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Yandaarra is living protocol

Aunty Shaa Smith^a, Neeyan Smith^a, Sarah Wright^{id}^b, Paul Hodge^{id}^b and Lara Daley^b

^aGumbaynggirr Jagun, Gumbaynggirr, Australia; ^bDiscipline of Geography and Environmental Studies, The University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia

ABSTRACT

We call ourselves Yandaarra, which is Gumbaynggirr for a group shifting camp together. We are Aunty Shaa Smith, story holder for Gumbaynggirr Country (mid-north Coast, NSW, Australia), her daughter, Neeyan Smith and three non-Indigenous academics. In this article, we share the meaning of Yandaarra for our work together. We see Yandaarra as binding beings together, living the protocols of Maangun, the Law, of the Dreaming. We do not talk of Dreaming to imply we were, or are, asleep, but to share this story as part of the creation time, that exists now. For we see Yandaarra, our research, as a re-creation story. It's about remembering what was/is as part of re-creating, rebinding, remaking protocols as we honour Elders and custodians, human/non-human, past, present and future. Importantly too, our collaboration requires us to know our place and our different histories as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr people living and working on unceded land. Our focus in Yandaarra is to learn to care for Country and ourselves from a Gumbaynggirr perspective. We are at a stage where radical change is necessary, and Gumbaynggirr wisdom can help create a new pathway of how to live on and with Mother Earth as kin.

Yandaarra est un protocole de vie

Nous nous sommes donné le nom de Yandaarra, ce qui est Gumbaynggirr pour un groupe qui change ensemble. Nous sommes Aunty Shaa Smith, dépositaire de récit pour le pays de Gumbaynggirr (Littoral centre-nord, en Nouvelles-Galles du Sud), sa fille, Neeyan Smith et trois chercheurs non indigènes. Dans cet essai, nous partageons la signification de Yandaarra pour notre travail ensemble. Nous voyons Yandaarra comme un lien qui unit les êtres ensemble, vivant selon les protocoles de Maangun, la Loi, du Rêve. Nous ne parlons pas du Rêve pour sous-entendre que nous étions, sommes, endormis mais pour partager cette histoire en tant que temps création, qui existe maintenant. Car nous voyons Yandaarra, notre recherche, comme une histoire de re-création. Il s'agit de se souvenir de ce qui faisait/fait partie de la re-création, de refaire le lien, de refaire les protocoles alors que nous honorons les Anciens et les gardiens, les humains/non-humains, le passé, le présent et le futur. Surtout aussi, notre collaboration exige de savoir quelle est notre place et de

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connaître nos différentes histoires en tant que Gumbaynggirr et non-Gumbaynggirr vivant et travaillant sur des terres non cédées. Nous mettons l'accent sur Yandaarra pour apprendre à aimer le Pays et nous-mêmes d'un point de vue Gumbaynggirr. Nous en sommes à un stade où un changement radical est nécessaire et où la sagesse Gumbaynggirr peut aider à créer une nouvelle voie qui permette de vivre sur la terre et avec la terre mère comme alliée.

Yandaarra es un protocolo vivo

Nuestro nombre es Yandaarra, que es Gumbaynggirr para un campamento en movimiento. Los integrantes de este grupo son la tía Shaa Smith, poseedora de la historia del territorio Gumbaynggirr (costa centro-norte, Nueva Gales del Sur, Australia), su hija, Neeyan Smith y tres académicos no nativos. En este ensayo, se comparte el significado de Yandaarra para nuestro trabajo en conjunto. Se ve a Yandaarra como seres unidos, viviendo los protocolos de Maangun, la Ley, de Aquellos que Sueñan. No se habla de soñar para dar a entender que estábamos, o estamos, dormidos, sino para compartir esta historia como parte del momento de creación, que existe ahora. Porque se percibe Yandaarra, esta investigación, como una historia de recreación. Se trata de recordar lo que fue/es como parte de la recreación, el reenlace y la reconstrucción de protocolos mientras se honra a Los Ancianos y custodios, humanos/no humanos, pasados, presentes y futuros. Lo que es también importante es que nuestra colaboración nos exige conocer nuestro lugar y nuestras diferentes historias como personas de Gumbaynggirr y personas que no son de Gumbaynggirr, que viven y trabajan en tierras que no han sido cedidas. Aquí el enfoque en Yandaarra es aprender a cuidar al territorio y a nosotros mismos desde una perspectiva Gumbaynggirr. Nos encontramos en una etapa donde el cambio radical es necesario, y la sabiduría Gumbaynggirr puede ayudar a crear un nuevo camino de cómo vivir y convivir con la madre naturaleza como una familia.

Yandaarra: a re-creation story

Gumbaynggirr Country is calling. The Old Fellas¹ guide those who are listening. We are at a stage where radical change is necessary, and Gumbaynggirr wisdom can help create a new pathway of how to live on and with Mother Earth as kin, acknowledging and learning from the mother energy. Even though we may not be listening, the songs are still being sung. We are learning to hear those songs again with our ears, our ears of today. And we will hear them, the songs of Country.²

In this article, we write to you as Yandaarra. Yandaarra is Gumbaynggirr language for a group going together, shifting camp together. Yandaarra is what we are doing – shifting – and how we are doing it – together, on, with and as Gumbaynggirr Country. We are Aunty Shaa Smith, story holder for Gumbaynggirr Country (mid-north Coast of NSW, Australia), her daughter, Neeyan Smith, and Sarah Wright, Paul Hodge and Lara Daley, three non-Gumbaynggirr academics from the University of Newcastle which sits on Awabakal Country in Australia. The Gumbaynggirr nation is on the heavily populated eastern seaboard of Australia. Gumbaynggirr lands reach from the Clarence river in the north, to the Nambucca

river in the south, to the Great Dividing Range in the west, and the Pacific Ocean in the east. On Gumbaynggirr Country, there are now the cities and towns of Nambucca Heads, Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Bellingen. The east coast of NSW is where the first colonists arrived in Australia so the disruption of colonisation has been long and deep but we want to get back to our prior Law/lore, to enact our continuing relationships with and as Country. Gumbaynggirr lands are unceded. There is no treaty and the vast majority of Gumbaynggirr land is covered by overlapping layers of Western land tenure that do not recognise Gumbaynggirr people, their land ownership or their belongings to and with Country. There are not just Gumbaynggirr people living on Gumbaynggirr Country anymore.

Yet, always and forever, Gumbaynggirr Country lives, calls and teaches. Together we are trying to listen, trying to act. This is a challenging journey for us, in different ways, as it is for others. There are many paths and many answers. We are sharing here our contribution and some of the ways we are trying to shift camp, together. We can only talk from ourselves. And we can only talk from our place. For Aunty Shaa and Neeyan, as Gumbaynggirr people, this is their place on, with and as Gumbaynggirr Country. For Sarah, Paul and Lara, as non-Gumbaynggirr people, their place is fraught with the histories of colonisation and what that means for how they got here, are here.

For us as a group, led by Aunty Shaa, this means we have to shift camp together yet we also shift camp in different ways with different histories and experiences. Shifting together we are acknowledging our differences as people, as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr, as people coming into relationship with each other and with Country. We want to be clear that we make no claim to speak for others, most especially we do not speak for other Aboriginal people, for there are many nations, many Dreamings, and distinct protocols and Law on different Country. We feel we have to bring back into consciousness the practices, the songs, the communications that Gumbaynggirr Country sends us, and bring them into relevance. And we are going to make mistakes (yes!) and these need to be made as we are learning.

Heeding the call of the Old Fellas, Yandaarra is a re-creation story, trying to live the protocols of Maangun, the Law, of the Dreaming, as we can, from our place. We do not talk of Dreaming to imply we were, or are, asleep, but rather to share this story as part of the creation time, that exists now. The English word dreaming 'is not equivalent to the meanings that exist in Aboriginal languages' (Grieves, 2009, 8) for the different creation times, events and ongoing work of the Dreaming, of the Law, on different Aboriginal Country. For we see Yandaarra, our research, as a re-creation story. It's about remembering what was (what is) as part of re-creating, rebinding, remaking protocols as we honour Elders and custodians, human and non-human, past, present and future. Our inter-cultural collaboration requires us to know our place and histories. Though it is not the same everywhere, for Yandaarra on Gumbaynggirr Country, Aunty Shaa suggests a need to see the violence of colonisation as part of a creation story as well. It is destruction but it is also creation. This is time. We are in that creation now.³

Many threads have been broken, not just on Gumbaynggirr Country but elsewhere too. Speaking in this special issue we are joined by others speaking from their places, mending relations, (re)tying the threads fragmented by 'extreme human disturbances' (Heron & Leduc, 2018, this issue). For us, as Yandaarra, we need to listen to what Country is saying as we move into this new consciousness, this new Dreaming. The energy of it is so big. We are walking in this and we need to tread carefully as we shift camp together.

In our work, we are inspired by other Indigenous peoples, their movements, Indigenous scholars, writers, artists and those working to heed the call of place. First, we acknowledge the inspiration of our Elders, of the Old Fellas and of Country. We acknowledge all our Elders, the stories and memories they hold. Aunty Shaa and Neeyan acknowledge particularly the inspiration of Aunty Elaine Walker, Gumbaynggirr Elder, who lived her Dreaming and her culture, and who led Aunty Shaa and Neeyan on to this path of connection, of them living the reality of their Dreaming today. She continues as part of them, as part of their journey and as part of Gumbaynggirr Dreaming. For Neeyan, her huge inspirations in her life have been four women, Aunty Elaine, Aunty Shaa's mother, Aunty Shaa and Jeanette Blainey, a non-Gumbaynggirr Elder who lives in relationship with Country and who has shown her the need to walk together.

We have other inspirations and mentors too. Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison (2009, 7), Yuin Elder on the south coast of NSW, is one of these inspirations who we know both through relationship and through his writing. He talks about 'really seeing what the land is telling you'. 'Let's watch the land talk to us' (2009, 7), he says, passing stories on to non-Yuin visitors to his Country. For him, passing on 'what I know' is remaking connections between humans and non-humans and honouring his teachers, his masters. Aboriginal scholar, Mary Graham (2009, 4), a Kombu-Merri person through her father and affiliated with the Wakka Wakka group through her mother's people reminds us that place precedes, defines, supercedes, enhances and clarifies inquiry. Place 'informs us of *where* we are at any time, thereby at the same time informing us of *who* we are'. There are others too, in different places. Jay Johnson (2017) refers to place, the 'pull of place', if only we can 'hear the call'. Place here is the Wakarusa wetlands, in Kansas, where activism merges with ceremony against a freeway development. Place, in this context, 'guides responsibilities' to it and is 'profoundly pedagogical', it teaches, even when harmed, even when hurt. The call of place persists despite the violence of colonisation (see also Coombes, Johnson, & Howitt, 2014; Larsen & Johnson, 2012, 2017). For Sarah, her work with Bawaka Country and the Bawaka Collective including Elders Laklak Burarrwanga and her three sisters has given her love, guidance, kinship and deep learning as does Gumbaynggirr Country where she lives (Bawaka Country et al., 2013). Country continues to create, continues to teach and guide and call, continues to emerge.

The three non-Gumbaynggirr authors must also stay attuned to who they are and how they've come to be(ing) here (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 5), both on stolen lands and at an intersection of Indigenous and western knowledge domains. Nakata (2002), calls this intersection the Cultural Interface. It is a contested knowledge space in which, from our different positions, we need to negotiate tensions and work the interaction of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems in ways which serve Indigenous interests and maintain the distinctiveness of Indigenous knowledges (ibid, p. 286). To do this, Sarah, Paul and Lara must be accountable for histories of disrespectful and damaging relations including of research (Kwaymullina, 2016; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012), which they must work hard and self-reflexively to not reproduce. It is their 'responsibility to try and be good friends of Country, good guests and to come into a place of relationship through acknowledging and respecting Gumbaynggirr Law' (Yandaarra, 2017a). They must also talk back to dominant knowledge institutions and to create openings with and as Yandaarra for Gumbaynggirr knowledge to shine through.

This article is one part of our effort to share our emerging Dreaming story, our story, with you. Dreaming stories are always emerging, they are always alive. They are not stuck in the past. Gumbaynggirr Dreaming, like the many Indigenous peoples and places speaking in this special issue are, like the ‘Heron’s sudden stab’ (Heron & Leduc, 2018, this issue), located ‘firmly in the present’ (Rubis & Theriault, 2018, this issue). We aim to share some of our practices of living our re-creation story, Yandaarra, together, as an inter-cultural collaboration led by, and in relation with, Gumbaynggirr Country. We write this piece to share some of our process, some of what we are learning. To do this we share examples of collective and individual practices and reflections as we get to know each other and our place on, with and as Gumbaynggirr Country through and as Yandaarra. We write this paper as part of our intention setting, a sharing from us, in the hope that others might be inspired to take steps beyond their current knowing, to try and live protocols on lands that are stolen and where such damage has been, is being, done.

Our article has two sections. First, we reflect on our attempts to document what remaking protocols means in a painted representation of Yandaarra, as we honour Elders and custodians, human and non-human, past, present and future. Second, we share individual stories and comments which highlight how we are coming to know and feel what is it to know our place as part of Yandaarra – how are we living the painted representation, or trying to. We conclude the paper by introducing Aunty Shaa’s rich and emergent vision in paint of supporting a process to get Gumbaynggirr Law recognised as the prior Law of this land. This is a difficult and challenging prospect given enduring colonial legacies, but the Old fellas and Aunty Shaa know it is vital to a healing process between the two laws. To begin to reflect deeply on what an inter-cultural collaboration might look like in practice, for us, is to begin to share our re-creation story as living protocol.

Yandaarra: shifting camp together

Our group has come together to better understand, support and share what a Gumbaynggirr-led Caring for Country might look like. Caring for Country is a concept that is widely used in Australian natural resource management but most of that work is either undertaken in ‘remote’ contexts (see Brand, Bond, & Shannon, 2016; Prout, 2011), where Aboriginal land ownership is recognised, or else is difficult to practice in meaningful ways in heavily colonised places. Country, though, is there in the city, in the suburbs, the national parks, the town park, the tennis court, the hospital, the shops. How is it possible for Country to be cared for, in a deep way and underpinned by Indigenous protocols and Law, in a place of deep colonisation (Howitt & Suchet-Pearson, 2017; Rose, 1999), where Aboriginal land rights are not recognised and Aboriginal people, places, Law, culture and history/present/future are invisibilised (Behrendt, 2009; Brand et al., 2016; Fredericks, 2013)? Gumbaynggirr Country and its people, on the heavily populated east coast of Australia, seek to answer these difficult questions.

We believe that radical change in how we live on and with the earth means responding, on Gumbaynggirr Country, to a Gumbaynggirr-led approach. Gumbaynggirr people and others are responding in diverse ways in this regard. For Yandaarra, we are at the beginning of this process, working to support an Elders’ group, holding camps and workshops on Country (Yandaarra, 2017b). This process will take us, has already taken us, on many paths. One path we are planning is to work with practitioners and organisations engaged in natural

resource management on Gumbaynggirr Country. This includes workshops and Gumbaynggirr-led mentoring so that Gumbaynggirr people and Gumbaynggirr protocols can guide how natural resource management takes shape on their Country. We are finding our way, slowly, knowing that there is no quick path to radical change. It has taken time. It will take lots more time, forever, perhaps, as we continually remake protocols, as they unfold. We realise, though, that it is important to start with our own relationships, within ourselves, with each other, with our families⁴ and ancestors, with Country. This is what we share with you here. It is not something that we do at the beginning of a project before moving on. It is ongoing and at the heart of our shifting camp together, our caring for ourselves as/with/for Country.

As a Gumbaynggirr artist, Auntie Shaa feels compelled to feel and think through her art. This desire to illustrate feelings and thoughts on canvas led to the idea of honouring Gumbaynggirr Elders and custodians, human and non-human, past, present and future through an artwork or representation of Yandaarra. We thought this might be a way to help us understand and begin to communicate what 'shifting camp together', as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr people, might mean on, with and as Gumbaynggirr Country. Because we live and work on different Countries, we also felt that this needed to be acknowledged and reflected in our representation of Yandaarra. For us, to live protocol is to be explicit about what it is we are doing in practice. This includes, of course, how the artwork itself came to be (Figure 1).

Stops and starts, long silences, moments of deep reflection, documenting: this is the practice of Yandaarra as we talk about, sometimes clumsily, what it is to be in this place, Gumbaynggirr Country, together. Honouring Gumbaynggirr Elders and custodians, in these moments, is to listen and share what this means, using fabric, rocks, pens and paper (Figure 2) to symbolise living protocol for us, Buddy, a dog, lying on our notes (Figure 3), slowly, tentatively, our re-creation story unfolds as we come into relationship with each other and with Country (Figure 4). Starting (Figure 5), and starting again (Figure 6).

We share this unfolding story with you as the Old Fellas, through Auntie Shaa, guide us, the movement of the brush on the canvass, the gentle breeze, the warm sun, holding the space. The story will continue to unfold, as it always does, as Country sends us messages. Figure 7 reflects one of those moments as we pause, as Yandaarra – the rocks, symbolising Gumbaynggirr Country, still to be added to the representation.

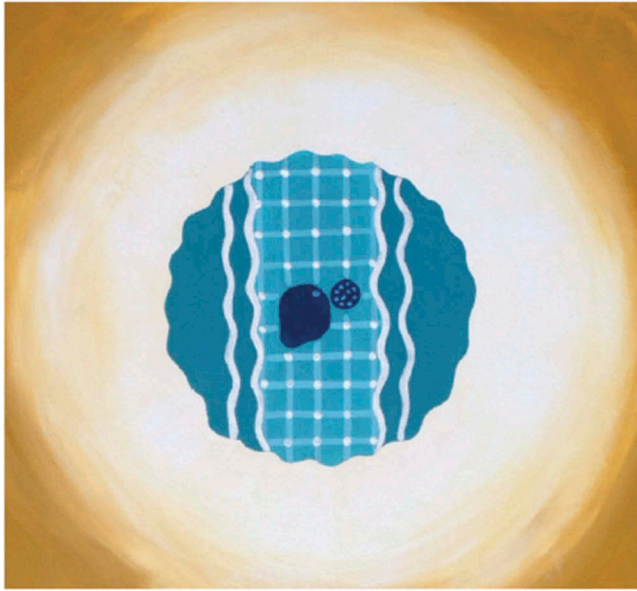
We took some notes of our discussions as we created the representation together, and wrote our collective understandings of Yandaarra – 'shifting camp together', our representation, in practice.

The river, north to south

Rivers are deeply significant in Gumbaynggirr Country. They are eternal, never static, always flowing. The river holds the past, present and the future within it. The water from the river is the water ancestors have drunk, we drink and people in the future will drink. It is an essential element of life and connected to women and birth.

The north to south flow of the river represents the connections between Bawaka Country in the north, Gumbaynggirr Country here and Awabakal and Worimi Country to the south. The research team lives and works on these Countries. These are part of our co-becoming (Bawaka Country et al., 2015).

Yandaarra



Shifting camp together

Figure 1. Representation of Yandaarra.



Figure 2. From left to right, Neeyan, Aunty Shaa, Lara.



Figure 3. Buddy lying on our notes.

The rocks in the centre

The rocks in the river represent Gumbaynggirr Country, the living breathing past, present and future as one.

The web of connections, lines and dots

The lines and dots represent a web where everyone and everything is connected. It is the weaving together of lives, of Country and those things coming together. The points represent Elders, us, the youth, everything. All beings. The web of life. The connected lines also represent a fish trap thrown over the river, an important part of sustaining Gumbaynggirr people and Country.

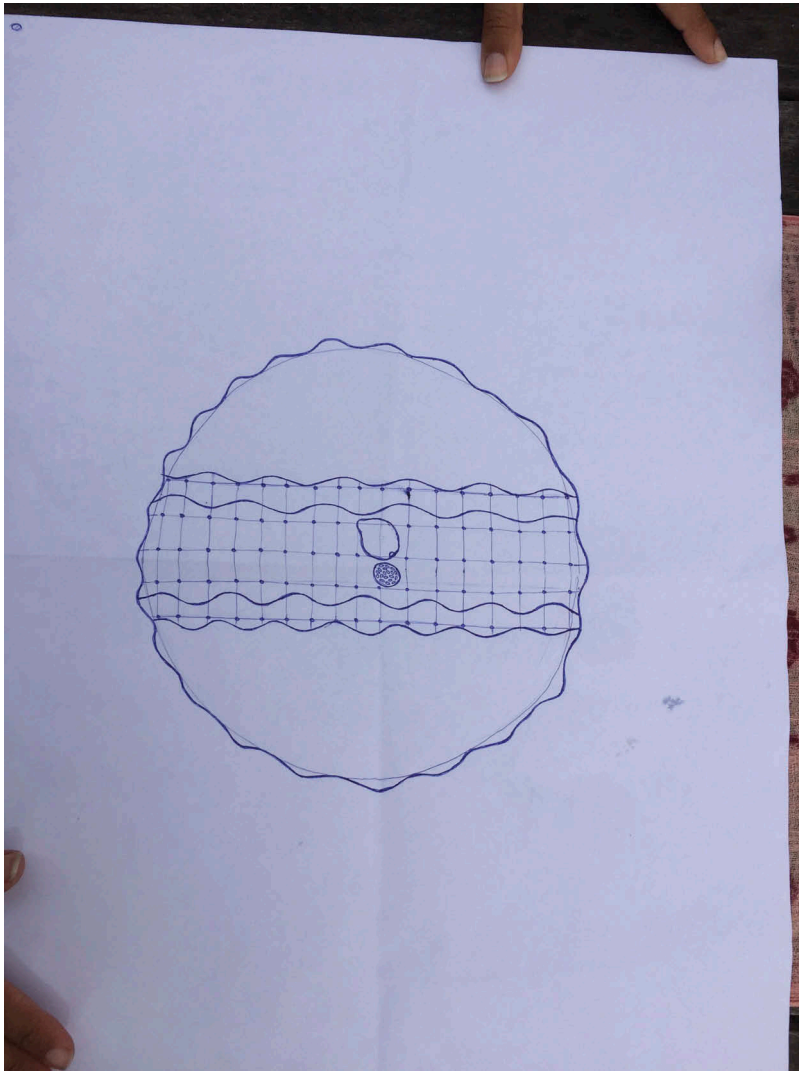


Figure 4. Our unfolding representation of Yandaarra.

The fluid circle

The fluid circle that encloses the river represents the ever-changing circle that is Yandaarra. It moulds, forms and recreates. People will move in and move out of Yandaarra and this is what keeps it strong and eternal.

The outer glow

The glow that surrounds the river, the rocks, the web of connections, represents light. The light is the source of everything. It makes Yandaarra possible. It is the telling of this story in the here and now. It is the understanding that this story of Yandaarra will keep unfolding. It is listening to the Old Fellas. It is shifting camp together.



Figure 5. Aunty Shaa, Neeyan, Dawu (Sarah's daughter in the foreground) with our first go.

Our attempts to try to make sense of what living protocol means in practice, as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr people walking together, is at times difficult, and at others, magical. There are times (and will be more!) when the non-Gumbaynggirr collaborators in Yandaarra make mistakes; speak out of turn, do not hear what Country is saying, assume without checking-in. Yet, these are the moments of learning. Country knows we are trying, as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr people on Gumbaynggirr Country. The process of creating the representation of Yandaarra is what we are doing – shifting – and how we are doing it – together, on, with and as Gumbaynggirr Country.

Living Yandaarra

To actually manifest our collective understandings of 'shifting camp together' as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr people involves being true to our intentions and vulnerabilities. In this second section, as we come to know each other and share our pasts, present and future, we are bringing into relevance our individual challenges and hopes. In this section, we share what it is to manifest our representation of Yandaarra. We give voice to this unfolding re-creation story through our personal thoughts and experiences on this journey of shifting camp.



Figure 6. Stephen, Neeyan, Aunty Shaa at the never never.

Listening to Gumbaynggirr Country is to know one's place in Yandaarra. So we acknowledge the need to attend to our differences and positionalities, as also taught by Indigenous scholars and their allies, to be true to our own stories and to tell them, as we reach across them to connect where possible (Cole, 2017, Hunt, 2014; Louis, 2007; Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2009). As Kamilaroi and Yualawuy scholar, Larissa Behrendt says, 'We tell stories to keep our law' (2009, 73). Stories strengthen law, are important to healing (Mitchell, 2018, this issue) and are part of creation (Heron & Leduc, 2018, this issue). So, in this section, we share with our own voices, our own thoughts that weave together and build resonances through this creation story.



Figure 7. From left to right, Yandaarra: Lara, Paul, Aunty Shaa, Neeyan, Taliea, Sarah and Stephen (in the foreground).

As we re-read our interwoven, yet different, stories, we found five major themes that we elaborate on here: the importance of integrating learning into our lives and sense of self; the importance of relationships beyond the self- with family, ancestors and Country; understanding knowledge and how we relate to it; land ownership; the need to acknowledge broken places and mistakes; and our understanding of our journeys as Dreaming stories. These are our emerging protocols.

The importance of integrating learning into our lives and sense of self

One of the central questions of Yandaarra is how we integrate it deeply into ourselves and our lives. Both Aunty Shaa and Neeyan have emphasised the need to take our learning seriously and to centre the question of purpose. Why are we doing this? What will we do with it? As Neeyan asks:

What are we intending to do with the yarning that we are getting from the project? Where are you hoping to go with the learning? How do you intend to use it in your life? That is a huge question to be thought about. Why are we learning this from Gumbayngirr? Does this knowledge even have a place in my life? Am I going to support the place it has in our life? The knowledge that is coming through that is so fundamental can't be placed as just another piece of knowledge that can be placed in a book. We have to look at what are our intentions with the knowledge. Knowledge is power and it needs to be used in the right way. (Neeyan)

While these are fundamental to our work together, as they ask us, and we ask ourselves, to rethink 'research' and the purpose of 'research' in a deep way, none of us find the answers to

these questions easy. Aunty Shaa speaks to her intention to go deeper into Gumbaynggirr Law at the same time as being true to the complexities of her own life and history.

What am I integrating in myself? Going from my inner guidance, my vision is to go further into Gumbaynggirr Law and further into myself. My reality, my existence, my purpose for being here is being Gumbaynggirr. That is what I was born into. After spending so much of my life trying to fit into this western way, I feel I need to go further into being Gumbaynggirr and discovering the Law in that, to balance. There is part of me that carries both ways and there must be a part of me that carries both these aspects. I can't be only one or the other. I would tear myself apart. It is about me coming into relationship with myself. The Law is held in the stories...Aunty Elaine gave me responsibility of being the story teller, continuing that tradition of passing the Law on. And the Law is the law of the earth, the law of the land, the mother. (Aunty Shaa)

While Aunty Shaa seeks to free herself from a powerful system that has seen Gumbaynggirr people, culture and worldview invisibilised (sometimes forcibly), and to free herself in a way that does not deny or ignore her own complex journey and subjectivity, Sarah talks of the need to acknowledge the way this very system has privileged her.

I see Yandaarra at the centre of my life. It's not an add-on. It's something that I want to take guidance from. I am a non-Indigenous person living on stolen land, and I have to acknowledge that. The meaning of my life now is about learning how to be/come in good relation to and with Gumbaynggirr Country as far as I can, *gunganbu*, to be a friend, to belong but not to take, not to appropriate. The very structures of colonisation that have stolen this land and continue to trample Indigenous Law, that put violence upon Indigenous people, their worlds, their living cultures, are the same structures that have privileged me, have literally made it possible for me to live here in such a beautiful place, Gumbaynggirr Country. It's not always in the ways that I want to be privileged or it doesn't reflect what I want to value, what I do value, yet it has helped me in deep ways, to fit in school, to have my face and my history reflected there, it lurks behind me when I walk into the council office and the woman looks to me to answer for our group. So, I want to act to dismantle that, to make it possible to be me, to be respectful because it's impossible for a white person to be fully respectful in such a disrespectful world, until we change it. (Sarah)

This, then, is a journey of both the self, of learning to live right within our complex selves, and of relationships with others and with Country. Long-time supporter of Indigenous struggles, Clare Land (2015) writes about 'acting politically with self-understanding' as a way of enacting this journey. She suggests that in order to reckon with complicity in colonising relations part of what non-Indigenous people are required to do is to do 'the personal-material work: to change the shape of our lives' (ibid, 233). Lara reflects on the ways Country can be re-invisibilised as we pass from one Indigenous Country to the next within Australia, something that can happen after an hour or two in the car traveling down a freeway. Both Paul and Lara travel from Awabakal and Worimi Country, where they live, to Gumbaynggirr Country when they visit and in doing so pass through Birpai and Dhanggati Countries. As Lara thinks about bringing Yandaarra to the centre of her life, she thinks about what this means for movement and the kinds of trips that many take every day without thought:

What would it be like if we paid more attention to these crossings? What are the protocols for this kind of travel? I sometimes announce myself to each Country and let Country know why I

am here and that I do not intend to do any harm, which I have learnt from others. I had suggested we listen to these recordings I found that were stories both old and more recent from these Countries. Paul was into it. I should make sure I organise that for our next trip. (Lara)

The importance of relationships beyond the self- with family, ancestors and Country

Integrating Yandaarra as a living protocol then means understanding our relationships differently, within ourselves, with family, ancestors and with Country. We are aware that this is not a journey of isolated individuals. Sarah reflects on what this means both for her ancestors and her place as a mother of a child growing up on Gumbaynggirr Country:

The Western way might think about Yandaarra as shifting camp for me as an individual – but that doesn't make sense. It is about my family now. My family then. Future generations and my ancestors. As my ancestors aren't Gumbaynggirr I am not sure of their place but I do know I can't ignore it... I feel that raising Dawu on Gumbaynggirr Country is a massive thing to do. I try to guide her differently, to guide her in Yandaarra. Sometimes it is amazing. Sometimes I feel like I fail. I love it when she surprises me and teaches me. (Sarah)

This means challenging the ways that research is often conceived and addressing some internalised expectations, trusting children, for example, for what they will bring. As Lara reflects:

Sarah had mentioned the day before we left that I could bring my kids with me but it didn't work for my family this trip. Then trying to connect with Gumbaynggirr Country, I started feeling Ruby's absence from the space and thinking about how nice it would be to bring her into this and have her notice things. Bringing my kids along on trips is rarely supported, so it can be really challenging to be attentive to both my kids and to what else is going on. But when I spoke with Aunty Shaa about feeling Ruby's absence I realised I also need to trust her [Ruby] more – trust that she'll find her place too, trust what she will bring to Yandaarra. (Lara)

Aunty Shaa emphasises the need to acknowledge all who are here and to take guidance from Gumbaynggirr Country. She says:

To sit in circle, each person, no matter where you come from. That line, 'no matter where you come from', that line needs to be acknowledged. So everyone acknowledges an ancestor. They are in the circle – not just us. The learnings, the guidance will come from the now, from sitting in circle, sitting on Gumbaynggirr Country. That's already in place and those connections will light up and bring in whatever needs to come in. Whoever the ancestors are, they are meant to be there. (Aunty Shaa)

This means attending to Country and to our emotional connections, slowing down, breathing, feeling Country beneath our feet, in our hearts, against our skin, getting out of our heads and into our bodies. This means 'opening our heart' as Aunty Shaa has advised.

I think it is about in coming into relationship with the self. With each other and with earth, with Country. (Aunty Shaa)

It takes time and an invitation to connect with Country. For Paul, tuning in to the eternal river is an embodied process. To honour Country is to be invited in; to give yourself fully.

It's really embodied. And that's why the next day when I was given the opportunity to have a swim with Aunty Shaa's invitation I had suddenly arrived on Gumbaynggirr Country. Having that swim, having Gumbaynggirr all around me... Because I was part of it. It was that embodied connection you have when you are actually held by Country. And really thinking, explicitly taking in that this is Gumbaynggirr Country – that I wasn't just going for a swim in a river. It was a shift from the me of yesterday... [Aunty Shaa, the Old Fellas] want me to feel embodied and communicating and engaged with Mother Earth. I felt like Aunty Shaa was helping me get engaged with her, that I felt that, unlike yesterday... when we [Lara and I] arrived late I was feeling completely disembodied, out of place because of the drive north and the busyness of life. I carried an expectation into it and it kind of wasn't met so I was feeling a little sad about that. But I felt at the same time she [the old girl, the Muurrbay tree] was ok with that, she is very forgiving. (Paul)

Understanding knowledge and how we relate to it

Building relationships with Country and living protocols are not done quickly, nor is this a process that is ever finished. As Neeyan points out:

You don't just do it once in your lifetime through a little bit of training but continually through your life, you do it every day. That is your responsibility as a human being – to integrate what you are learning, not just store it in your mind. Some people are learning all this stuff and not using what they are learning. It becomes an ego thing, they are holding knowledge but can't use it. So...in terms of knowledge, how to use knowledge comes in. We would use that protocol [responsibility to continually integrate knowledge] if we were to share a Dreaming story. We would hope someone wouldn't take that story and use it the wrong way. Or, treat it as just a story but bring it into their life. Also, it is a journey, you need to be patient with yourself, working on this.

Neeyan makes an important point about knowledge here which is fundamental to Yandaarra as a living protocol. Knowing and coming into knowing is not about getting knowledge, holding knowledge or treating it as an acquisition. Rather, knowledge is a process of continual integration. For Aunty Shaa, this means that, while one part of knowledge is to have it to learn, another is to live from a more open and loving and accepting and creative place in the search for how to live. Respecting the learnings also can lead us to push back against dominant Western structures that invisibilise Gumbaynggirr and other Indigenous protocols. As Paul reflects:

Yandaarra is going to be teaching us all the way, teaching us to slow down and to be bold and to challenge things. I felt like that when I was filling out the university travel form. I had to put down what country I am going to for research (referring to the Western nation-state notion of country i.e. Australia). Instead I put down Gumbaynggirr Country. It was like Yandaarra was speaking through me, in a way. It's almost that Yandaarra, the idea of shifting camp, is encapsulating so many things...It's provoking us to challenge, it's got a life of its own, it has an energy about it. Yandaarra starts to become a part of who you are, I find myself wanting to bring it up, she wants to speak. (Paul)

Land ownership

There are many structures that underpin a Western dominant approach, most significant is land ownership. Land has been stolen from Aboriginal people in Australia and Aboriginal ways of being, knowing, living with and belonging to the land have been

marginalised. This exchange between Aunty Shaa and Sarah points to the centrality of land, the different and complex ways of relating to land and tries to speak to the tensions and problematics of life in a colonised world.

- Sarah: I see a disjuncture with the colonial way. To be secure in the colonial way you have to own stuff. You have to own and take stuff to be secure. But that doesn't fit with the Gumbaynggirr way...The land owning me. That is not saying about ownership. That is belonging. Gumbaynggirr. So there is that and there is this whole security thing in the western way owning property...so where does that take us. That seems to be... how do you build a bridge there, what does it involve?
- Aunty Shaa: I've been thinking about land. It's interesting you bring it up. It's important that you bring it up. It's good. This whole thing around stolen land. I don't know what to do with that. It is in the foreground of my mind. Not for it to become an issue but so I can look at it. The land was our base – economic base, learning life, everything. I don't feel I want to negate that desire in me for owning property in a western way and having that security, because that is how we live now. But it gets political then.
- Sarah: You said you don't want to make it an issue, you are being gentle with me, but it is an issue. We can't deny it.
- Aunty Shaa: Yes, we are all carrying something from it, from this whole thing. Trauma or whatever it is. It would be good to bring it in to help us look at it.
- Sarah: There is an important article (Yang and Tuck 2012) that points out that decolonisation is not a metaphor. Land really is underneath it all. Yes, there are different levels and places of colonisation, important things about knowledge and relationships and spirit, but it comes to land underneath it all.

As Neeyan suggests, land is indeed underneath it all and it is not just land stolen from Gumbaynggirr people, but Gumbaynggirr people stolen from the land:

It's like when you say, looking at the conversations that Elders have here. How it is stolen land. It's like, we have been stolen from land too. When we are connecting with Country and allowing her to speak through us, we are trying to get back to her, she is calling us back. We are trying to get back to her in the way we integrate. But we can only do that if we have those protocols – if we are living the protocols. (Neeyan)

As we try to shift camp with Yandaarra, to live the protocols, land sits as a central, but extremely challenging question. We feel we cannot leave it as is, and we are aware it is a difficult path, but that we must come close, to talk but not only talk, to change.

The need to acknowledge and learn from broken places and mistakes

Our protocols as Yandaarra mean not ignoring these difficult places. If we are sitting in circle, everyone sits in their place in that circle and whatever comes in is deserving, has its place (even if an ancestor is part of that separation, even if there is hurt, grief, pain). We need to acknowledge and name what we need to name, to learn how to be with it, to learn how to heal.

We feel that it is important that we don't stop when things get hard. The reality is that it is a colonised world, there are no easy answers. But we can help each other get through. We can work so that people can start understanding what these protocols look like, what their process of learning will include. Neeyan powerfully discusses the importance of both mistakes and of the need to treat broken places as sacred:

When someone does make a mistake, or a mistake comes in, we know we are not finished here. We have to go through this learning. Even if it were me who acknowledged a mistake – all will learn. Then we can move onto the next. The Old Fellas can create that. (Neeyan)

Sitting in that place of being – trusted; loved; no judgement. When you are acknowledging the ancestors and there is a feeling of judgement or trauma it has a place. It has a place in the acknowledgement – let's go with that, let's sit with that, the broken place. It is sacred. It needs to be held as sacred. Calling that ancestor in, for a white person say, that ancestor is going to guide you in that learning whatever it is – shame. That is the guidance that needs to go through. (Neeyan)

As creation story

Coming back to being in the creation story it is a really important place to think these things from, I think. (Aunty Shaa)

Yandaarra is a creation story, a Dreaming story. It is a journey, but it is a journey of many starts, many times, many paths of learning and being and becoming. In recognising Gumbaynggirr Law, trying to be true to it in a colonised world and in appropriate ways as defined by our different positionalities as Elder, young leader and non-Gumbaynggirr people, we not only learn from stories, but, rather, as Aunty Shaa and Neeyan emphasise, we are part of the story. The creation stories are not dead or in the past, they are around us, teaching us. They are us. The question, as Neeyan asks, is how do we do this properly:

In the spirit sense, I can't help but think we are a Dreaming story. In our own special form. We are more than just who we are. We are all co-creators, creating the new story. If we are part of this creation story; what is our part in it; what is our connection and place with Country (so we don't break the Law)? (Neeyan)

Yandaarra itself, shifting camp, stating that, working on that within our beings, in our relationships with each other, with other people, other beings and Country, that is a huge protocol. That is a re-creation story. It is not knowledge for knowledges sake but living it. That is the living protocol.

Yandaarra as living protocol: our unfolding story/ies

As we shift camp through Yandaarra we are living protocols. This is a complex journey, a difficult shift, but it is a shift that we all see as vital in our lives. We are all learning. Aunty Shaa points out the need to go back to the Law in the stories, to the old girl, the Muurrbay tree that held and holds sharing, a place where the people met/meet and live/d in harmony and oneness. She sees this story behind Yandaarra, behind our shifting camp together, as it is behind all sharing. Central to any relationship is that place of sharing story, of sharing our lives, of creating the Dreaming story together. And

relationships are not only human ones, but also include our relationship with Country because being in relationship with Country is the big one. It is the centre of it all. We are not in the centre, with our personal ego stories, although these are there too and we do see a great need to look deep within ourselves, but behind that is being held by Country. That is a living protocol. We are living it.

And while we are supported in that integration by the Gumbaynggirr Dreaming stories, this Law coming from the land, while the stories hold us, guide us, and show the way, we also acknowledge that we are not all Gumbaynggirr and so have different relationships to those stories, to that Law. Acknowledging and understanding this complex dynamic is key to our being together and moving together. We are all living here, we have all got a place, we all have to survive somehow, but our places are complicated, fraught.

For Aunty Shaa and Yandaarra, this can once again be understood through painting. Our Yandaarra representation that we have shared in this article was done by all of us, collaboratively. The next painting planned by Yandaarra will be by Aunty Shaa. In the centre, she envisions a net, criss-crossed with points of connection. But not all the points are closed yet. Some of these, we will work to bring together through Yandaarra. This is the hard work we need to do, to honour our pain and hurt and to come together, build our bridges of understanding and co-becoming. Some points, we do not know if we can close, even with this hard work, even through Yandaarra. These we will acknowledge, even honour, like the pain of land stolen and the generations stolen from each other and from the land. Yandaarra is bringing us into a place where we can meet and talk, and feel and learn and go to the hard places around it. These points we cannot easily join, we cannot ignore, but we can honour them being there. We don't leave them dangling. These are things we cannot paper over. There is a grieving in that.

For not only, as Neeyan has pointed out, has land been stolen from Gumbaynggirr people but Gumbaynggirr people have been stolen from the land too. For Aunty Shaa and Neeyan, Yandaarra means finding ways to live protocols as un-stolen, trying to get back to a place of oneness with Country, getting back to her and allowing her to speak, to hear those songs and to sing them, finding that place of oneness within, that remains uncolonised despite everything. For Lara, Paul, Sarah, this means establishing a respectful relationship, learning to listen and heed Country, modestly and in ways not underpinned by a sense of expectation or entitlement.

For all of us, this means being vulnerable, being open, acknowledging grief and hurt and where we are broken. It also means care, for ourselves and each other and for Country. So that we can be vulnerable together as part of Yandaarra, as part of being in our place. We can also acknowledge the importance of grief and of pain and the need for truth between us, to talk about difficult issues. Country needs someone to cry for it. Country also needs people to care for it, too.

In our care, and in our efforts to shift camp, we care for, as and with Gumbaynggirr Country. We centre Gumbaynggirr Country, let it shine, let its stories and its Law and its place hold us, shine forth. Neeyan reflects on this process:

In this, we feel so much harm has been done. We are doing something positive and creative. We have to find a way, not be paralyzed about doing a wrong thing or making mistakes. Our mistakes we try to learn from; we open up, move forward. Gumbaynggirr Country

knows we are trying. She knows what we are doing, we trust that too. That is where the ancestors come in also, to help us make the next step. We are finally doing something... finally. (Neeyan)

Before colonisation, when the Law was broken, when there was a need for healing, Gumbaynggirr people had their protocols to continue, to make sure everything remained connected always, that everything was done right, with the Law. When colonisation started, Country began to miss out on that. Through all this time, Country has missed out on so much of it, it hasn't had everyone there thinking about her, remembering her. This means there has been suffering, of people, of Country. Now, in this time, for each of us, our integration is to learn how to shift camp together, for Country's sake, for survival's sake, for all of our sake. Everything fits into that: global warming, the environment, us. Country is calling back and, through Yandaarra, we are open to her call.

We hope these reflections can help others too and help re-build relations with each other and with Country, with our more-than-human kin. As Yandaarra, we are only beginning this process, taking steps into the unknown as we learn to be together as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr, to co-create change in a place where much damage has been done (is being done). In co-creating our intentions and beginnings with each other, Country, and with you, we hope that others may be similarly motivated to come together and to try to re-build relations from their places, with Country and Indigenous peoples in the lead. Importantly, this means respecting the rights of knowledge holders to say 'no', as different Country will call for different pathways in continuing protocols and Law/lore in which non-Indigenous peoples may or may not have a place. It is these uncertain beginnings, the mendings and re-bindings, which we envisage creating the conditions for radical change, because, as Neeyan has insisted, 'what we need is people who will come together *not knowing*, otherwise they're gonna learn nothing!' This process, we are trying to live, is like walking into something backwards. You can't see the path until it's in front of you – as the change is already being made. And you make yourself vulnerable in this because your back is something vulnerable, so you feel vulnerable. Now, in this time of change and hurt of Mother Earth, we all need to acknowledge our vulnerabilities, what we do and don't know, and to try and integrate, as we in Yandaarra have tried to do, what we know with what we do and who we are.

Yandaarra is the living protocol, the discussions, the camps together, the listening and learning from Country, the laughing, the crying, the grieving, the supporting of Elders, the waiting to be asked. Writing this piece has given us a chance to pause and reflect and to keep coming back to our question of integration, of bringing Yandaarra into our lives, of stopping to listen to Country and centring it. In the busyness of life, looking after other people, living in a deeply colonised world, it can be easy to forget Country even as she holds us. It can be easy to forget our connection. So that writing the article, reading the drafts has been a healing and grounding process. It is itself Yandaarra. This article too is not a finished product, it is a process, part of our process. It aims to share where we are now rather than where we will stop, or where we will go as our Dreamings unfold. We hope others may heal and feel the grounding energy of Gumbaynggirr Country, of their own land, as they read and share and live their own story.

Notes

1. Ancestors of Gumbaynggirr Country.
2. Country is an Aboriginal English word meaning homeland, a place of more-than-human co-becoming, lived with and lived as (Bawaka et al., 2013; Hsu, Howitt, & Chi, 2014; Rose, 1996). (Rose 1996, 7) describes:

Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place, such as one might indicate with terms like 'spending a day in the country' or 'going up the country'. Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart's ease.

3. Acknowledging that engaging with the Dreaming of any Country must be both invited and led by the knowledge holders for that place and undertaken according to Country specific protocols, with 'Free, Prior and Informed Consent' as reflected in the AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (2012). See also Kwaymullina (2016) for key considerations for research ethics and Indigenous peoples in an Australian context.
4. Including Stephen, Matt, Dawu, Fee, Charlee, Lucas, Emily, Adam, Ruby and Astrid.

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ORCID

Sarah Wright  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8595-4529>

Paul Hodge  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8633-6159>

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