how these impact on health with regard to Aboriginal people. Racism is an attitude that has been institutionalised and reinforced throughout our system of government and its policies (Eckermann, et al., 1994: 29-30). Carmichael and Hamilton (cited in Eckermann, et al., 1994: 30) argue that:
Institutional Racism is covert and relatively subtle; it originates in the operation of essential and respected forces in the society and is consequently accepted. It manifests itself in the laws, norms and regulations which maintain dominance of one group over another. Because it originates out of the society's legal, political and economic system, is sanctioned by the power group in that society and at least tacitly accepted by the powerless, it receives very little public condemnation.

As a result of such institutional racism, Aboriginal people become totally dependent on whites and the welfare system. Unlike some colonial nations, Australia never recognised Aboriginal people's prior occupation and ownership of this country. Colonisation saw the land itself rendered subject to the legal lie of being 'uninhabited', the legal term being *terra nullius*.

These ideological differences, regarding the land (Australia), are the source of conflict and contention in contemporary Australia (Eckermann, et al, 1994: 11). My thesis argument is that Aboriginal people need to overcome their colonised position and assert control over their health and their country, because it is the land that provides Aboriginal people with an overall holistic approach to health.

In *Race Matters*, Gillan Cowlishaw (1997), discusses various forms of racial discrimination in Australian society. An interesting point Cowlishaw makes is that not all racism is explicit and that implicit racism is evident in bureaucratic services provided for Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people (1997: 182). Cowlishaw and Morris argue that: 'Equality of opportunity in education is an essential foundation of the liberal egalitarian strategy for achieving social justice' (1997: 182). My argument is that new media technologies provide an opportunity for more egalitarian inclusion of Aboriginal people in the media industry. It is urgent that the current and future generation of young Aboriginal people learn to represent themselves positively with the new media technologies.

Attempts to eliminate racism must be rooted in a basic understanding of psychology of behaviour. No one is born a racist, because racism is learned like any operative behaviour. This implies that no one has to behave as a racist (1995: 24).

Ridley (1995: 29) argues that most people are unaware of racist acts, and that most people believe that racism is only about burning crosses and hooded Klansmen of the KKK. Ridley argues that it is unwise to focus mainly on explicit racism, as psychological racism is damaging and dangerous:

Of the various forms of racism, unintentional racist acts are the most insidious. These behaviours usually go unnoticed, but their harmful consequences are far reaching (1995: 39).

My argument here is that Aboriginal people are being blocked out of the media industry and it is time to start making positive changes so that younger Aboriginal people are able to speak on behalf of their communities. Through new media arts or multimedia technologies, Aboriginal people will be able to explore new grounds to express their opinions so their voices can be heard on an international level.

2.4 Health Education & Aboriginal Health

The current printed materials that address important issues relating to improving the communication gap between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people in Aboriginal health are insufficient. However, there has been a significant contribution made by Devitt and McMasters (1998) in Living on Medicine A Cultural Study of End-Stage Renal Disease among Aboriginal People. This book gives the reader an insight to the challenges that many Aboriginal people have when becoming a renal patient and, it also allows the renal patient to have a voice, so that their stories are told. These stories are quite powerful, for example in the words of an Aboriginal patient in Central Australia:

Some of our families, got this big trouble with this diabetic going around everywhere amongst our people-some of them have got hidden [sickness]. They don't know, they think they're strong, but they don't know. They're walking around like a time bomb—yeah [Dialysis patient 1994] (Devitt and McMasters, 1998: 1).
Living on Medicine is a research and publication project that focused on kidney failure issues in Central Australia. Devitt and McMasters (1998) draw attention to the communication problems experienced by Aboriginal patients when they state that renal patients are suffering in silence:

A consequence of being ill, alone and frightened is an inability to concentrate and focus on what is being said to and about yourself, even more so when explanations and instructions are in a foreign language (Devitt and McMasters, 1998: 59).

The research also demonstrated many Aboriginal renal patients maintained their cultural pride as they managed to get on with their lives under great difficulties (Devitt and McMasters, 1998: 2).

The incidence of kidney failure also known as end-stage renal disease (ESRD) is escalating in Aboriginal communities and it is proving to be a social health and economic burden on communities and health providers (Hoy et. al, 1995: 42).

In the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001), research figures clearly show that Aboriginal people are more at risk than non-Aboriginal people to develop kidney failure. This high level of risk and incidence of renal disease and failure has been linked to diabetes, high blood pressure, infections, low birth weight and obesity (ABS, 2001: 87). At the time of publication an estimated 70% of Aboriginal ESRD patients were receiving haemodialysis treatment (on the kidney machine), the remainder receiving peritoneal dialysis either home-based or hospitalised dialysis treatment (ABS, 2001:87).

Anderson (1995: 15) argues that the statistical evidence, which reflects the current state of Aboriginal health has 'lost the power to shock', because the scandalous rates of Aboriginal morbidity and mortality have become meaningless to the Australian community.

In Binan Goonj: Bridging Cultures in Aboriginal Health, Eckermann, et al, (1994: 163), state that for Aboriginal people health is a 'multi-dimensional concept that embraces all aspects of living'.
Pat Anderson’s argument for a holistic view of Aboriginal health supports my thesis that Aboriginal health education needs to focus more on the connection between people, culture and country. Anderson states:

Invading cultures have been unable and unwilling to see our cultural traditions as anything but inferior and primitive versions of theirs. They seem to believe that making us accept an imposed culture, their culture, which they believe to be vastly superior, can only improve the quality of our lives in every way. The reality is exactly the opposite, of course. Our identity as human beings remains tied to our land, to our cultural practices, our systems of authority and social control, our intellectual traditions, our concepts of spirituality and to our systems of resource ownership and exchange. Destroy this relationship and you damage - sometimes irrevocably - individual human beings and their health (Anderson, 1995: 15).

My argument is that current health education materials designed by non-Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people perpetuate the imposition of the dominant culture and it is no wonder that Aboriginal people find it difficult to understand the health messages.

Boughton (2000) in his publication titled What is the Connection Between Aboriginal Education and Aboriginal Health?, analyses the connection between health and education in a way that is relevant to my thesis argument, and I quote him as follows:

Education systems in Australia and elsewhere, historically-speaking, often aimed to reduce Indigenous peoples’ power and authority over their children, and helped to lower the status of Aborigines in society. These systems often devalued Indigenous laws, languages and cultures, and most importantly, denied the basis on which people legitimated their ownership of the vital economic resources of land and sea. The education system has been in other words, heavily implicated in the processes of dispossession and cultural genocide which were major causes of increasing ill-health (Boughton, 2000: 14).

As with Boughton, I see the importance of the transmission of knowledge by elders to the younger generations, based on land, law, languages and cultures, as essential education for survival and for a return to health. In studying the problems associated with renal failure in Australia’s Aboriginal population, it appears to me that Aboriginal health has been given few resources in the way of culturally appropriate health education materials.
Boughton (2000) brings to attention the need to seriously change direction and make improvements in Aboriginal health education.

Education and health are both key aspects of governance, but education is related to governance in more complex ways, because it is one of the major institutions by which societies reproduce in each new generation their basic understanding of their social and political roles and obligations, including their understanding of how power should be distributed and exercised (Boughton, 2000: 24).

My view is that it is a form of discrimination and a failure of good governance that perpetuates the lack or inappropriateness of health education materials designed for and delivered to Aboriginal people in remote communities.

Ian Anderson in *The ethics of the allocation of health resources* (1997: 193) argues that kidney disease is more common in Aboriginal people compared to the non-Aboriginal community. Anderson defines Aboriginal health as follows:

[The] physical, social emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of the individual and of the wellbeing of the whole community. This is a whole of life view and it also includes the traditional concept of life - death - life and the relationship to the land (Anderson, 1997: 198).

The holistic approach needs to be strategically implemented and one strategy for improving Aboriginal health is to improve Aboriginal health education. The western concept of health and using medicine is not the only way to make people better when they are ill. Aboriginal elders know that getting back onto country and regaining healthy diet and exercise routines leads to improving health and well-being. Moreover, my DVD Aboriginal Imagination demonstrates that contemporary hunting contexts are also good opportunities for knowledge transmission and health education.

### 2.5 Health in Hunting & Gathering Context

In my literature review, I refer to some key sources on contemporary hunting in land and marine contexts in the Northern Territory. I focus on the changes in hunting practices and the continuing cultural value that Aboriginal people place on the food and the hunting experience.
Hunting and gathering is particularly important to Aboriginal health because it provides a context in which a holistic approach to health and well-being may be demonstrated. Firstly, people are in contact with country, which is a spiritually fulfilling activity. Secondly, people are physically active and able to access fresh and nutritious foods, which is opposite to the sedentary lifestyle and poor diet typical of settlement living. Thirdly, hunting and gathering is an opportunity for socialisation and transmission of cultural knowledge. In particular, elders pass on knowledge about health and lessons on biology, botany and medicinal plant use to younger people while hunting and gathering.

The butchering of game is also an opportunity for elders to teach younger people about organ function and about responsibilities in food preparation and distribution. Hunting and butchering are important contexts that are used for teaching how meat is shared with family or the community. There are, however, some advantages and limitations evident in contemporary Aboriginal hunting practice. For example, Aboriginal hunting and gathering today has some technological advantages over traditional practices. These technologies include guns, 4wd vehicles and motorboats. On the other hand, hunting has become a lot harder because of the costs involved in running and maintaining these valuable assets and not everyone has access to them. Moreover, for many Aboriginal groups there are restrictions on access to land and time constraints in modern living typically limit hunting to weekend and holiday periods.

Altman (1998:47 - 61) provides an example of contemporary hunting and gathering among the eastern Gunwinggu at Momega outstation in North Central Arnhem Land. He highlights how technological and social changes impact upon men and women's hunting and gathering activities.

Altman states that:

men's hunting economy remains resilient.... Men's production has remained significant because men have incorporated simple market technology into traditional production processes, and have adapted hunting skills to exploit introduced feral game (1998: 59).
In small homeland centres and outstations like Momega, Aboriginal people are closer to the environment and more in tune with hunting as a regular way of life. Even so, Altman (1998: 59) notes a decline in women's food production with store bought foods, particularly carbohydrates - flour, bread, sugar, rice, taking over from bush vegetable foods in Gunwinggu diet.

In major Aboriginal townships and urban centres Aboriginal people’s diets are being assimilated to that provided by store bought foods and fast food outlets. High sugar, fat, salts and carbohydrate levels in the diet, together with diminished levels of physical activities, have led to significant health problems.

Bradley (1991) acknowledges the Yanyuwa of the Limmen Bight region of the Northern Territory as skilled in hunting marine animals, especially turtle and dugong. Although my project more explicitly focuses on land-based hunting and in the DVD titled *Aboriginal Imagination*, I do not use video clips of marine hunting, yet I have learned some of the basic knowledge that is required for hunting marine animals. A lot of preparation is made when hunting turtle and dugong, as the hunters spend many hours preparing boats and hunting equipment. I found Bradley’s (1991) documentation of the marine hunting stories of the Yanyuwa to be very interesting as my cultural experience of hunting is land based.

It is important to acknowledge the cultural value that Yanyuwa place on marine hunting in their sea country. The Yanyuwa men who hunt marine animals also make time to spiritually prepare themselves before hunting. Hunting is not just about the food quest, it is a whole of life approach to maintaining harmonious relations between people, other species and country. Yanyuwa hunters must acknowledge the animals in a respectful way, through song and dreamtime stories. They are not out hunting to kill anything that moves, as they are very selective in making the right kill.

For example, they watch how the animal swims in the sea, how it dives into the water when the dugong notices the hunters approaching (Bradley, 1991:96). When the Yanyuwa are successful in a hunt for turtle or dugong, the butchering process is done on the land. The sharing of the divided meat within the group is done in a culturally patterned way.
No one just helps themselves, as there are strict rules that must be followed and respected so that community members share the hunted food. Bradley (1991:96-100) provides diagrams that explain how turtle and dugong are butchered and the cuts of meat are subsequently divided within the community.

The Yanyuwa use the hunting, butchering and distribution of food as a whole-of-life approach to transmitting to younger generations the values, knowledge and skills for a healthy diet and life. Bradley (1991) also documented stories from Aboriginal Yanyuwa elders who are very concerned about modern trends towards dis-respectful methods of hunting now used in today's society by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

The elders see this as a breakdown of communication between elders and younger generations who see hunting only as a food quest rather than as a cultural responsibility. Hunting is a very important cultural activity for Aboriginal people. Hunting is about being with family, its about sharing stories from hunting experiences, transmitting knowledge of country, its about keeping fit and being thankful for what the country is able to provide. Hunting is about respect for elders and for country.

Povinelli (1993: 168-202) argues in Labours lot, how dramatically western society has influenced Aboriginal people at Belyuen, an Aboriginal community on the Cox Peninsular across the harbour from Darwin. Povinelli (1993: 175) states that 'hunting and gathering practices have changed - many items have been dropped from the diet and many technological innovations incorporated into the practice'. Povinelli (1993: 170) acknowledges Aboriginal elders of the Belyuen community who have major responsibilities for the young population. They speak on behalf of sixty percent of the population who are young children under the age of fifteen.

Senior Belyuen Aborigines say that the large number of young people is an important reason why they fight for country and why they continue to hunt, fish, and gather. They must do both in order to maintain the life of their families by meeting the needs of their households with the bush foods they gather and to maintain the life of the country by providing the necessary regular human presence. Balancing these two productive spheres can be very stressful (Povinelli, 1993: 170).
The dramatic changes in the environment brought about by land clearing, settlement, agriculture, industry and tourism have effected many hunting grounds located in the Belyuen area. Aboriginal people describe environmental changes as follows:

Belyuen women note that in their lifetime creeks have dried up, swamps have turned into open forest plains or paperbark forests (or have simply disappeared because of gravel mining), and dense vine tangles, once the gathering grounds for long yams (*Dioscorea transversa*), small mammals, and reptiles, have given way to beachfront houses (Povinelli, 1993: 174).

For many Aboriginal people, dramatic environmental changes have altered their lifestyle and made it much more difficult and less productive to pursue their hunting and gathering activities.

Povinelli (1993: 174) states that the absence of Aboriginal people going out bush to hunt, camp and talk about country and places has caused many sites to feel 'sorry' and 'go underground' or 'go inside'. In today's modern society, new values including the value of commodities such as store bought food, grog, cigarettes have become the norm. In this way, the interest of young people in learning to hunt and gather with elders to keep culture strong is in decline. Povinelli uses the metaphor of hunting to describe the new preoccupation to find cash for alcohol.

People draw out the metaphorical similarities between the two "stores" in their ordinary conversations. People say that young men go "hunting the green cans" (a particular brand of beer) when they walk single-file through the bush to the local grocery store some fifteen kilometres away. As they walk, men collect what foods they find along the way and when they get to the store they "hunt around" for credit and cash. Deciding who is to be asked for money to buy food, tobacco, and alcohol is seen as a form of hunting and fishing (Povinelli, 1993: 176).

A healthy diet and lifestyle, which is strongly based on hunting and gathering has now been replaced on a large scale by the grocery store. Foods high in fat, sugar and salt content as well as money spent on alcohol and cigarettes, together with inadequate exercise in combination leads to bad health in Aboriginal populations. Povinelli (1993: 193) draws attention to the two grocery stores on the Cox Peninsula.
In particular, I read the case study of 'The Milikapiti Nutrition Program' by Kerin Coulehan and Trish Jones (1998: 123-127). Coulehan and Jones bring attention to some very important issues in relation to income and how money is spent in Aboriginal communities.

The Tiwi, like many other Aboriginal groups and especially those in rural and remote communities, are predominantly reliant on welfare based incomes provided by the Federal Government in the form of pensions and allowances. The Tiwi also depend on the Commonwealth of Australia for study, training and work for the dole schemes to provide them with the means to live and gain educational and employment skills (Coulehan & Jones, 1998: 127).

Aboriginal communities that have a similar economic base to that of the Tiwi Islands also employ locals who have wage and salary incomes, for example Aboriginal teachers and health workers. However most employed locals work under the Federal Government's Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP), a working for the dole strategy. Coulehan & Jones emphasise that Aboriginal people are predominantly on very low incomes.

The majority of Tiwi at Milikapiti had low annual individual incomes. Indeed, 38% of individual incomes were in the $5,000-$8,000 range and 27% in the $8,001-$12,000 range or 66.4% of incomes being at $12,000 per annum or less (Coulehan & Jones, 1998: 127-128).

Low-income earners living in some of the most remote regions in Australia are dependant on store bought staples and take away meals.

In reviewing the literature on Aboriginal health I have found it to be a very complex area. Certainly we can improve things if we start to focus more attention on some of the basic services that are provided to remote Aboriginal communities. For example, we need better grocery stores with realistic prices, and people on remote communities need to be paid a wage so that our families can afford to buy healthy foods. However, the bigger picture suggests that a holistic approach to Aboriginal health and effective Aboriginal health education are the keys to positive change.
2.7 Conclusion

The literature I have read leads me to conclude that one of the key issues that should be addressed is to focus more attention on improving Aboriginal health education. Aboriginal people must be involved at all levels and with more control over new approaches to improving educational standards for younger people. Educating young Aboriginal people to be smart and look after their bodies has traditionally been the responsibility of the elders, but social change and modern life have altered relations between elders and the younger generation. With a rapidly changing society that is more accepting of new media arts, multimedia and computer technologies, younger Aboriginal people have new knowledge and skills.

New media arts is a very powerful tool that can be used to make positive changes, and Indigenous new media artists can use our creative imagination to make some improvements in Aboriginal education, including health education. The way forward with technology should be seen as an empowering journey for the Aboriginal community. Today we are able to transmit stories from our elders onto CD-Rom and DVD and over the Internet we are networking with other nations. We have a new way for our elders to pass on their stories and knowledge to the next generation.

The hunting context remains an important opportunity to link people to country and culture. The knowledge of our elders transmitted in hunting and gathering activities focuses on holistic health, on food, exercise, responsible relations to kin and country. When the knowledge of the elders is combined with the imagination and skills of young new media artists bringing a new approach to our storytelling, there can be new positive outcomes.
Chapter 3  Research Background & Methodologies

3.0  Introduction

In my research, I have used a combination of methodologies including informal interviews, participant observation, videotaping of hunting scenes, Aboriginal design drawings and production of animated graphics. I have included contemporary Aboriginal music, which has been incorporated as a component of the multimedia DVD *Aboriginal Imagination*. Most importantly, my research methods have included informal interviews with non-Aboriginal health professionals and Aboriginal patients at the NRU. In addition I have talked with Aboriginal family elders, networked with new media artists, especially Aboriginal artists, and reviewed the relevant literature.

Initially my research methods consisted of listening to health care workers and Aboriginal renal patients. One of the main points discussed was that Aboriginal renal patients had poor knowledge of how the kidney functioned. I learnt that most Aboriginal renal patients had little understanding of what was actually happening to them whilst they were on dialysis treatment. From previous discussions with health staff and Aboriginal patients at the NRU it became clear that the communication of specific information and health messages was not happening effectively. I summarise the informal interviews that I had with non-Aboriginal health professionals and Aboriginal patients and quote a number of comments made by Aboriginal renal patients.

3.1  Informal Interviews with Renal Patients

During one of the first meetings that took place at NRU, I was asked to sit down and look at the current educational materials available for Aboriginal people on renal health. Non-Aboriginal health staff advised me that Aboriginal renal patients find it difficult to understand the health education materials. From my first impression and my more considered examination of the current education materials that are being used to inform Aboriginal renal patients, I concluded that there is much room for improvement.
In order to come to an appreciation of renal services, I was advised by health care workers to visit Aboriginal patients at NRU when they were receiving dialysis treatment. This was my first experience of the renal unit and I had never previously seen the dialysis machine. I recall from my first visit that there were far more Aboriginal patients than non-Aboriginal renal patients using the dialysis machines. NRU was operating at full capacity with renal patients, all machines were in use and dialysis treatment occurred six days a week. After the initial shock of seeing so many people receiving dialysis treatment, I soon got back to my research task.

My project involved informal interviewing renal patients about their experiences of dialysis treatment and their opinions of the education materials that were being used to educate Aboriginal renal patients. A crucial part of my project was making time to sit down to listen to what Aboriginal elders and Aboriginal renal patients had to say about kidney problems and how it affected their lives and families.

As detailed below, I have used informal interviews to help support my argument for the urgent development of effective educational resources for Aboriginal renal patients, their families and communities. Each renal patient's name has been withheld in respect to his or her privacy. Only region details of region or country of origin have been provided to distinguish renal patients A, B and C.

Aboriginal renal patients' stories and responses are paraphrased as follows:

Renal patient A is from Arnhem Land, Northern Territory has been coming in to the Nightcliff renal unit for seven years and never learned how the dialysis machine kept him alive. More importantly, renal patient A had not come to understand his health treatment even though the patient's life was dependant on and was programmed around the dialysis session.

Renal patient B is from the Croker Island region, Northern Territory had not understood the health education materials on renal care. During my informal interview with him, I was told it was too hard to learn from the health education materials, which were 'not interesting' and 'boring' (pers. com. Renal Patient B, 2001).
Renal patient C is from the East Kimberley, Western Australia. I recall an informal interview with Aboriginal elder from remote Aboriginal community of Turkey Creek in Gija country. I spoke with him about dialysis on the bag, also known as Peritoneal Dialysis. Renal patient C told his story as follows:

'Before I used to be on dialysis machine in Perth for many years, long way from home and family. I was starting to get home sick for my family and country. Them doctors said if I wanted to go back to the community I needed to learn how to go on dialysis for the bag treatment, that was one of the main options for Aboriginal people who want to go home to their country. It took me a long time before I knew how to do everything on my own with the bag treatment. But I'm ok now. I am happy to be home. It is better to be on bag dialysis than the dialysis machine for me, because I can be in my country with my family' (pers. Com. Renal Patient C, 2001).

Renal patients A, B and C were chosen for informal interviews because they came from different Aboriginal communities in the Top End of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Their responses provided me with information as to how Aboriginal people from different parts of Australia were trying to come to terms with their illness. Among the Aboriginal renal patients that I interviewed, there seemed to be two options they used to deal with the dialysis treatment.

One was to gain some understanding of dialysis treatment, while the other was to ignore the meaning of dialysis treatment. Ignoring the complexities of dialysis treatment may have been one way to deal with a stressful situation and one less thing to worry about. Even so, I argue that Aboriginal renal patients deserve culturally appropriate educational materials and it is apparent to me that the available education materials on kidney health and renal disease and treatment options are inappropriate for many Aboriginal people.

### 3.2 Research Focus & Ethics

During the first stage of my project, the main topic that was discussed with Aboriginal renal patients and health care workers was how the kidney functioned and how irrelevant most of the available kidney health education materials are in regard to informing Aboriginal people about kidney function.
Devitt and McMasters (1998: 26) state that dictionary entries provide information on shape and location of the kidney but ‘none, however, include any information concerning function’. Other discussions centred on my finding out how much patients know about their body and about kidney function. Some patients did not understand the biomedical story of how their own body functioned. I decided that my research would aim to improve health education about kidney function by combining western biomedical concepts with Aboriginal knowledge and imagination.

It occurred to me that Aboriginal hunting is a culturally appropriate context for passing on information about where the kidney is in the animal body and how it functions. In particular, in the butchering process the kidney story can be told. The idea of bringing my multimedia skills to focus on Aboriginal hunting contexts and to develop an animated diagram and DVD to illustrate and educate about the body and kidney function was the conceptual origin of the project Aboriginal Imagination. I planned two stages of the project. One was based on healthy kidney function and the second on unhealthy kidney function. The idea was to create an interactive DVD as an educational story that had two sides to it.

However I was unable to produce an animated story that focused on both healthy and unhealthy kidneys due to time and lack of resources. I had to apply short cuts to the project because funding was limited and some ideas had to get left behind and saved for another time.

Under these circumstances, I limited the focus of the DVD Aboriginal Imagination to the positive story of Aboriginal hunting contexts as educational opportunities and on animation of normal kidney function in an Aboriginal x-ray style design of the human body. Initially, when I first started to talk with academics about the idea of using the hunting context for health education, I was told that it would not work. However, I persisted and finally proved my point. The academics and health educators have adapted ideas and concepts from my project with similar projects that they working on. I have been told that they will acknowledge my research project and DVD Aboriginal Imagination and its contribution to Aboriginal health education.
3.3 Learning from Elders in the Hunting Context

When I was younger, my uncles first started taking me out hunting for animals such as kangaroo, magpie geese, wild pig, and this was how I was educated on health issues relating to how the body functioned. When we succeeded in the hunt, my uncles killed and butchered the animals and talked to my 'cousin-brother and me' about the organs in the body. During the butchering process we discussed the heart, liver, lungs, stomach, intestines and my uncles taught us basic stories about how the body functioned. Thinking back to the times I spent with family out hunting, I realised that this was a more appropriate way of passing on messages relating to health education for Aboriginal people. This was a way to inform Aboriginal people with culturally appropriate methods.

Plate 7: Author
© 1999, Photo Uncle Jim

My plan was to combine Aboriginal knowledge and skills exercised in the hunting context with my imagination and skills in new media arts to form the basis of my project to make a positive contribution to Aboriginal health education. The hunting component and storyline was done on a tight budget, but even so it ended up working effectively. I could see that the combination of the knowledge of the elders and Aboriginal imagination had the potential to give back something to the community for health education purposes. This project is an example of how well Aboriginal people can adapt their knowledge and skills to do good for their community, even while limited by a tight budget and with minimal infrastructure support.
Hunting with my family also allowed me a chance to go back to country and be in the environment of my mother's, mother's country, Gurindji country in the Northern Territory. Living in the city, studying and trying to make time to get out bush is very difficult. The hunting component of my research project gave me the perfect opportunity to get away and spend sometime out bush with my family and go hunting with my uncles.

I already knew that going out bush gave me the benefits of exercise, fresh air, company of kin and caring for country as well as an opportunity for the transmission of knowledge. The hunting and associated interaction with kin took place in the following communities and country: the East Kimberley of Western Australia, Kununurra and Turkey Creek in Western Australia and Batchelor, Kalkaringi and Roper River regions in the Northern Territory.

![Plate 8: Map of Australia Indicating Relevant Locations © 2004: Jason Davidson](image-url)
The reason why I hunted with my uncles was because this is men’s business in providing food for families. My uncles have provided me with knowledge and skills in hunting.

I decided not to include women’s hunting in my research project because I had limited time and I was on a tight budget. Hunting with men provided a perfect opportunity for the butchering of animals and the telling of the biomedical story. The animals that were hunted for this project were wild pigs, cattle, magpie geese and bush turkey.

3.4 Community Feedback

My first take of filming the scenes of hunting magpie geese, cattle (known locally as ‘killers’) and wild pigs was video edited back onto a computer and then recorded back onto digital videotape and later used for giving demonstrations of how the project was developing. By connecting the portable camera to a television and pressing play on the digital camera, I now had my draft videos ready to show to an audience. I sought feedback from non-Aboriginal people, Aboriginal families and renal patients and remote Aboriginal communities.
The first feedback I received, while I was putting some of the video footage together at the University, was from non-Aboriginal people who felt that the hunting and butchering scenes were inappropriate for health education. The footage of animals being butchered and the kidneys being cut out was distasteful to them. This first critical assessment from a non-Aboriginal person about my work really made me have some doubts about the hunting component of my project.

After this negative feedback, I decided it was time to double check what sort of response my family and Aboriginal people out in communities had to the hunting and butchering scenes and to the associated educational message contained within the video clips. In order to obtain feedback from Aboriginal communities, I returned to Kalkaringi, Kununurra, Turkey Creek and Batchelor. In the communities of Turkey Creek and Kalkaringi, I had family to consult. Family members didn't even have to talk much because their body language said it all. A number of kin said that while viewing the video of wild cattle meat and magpie geese being cut up, it made their mouth water for bush tucker.

From this statement I then knew that I had got their full attention. This was a sure sign to me that my project has been targeted for the right audience. What some non-Aboriginal people found unfamiliar and sickening to watch, Aboriginal people found familiar and pleasurable. This highlighted the differences between cultures and proved my argument that Aboriginal people need to design and produce educational resources for Aboriginal people. This was enough to tell me that my project design was on the right track. The project was based on designing culturally appropriate educational material for Aboriginal people.

These short video stories of the Aboriginal hunting and butchering process were not intended for a non-Aboriginal audience. The audience for my project has been made up of Aboriginal people, especially Aboriginal people who are on dialysis and in need of a better understanding of how their kidneys function. I was happy with responses given by my family members and by Aboriginal renal patients at NRU and remote Aboriginal communities. I was convinced that my project could convey a strong health message, as Aboriginal people were able to relate to the story.
3.5 Filming & Video Editing

The hunting scenes were recorded with a digital video camera and the videos were later edited to short video clips. These video clips illustrated the hunting and butchering process with a focus on the animal organs, in particular the kidneys. I provided a brief voice over, including a plain English explanation of kidney function. The hunting footage was then edited into four short hunting stories on the interactive DVD, *Aboriginal Imagination*. The hunting stories run for three to five minutes each. The short videos focus on some of the techniques of hunting and there is footage of dissection of animals when they are being gutted. This project had an exciting aspect to it. When the time came to go hunting it was real.

There were no re-takes of filming. Time and budget were tight and there was limited room to make corrections for mistakes. It is sufficient to say that I need to acknowledge that in the DVD I have over simplified and inadequately represented the complexity of the biomedical story for the human body. My project was to help demonstrate, not a perfect biomedical story on kidney function but how Aboriginal knowledge and imagination should be engaged in developing health education materials. All the video scenes in *Aboriginal Imagination* were filmed on digital video cameras that were borrowed from the Faculty of Indigenous Research Education (FIRE) and the Digital Media Centre at the University.

The video editing process was done at the University and at Grove Studios in Darwin. Mark Strother at Grove Studios allowed me to use his facilities to make the final adjustments with the latest up to date computer technology. I was able to create an interactive DVD on a Mac computer with user-friendly programs such as Imovie (video editing program) and IDVD (creates interactive DVD). Once the hunting scenes and informal interviews were edited and stored in a safe place. I was then able to start focusing on creating a health education story that uses animation to show how waste is filtered from the blood for my kidney story. This part of the project was based on using health education texts to inform me on the basics of the biomedical story, which I used to develop my own design which combined Aboriginal x-ray style art and new media art technologies to illustrate the human body and kidney function.
3.6 Computer Animation

The idea came to me to combine Aboriginal x-ray art for the design of the human body and computer animation to illustrate the process of kidney function. I discussed my ideas in health education circles in Darwin and found the extra support I needed through the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRCAH). The CRCAH provided me with the funding necessary to participate in professional training in Sydney for one week at the Australian Film Television and Radio School. I learned the basics of computer animation with a computer program called Adobe After Effects 5: <http://www.aftrs.edu.au/>

This program is user friendly and gives artists an opportunity to explore their own imagination to produce computer animations. When I had obtained the basic skills for using this program, I returned to Darwin eager to get started, but that was not to be so easy. Getting access to suitable computer equipment was a very difficult process back in the Northern Territory. After many months of problems with trying to get started on the animation at the university, I decided to work from home on my trusty old computer.

Working on the animation of kidney function towards the development of my DVD for a health education purpose proved to be complex with a lack of resources and very time consuming. As I worked on the animation, I found it useful to consult current health education materials and a few medical texts that explained and illustrated relevant aspects of human biology. Firstly, on paper I created hand drawn images of the kidneys. At the same time, I was exploring the idea of bringing an Aboriginal artistic perspective to the design and production of my multimedia educational project.

The kidney image and concept took about two months to complete. With the image ready, I then scanned it into the computer with a program called Adobe Photoshop 6. This program was used to add special effects and a graphics background that located the kidneys in an Aboriginal x-ray art design of the human body. I also used this program to help make minor adjustments to improve the brightness and contrast of the image.
I saved the image onto the hard drive of the computer and later started to add the graphics concept that illustrated the flow of blood and waste, which was to be used for the animation process. Directional arrows in red showed the path of the blood flow through the kidneys and the blue arrows gave illustrated how waste is filtered from the kidney to the bladder. Attached below is an image used in the animation.

The animation was developed with computer program After Effects 5. The idea of creating red arrows to illustrate blood flow with the main kidney function image was effective. The design for the animation of the filtering function proved to be complex. However, this part was drawn in blue to briefly show how waste (piss or urine) is filtered from the kidney to the bladder. With the animation of the kidney function completed, I turned my attention to developing a layered design for the animation of the human body. I recall when I first started on this project I was asked by health care workers in this field to specifically focus only on the kidney function.
However, it seemed to me that it was not adequate to focus only on the kidneys when everything is interconnected in the body. The kidneys keep the blood clean and the entire body needs a fresh supply of healthy blood so it can run properly. With this thought in mind, I designed the human body in an Aboriginal x-ray art style and specially designed it through a complex process of layered images so that I could use it for animation showing the internal organs.

![Plate: 11 Human Body](image)

© 2002: Jason Davidson

Next I started to work on animation of the heart and how it pumps blood through the veins and arteries. Another stage on, I developed a design of the stomach and intestines with animated arrows to show how food goes from the stomach through the intestines and comes out the arse, or technically speaking the anus.
The next stage of the design development focused on the liver, which was based on an attempt to briefly include the function of the liver. However, medical professionals advised me that the liver was more complex than my DVD diagram suggests. I acknowledge that this is a limitation of my project.
3.7 Development of Music Background

Instead of using narration throughout the project, I decided to include contemporary Aboriginal music as a theme for the DVD. My reason for including music was because it is a significant way to communicate to an Aboriginal audience. Traditionally and still today Aboriginal people entertain and inform in song as well as storytelling. For Aboriginal people today, rhythm and song continue to be effective means of communication. The music was added as background to my introductions and to the hunting stories and animation. The integration of music, animation and video footage complements the project.

Aboriginal musicians who live in Darwin, Djolpa Mckenzie and Noeletta Mckenzie, well known from their work in the band Wild Water, contributed great original sound tracks for the interactive DVD, Aboriginal Imagination. Djolpa and his wife Noeletta helped me in the final stages of the music sound track, as we wrote the lyrics and composed the music together for the song Aboriginal Imagination during a jam session.

The song came together well and during the course of a single day we were able to record the music that made the project more complete. I also need to acknowledge local Darwin musician, Liam Kelliher, a very talented guitarist and his fiancée Debbie Hake who helped with the percussion. Liam helped me by providing lead and rhythm guitar for the original sound track of the Kununurra Track on the Introduction and the Kidney Problems song on the DVD.

Finally Jeffrey Gurruwiwi from Goulbourn Island in the Northern Territory wrote the reggae rhythm music and put his voice to the song, Kidney Problems, which accompanied the kidney animation on the DVD. Jeffrey Gurruwiwi and I worked up the words for the song, Kidney Problems, which reflects the current kidney epidemic in Aboriginal communities. Kidney problems are affecting many families in Jeffrey's remote community and the song was a way for Jeffrey to express his concerns through music.
It is important to acknowledge the people who have participated in composing and producing the music. The names of songs, copyright owners and list of video clips on the DVD *Aboriginal Imagination* are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DVD/ Video Clip</th>
<th>Music/ copyright owner</th>
<th>Musician</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>© <em>Kununurra Track</em></td>
<td>Jason Davidson (rhythm guitar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jason Davidson (2002)</td>
<td>Liam Kelliher (lead guitar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidney Introduction</td>
<td>© <em>Blues</em></td>
<td>Jason Davidson (rhythm &amp; lead guitar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jason Davidson (1998)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush Turkey</td>
<td>© <em>Bush Turkey</em></td>
<td>Djolpa Mckenzie (singer &amp; rhythm guitar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Djolpa Mckenzie (2002)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magpie Geese</td>
<td>© <em>Arnhem Land Blues</em></td>
<td>Djolpa Mckenzie (singer &amp; didgeridoo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Djolpa Mckenzie (2002)</td>
<td>CJ (Djolpa's Brother, instrument clap stick)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle Country</td>
<td>© <em>Aboriginal Land</em></td>
<td>Djolpa Mckenzie (singer &amp; rhythm guitar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Djolpa Mckenzie</td>
<td>Noelletta Mckenzie (percussion)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noelletta Mckenzie (2002)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pig Hunting</td>
<td>© <em>Tribal Land</em></td>
<td>Djolpa Mckenzie (singer &amp; rhythm guitar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Djolpa Mckenzie</td>
<td>Noelletta Mckenzie (percussion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noelletta Mckenzie (2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kidney Function</td>
<td>© <em>Kidney Problems</em></td>
<td>Jeffrey Gurruwiwi (singer &amp; lead guitar)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jeffrey Gurruwiwi</td>
<td>Jason Davidson (rhythm guitar)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jason Davidson (2002)</td>
<td>Liam Kelliher (lead guitar &amp; bass)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Debbie Hake (percussion)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyrone Lynch (drums &amp; sound recording)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Imagination</td>
<td>© <em>Aboriginal Imagination</em></td>
<td>Jason Davidson (rhythm guitar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aboriginal Imagination</td>
<td>Djolpa Mckenzie (rhythm guitar, keyboard &amp; singer)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jason Davidson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Djolpa Mckenzie (2002)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wild Water album BALTAPA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Djolpa</td>
<td>© <em>Aboriginal Imagination</em></td>
<td>Djolpa Mckenzie</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sunset Bay (Wild Water)</td>
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Table 1: Aboriginal Imagination, Musical Production
The contemporary music theme brings another form of Aboriginal artistic expression to the DVD *Aboriginal Imagination*. In their involvement in the production of the DVD, Aboriginal people believed that whether as media artists, musicians or family members they could contribute to culturally appropriate education and self-development in the Aboriginal health context. The completion of the interactive DVD *Aboriginal Imagination* and positive feedback from Aboriginal renal patients, elders and family was a major stepping-stone for the project. Next I had to bring the project to a new audience, to test how they would react to the project themes and ideas. I have received positive feedback from most professional people whom I have met in health and multimedia circles.

### 3.8 Networking & Professional Development

An important addition to my Master’s project was to make new contacts with relevant experts, develop ideas to take my *Aboriginal Imagination* project further and provide ways forward for my post research career. As I developed and expanded my networks with Aboriginal artists, new media artists and health education professionals I was able to see the bigger picture beyond the Master’s to my long-term professional development. Attached below is a timetable, which outlines the networking and professional development opportunities that I have participated in during my research studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date &amp; Location</th>
<th>Events &amp; Professional Development</th>
<th>Website Links...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001… Sydney…</td>
<td>Training Animation… Australian Film &amp; Television</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aftrs.edu.au/">http://www.aftrs.edu.au/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002… Adelaide… Art Festival South Australia Museum</td>
<td>ConVerge Exhibition</td>
<td><a href="http://www.adelaidebiennial.com/">http://www.adelaidebiennial.com/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Networking, Events & Professional Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting New Media Arts Promotional Goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The first stage of developing professional networks began when my work was accepted into the exhibition *conVerge* where art and science met at the 2002 Adelaide biennial of Australian Art at the Museum of South Australia. Whilst at *conVerge*, I was also invited to participate in The Fourth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Arts Conference in Adelaide 2002.
I participated and contributed information at the conference and gave examples of my artwork that was entered in the group exhibition, *conVerge* in the Museum of South Australia. Further information can be found at: [http://indigenousvisualarts.com](http://indigenousvisualarts.com)

Several of the images that I was developing in my Master’s project were selected for the above exhibition. One of these being the image titled *Kidney Problems in Aboriginal Australia have now Reached Epidemic Proportions, 2001*. To accompany the images, I produced text commentary, for example as follow:

My work indicates ways in which Aboriginal cultures are incorporating modern technology. It also suggests some of the things that Aboriginal cultures offer to contemporary understandings in shaping our shared future (Hampton, 2002: 40).

My artwork for this exhibition consisted of seven hand drawn images of a variety of Australian animals. The images were combined with computer graphics to tell a story about Aboriginal people’s relation to country as well as to give a health education message about the kidney story. The images selected were printed on canvas and framed.

The rationale for the *conVerge* exhibition was as follows:

*conVerge* surveys a range of artistic responses to questions about the future of technology, humanity and the sustainability of Earth’s biosphere. All of the artists represented here are actively engaged with scientific research at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The exhibition explores some of the fundamental issues facing modern Australia, through creative encounters with diverse systems of knowledge such as ecology, physical science, biotechnologies, Indigenous knowledge, information technology and cognitive science. This biennial project has also recorded the details of collaborations between artists and scientists or science organisations (Radford, 2002: 4).

The exhibition *conVerge* was a very exciting opportunity which enabled me to meet and network with talented artists from a broad range of artistic backgrounds. Among the artists I met were Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr from *SymbioticA*, University of Western Australian (UWA). They were also exhibiting at *conVerge*, with a project titled 'Pig Wings', based on bio-medical technologies and tissue engineering.
Oron noticed my artwork titled *Kidney Problems in Aboriginal Australia have now Reached Epidemic Proportions* that was on display. He introduced himself to me as the Director of *SymbioticA* at UWA and asked if I would be interested in doing an art residency in Perth 2003. He suggested the potential for me to develop my project on the *Kidney Function*. Oron gave me a brief description of *SymbioticA* and invited me to Perth to present my work and look at the facilities.

Meanwhile, I had to return to Darwin and to my thesis project, enthused with the new horizons opening up for Indigenous artists working in the new media and in the health sphere. Later in that same year, I was asked to participate in the Indigenous summer school workshop in Adelaide, known as NISNMA (National Indigenous School in New Media Arts). I was asked if I was interested in tutoring and helping to introduce Aboriginal students to new media arts. My main role was to teach students the fundamentals of Adobe Photoshop, computer graphics, scanning and video editing.

For two weeks networked and participated in the NISNMA School in Adelaide at Ngapartji multimedia coffee shop in the city. NISNMA was a great opportunity to talk with other Indigenous new media artists who were also trying to establish new networking strategies within Australia. The Indigenous New Media Artists website known as Blackout has some useful information and can be found at: <http://www.fineartforum.org/Gallery/cybertribe/blackout/>

Participants of the NISNMA summer school have stated that they obtained useful knowledge about New Media Arts and developed positive visions for their future goals. Further information about NISNMA summer school can be located at: <http://www.anat.org.au/nisnma>

Being at NISNMA was also about encouraging other Aboriginal new media artists to seriously look at future jobs and opportunities in the emerging area of new media artistic expression as well as employment. Aboriginal artists who participated in this project were obliged to give demonstrations of their work. I was really amazed at some of the great work that was being produced. This experience convinced me that Aboriginal new media artists could find new and powerful ways of creating original artworks and sharing their messages.
Indigenous artists are producing professional works in all areas of New Media Arts, all over Australia and in the main are doing so on tight budgets with poor resources and lack of support. Seeing other talented artists out in the wider community encouraged me to continue with the work I was developing for my Master's research project. When I returned to Darwin, I had a very positive outlook on media arts and was encouraged by the new experiences and contacts I had made.

As I had been invited to attend and look at the facilities of SymbioticA at the UWA, I finalised arrangements to go to Perth and caught the plane on the 7th January 2003. SymbioticA is an artist run laboratory set within the School of Anatomy and Human Biology at UWA. It is a research laboratory dedicated to the exploration of scientific knowledge in general and biological technologies in particular and which also encourages artistic expression. This vibrant community of artists, scientists and technicians provides a stimulating environment for any artist who is interested in exploring the complexities and wonders of anatomy and biology (Grounds, 2003, pers. com).

While in Perth, I was able to network with people who had knowledge in the areas of science, art and Indigenous studies. During my stay, I discussed ideas for further developing the project *Aboriginal Imagination* with a broad cross section of people at UWA, including people from Aboriginal health organisations and arts community. In the final days of my stay in Perth, I was advised to attend Synergy, a health conference planned for February 2003 in Sydney. Synergy would be another opportunity to promote my work, network with like-minded people and attend a very important meeting in relation to art and health.

After returning to Darwin and making further adjustments to my thesis, I flew down to Sydney on the 2nd February 2003. I was invited to the *Synergy* World of Art and Health Conference held at the University of New South Whales in Sydney, to show work based on my Masters project *'Aboriginal Imagination'*. *Synergy* was another opportunity to share stories and look at opportunities to develop projects with others who had knowledge of and interest in the combination of art and health projects.
The people that participated in this project were doing some amazing things that incorporated art in all fields and there were many stories that were inspiring for me. The symposium consisted of delegates who came from around the world and from a diversity of disciplines. Synergy was about bringing people together including health professionals, policy makers, design professionals, architects, artists and cultural activists. Information on Synergy can be found at: <http://www.placemaking.com.au/>

During the year 2003, I was invited to attend an important meeting in relation to Indigenous new media arts. The New Media Arts Board for the Australia Council had organised for a group of Aboriginal artists to go to Sydney to talk and find ways to help improve and promote Aboriginal New Media Arts and Artists. The Round Table Meeting as it was titled, discussed feedback from each state of Australia from Aboriginal artists who practice new media arts. The meeting concluded that not enough has been happening to help promote new media artists. It was recognised that new media artists were constantly struggling with poor resources and lack of support Australia wide.

A decision was made to develop new advertising incentives in Aboriginal new media so that in the future the wider community would be more aware of new media arts. One of the first promotional activities that the New Media Arts Board contributed from the Round Table Meeting in Sydney was to send new media artists to talk about their works at the Garma Arts Festival in Arnhem Land, Yolngu country in the Northern Territory. I was pleased to be invited to participate in the Garma Art Festival in August 2003. During the Garma festival Chief Minister Clare Martin launched the Northern Territory Indigenous Arts Strategy.

The Northern Territory benefits from an exceptionally rich artistic and cultural heritage. The cultural practices of Indigenous Territorians reflect the ongoing and unbroken traditions of many millennia. At the same time, contemporary development in Indigenous visual and performing arts, building on these traditions, are extending Northern Territory Arts in new and exciting directions, attracting world interest and acclaim (Martin, 2003: 1).
The festival gave me an opportunity to demonstrate my work and get involved in supporting Indigenous artists. The project *Aboriginal Imagination* was well received by other Indigenous new media artists and this positive response assured me that my ideas for the *Aboriginal Imagination* project were on the right track. While at Garma, I played the song and video clip 'Aboriginal Imagination' to some of the students who were attending from NISNMA School at Ngapartji in Adelaide. After Garma, I returned to Darwin in time for the Darwin Arts Festival and the opening of the Twentieth Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards.

The image 'Kidney Problems in Aboriginal Australia have now Reached Epidemic Proportions', first exhibited at conVerge in Adelaide, was also exhibited in the 20th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art award 2003 at the Darwin Museum. During the festival I was also encouraged to exhibit *Aboriginal Imagination* DVD in the new media art space at '24HR Art gallery', the Northern Territory centre for contemporary Art. The web site for 24hrart can be found at: <http://www.24hrart.org.au/>

In February 2004, Dlux Media Art invited me to participate in a group exhibition in Sydney with the *Bush Mechanics* (Warlpiri Media Association). Further information can be found at: <http://www.warlpiri.com.au/home.htm>

The title name of the exhibition was *Aboriginal Imagination: An Indigenous Screen & New Media Arts Exhibition*. Cooper (2004), a new media exhibition producer and writer gives her views about the two new works being exhibited, stating that:

> Aboriginal Imagination is about showing us different ways of understanding and using technology in the development of creative expressions. This exhibition gives us fresh, exciting, even raw perspectives of differing elements of contemporary Aboriginal Australia. <http://www.afc.gov.au/newsandevents/events/dlux_aboriginal.aspx>

The exhibition was held at Blacktown Art Gallery Centre and was exhibited from the 5th February 2004 until the 21st February 2004. During my stay in Sydney I made time to talk with other Indigenous new media artists.
3.9 Conclusion

In new media arts, I have learned that you never stop learning and you pick up new ideas and methods, and evaluate them against the work of other more experienced new media artists. I have established some good networks that have encouraged me to develop my project as it progressed. On the other hand, I must also say that I have learned not to depend too much on others to help you along the way because as a new media artist, and Indigenous, you have to be self-motivated.

You must be aware of the sharks in the community who can take advantage of your original ideas. In the long run apart from self-motivation, what keeps you going when you are doing a long term independent project is as much the support of family and friends as it is institutional support. I found that completing this project with limited resources has made me think about continuing to work hard and be independent.
Chapter 4 Holistic Approach & History

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I argue the need for a holistic approach to Aboriginal health. Since WWII, holistic health has been an identified health goal at international, national and local levels. The following definitions of holistic health are given. Macionis and Plummer (1997: 554) state that the Constitution of the World Health Organisation interim commission in 1946 defines health as a 'state of complete physical mental and social well-being, health is as much a social as a biological issue'.

In 1978 the World Health Organisation, Report of the International Conference on Primary Health Care at Alma-Ata identified the need for:

... a new approach to health and health care to shrink the gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots', to achieve a more equitable distribution of health resources, and to attain a level of health for all the citizens of the world that would permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life (The World Health Report 1998: 16).

The health of Aboriginal people is multidimensional, it involves all aspects of living (Eckermann, et al, 1994: 210). It is important that all of these dimensions are considered when dealing with Aboriginal health issues. The National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation (NAIHO) in 1982 described Aboriginal wellbeing as:

Not just the physical well being of the individual but the social, emotional and cultural well being of the whole community. This is a whole-of-life view and it also includes the cyclical concept of life. Health care services should strive to achieve the state where every individual is able to achieve their full potential as human beings, and thus bring about the total well being of their community... (Eckermann, et al, 1994: 174).
The Northern Territory Government has acknowledged that overcoming the problems in Aboriginal health can be accomplished through the holistic approach. The website of the Northern Territory Government Department of Community Services, last updated Friday, 7th February 2003, acknowledges the need for a holistic health approach:

Improving Aboriginal health as part of efforts to overcome Aboriginal disadvantage more generally, poses the greatest single challenge to the Northern Territory and its health care system. It is widely recognised that tackling the underlying causes of Aboriginal health problems holistically, and providing health services within a primary health care framework are the most appropriate community and health sector responses to the Aboriginal health problem. <http://www.nt.gov.au/health/comm_health/abhealth_strategy/abhealth.shtml>

Janzen (2004) in *The Social Fabric of Health, an Introduction to Medical Anthropology* describes how medicines or traditional medicines have been categorised ethnographically and scientifically according to various health-upholding practices.

The medicines of hospitals and mainstream doctors of the industrialised world are usually spoken of today by medical anthropologists as biomedicine. This name identifies the specific character of this medical tradition, its basis in science, and its emphasis on the physical body. Although this medicine is globally distributed... it is seen as a specific medical tradition, distinct from other medical traditions such as Chinese medicine, or Indian Ayurvedic medicine, the medical traditions of Africa, or any number of distinctive schools of healing and bodies of knowledge (Janzen, 2002: 4).

Reid (1982), a medical anthropologist who documented a Yolngu socio-medical theory and practice in northeast Arnhem Land, argues that Aboriginal health is not just about sensible lifestyle and maintaining a good diet. 'It is the outcome of a complex interplay between the individual, his territory of conception and his spiritual integrity: his body, his land and his spirit' (Reid, 1982: xvi-xvii). By contrast, western ideas for improving Aboriginal health are based on the biomedical model of what is good for health. Aboriginal health knowledge exemplifies the holistic approach in that health and well-being depends on harmony within the individual body, the social group, the environment and the cosmos (Rose, 1998: 242).
Aboriginal knowledge, imagination and skills in how to achieve health and well-being is traditionally based in country, culture, law, family and the Dreaming. This holistic approach to individual, social, moral and environmental health has been passed on from generation to generation because it is effective and it worked for our ancestors. I believe in what our elders tell us when they say that the country and all the forces of nature, together with living kin, are our teachers. It is kin and country that show us how to live Aboriginal way. Aboriginal people and Gardiya must consider new ‘solutions’ especially in the areas of health education. Historically and still today, Aboriginal knowledge and imagination have been suppressed. Typically, Gardiya uphold their dominant cultural knowledge, technologies and skills, including the biomedical model of health.

My argument is that the dominance of the Gardiya way of thinking and communicating about health must come to an end and a balance must be found by genuinely including Aboriginal knowledge and imagination. An example of this is in the way that Aboriginal people find that balance in nature. Rose (1998: 243) discusses the Dreamtime story of the sun and rain as ancestor beings. The latter is also known as the Rainbow Snake. During the Dreamtime, important laws were established so that the sun and the rain could maintain a balanced and long lasting relationship.

Without sun the earth would be flooded, while without rain the earth would be burnt. In short, the sun has its own law and rain has its own Law.... Sun and rain exist independently of each other; they are autonomous Beings.... Each in its own way expresses the powers of birth, death and renewal. They thus balance each other. Neither allows the other to go out of control (Rose, 1998: 243).

With the concept of balance in mind and applying it to Aboriginal health, one can clearly see that Aboriginal people have lost their health and well-being since power is weighted to Gardiya who are in control. Acting Chairman, Lionel Quartermaine, (ATSIS) brings attention to the urgency of this particular debate about Aboriginal empowerment, which was discussed at the Indigenous Researchers' Forum, 1st October 2003:
One key issue before us is how to empower people at the community and regional levels, so that policies and service delivery are driven by the people and the communities themselves.... We want Indigenous peoples and communities to drive change and shape their own futures (Quartermaine, 2003).

Reid (1982: xv) argues that health services are failing in Aboriginal communities, because of a failure to take a holistic approach to health, which is a whole of life and all services approach.

Physical and emotional well-being also depend on the adequate provision of water, power, sewerage, housing and education, and on less tangible but equally important factors such as secure land tenure, social cohesion, cultural integrity and financial support... services to Aboriginal communities must do more than simply meet the technological and cost criteria applied in Australian towns and cities. They must be based on the priorities and views of Aborigines about their own development (Reid, 1982: xv).

Reid (1982: xiii) draws attention to the relationship between improving Aboriginal health and the need to focus on how financial resources work within the structure of the health system.

In fact, in the health sector, the 'spending on Aboriginal health' is largely spending on European staff salaries and on capital works, which may or may not have an impact on Aboriginal health and which certainly do not channel money into the local economy of Aboriginal communities, where it is most needed (Reid, 1982: xiii).

The dollars spent on health research and education goes to provide careers for non-Aboriginal experts and advisers. Aboriginal people better understand the worldview and the holistic health approach that fits the Aboriginal context. My argument is that Aboriginal people need to be brought into the design and delivery of health education. It is time to start making things happen by taking a holistic approach to health and empowering Aboriginal people through health education and in health services. There is a need for a balance between a biomedical and an Aboriginal holistic approach to health research, education and services in order to benefit the Aboriginal community.
4.1 Holistic Versus Biomedical Model of Health

Aboriginal culture can play an equal part with western culture in guiding our future in Australia. Indigenous forms of expression, which are relevant to Indigenous people, are appropriate to convey information of a high order of complexity.

Indigenous knowledge demands its recognition as priceless intellectual capital, as the systematic organisation and cultural transmission of crucially significant ways of knowing the natural, social and spiritual worlds. These integrated understandings of local systems can provide insight absent in the partial yet globalising impulses of modern science (Cooper and McDonald Crowley, 2002: 7).

The enormous gaps between two cultures and their ways of dealing with health problems can be explained through the very different worldviews that each culture has for its basis of understanding. Malloch as cited in Smylie (2001) who discusses Canadian Indians and their cultural beliefs and practices concerning the balance of life states:

Good health is a balance of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual elements. All four interact together to form a strong, healthy person. If we neglect one of these elements, we get out of balance and our health suffers in all areas... Prevention of sickness goes hand in hand with traditional healthy lifestyle. Good health is ours when we live in a balanced relationship with the earth and natural world. Everything we need has been provided by our common mother, the earth: whole foods, pure water and air, medicines, and the laws and teaching, which show us how to use these things wisely. When we combine these gifts with an active lifestyle, a positive attitude, and peaceful and harmonious relations with other people and the spiritual world – good health will be ours (Malloch as cited in Smylie 2001: 2).

From the Aboriginal perspective, health involves the whole of life, taking into account the person and their environment, the physical and the spiritual dimensions of health and well-being. The western perspective on health focuses more on disease and prescriptive remedies. Too often health is seen as separate from the other business of life. Poor co-ordination and collaboration between government departments, has typically meant that health, housing, education, welfare, and employment are treated as separate issues instead of being seen as essential to the holistic view of community well-being (Eckermann, et al, 1994: 193).
4.2 The Dreaming & the Cycle of Life

To get an overall understanding of the holistic approach to improving health one needs to consider Aboriginal cosmology, popularly known as the Dreaming. Aboriginal groups in Australia have many different understandings of the Dreaming. In Aboriginal Australia, storytelling is a primary medium to socialise children and to transmit knowledge to the younger generations. Telling Dreaming stories and performing ceremonies that enact the Dreaming are the performance media by which Aboriginal knowledge has been passed on and shared. Through telling these Dreaming stories, Aboriginal elders communicate with younger people about the creation of life and how the country was formed (Stanner, 1998: 230).

These Dreaming stories that are told and retold from generation to generation help Aboriginal people to know how to respect and follow their elders in upholding customary law and looking after country and nurturing life. 'To be 'good' is to be intelligent, knowledgeable and sane. It is also to be at one with the cosmos' (Rose, 1998: 248).

A core part of Aboriginal spiritual beliefs is based on the Dreamtime creation of all things, spiritual and physical. Our spiritual beliefs and cultural relationship to country are a vital aspect of our personal and community well-being. To understand Aboriginal culture, one needs to acknowledge the continuing significance of the Dreaming law and Aboriginal concepts of the cycle of life. Stanner (1998) describes the Dreaming:

Clearly, The Dreaming is many things in one. Among them, a kind of narrative of things that once happened; a kind of charter of things that still happen; and a kind of logos or principle of order transcending everything significant for Aboriginal man. If I am correct in saying so, it is much more complex philosophically than we have so far realised. (Stanner, 1998: 228).

The philosophy of the Dreaming is like a powerful key that gives meaning to our lives. The Dreaming is expressed through an 'idiom of poetry, drama and symbolism, into a principle that the Dreaming determines not only what life is but also what it can be' (Stanner, 1998: 230-231).
People from different races all over the world have to come to terms with the big questions in 'life' and this includes important matters that focus on health and well-being, sickness and death. The Western concept of life tends towards a linear chronology that follows life from birth, through adolescence to adulthood, and includes sickness and death (Janzen, 2002: 19). Aboriginal people by comparison, have a more cyclical perspective on life not just on the individual's life but also include the environment, the cosmos and spiritual ancestors in the cycle of life. Rose (1992: 90) writes that 'Yarralin people pay close attention to what people, country, and cosmos are 'telling' them' and that 'circularity... is implicit in Yarralin people's stories: the cosmos as it exists, or as it existed before the European invasion, is good because it works—it does not fall apart'.

Janzen (2002: 129) states that '...two contrasting concepts of time are in evidence in life-change rituals: one is linear, the other cyclical'.

Anthropologists have rightly noted that the very notions of the life-course, life span, and life cycle embody these contrasting senses of time, and therefore are simply yet other cultural constructions with which we make sense of, and try to conceptualise, the mystery of change (Janzen, 2002: 129).

My argument is that it is imperative that the Aboriginal community provides an Aboriginal perspective in health services and especially in health education because here Aboriginal people can give the whole of life perspective, including but not limited to the individual life cycle. Aboriginal people believe that there is a relationship between people, their health and well-being and the presence or absence of balance or harmony in the physical, social and spiritual environment:

In relationship to the conceptualisation of health, most health educators would agree that a narrow biomedical model of health is unsatisfactory and that any definition should encompass some idea of well-being. It is also claimed that health status is affected, not just by physical causes but by the total environment in which an individual operates (Laurna and Heaney as cited in Winch and Gingell, 1999: 104).
The image below is designed to illustrate the nature of Aboriginal peoples’ relationship to country. People living on land, nurturing country and being nurtured by country helps to affirm the cycle of life.

4.3 History of Violence on the Frontier

To be able to grasp how history has influenced today’s Aboriginal society one needs to acknowledge the stories from the past. Informal recollections of history by my kinsmen and countrymen from the Victoria River district and East Kimberley portray their distrust and resentment of Gardiya authorities. I do not speak on behalf of all Aboriginal people here, but it must be stated that certain contact histories have produced a psychological effect that has caused many Aboriginal people to distance themselves from Gardiya in authority.
The history of the pioneering days on the pastoral frontier in Northern Australia has made a big impact, and it is hard for many to just move on in our lives and forget these stories, because these stories happened to our elder’s mothers and fathers. Many crimes were committed in the last frontier of Australia and the stories told by Aboriginal elders are horrific and un-imaginable.

The abuses of Aboriginal people continued beyond the frontier era, especially through poor working and living conditions in the pastoral industry in Northern Australia during the immediate post war period. An example of these conditions is as follows:

Aborigines actually classified as employees received rations from the kitchen: for each person, one slice of dry bread, one piece of usually cooked meat (sometimes in the form of a bone), and a dipper of tea. This was the ration that workers received three times per day, for seven days a week. Workers in the main dining-room received left-overs from the table which they sometimes shared with relatives. Those employed in the kitchen obtained odds and ends thrown aside in the preparation of meals and these also were shared (Berndt and Berndt, 1987: 71).

Aboriginal elders who worked on the cattle station tell stories about how life was hard in the early days. An elder from the East Kimberley told me:

If you like to talk up for yourself and you was a bit of a smart arse you would end up getting yourself killed. Back in the early days it was safer to keep a bit quiet, that’s why some of us are here, we still a live today. Lot of bad Gardiya people around in the early days’ (pers. com. East Kimberley elder, 2001).

Most Australian people have little knowledge and interest in the crimes that were committed in the early days and this is only just one story. Imagine yourself sitting down and listening to Aboriginal elders telling you about how their family was massacred, and their stories are about comparatively recent Australian history. In Bruce Elder’s, Blood On the Wattle (1998), he points out that Gardiya people seem to have some sort of amnesia about the massacres in Australia’s history. Aboriginal people are compelled to tell and re-tell these sad stories over the generations.
So many of the massacres have been forgotten. So many live on as memories and folklore. So many have been dissolved by time. That was the way it was on the frontier. A few blacks killed over there. A few blacks here. It was a good story for maybe ten or twenty years, then the whites conveniently forgot about it. It lived in the Aboriginal memory-if the tribal groups survived. At night, beside the campfire or under the stars, the story would be told and retold. The massacre, or massacres, became tribal history (Elders, 1998: 192).

An infamous massacre at Mistake Creek in Gija (Kija) country of the East Kimberley of Western Australia has been well documented through the oral storytelling of Aboriginal ancestors and elders. However, some revisionist history is being written which minimises or denies the true extent of violence, especially of massacres, on the pastoral frontier of black and white conflict.

I recall elders from the East Kimberley stating that Keith Windschuttle, had voiced and published his opinion that the massacre at Mistake Creek had been fabricated (Windschuttle, 2003: 7-8). For the debate that Windschuttle aroused see for example, (Australian Financial Review 2001; Manne 2003). For further information on Mistake Creek go to: <http://www.sydneyline.com/Mistake%20Creek.htm>

I recall the controversy and the upset it caused amongst Gija elders. In the year 2000, I was given permission to help in documenting the massacre site with Gija elders of the East Kimberley. Later I was invited to participate in a group exhibition called Seeing Through Landscape at the Australian Centre of Photography in Sydney. I exhibited photographic images of the landscape of the Mistake Creek Massacre Site in the East Kimberley. Nine colour images of landscape were selected from the massacre site and the images had text applied to briefly explain the story of the massacre. My photographs focus on landscape and particularly on a locally well-known boab tree.
Aboriginal elders have identified this tree and the country surrounding this particular area, and they say ‘many Aboriginal people died around here, all their bodies been burned, one time’ (pers. com. East Kimberley elder, 2001).

At the time Gija elders had arranged to meet with and share their story of the massacre at the actual site with the ‘governor general fella’, Sir William Deane. Shortly after Windschuttle disputed the massacre story and upset elders from the East Kimberley, there was significant media coverage.

The Age newspaper website discusses some of the arguments that occurred back in 2001. A review of Robert Manne’s edited volume *Whitewash* (2003), by Rebe Taylor, highlights some of the criticisms of Windschuttle’s version of history.

Two welcome inclusions in *Whitewash* are the Aboriginal voices of Peggy Patrick and Greg Lehman. Lehman, a Tasmanian, explains how ‘truth’ and ‘facts’ of history-telling are secondary in Aboriginal culture to the notions of respect and trust. Nowhere has Windschuttle more notably disregarded these concepts than in accusing Patrick of fabricating her story of the Mistake Creek massacre. Windschuttle said it was not possible that Patrick’s mother was killed in 1915. He misinterpreted Patrick’s Aboriginal English: ‘mum mother’ means grandmother, not mother. [http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/09/10/1062902109534.html?from=story rhs]

Gija elder, Peggy Patrick, was angry and shamed by Windschuttle (2003) denying the validity of their knowledge of the massacre. Patrick states the following:
Bad enough this terrible thing bin happen before... He rubbish my name and he rubbish all my relation that bin kill. He make big shame for me all over. Make me and all my family real upset. We bring out hard story what bin happen to blackfella. We talk about bad story so black and white can be friend when we look at true thing together. Look like nothing change. Gardiya killed blackfella with gun and poison now he look like he killing our life making fun of my word. Not worth (Patrick 2003: 216-217).

I find it amazing how academics like Windschuttle can believe anything they see in a written form from some of Australia's most racist periods as being more respected and privileged than the Aboriginal oral version of history. The white description of history with its reliance on the written record shows little respect for Aboriginal knowledge and cultural forms of passing on knowledge, including oral and visual forms of storytelling. How offensive it is to Aboriginal people that Gardiya can tell a different story about our own history. Here we have a perfect example of how respect and trust of Aboriginal knowledge is still not recognised by some Gardiya people in authority.

To help in telling the true history of these crimes, Aboriginal elders have painted and exhibited these massacre stories of the East Kimberley. Now this form of storytelling should be respected as much as the academic way of writing Aboriginal history and Aboriginal artwork needs to be recognised as an important medium to educate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal artists from the Jirrawun Art Cooperation in the East Kimberley decided to exhibit a series of paintings (ochre paints on canvas) that told these massacre stories. The series to rebutt Windschuttle was called 'Landscapes in Blood'. Debra Jopson reports on Landscapes in blood, (2002).

According to the exhibition's curator, Tony Oliver, these artworks are a direct rebuttal of the attempt by Keith Windschuttle, author of a new book, The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, to downplay the ferocity and frequency of frontier killings of the 18th and 19th centuries. 'The whole thing is about an oral history versus a written history and that's what this show is partly discussing,' says Oliver. 'When you can't read and write, your main history is through oral history, the passing down of stories. <http://www.eniar.org/news/kimberley.html>
My argument is that Gardiya are also denying Aboriginal people a voice by marginalising Aboriginal people from the design and production of health education materials. My research aims to utilise new media as a contemporary form of storytelling to get across Aboriginal knowledge in storytelling for health education purposes.

The photograph above is from the website I created in respect for our ancestors and their knowledge of history. This site depicts the Mistake Creek Massacre Story told by Aboriginal elders belonging to the Gija (Kija) group from the East Kimberley of Australia. Most of the massacres that occurred in the Kimberley were not documented at the time but the events have been re-told by our Aboriginal elders. These events have not been forgotten.

This web site is about preserving our history in stories and the photographic images are dedicated to the memory of our living Aboriginal elders and to our deceased ancestors. For more information on these stories go to the following web address:
<www.anat.org.au/Aboriginal_Ancestors>
The history of violence and of dispossession continues to affect the collective consciousness of Aboriginal society and it is not something that just goes away overnight. Memories of past massacres are very real. These shocking stories are re-told by Aboriginal elders and re-lived each time they are passed on to the next generation.

We killed off Aboriginal people with guns and poison and disease. We refused, through ignorance and arrogance, to see any tribal differentiation in those Aboriginal people who survived our insidious, long-term holocaust. Those Aboriginal people who survived were herded into reserves or 'allowed' to live in humpies on the fringes of towns. We took away their reason to exist and when, in their despair, they took to the bottle or simply threw up their hands in hopelessness and gave up life, we had the arrogance to accuse them of drunkenness and laziness. The blood of tens of thousands of Aboriginal people killed since 1788, and the sense of despair and hopelessness, which informs so much modern-day Aboriginal society, is a moral responsibility all white Australians share. Our wealth and lifestyle is a direct consequence of Aboriginal dispossession. We should bow our heads in shame (Elder, 1998: 256).

The destruction of our culture and country is a deep wound that runs through us, generation after generation. The gun was the weapon of the past, now people are dying from despair and disease. 'This country is built on lies, massacres, genocide, imprisonment, poison, stolen children, and the ongoing bullshit of western politics' (Davidson, 2001: 39). Aboriginal people as a people have survived the massacres of the past but now in today's society many contemporary communities have a social malaise and high rates of morbidity (ill-health) and mortality (death), which still threaten our people.

Today we are being killed in different ways. It's not straight out and messy with blood everywhere, it is now psychological and political. The Western health model and how the system is structured to dis-empower Aboriginal people is part of the problem. Aboriginal people are largely excluded from decision making about health. For example how marginal Aboriginal people have been to the development of health education initiatives.
4.4 Social Malaise, Morbidity & Mortality

Reynolds (1981: 101) estimates that at the time of invasion by the colonialist, the Aboriginal population of this country was around 300,000 people and that little more than 100 years later that population had shrunk to an estimated 50,000 Aboriginal people. ‘Given ample evidence of massacres should we not significantly extend the death list?’ (Reynolds, 1981: 101). Violent incidences aside, this appalling decline in population can be blamed on two main factors, dispossession, by what ever means possible, and disease (Reynolds, 1981: 101). Once the violence of the frontier ended, Aboriginal people continued to suffer from a new form of aggression, which was related to dispossession, dislocation and poor living conditions.

Burns (2001: 51) states that ‘at the beginning of the 21st century, basic needs such as clean water, proper sewerage, and access to decent health services, education and housing are still far from a reality for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities’. The loss of our land and consequent dispossession from our economic and spiritual base brought about an insidious decline in all aspects of the everyday lives of Aboriginal people. The poor socio-economic indicators and health statistics of Aboriginal people are more reminiscent of third or fourth world countries than an affluent Australia.

My thesis argument is that Aboriginal knowledge and imagination must be applied to solving the health crisis in Aboriginal communities. Repairing the broken cycle of people, land and life is one of the first stepping-stones towards Aboriginal health and well-being. If we allow the continuation of the broken cycle then we are obviously heading into more troubled areas in the near future.
If Aboriginal communities continue to be plagued by ill-health and dysfunction, then we may see further destruction to Aboriginal health and the environment. How much longer can the broken cycle be tolerated, before we start to make changes? The time to act is now, not tomorrow. A balance of all aspects of Aboriginal society needs to be found so we can move forward. This story highlights the need to bring about a new relationship between Aboriginal and Gardiya people that builds trust and partnerships in working towards improving Aboriginal health and well-being.

4.5 Story from an Aboriginal Elder

An Aboriginal Gurindji elder, my Joji (grandfather), was a witness to the many crimes that were committed in Australia’s frontier history. He watched the pioneer settlers take the lands in the Victoria River district of the Northern Territory and East Kimberley, as he was brought up by his family, traditional way, Aboriginal way.
The country he is personally linked to is Gurindji country and he is culturally connected to wider country through family. He speaks of how historically, Gardiya people killed members of his family and clan groups in many parts of Gurindji and Gija country. His life has been extremely hard and he has told me many sad stories from the past. The settlers stole his family’s country, a process that cost the lives of many Aboriginal people in the Victoria River and East Kimberley regions.

Cattle stations were established and Aboriginal people were forced to work on them. Keep in mind that many Aboriginal people chose to work on cattle stations so that they could be close to there country. It was the only way to survive in these very difficult times. For Aboriginal voices on the historical struggle for wages, living conditions and land rights see for example Long Johnny Kijngayari and Vincent Lingiari in Hercus and Sutton (1986: 305-315). Even when Aboriginal people worked in the cattle industry they experienced injustices, for example being paid in rations, or non-award wages, and enduring substandard working and living conditions. Berndt and Berndt in End of an Era (1987) give an example of ration payments:

At the end of their season’s work, the stockboys would come to the station store to receive their ‘walkabout rations’, which were officially supposed to last them for one month. This consisted of half a bag of flour (twenty-five pounds), eight pounds of sugar, one pound of tea, one tin of baking powder, twelve sticks of tobacco, one handkerchief, and three boxes of matches (Berndt and Berndt, 1987: 70).

The ongoing poor quality of life was intolerable and this lead Gurindji elders to stand up and fight for their rights.

On 22 August 1966 the Gurindji people, working as stockmen and station hands in the north-west of Central Australia, walked off Wave Hill Station, then owned by England's Lord Vestey. Soon after, they set up a permanent camp nearby on part of their traditional land at Daguragu, a waterhole on Wattie Creek. A ten-year battle led by Vincent Lingiari followed, which moved from a strike for wages and better working conditions to a political struggle that eventually led to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976. Then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam handed over the lease to Daguragu Station in August 1975 by pouring a handful of soil into the hands of Vincent Lingiari and saying the land would belong 'to you and your children forever' (Wright, 1998: 1).
Gurindji elder, Mr Inverway, recalls Vincent Lingiari as a hard man with a strong heart. Donald Nangiari, Vincent Lingiari and Captain Major—they been talk really hard to Vestey’s. Because Vestey's been treating these people all over Australia just like a dog. They were good stockmen, really good men’ (Inverway, 1998: 2). These historical changes that led to land rights for the Gurindji and eventually for other Aboriginal people were positive, but there were also negative outcomes.

Many Gardiya people who owned cattle stations where unable to accept the idea of equal pay for Aboriginal employees and of land rights, and preferred to see my grandfather and his family leave the station rather than pay them wages for their work. A new way of life began which was the result of unemployment. Aboriginal people were relocated to artificial Aboriginal communities and were taught to become dependent on welfare and government funding.

Now, Joji as a respected Aboriginal artist and elder in the community paints for the art market. In talking to him, I asked him what he thought about Aboriginal people following a new way of life on communities and in cities, and about how life had changed so dramatically in such a short period of time. I asked him what kind future is there for Aboriginal people in Australia?

I was really hoping that Joji would say something brilliant, a really long story that had all the answers. But my grandfather summed everything up with the strong words, 'Gardiya fucked everything up for black fella’ (pers. com. Joji, 2001). My grandfather’s view is a judgement, on an Aboriginal level, spoken briefly and said straight out. It is a statement from an Aboriginal elder, a man with knowledge and experience. Joji talked about how strong people were back in the early days and how more recently grog has been weakening and killing many Aboriginal people in the communities. It is time for non-Aboriginal people to assist Aboriginal people to repair the damage. My thesis is about the need for more Aboriginal people to take charge of their own health and especially their health education.
Storytelling is one way of preserving our history. Aboriginal elders have a powerful way of telling these stories; it’s stronger than written documentation and can even be more powerful than a well-made movie. When you listen to Aboriginal elders telling you their stories they take you to that place imaginatively, spiritually and emotionally. They have energy in their words, which makes their stories strong and convincing. Storytelling is an art form as well as a medium of knowledge transmission. These are not just any stories, they are our past, our history and our future and they are valid and legitimate accounts of the facts of our lives under Gardiya rule. They must be treated with respect and given the same measure of acceptance as Gardiya historical accounts.

Contemporary Australian society privileges the written word over oral traditional accounts. Throughout history in Australia, Aboriginal people have been silenced, and told that our stories are just that, stories. However, our stories are important. In an oral tradition, stories are a significant medium for conveying our history and cultural transmission of knowledge.

Michael Dodson points out that Aboriginal people are continually made to feel that our knowledge is inferior to Gardiya knowledge. ‘We have suffered consistent invalidation and devaluation of our worldview and experiences' (Dodson, 1997: 42). Aboriginal artists, including those working in new media and multimedia are the new storytellers following their ancestors and elders in the oral, visual and performance traditions but now using new technologies.

4.6 Conclusion

My thesis argues that Aboriginal people's voice and vision must be valued and utilized at decision-making levels and in the implementation process, particularly in the design and delivery of health education materials. My research project is an extension of Aboriginal storytelling that includes imagination and knowledge transmission, exercised within the academic mode of thesis writing together with a new media DVD package.
With the new media technologies, we the younger generation who have the knowledge and skills in new media are looking at ways for Indigenous people to share their stories. As we advance and further develop our skills it is important that we maintain an honest approach and acknowledge our elders and families. We are now moving into the time when we can become empowered to help with the battle of getting things right for the Aboriginal community.

Our battle is not over. Today we struggle for equality. My dream is to one day see the same level of respect given to us, the first Australians of this 'lucky country' of ours (Davidson, 2001: 39).

The overall status of Aboriginal health in contemporary Australia can be likened to a new frontier and for my people it is a battle for survival in which we must be victorious. Our traditions in knowledge transmission must take advantage of new media technologies. Aboriginal people have a unique way of sharing stories and through the new media technology we can find new answers to help improve the current status of our health and education.

It all comes back to the simple fact, as many Aboriginal people would agree, that we have been disempowered for too long in a broad range of areas. With the new technologies becoming accessible in remote regions it is very important that Aboriginal people take on the challenge and learn how to use this technology to benefit their communities. This is the perfect opportunity to test how technology can be used in an holistic approach to improving our health and education.
Chapter 5   Aboriginal Imagination

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I argue it is imperative that Aboriginal peoples’ knowledge and skills are used to improve Aboriginal health education resources so that they are culturally appropriate and incorporate new media arts. My thesis argues that Aboriginal people must be encouraged and given the opportunities to take advantage of new media arts and communication technologies. My project *Aboriginal Imagination*, is based on looking at ways of improving health education materials, by applying both the knowledge and skills of our elders based in culture and in country, and the knowledge and skills of young Aboriginal people acquired in new media arts and communication technologies.

The interactive DVD *Aboriginal Imagination* is a new way of expressing an Indigenous perspective and demonstrates how Aboriginal knowledge and imagination can work with technological resources. With this in mind, I set about designing and producing a prototype of a culturally appropriate, health education DVD that can be delivered with limited technological resources. My project also aims to encourage other Aboriginal new media artists to become involved in multimedia technology and not to be discouraged.

5.1 Intellectual Copyright & Moral Rights

Aboriginal people have shown themselves to be willing and able to adopt and adapt Western knowledge and technologies into their contemporary way of life even in the most remote communities. By contrast, the Gardiya community still fails to appropriately recognise, respect, protect and utilise Aboriginal knowledge and skills. We are still seeing Aboriginal people having their knowledge exploited, appropriated and misused. In the native title context, Williams (1998: 12) argues that:

... Aboriginal people are increasingly calling not only for recognition of their ownership of the land and seas, but also the resources within them.... Also at issue is acknowledging proprietary interests in knowledge.... (1998: 12).
In the art context, the appropriation of cultural intellectual copyright has been an ongoing concern within the Aboriginal community. The seriousness of protecting Aboriginal cultural and intellectual property has led Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS) to develop a professional report on Indigenous cultural and intellectual property. The report *Our Culture Our Future* was instigated to help improve copyright protection and recognition (Frankel, & Janke, 1998: 1). Frankel and Janke (1998: 271) argue that 'there is a need for greater legal education and specialist knowledge to assist with the development of standard agreements' (1998: 271). Frankel and Janke (1998: 19) state that:

Indigenous people are concerned that the wider Australian community has tended to appropriate their arts and cultural expression and that once appropriated, these have been marketed as an integral part of Australian identity. Complaints of appropriation encompass a range of performing, musical and artistic works including Indigenous words, designs, motifs, symbols, artworks, songs, stories and dance. Indigenous people are concerned that use of Indigenous arts and cultural expression is occurring without the knowledge or permission of the Indigenous artists, or the artists’ communities. Sometimes, such use is inappropriate, derogatory, culturally offensive, or out of context (1998: 19).


The report *Our Culture Our Future* (Frankel and Janke 1998) provides general guidelines relating to Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. If the misuse of cultural intellectual property continues and if it is not addressed at a legal level, then cultural and intellectual copyright concerns will turn new media arts into 'mine fields' of conflict in the future. In some cases non-Aboriginal people operating in new media arts have been appropriating Aboriginal knowledge. This has lead to Indigenous people seeking greater protection for Indigenous arts (New Media Cultures, 2002: 22).

As my own project progressed, I found it essential to develop an understanding of how to protect my project *Aboriginal Imagination*. Aspiring Indigenous artists will benefit from a thorough understanding of intellectual property rights. The public and the industry need to acknowledge what Aboriginal new media artists have to offer.
As a part of the development of my thesis and multimedia project, I found I was not only working on a time consuming project, but also having to discuss, argue and remind Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that it is important to acknowledge other peoples' work in new media art. I found it difficult to continue my project knowing that even professionals failed to acknowledge other peoples' work. Many people are not being educated properly in intellectual property and copyright law. Below I briefly describe the principles and protocols outlined in the New Media Cultures handbook, an initiative of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council (New Media Cultures, 2002: 9).

The Protocols, defined in the handbook (New Media Cultures, 2002: 9) are as follows:

- **Respect**: 'Respectful use of Indigenous cultural materials and information about life experience is a basic principle' (2002: 9).

- **Indigenous control**: 'The right to self-determination... To consult effectively and gain consent for use of Indigenous cultural material in a particular project, the Indigenous people with authority for specific geographic locations, stories, rhythms, song cycles and images need to be identified' (2002: 10).

- **Communication, consultation and consent**: Doreen Mellor (2002: 12) discusses, 'Consultation is required as a precursor to consent for it to proceed. It is not appropriate to have decided that the activity is to proceed, or that its structure or format is established before consulting the Indigenous group or person involved... Consultation establishes the internal, cultural perspective and it is important to accept that it is this perspective, which should determine the appropriate course of action'.

- **Interpretation, integrity and authenticity**: It is argued in New Media Cultures (2002: 13) that interpretation reflects how cultural materials have been represented and interpreted and past history has clearly shown that Indigenous cultural materials were 'subjected to interpretation by non-Aboriginal people'. Indigenous people today are reasserting and claiming control over cultural heritage. Jenny Fraser adds, 'Maintaining the integrity of a work is important for the artists. Integrity of a work is also very important for the Indigenous communities where a work originates' (2002: 13). In New Media Cultures it states that: 'Authenticity refers to the cultural provenance of Indigenous heritage materials' (2002: 13).

- **Attribution**: 'Indigenous people should be attributed for the use of their cultural heritage material in new media works. Under the moral rights provision of the Copyright Act, the right of attribution is recognised for individual creators. However, as a new media work may use material from many different sources, it is respectful practice to credit individuals, families, clans or communities who contributed to the work at any stage' (2002: 20).
• **Continuing cultures:** 'Cultures are dynamic and evolving, and the protocols within each group and community also change. Consultation is an ongoing process.... The new media artist will also need to consider how his or her work might be made available to the relevant communities in the future. Some artists have dealt with the issue by donating collections to Indigenous cultural centres or depositing materials at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and/or Screen Sound' (2002: 21).

• **Recognition and protection:** There are currently no special laws dealing with Indigenous cultural heritage ownership and reproduction rights. The Copyright Act has been criticised for not recognising the communal ownership of heritage materials and that rights to heritage are infinite. It is important for Indigenous new media artists to be informed about copyright and other laws in order to protect their cultural interests' (2002: 22).

Aspiring new media artists, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, must understand the basic principles of how copyright works. It is important to have an idea of how to protect your work so that proper examples are followed by the next generation of new media artists. New media art and multimedia technology is a new area of exploration and it is important to watch out for exploitation. It is crucially important that copyright is respected at all levels. Indigenous people bring a new way of expressing themselves through new media and aspiring artists must make it a rule or an obligation to understand what you can and can’t do as a part of your own professional development.

5.2 **Diversity in Aboriginal Culture**

Multimedia and new media arts, together with communication technologies are pushing the boundaries in the way Aboriginal people express their stories. An example of this is when I exhibited artwork at the conVerge exhibition. The exhibition was based on how art, technology, culture and science are working together. In the text that accompanied my artwork I stated the following:
My work is about being strong for my culture. It is saying that Aboriginal culture can play an equal part with technology in guiding our future; that Aboriginal ways and understandings are equally valid; and that Indigenous forms of expression are more pertinent to us in conveying information even of a high order of complexity (Hampton, 2002: 40).

A part of my argument is that Aboriginal people have been taught to be limited and negative in their self-evaluation and expectations. Whereas in actual fact it is the opposite, Aboriginal people have much to offer back to the wider community. The sooner Aboriginal people realise that we need to break the chains that make us feel limited then the sooner we can broaden our horizons. Culture is diverse, and it is always changing. Aboriginal people need to keep up with the pace of life and new media technology is an opportunity not to be missed, especially for Aboriginal health education purposes. Aboriginal people adapt readily to new skills and technologies, for example, motorboats and fishing gear, four wheel drive vehicles and guns have become the norm in contemporary Indigenous hunting contexts. It is the same with art and how messages are communicated.

Aboriginal graphic and performance arts including painting, sculpture, singing, dancing and storytelling are now being incorporated into new art technologies. Aboriginal people have adapted modern communication technologies and used the new media as a way for community empowerment. For example, the Broadcasting in Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS) and satellite television broadcasting has enabled Aboriginal people to broadcast news and educational and entertainment content that is suitable for their community (Green 2002).

BRACS has become one of the most important foundations for the development of Indigenous media in Australia. Molnar and Meadow (2001: 42) describe BRACS as 'a community loud speaker' (Molnar & Meadows, 2001: 42). BRACS, was based on delivering a better television service to remote Aboriginal communities by implementing more control to Aboriginal people to choose what they thought was culturally appropriate (Green, 2002: 128).
The Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS), was introduced by the Federal government in 1987 in response to the launch of the Australian satellite, Aussat. Aboriginal and Islander people were concerned about the impact of the satellite and requested resources that would allow them to:

- broadcast locally produced radio and video material
- receive mainstream radio and television programs
- control what was being broadcast into their communities.

The concept was to give Aboriginal and Islander people, access to and control of their own media at a community level. Due to limited funding, basic domestic audio and video equipment was used. Each installation comprised a cabinet to house a cassette recorder, radio tuner, microphone, speakers, switch panel, two VHS VCRs, television set, video camera, two UHF television transmitters, FM transmitter, satellite dish and two decoders. When the program finished towards the end of 1991, Telstra had installed 80 BRACS units across Australia.


Green (2002) points to the importance of the early work of American anthropologist Eric Michaels (see, 2.2). Michaels worked with the Warlpiri people of Yuendumu in the Northern Territory for a period of six years and his work remains groundbreaking (Green, 2002: 124-125). Michaels documented how the Warlpiri people appropriated video and television to suit the community and his work includes 'accounts of programme making which indicate significant cultural differences between western modes of production and Warlpiri video-making' (Green, 2002: 125).

Michael's work on the Warlpiri community of Yuendumu had far-reaching effects, which are still appreciated today and helped to 'set the scene for innovative Australian legislation to deal with the issues of broadcasting in Indigenous communities' (Green, 2002: 125). My argument goes back to the fact that culture is diverse, it is always changing because it has to adapt to a changing society. We Indigenous people must find ways to move with the changes. Today Indigenous people can move forward with communication technology provided that they fully participate in, and better still control decision-making, production and distribution.

Molnar and Meadows (2001: 203) state that only then will Indigenous media be 'a potentially powerful challenge to the cultural hegemony of mass media'. Indigenous people need to focus on how we can take advantage of new media art technologies. Indigenous new media arts and communication industries and initiatives are in the early stages of evolving and continue to be poorly funded. Molnar and Meadows (2001: 204) emphasise that:
It is obvious that Indigenous communications would not be where it is today if Indigenous producers had waited for their governments to act. Their commitment to producing Indigenous programs has meant that in many instances they have made the best of what they have, rather than what they need (2001: 204).

By using our limited resources in media arts and communication technologies, Aboriginal people have nevertheless managed to apply our imagination, artistic skills, and ways of storytelling to create a unique and culturally relevant way of expression and of communication that can be beneficial to Aboriginal people and the wider community. New media arts and technologies should be used to help preserve our culture and used to improve our health and education. Indigenous people now have another way of expressing and preserving our stories via media technology.

Better understanding and support from industry and government is essential to help improve the lack of opportunities and of resources for the development of Indigenous media and the promotion of new media artists (Molnar and Meadows, 2001: 205). In today's technological society, Aboriginal people need to be well resourced in terms of control of and access to new media technologies.

Molnar and Meadows (2001: 205) argue that:

At present, non-Indigenous Australians are catered for by two government-funded, public service broadcasters, as well as all the commercial media. Indigenous media remain at the margins of government policy and funding agendas (2001: 205).

The latest innovations in communication technology and appropriate training and funding need to be in place in remote Aboriginal communities. The history of BRACS, which from 1987 operated with limited funding and equipment highlights how effectively Aboriginal people have mastered and made use of technology to empower the Aboriginal community. <http://www.phm.gov.au/hsc/bracs/>

We need to take back ownership of our own knowledge systems and cultural resources (Hampton, 2002: 40). Technology is advancing and gaining new territories and Indigenous people need to be able to find positive ways of embracing technological tools to benefit Aboriginal communities.
5.3 Imagination as Creative Power

As a part of my thesis argument, I draw attention to the importance of overcoming the limitations that the Gardiya system has created for Aboriginal people to dwell in. Since the earlier historical periods of western colonisation, Gardiya people have taught Aboriginal people to fear the white man. This was done through frontier massacres and through the assimilation process and both tactics had a profound impact on Aboriginal people. Overtime, Gardiya have created this false illusion of being the superior and powerful people to be feared. The process is known as psychological scarring (Trudgen 2000: 191).

As a result, many Gardiya people have very negative attitudes to Aboriginal people's progress and lifestyle, and tragically, many Aboriginal people have accepted this low opinion of themselves. My argument is that Aboriginal communities must regain self-esteem and confidence to move forward into the future in order to take advantage of new opportunities. By using imagination, new media arts and communication technologies, the doors will open to new opportunities for Aboriginal people both in employment and in health and education.

The imagination, which may seem to be related only to our emotional and artistic impulses, our fantasises, and even to our most illogical thoughts, is also a means by which we conceptualise, structure, and schematise mental representation in perfectly rational ways... Thus, the imagination enables us to use our creative potential in service of our rational intentions (Lull, 1995: 109).

Imagination is creative power, it is not just about daydreaming. Everybody uses his or her imagination. For example when Aboriginal people tell stories of the past, we visualise that story with our imagination.

Lack of understanding of the power of the imagination, is responsible for the suffering, incompetence, difficulties, failures and unhappiness people experience. For some reason, most people are inclined to think in a negative way. They do not expect success. They expect the worst, and when they fail, they believe that fate is against them. This attitude can be changed, and then life will improve accordingly.

<http://www.successconsciousness.com/index_000007.htm>
Aboriginal ownership of communication technologies and new media arts programs may have a boomerang effect in turning around Aboriginal health and education and bringing in a whole new sphere of empowerment. Combining Aboriginal imagination and new media arts has the potential to change the way Aboriginal people have been conditioned to think about themselves and to bring about positive change.

5.4 Aboriginal Storytelling & New Media

New media technology provides an opportunity for me to explore my imagination, and it is an innovative way for Aboriginal people to tell their stories and share knowledge. Storytelling is an art form as well as a medium of knowledge transmission. Aboriginal elders have a unique way of telling stories that has been practiced and passed on by our ancestors. Aboriginal elders and artists tell the stories about country, culture and history for the younger generations so that we always remember and re-live past experience through memories and imagination. This is our way of communicating and preserving our stories and culture. Traditionally, the stories of our Aboriginal elders have been artistically expressed in a variety of media that nature provides, for example in art forms described today as body art, rock art, bark painting and ground sculpture and mosaics.
The design elements in Aboriginal paintings can be difficult to read or understand for the European observer (Michaels, 1994: 57). Morphy (1998: 8) discusses the complexity of Yolngu art and how the artist has combined a variety of media and techniques. Aboriginal art is not merely decorative. It has meaning and tells a story often of spiritual significance. Morphy (1998: 20) argues that traditional design elements in Aboriginal art are 'products of systems of communication which create meaning by encoding relationships between things, by relating people and place to the world of the land-transforming Ancestral Beings' (Morphy, 1998: 20).

Morphy (1998: 8) emphasizes that there is diversity in Aboriginal art forms and this has extended the boundaries of art and traditions. In today's society, Aboriginal artists use many mediums in order to tell their stories. Aboriginal paintings, whether produced on traditional materials like paper bark, or on modern canvas or acid free paper, are recognised and highly valued in the art market on a national and international level. Contemporary forms of storytelling that have their origins in the stories of our ancestors and elders are now the focus of a multimillion-dollar business (Frankel & Janke, 1998: 13).

In today's changing society, storytelling is being translated into new media including websites, digital photography, digital video, animation and contemporary Aboriginal music, dance and drama. New media art is one powerful form of storytelling and communicating and Indigenous people need to make it their own in order to work for our future.

Lull (1995) explains how globalisation of communication technology is changing the world:

... cultural territories diversify and expand in a world where people and images move about at breakneck speed.... World cultures are being continuously recontextualized into new provinces of meaning (Lull, 1995: 145).

Aboriginal communities need to focus on the effects of globalisation and find ways to use technology to benefit their own communities. Indigenous people need to grasp 'the notion that a networked world is now interconnected - rather than divided - by information and communication technologies' (Green, 2002: xviii-xix).
Indigenous people find it a challenge to write within the western academic discourse, which can be very frustrating at times. However, now we can express our point of view through new media art and communication technologies, which provide both new challenges and a positive way to enter the academic debate.

Indigenous community producers are increasingly able to access communication technologies at varying levels and to tell their own stories in their own words-'the way we want to talk'. This dynamic movement is under way in many sites around the world (Molnar & Meadows, 2001: 207-208).

In national and international arenas, Indigenous academics and activists have been fighting an ongoing battle to be able to use their own Indigenous languages within academic discourse. Smith Tuhiwai states:

One of the many criticisms that gets levelled at Indigenous intellectuals or activists is that our Western education precludes us from writing or speaking from a 'real' and authentic Indigenous position (1999: 14).

My argument is that new media art and communication technology can be used as a positive way for Indigenous people to challenge the Western dominated academic discourse. New media art and technology should be strategically used to communicate an 'authentic Indigenous position' (Tuhiwai, 1999: 14). Aboriginal new media artists are the contemporary storytellers following their ancestors in oral, visual, and performance traditions.

5.5 Networking Through New Media Arts & Technology

It is imperative that new media art and technology is understood both in terms of its positive and negative possibilities, so that positive directions are implemented. Michaels (1994: 120) cautions that:

On neither side is there a clear sense of what can be given up and what must be kept if Aborigines are to avoid being reprocessed in the great sausage-machine of modern mass media.... If by the next generation the means of representing and reproducing cultural forms are appropriated and lost, then all is destroyed. What remains will be a few children's stories, place names for use by tourist or housing developments, some boomerangs that don't come back, a Hollywood-manufactured myth of exotica (Michaels, 1994: 120).
Molnar and Meadows state in, *Song Line to Satellites* (2001: 174) that Indigenous people of North America have already noticed that new media is actually 'offering empowering opportunities'. Although the media has played a role in implementing 'decolonisation of native people, they are also being used to regain cultural identity' (Molnar & Meadows, 2001: 174). Indigenous people must not see technology as the culture destroyer. As pointed out by Molnar and Meadows 'cultures are highly adaptable if technologies can be made functional at the community level' (2001: 174-175).

New media technology should be taken seriously and strategically used to empower Indigenous peoples whilst 'lending itself to emancipatory social projects' (Molnar & Meadows, 2001: 174-175). The opportunities to communicate ideas, and to network seem to be endless.

Lionel Quartermaine (ATSIS), 5th December 2003, highlighted the opportunities in technology and health education:

For this is a major step to health and wellbeing for Indigenous Communities, via education, which in turn means employment and career opportunities. It also gives the wider community an insight into the traditional owners of Australia and their cultures. Aboriginal people can trace their heritage back more than 40,000 years and the concept of storytelling and knowledge has always been passed down from generation to generation. The documentation started by drawing on cave walls, it is appropriate it should continue in telling tales, via the latest technological medium. <http://www.atsic.gov.au/News_Room/media_releases/Default.asp?id=3040>

Today we are living in the time of technology and new ways of communication and it is important for Indigenous people to become involved in controlling how technology is delivered to our people and communities. The opportunity is here right now and Aboriginal people need to seize the moment and make the media work for their communities. The potential for Indigenous peoples to network and communicate both nationally and internationally is there. A prime example is through the email, Internet and World Wide Web, which provide endless opportunities for communication and information sharing through 'the interconnected, global network of computers' (Green, 2002: xx).
The networks developed have strengthened Indigenous voices that have been silenced for so many generations (Foley, 2000). Indigenous people now have a way of expressing their struggles and ideas while being able to connect and communicate with fellow Indigenous peoples from around the world who 'share experiences and aspirations' (Foley, 2000).

New media art and other means of technological communications have the potential to become a very powerful voice for the Aboriginal community. The World Health Report of 1998 also acknowledges the importance of communications and technology, as follows:

> The information society provides the tools. Sharing the world's store of global health knowledge through information and communication technology is a keystone to international health development. Rapidly developing information technologies are changing the way the world communicates, with far-reaching consequences, including in the area of public health (The World Health Report 1998: 209).

Aboriginal people working in new media arts and communication technologies must find a way to balance and sustain business practice and moral obligations that contribute to Indigenous health education. Foley (2000) highlights the importance of making technology work for Indigenous people.

There is no doubt in my mind that if the Internet continues to develop in the manner it has to date, the prospects look good for a broader decentralization of power and control in both local and global communities. As a dispossessed indigenous person I can only welcome such a development if my community is able to have some control over our interaction with this new technology. With a new generation of Aboriginal activists who acquire the new skills whilst at the same time being alert for the cultural shifts in attitude that might compromise their 'Aboriginality', the future looks bright for our struggle for justice (Foley, 2000).

It is important that new media artists maintain and develop their connection to their Aboriginal elders and communities so that they can combine Aboriginal knowledge and imagination with the new technologies and without compromising 'Aboriginality'.

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5.6 Aboriginal Designers Working in Aboriginal Education

It is crucial that Indigenous people set new strategies for self-empowerment when engaging with new technologies. In particular, my argument is that Aboriginal new media artists must work together to have a strategy for bringing their knowledge and skills to bear on Aboriginal education so as to bring about positive change to Aboriginal communities.

Eckermann et al, (1994: 192) argue that Aboriginal people, as individuals and communities, must be self managed as to ‘be in a position to make the same kinds of decisions about their future as other Australians customarily make, and to accept responsibility for the results flowing from such decisions’. My thesis focuses on improving health education materials and is based on the argument that Indigenous people need to be more in control in all areas of decision-making for positive change.

Molnar and Meadows (2001), state that in most cases:

... Indigenous people have been informed about decisions already made, rather than having the opportunity to actively shape those decisions. Clearly, Indigenous people need to control their own affairs if there is to be any lasting progress made in the development of community cultural production (Molnar and Meadows, 2001: 204).

Historically, Aboriginal people have not had appropriate access to knowledge and skills in the western domain and have been made to feel as though they are inadequate when they have engaged with new ideas and technologies.

Aboriginal people have been banished from the scientific and technological world for too long. We have been taught that this is the white man's place; made to feel that we are incapable of keeping up with the pace of modern change. We have been taught to become dependent on white people to do all our work—because they are really brainy? We are disempowered, put out of work and made to feel no good about getting work in a white man's world (Hampton, 2002: 40).
On the other hand, Aboriginal artists have been making their mark producing health information and education materials for Aboriginal communities.

In Australia the use of Aboriginal art to promote communication in the field of health dates from the late 1970s. The first Aboriginal painting from the desert to be used in health promotion was Johnny Briscoe's caterpillar Dreamtime spirit painting Anumarra-Working for health, 1979. Art remains a teaching tool. Brady, 2000: 450-451).

A focus on producing and distributing quality educational materials that are designed by and for Aboriginal people, is an important direction towards Aboriginal empowerment. Molnar and Meadows (2001: 203) say that the 'the mix of Indigenous culture and technology is resulting in creative new cultural forms and methods of distribution'. It is important that Aboriginal people control or participate fully in the business opportunities that are involved in the design and distribution aspects of new media arts and communication technologies. Aboriginal people need to be artists and entrepreneurs.

The present situation is that Aboriginal interests are subordinated as Gardiya people design, produce and deliver Aboriginal educational packages. Aboriginal health is providing many jobs for the non-Aboriginal community (Reid, 1982: xiii). For positive outcomes in Aboriginal health, Gardiya need to partner with Aboriginal people to design, produce and deliver culturally appropriate educational materials. Aboriginal people working in new media technologies must be encouraged and supported so their individual and community initiatives thrive rather than waste away for lack of encouragement and resources.

Molnar and Meadows (2001: 203) argue for a grass roots approach:

The significant aspect of this is that knowledge is being exchanged within an Indigenous-determined framework, rather than the usual top-down approach. Outback Digital Network across Central and Northern Australia is one example of this, and indicates possible future directions for Indigenous communications.

Mike Moore (2001), writing from his media experiences in America, identifies the marginalisation of African Americans in the media world.
I'm done hiring white people. Nothing against them personally, of course. They're a dependable, hardworking lot.... I'm happy for them all, but there's a question that gnaws away inside my head: What if I'd done the same for a hundred black writers, editors, field producers, and cinematographers on my projects over the years? Where would they be today? My guess using their talent to affect a hundred shows or movies, having their voices heard. And we'd all be better off for it (Moore, 2001: 71-72).

With this thought in mind, imagine what sort of changes would occur here in Australia if the media industries were to take affirmative action to employ Indigenous people in the media. Aboriginal communities need to own or have partnership in new media arts and communication industries in order to retain ownership of our knowledge systems and cultural resources, which are all too often appropriated by non-Aboriginal interests. Aboriginal creativity expressed through our knowledge and imagination is the key to positive change.

5.7 Conclusion

My research project is an extension of Aboriginal storytelling, using traditional forms of imagination and knowledge transmission combined with the academic medium of thesis writing and a multimedia DVD. Storytelling is the primary way of preserving our history and Aboriginal elders have a powerful way of telling these stories. Aboriginal artists use visual means for storytelling and many are renowned internationally as painters and sculptors. Aboriginal people working in new media combine the visual and the oral arts of storytelling with new technologies and they have the potential to demonstrate world-class talent. A whole new way of expanding our talents and imagination is offered by new technology and the future can bring positive outcomes if Aboriginal artists are strategic in using their skills in the new media.

The history of Australian Indigenous people's engagement with the media of writing, print, radio, television and now computer-based 'new media' is not the expected one subordinate but, in many intriguing ways, of an Aboriginal culture adapting western media to its own ends (Mitchell, as cited in Frankel 2003: 3). <http://www.fuel4arts.com/touring/tips/pdf/aia_newmedia.pdf>
Aboriginal artists have opportunities in the art market but they also have opportunities in the communication and education industries. Employing our artistic talents in education and new media is a moral obligation as well as a new employment field. My argument is that Aboriginal talent must be used to design culturally appropriate education materials for Aboriginal people and this empowering opportunity must be supported. Gardiya people must start looking at how Aboriginal people can play key roles in designing more effective Aboriginal health education materials.

This would involve developing real jobs, not just short-term workshop projects and irregular payments, but career paths for Aboriginal people. At present, Aboriginal people contribute to the knowledge component and design of much of the educational materials being produced and it is essential that Indigenous people have control of and are appropriately rewarded for their efforts.

Whilst Aboriginal elders need to be paid appropriately for their knowledge input so too do the younger generation of Aboriginal new media artists who can design multimedia materials. Aboriginal elders and younger people working in new media arts and communication technology must look to the future together and explore our Aboriginal knowledge and imagination and bring our combined talents to bear on Aboriginal health and education.
Chapter 6  Conclusions

6.0 Introduction

My research project Aboriginal Imagination was very challenging. I had to address the urgent need for more effective health education for Aboriginal people, because of the appalling health circumstances among Aboriginal people in Northern Australia. I also had to find a way to bring an Aboriginal perspective and new media art technologies together to develop culturally appropriate, health educational materials. Part of the challenge was working with limited technological resources and having to further develop my academic research skills. As the project developed, I had to find a way to incorporate knowledge from my Aboriginal family background, in particular by using hunting stories as a means of passing on knowledge and a health education message. My project has demonstrated that the Aboriginal hunting context is still effective for Aboriginal knowledge transmission and potentially may be used for health education purposes and for conveying biomedical knowledge.

My project led me to examine a sample of current health education materials from academic, artistic and Aboriginal perspectives. I found these materials typically inadequate and culturally inappropriate for many Aboriginal people. I have argued that Aboriginal knowledge, talent and imagination must be encouraged and put to good use in health education. In my review of the relevant literature, I particularly focused my critique on health education materials that are used to inform Aboriginal renal patients. My argument is that current health education materials on kidney function, renal disease and treatment options are typically inappropriate and of little use to the Aboriginal community.

In particular, most of the health education materials that I examined either relied on technical text or reduced complex information to simplified drawings. For example, there were two extremes, either the written English text very technical, or on the other hand, the over simplified illustrations were unimaginative and uninteresting. My argument comes back to the fact that the stick figure approach to illustrating complex information treats Aboriginal adults as if they were children.
The paternalistic attitude which is behind the over simplification of information transfer to Aboriginal people must be changed. Davidson (2003) an "Aboriginal concept in telling the same story would be a thousand times better": <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/02/01/1043804568854.html>

My thesis argues that media messages, especially when they put Aboriginal people down, have an adverse psychological impact. I further argue that oversimplified images, which do not respect the wholeness of the human body, may send wrong messages to Aboriginal people. The kidneys should not be depicted in isolation as kidneys have a very important role in keeping the whole body healthy and clean.

As my project developed, it became clear that not only was it time to upgrade current health education materials, but it was also essential to get Aboriginal people involved in the design and production of those materials. Aboriginal artists who use new media arts and technology are needed to make the appropriate changes to improve our health education. The project Aboriginal Imagination highlights the need for Aboriginal self-empowerment by combining the knowledge of our elders with the younger generation's skills in new media art and technology. Using technology and new media arts is a positive way to strengthen Aboriginal peoples' creative abilities. My thesis and DVD package is an example of how Aboriginal people need to engage in both academic and artistic areas, whilst respecting and not overlooking the cultural knowledge they gain from their elders.

6.1 Old & New Methods of Knowledge Transmission

It was from my own experience of going bush with my uncles and of hunting with family and friends that I first started to develop the concepts for my project Aboriginal Imagination. The important point is that Aboriginal people do have knowledge about health and the biomedical functions of the body and organs. My project was to capture that knowledge exchange in a new way using new media art technologies to inform Aboriginal people about kidney function. Performance is also another crucial element in Aboriginal learning and knowledge transmission whether in hunting, storytelling or performing in ceremonies.
My DVD *Aboriginal Imagination* involves performance in the video footage, animation, art, music, and interactive components from an Aboriginal, not a western perspective. *Aboriginal Imagination* can be viewed on a Mac or IBM computer with a DVD player. The DVD can be used on Sony Playstation 2 and viewed on a home theatre DVD, but it must have 'all regions' setting for the DVD to be played.

My project may be used as an example for students even on a tight budget, technological projects can work and still communicate effective messages. Working with limited technological resources was an experience, and I had to make use of what tools I had to complete my project. By completing this project, I also hope to inspire other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal new media artists to follow through with their project ideas.

### 6.2 Media & Design

My project has been to explore a new communication frontier by combining modern technology and Aboriginal knowledge and imagination, in order to develop a multimedia package on health education for Aboriginal renal patients and families. My project combines Aboriginal imagination, media technology and a number of art forms for the purpose of communicating health education messages. A key part of my research project has been to look at new ways to extend Aboriginal storytelling and knowledge transmission. The new media technologies I used include contemporary Aboriginal music, video, graphic art combined with digital design work and computer animation, which was brought together on an interactive DVD.
I set out to incorporate modern technologies by consulting with Aboriginal elders, new media experts and professional musicians. In my Masters project, I worked towards achieving a balance between the culturally appropriate way of knowledge transmission from my Aboriginal elders, as well as taking advantage of good advice I gained by networking in the new media arts and technology field. My research project has incorporated modern technology with Aboriginal knowledge and imagination. My project allowed me to combine my skills in design drawing and computer graphics to produce an interactive DVD that included an Aboriginal x-ray style design of the human body with animated functions, including kidney function.

An important part of my project was the evaluation component, once the animation work was completed, I sought out feedback from Aboriginal family, renal patients and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health workers. The main point that came out of this informal evaluation is that seeing how the body functioned as a whole is a more holistic approach and more culturally appropriate than for example materials that only illustrated the kidney.

The hunting and butchering scenes were controversial. Aboriginal kin, countrymen and renal patients enjoyed the scenes, and laughed and joked some of the hunting scenes and also about the narration and animation. The DVD certainly wasn't boring and my feedback was that it was very informative. However, some non-Aboriginal people continued to find the hunting and butchering scenes a bit disturbing. I understood that some scenes would be hard to watch for people who had never experienced hunting and the butchering process. Perhaps my DVD should come with the warning: If you have a weak stomach then don't watch it’.

6.3 Networking & Feedback

The networking opportunities I had during my research project were many and varied. Through these events and contacts, I have been able to develop important communication and networking skills. New opportunities developed and at the conclusion of my research project I have been offered a chance to go one step further by working on an art residence at SymbioticA in Perth. There I hope to gain more professional advice for new projects.
The main value to me during my research project was that I learned from these networking opportunities and gained support and encouragement. I learned to focus and be motivated to complete my Masters and to further develop my career in new media arts. In exhibiting at various conferences and galleries, I was also developing different versions of my design work for the interactive prototype *Aboriginal Imagination*.

I also received useful critical comment for improvements. In particular, a medical professional in Perth alerted me to a design fault, namely that my animated design did not fully tell the complex story of the role of the liver and its relationship to kidney function. My response was to acknowledge this limitation and that the animation was only designed to briefly model how the overall body functioned. Being a student working to a time frame and a limited budget also constrains what is achievable. The same medical professional offered to supervise me for a residency at SymbioticA in Perth in 2004.

Another fault that was pointed out to me was in the Introduction video. Where I was describing the organs in a 3d anatomical human torso, (medical doll), I was told that I mentioned the large and small intestines in the wrong order. I acknowledge this mistake. From the Aboriginal perspective of the project I also received vital encouragement and useful comments. My Aboriginal family and friends, elders and younger people, enjoyed being involved in various stages of the project, including the hunting and butchering scenes. They gave feedback on the draft storylines of the video scenes and first efforts in animation. Their interest and humour helped me to put the seriousness of my research project into perspective. I knew that for Aboriginal people, health education had to be fun to be effective.

Aboriginal patients at the Nightcliff Renal Unit (NRU) and at Turkey Creek in the East Kimberley also evaluated the graphic designed images, animation and video clips of the hunting and butchering sequences. They kept me on track when I began to doubt myself, following criticism by non-Aboriginal people of the relevance of the hunting scenes and about animal rights.
Patients with whom I discussed my project enjoyed and understood how Aboriginal art and new technologies could give a positive health message. Whilst doing my research project, many people advised me that it is not good to get too emotionally involved in my work. However, I did and my argument is that I turned my emotional and creative energy to design and develop the DVD *Aboriginal Imagination*.

I could not remain unemotional at the sight of Aboriginal renal patients plugged into haemodialysis machines. I could not remain detached when I reviewed the culturally inappropriate health education materials, and my anger led me to design the image 'Aboriginal Health Education'.

Plate: 22 Aboriginal Health Education
© 2002: Jason Davidson
6.4 Repairing the Cycle of Life

In my thesis, I have described Aboriginal knowledge and whole of life approach to the understanding and management of health and well-being as a circle or cycle which has been bent, twisted and in many cases broken. For Aboriginal people, the traditional ways of understanding their life, their bodies, their health and their relation to the environment are denied or made irrelevant by Gardiya people who shaped the modern history of Australia, and largely dispossessed Aboriginal people of their land and lifestyle. The continuing history of dis-empowerment for Aboriginal people through Gardiya control of knowledge and resources, together with Aboriginal despair and social malaise, leads to the broken cycle of life and to deterioration in Aboriginal health.

Aboriginal people suffer many disadvantages in contemporary Australia, but in what order or where do we start so we can resolve these problems? Inadequate housing, extremely high unemployment rates, over representation within the correctional facilities, loss of language and culture, unacceptably high infant mortality rates and diminished life expectancy make the 'problem' appear overwhelming (Bennett, 1999: 132). In today's society Aboriginal people are dying, the rates of Aboriginal people with kidney failure 'requiring dialysis treatment are the highest in the world' (Mathews, 1995: 29).

The struggle to turn around our health status, given the historical and continuing circumstances of western dominance over our people, will continue to be a challenge. In reality and carefully looking at Aboriginal health, it comes back to a basic fact that Aboriginal people are dying. Kidney failure has had a devastating impact on the lives of many Aboriginal people and these are facts that are truly shocking.

Renal failure is affecting more and more Aboriginal people; in some areas it is reaching 'epidemic proportions'... Aboriginal people are affected at younger age and in greater numbers when compared to the Australian population as a whole (Devitt & McMasters, 1998a: 1).
Kidney failure is linked to poor health, diet, education, housing, unemployment and no career paths in the work force. All these problems occurred overtime and overtime again we are going to have to find ways of getting things right to improve Aboriginal health. Today, we have new options to become empowered to help with the battle of getting things right. Aboriginal people have a perfect opportunity to look at how technology can be combined with a holistic approach to improve our health and education. One cannot just assume the overall problem is a matter for more effective health education, but this surely must be an important starting point.

6.5 Ways Forward

My thesis signifies the urgent need for attention to be given to empowering Aboriginal people in health education. On a personal level, I believe that beyond my research project, there are opportunities for me to explore a post research career that includes working with a team of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to design culturally appropriate health education materials. Personally, I discovered that persistence is the key to completing a research project and during my Masters project I was able to see the bigger picture relating to my longer-term professional development. For Aboriginal people there is a way forward through imagination and knowledge transmission, which is offered by the opportunities in new media arts and technologies.

Indigenous new media artists must be encouraged, so that Indigenous people can be one step ahead. There is no time to be one step behind, as communication technology and new media arts are moving too fast. Education is the key for improving things for the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal people should be confident to get their qualifications so they can be employed at decision-making levels. Aboriginal new media artists and technicians must be empowered to work, design and produce more effective communication and education tools particularly in Aboriginal health education.
Aboriginal people have something good to offer for our people and the wider community. Gardiya people must open their eyes to see this as a positive step so we can all move ahead together. The way forward is to empower Aboriginal people to take control of their own knowledge resources and new media gives us the perfect opportunity to do this.

6.6 Conclusion

The Master's project has been very challenging and in coming this far in my professional development, I have found my confidence in writing in an academic manner. In my critique of a cross section of health education materials made available to Aboriginal renal patients in Darwin, I established that there is a cross-cultural communication breakdown in Aboriginal health. The problem relates to the fact that the Gardiya system has taught Aboriginal people to become dependant instead of independent. Gardiya are unwilling to transfer knowledge and power to Aboriginal people and when they design and develop information and education materials for Aboriginal people, they do so from a paternalistic approach and in culturally inappropriate ways.

If we are not careful, Aboriginal people will be excluded from taking advantage of the new frontier in communication technology. It is urgent that Aboriginal people apply new media arts and technology with Aboriginal cultural perspectives to help benefit their communities. Many contemporary Aboriginal artists are recognised on a worldwide level, but the talent that we have in our urban and remote communities is typically not being used to design produce more effective health education materials.

Instead of depending on Gardiya to design what is right for the Aboriginal community, surely it is time to encourage the professional development of Aboriginal people to work with new media and technologies to benefit the wider Aboriginal community. If Aboriginal people start to get too comfortable seeing Gardiya doing everything from making websites, taking digital photographs, scanning images onto the computer, creating animation and interactive CD-Rom or DVD's, then how is the Aboriginal community going to grow with technology.
My main argument throughout this thesis is that not enough is being done to empower the Aboriginal community through technology. Aboriginal people must take advantage of the new opportunities that are beginning to unfold in new media arts and communication technologies.

As Aboriginal new media artists and technicians develop their skills, we also need to be aware of the importance of networking on a national and international level, to develop our expertise, overcome isolation and develop self-empowered Indigenous media networks. New media art and education is now in the process of becoming big business. New media technologies have the potential to benefit Aboriginal communities, but who will be in charge of creating and delivering the education materials? Will it be Gardiya as usual? My dream is to see the situation reversed, so that one day an Aboriginal run organisation operates professionally and teaches the non-Aboriginal community how to be culturally sensitive and creative with new media arts and communication technologies.

I believe that some people out there need to start opening their eyes and hearts slightly and they need to change their negative attitude to new media. It seems as though the non-Aboriginal community has moulded us into what they accept to be Aboriginal. Many non-Aboriginal people seem to believe that the only way Aboriginal people can tell a story is through a painting. By including new media or multimedia as a way of artistically telling a story we are also expanding our boundaries of artistic expression. Young people should be encouraged to not only paint but to also incorporate and combine new skills of new media technology so we have a future (Davidson, 2003: np).

My thesis and DVD Aboriginal Imagination highlights the need to encourage Aboriginal people to apply their knowledge and imagination to new media arts and communication technologies. Aboriginal health education needs a positive direction and Aboriginal Imagination provides an example of the new options. The time is right to focus on real strategies that can work to benefit the Aboriginal community, using Aboriginal knowledge together with creative ideas and new media technologies to design and produce culturally appropriate health education materials. Bring Aboriginal health education back into the control of Aboriginal people, then work to get it right.
Aboriginal artists must promote health and education. They can be the new voice as they represent Aboriginal imagination, knowledge and skills in the new language and communication technologies of multimedia. Technology should be seen as a way for Indigenous communities to confidently move forward to the future.

Plate 23: Aboriginal Australia
(adapted from Aboriginal flag design by H, Thomas)
© 2004

Explore Aboriginal Imagination
Open up the Doors to a new generation
You can do it all with multimedia
Aboriginal voices shall be heard with multimedia...
With imagination lets open up the doors, to explore Aboriginal Imagination...

(Davidson & Mckenzie, 2002: Aboriginal Imagination)
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