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Truth-telling and the Ancient University

Healing the Wound of Colonisation in
Naiiyu, Daly River

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Prologue

Beginning the Journeys to Daly River

To arrive at Daly River by car from Darwin, the journey proceeds south on the Stuart Highway, named after its White male traverser of Australia's north-south arterial axis. The turn-off is taken around 90 minutes into the journey, at the Adelaide River township, a significant base of military operations during Second World War. Scars and stories of that war remain rusted into the landscape, evidenced along roadside monuments and munitions, emphasised annually in public ceremonies; the bombs reached well south of the coast into the rich iron-ore red earth.

The Daly River community of Nauiyu Nambiyu sits approximately 225 km south of Darwin. With a catchment area of 52,577 km², the Daly River is one of the largest river systems in the Northern Territory (Appendix A) (Bureau of Meteorology, 2017), and one of the few rivers in Northern Australia with a perennial flow. Its dry savannah, yet stereotypically assumed to be tropical, climate helps to distinguish the region and its northern-most capital city on the Australian continent.

A winding dark asphalt road emerges that performs as an intensifier of contrasts, extraordinarily lime-yellow leafy foliage and impenetrably dark vines. Until just recently, this road was unsurfaced and it took several hours to travel a few kilometres as vehicles bogged into the earth—during the wet season hours turned into many days. The Nauiyu community, in its current location, was established in 1954 as a Catholic mission by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and is situated on the traditional land of the Malak Malak tribe (Birk, 1976; Stanley, 1985; Stanner, 1934). In addition to establishing the mission, the Catholic Church acquired Land Portion 4028 (Appendix B), consisting of a 'freehold title' over more than 4,000 acres of land, including and surrounding the current Nauiyu community (Victoria Daly River Council, 2018).

The Nauiyu community has a fluid population of approximately 300 people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), most of the inhabitants are migrants from lands to the south and southwest, or their descendants (Duelke, 1998; Stanner, 1933a). The predominant languages are Ngan' gikurunggkurr and Ngen' giwumirri; however,

the Daly River language group extends some distance from the Daly River, to as far south as the Fitzmaurice River (Appendix C), and is comprised of nine languages and 15 dialects (Hoddinott & Kodof, 1988; Reid, 2000, 2002, 2003; Tryon, 1968; 1970). English and Kriol are also extensively spoken throughout the community.

When arriving into Nauiyu, the traveller's gaze is regularly arrested by startlingly bright and often moon-white boughs of *Eucalyptus tintinnans*, contrapuncted by spikey pandanus palms, and spindly spear grass, cultivating a kind of trance-like receptivity.

In wet season monsoonal times, the deeper tones of the undergrowth and the rich fecund ancient land pervades the senses, drawing the inquisitor to inhale more deeply, energised and enervated by the electrical build-up of shifts in atmospheric ions.

Local traditional knowledge trumps the Western binary dry-wet mentality, elucidating 13 main Ngan'gi seasons which are recognised in each annual weather cycle, where sophisticated and complex ecologies invigorate Country and community.

Up and down long hills, across vast plains, including the notable Tipperary Station, a one-time fanciful zoo that played host to exotic species such as rhinoceros and hippopotamus. 1980s follies aside, just what is to be done with an average 11 hours of daylight—so much light, heat, and energy needs to go somewhere, become something, amongst all the scorching and soaking. Elizabeth Downs, Litchfield Station, and Fish River Station also hold great significance to the Nauiyu community. Whether drenched or in drought, the seasonal intensities in the Daly River inform rhythm and rites.

The trip turns parallel with the dominating ridge line as companion into the delta valley. Now the quester is greeted by paperbarks in billabongs, unpeeled by pulverising heat and humidity, partaking in the regional flooding cycles.

Eventually the road makes an inevitable pause on the banks of the Daly River.

Birds hidden in the mangroves keen their stories, beckoning and beguiling the visitor towards the pneumatophoric roots that erupt through the banks and tumble, expelled, into the river.

The river itself teems with sought-after prized fish such as the Barramundi at certain times of the year. The community lives in rhythm with the river—the emergence of dragonflies means Barramundi are in abundance, as does the change of river colour from green to brown as the first wet season rains fall. The 'run off' at the end of a great wet season results in Barramundi numbers which attracts people from all over the country. Year-round its prehistoric guardians, the saltwater crocodile, ensure a circumspect and healthy respect for this home. The flowering of the Kapok tree, its cotton used for pillows and traditionally felled for the construction of canoes, signals the time to collect crocodile eggs within the sandy banks of the Daly River—a small twig to dig for the nest and the right Elder to navigate provides a surplus to the risk involved.

On the banks of this river local Elders may perform a welcome ceremony directing visitors to remove shoes and sink toes into the sandy pebbly water's edge—not without trepidation in the presence of local wildlife witnesses. There is a cheeky invitation from the Elders to 'leave your gold' behind on the sandy bank as the visitor starts to peel off their footwear! In this area, the responsibility of welcome to

Country belongs to the Malak Malak people, a small but powerful tribe numbering no more than 100 people after the impact of colonisation—disease, dispossession, and genocide. There is no question that the future of Aboriginal leadership and governance of this Country is in safe hands of an up-and-coming and brilliant group of Malak Malak rangers. The significant Woolwonga tribe belonging to the same Country also deserve land rights which have yet to be properly recognised. The 1884 Coppermine Massacre (detailed in Chapter 2) devastated the Woolwonga tribe on such a scale that until very recently the tribe was considered extinct. Surviving families continue to strive for the voice and recognition through their experience of this genocide.

Recognition and respect undergird the ceremonial welcome, as the river is scooped up and the life of the Elder, visitor and Country mingle together in a kind of watery multi bond, performed through the droplets that are woven from hand, to head, to belly, to the beholding and being-held-by Country. In this acknowledgement and recognition, there is ancestry, ancient knowledge, and contemporary custodianship.

It is on this Country that holds all and sustains life, where gifts of exchange in the listening, awareness, understanding and sharing have emerged as the spiritual practice of what locals term, Dadirri. While truth-quakes and coloniser collisions over the last couple of centuries erupt amongst the community as forces of cultural fault lines, Dadirri is a part of a response that attends to this epicentre. Nauiyu might be conceived of as the recipient of seismic cultural shocks...

In recent times, a visitor to the Nauiyu community might be unaware of these faults and force-waves, perceiving the obvious current orderliness of the town—the store, a local corporation, a Catholic school and child care centre, the council arm at the centre of the township in a clean and green space, opposite a community oval where eager football players regularly train.

There is a calm and somewhat idle vibe on a surface level hinting at a deeper story. A lack of resources to fund infrastructural progress, a disconnection with Western-success defined by a hustle-bustle place of industry and outputs, is represented by the industrial section of town. Prior to the 2007 Intervention local people built and manufactured their own housing, conducting maintenance and operational autonomy. The Intervention pulled triggers which devastated the skilled labour force in Nauiyu, and currently, the industrial zone lies depressingly dormant and decaying, mourned by past-workers, and older town folk.

The local arts centre is a small haven of creative activity and commerce. A handful of artists have garnered regional attention, and one or two have emerging international profiles. New proudly community-generated murals are projects of reinvigoration, and ongoing projects continue to be negotiated with external supporters. But these small symbolic gestures towards capacity building and engaging youth are a sadly weak echo of self-determination and autonomy of the thriving Nauiyu from the early 2000's.

Yet the resilience of the people and place remind that there is a power in strong identity and knowing your place—in myriad ways, this might be construed as the depth of which one chooses the physicality and psychic interconnectedness of being in-place, amongst Country. There is also the appropriateness of which we as humans

relate to each other, and in respectful ways, demonstrate understanding of knowing our place in strength and humility.

Strength and humility are required to attend to fault lines and lived epicentres, embodied in the life of Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, born in the bush near Daly River in 1950. At the age of five, Ungunmerr-Baumann was placed in the care of her Aunt Nellie and Uncle Attawoomba Joe, a legendary police tracker. Her sister was stolen at a very young age separated as part of a government policy which forcibly removed children from their families. Miriam-Rose moved with her aunt and uncle to live at police stations at Adelaide River, Pine Creek and Mataranka, and while she received a formal education, Miriam-Rose also learned traditional ways through following her uncle Joe around. She was identified as being useful domestic help for the Catholic nuns working at the school she attended. It was amongst the assignment of household chores and being offered the opportunity to read which changed Miriam-Rose's life forever. The combination through her formative years, building skills that enabled her to read books, and understanding the land allows 'feeling comfortable walking in two worlds'. She has mastered and created multi-worlds through her command across multiple local languages, art practice, and education. Miriam was Northern Territory's first Aboriginal school teacher and then principal of St Francis Xavier school in her home community. Incredibly, she developed a teaching workforce where all trained teachers in the school were Aboriginal, classes were in language groups as opposed to traditional 'year levels' and where educational outcomes have never been matched, before or since. Sadly, she gave up her post when forced to choose between her positions in the school or take up the invitation as being a member of the original 2007 National Indigenous Advisory Council under then Prime Minister, John Howard. Miriam-Rose has created a foundation in her name to combat youth suicide and is a leader of numerous Aboriginal organisations. Ungunmerr-Baumann is not just a local hero who advocates for Dadirri and cultural independence for her community but a national icon—a powerhouse Nauiyu Elder and Senior Australian of the Year in 2021. Upon meeting Ungunmerr-Baumann, her striking person and lively spirit is an encounter with the strength and kindness that is the hallmark of Nauiyu community members.

In the fullness of time and respectful appropriateness, trust arose in one of its new members—a teacher, Gavin Morris, and his family had arrived into Nauiyu and connected with the community. It was decided that a joint project, a research collaboration, would provide a way forward for the community, eliciting truths and transformations together, for the community's healing and future. This took on the form of a research collaboration amongst the community with Morris through this empowering PhD scholarship project that has become this publication and ongoing projects.

Further strengthening this particular project, Judy Atkinson, a Jiman—Aboriginal Australian (from Central west Queensland) and Bundjalung (Northern New South Wales) woman, with Anglo-Celtic and German heritage, joined the project team. Atkinson's work advocates for recovery and training in education-as-healing through the concept of Educaring, an empowering community-based practice. Atkinson's

expertise in mental health research into transgenerational effects of trauma in Indigenous Australian communities assisted the Nauiyu community in recognising and owning solutions that arose from this truth-telling project.

It is not just the scholarship practices of this project and Dadirri that assisted with shifting the sonics and energy for Nauiyu, but a wrestling with the systemic institutional biases, exposing the predispositions of insidious colonialisms. Through these expositions and seeking of empowerment in this project, appropriate methods of engagement in truth and healing were sought. In concert with Dadirri, these included traditional cultural knowledges and practices, with Western social science inquiries that were strengths-based and became community-owned solutions, explored and recounted through the book.

The book is a rich offering for diverse audiences: history buffs, health service providers, wellbeing workers, curious queriers of culture and community life, government policy wonks, academic researchers, truth-telling inquirers, reflective readers, seekers of decolonisation, and more—informed by deep timelines and coinciding contemporary timeliness as the nation of Australia prepares for a referendum on ‘The Voice’ and the ramifications of this kind of auxiliary to the Australian Parliament. Just how effective this will be for First Nations people agendas and action will remain to be seen. As a backdrop to this arresting moment, the book presents intergenerational community life stories that amplify the resilience of the Nauiyu community amongst the experience of trauma through colonisation.

Chapter 1 ‘The Context’ provides the reader with introductory contexts and backgrounds, examining colonial practices and associated government policies impacting Australian Aboriginal populations since European settlement. The first part of the chapter introduces the mechanisms of colonialism’s perpetual wounding; the second part of the chapter presents an overview of healing that is responsive to this wounding.

Chapter 2 ‘The Nauiyu Experience of Colonisation: Truth-Telling as Historical Waves’ situates the reader amongst the historical waves that have impacted Nauiyu. It is in gaining this sense of historical perspective that the reader may experience waves of anger and alarm, grappling with how to frame their own witnessing and reflection: how are we implicated, how does colonisation persist and colonialism continue to harm, how to sit with the stains of these truths. More questions and reflections such as these may encounter the reader in the ensuing chapters.

Chapter 3 ‘Nauiyu’s Cultural Colonisation: Truth-Telling with Dadirri’ follows the cultural waves and contexts of the truth-telling and the tellers of truths. It traces the narrative and nature of the research project, with the arrival of the teacher/ally/friend/researcher, examining the waves of cultural disruption, presenting protocols for invitational engagement, then demonstrating culturally appropriate exploration and eliciting of truth, such as with Dadirri, for healing and new histories. It is a preparation for the deep dive into the next chapter’s truths of intergenerational trauma and feedback of grief that lead to the increasing and intensification of harmful cycles in community.

Chapter 4 ‘Nauiyu Empowerment: Intergenerational Voices and Stories’ is the weighty heart of the book, sharing with the reader a truth-telling of lived experience—raw grief, cascading trauma, intervening awareness, and owning truth. This

chapter describes the stories and incidence of intergenerational trauma, revealing the compounding nature of unresolved trauma as it is passed across generations. Seven processes are identified as comprising intergenerational trauma, and the chapter details complex dynamics and elements that explicate a forensic exploration of the forces contributing to the clout of colonisation waves and transgenerational whirlpool effects. These effects as stories in this chapter comprise the first phase of the healing for Nauiyu community members: speaking and owning the truth of the impacts of colonisation. The second phase of the healing continues in the next chapter, where participants moved onto emphasising the importance of traditional healing practices as a healing and recovery response in their truth-telling journey.

Chapter 5 ‘Nauiyu Empowerment: Owning Our Solutions’ presents traditional local healing practices that counter intergenerational trauma. Just what Nauiyu empowerment is, as strength-based truth-telling through intergenerational voices and traditional practices, is detailed in this chapter. Intimate details are shared about traditional healing practices that exist in community and how these are important in the healing response to the experience of colonisation. The chapter also reveals enablers and barriers in decolonising mainstream primary health care settings so that traditional healing practices may be privileged and effectively incorporated. The concept of an Ancient University is briefly introduced as a community-based response that challenges and addresses inadequacies in mainstream health for Aboriginal culture and communities.

Chapter 6 ‘Truth-Telling and the Ancient University’ elucidates the concept of the Ancient University, and the significance of the Ancient University in providing a broad range of functions, including research, education, capacity building, training, accreditation, preservation, and the protection of traditional healing practices and knowledges. The Ancient University also serves to redress the compounding and increasing severity of trauma, escalated by fragile family structures, poverty and parenting practices disrupted by colonisation. The chapter also offers the reader a decolonised approach to inform government policy development and non-Indigenous service provision in Aboriginal communities.

Postlude ‘Mermaid dreaming, murals and moving forward’ ponders and pauses as a where-to-from-here, but recognising that it is insufficient to merely look back in order to move forward. Community, tiers of government, and services providers are required to wrestle with authentically engaged community self-determination for local transformation.

The reader is invited to participate in this journey through this text, an empowering truth-telling for healing and new histories with the community of Daly River. The truth-telling is as exciting, tricky, tumultuous, and as soul-soothing as the rhythm of the river that runs through the community itself.

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Chapter 1

The Context



Abstract This chapter presents the reader with the contexts of the book and a comprehensive examination of the colonial practices and associated government policies which have impacted Australian Aboriginal populations since European settlement. The specific socio-cultural impacts of the colonial practices are described, with a focus on the trauma which now spans several generations. An exploration of the Aboriginal view of health is presented with an emphasis on traditional healing practices that respond to the experience of trauma.

Keywords Colonisation · Colonialism · Intergenerational trauma · Australian Aboriginal health

The Context Part 1: Wounding

Dispossession of Aboriginal Australia: A Nation's Wound

In less than twenty years we have nearly swept them off the face of the earth. We have shot them down like dogs. In the guise of friendship, we have issued corrosive sublimate in their damper and consigned whole tribes to the agonies of an excruciating death. We have made them drunkards, and infected them with diseases which have rotted the bones of their adults, and made such few children as are born amongst them a sorrow and a torture from the very instant of their birth. We have made them outcasts on their own land, and are rapidly consigning them to entire annihilation. Edward Wilson, *Argus*, 17th March 1856. (Wilson, 1985, cited in Harris, 2013, p. 259)

It is about time that we tell our story, our side of it all. The White fella blew a hole in the floor and everyone fell into it. Destroyed us, ripped our heart out and for what. I haven't seen nothing. What advancement has there been? Nothing. There has always been something that always put us on the back foot. And then they still turn around and say the black folks got to run their own thing. Let him take the bull by the horns. We broke it for you, now you got to run your own thing now. You can't make wood out of ashes. You burned the tree. You're not gonna get those ashes to rise up and grow into a tree again. But they're expecting us to now put our brains together and come up with a solution to self-improve. We will do it again, we have the strength in us to control our destiny. Nauiyu, key Elder.

The 1788 colonisation-invasion of Australia involved two groups of people, poor, oppressed European convicts who didn't want to be here and the original Indigenous inhabitants of the land, who didn't want them here. This agricultural, human, and penal experiment, based on establishing a rural, self-sufficient British colony, was predicated on Aboriginal dispossession. The striking thing about this was just how central to English law was property rights, in that, the British settlement in Australia was established as a colony to punish convicts, of whom, a great majority were thieves. Yet these thieves were leveraged by the Crown to enact its own thieveries, crimes, and weeping wounds, exacerbated by British arrogance and ignorance:

The hardships the newcomers suffered in discovering what was already known were self-inflicted wounds. The extent to which they misread their own interests was illustrated in 1796 when some of them, having ignored Aboriginal warnings that the Hawkesbury River was about to flood, saw their dear possessions swept to sea. (Stanner, 1979, p. 164)

The still-open wound, at the heart of this story, is the almost-annihilation, banishment, and suffering of Aboriginal people, so varied and powerful, that at the time of white European settlement, it would have been fanciful to claim that Aboriginal Australian people would ever be in a position to have any agency of their own destiny.

Colonial Destinies

There is a commonality to the historical experience of colonisation for Indigenous peoples worldwide and its ongoing manifestation through pervasive colonialisms. Colonialism might be acknowledged as blindnesses, such as failure to recognise white superiority claims from colonial legacy and Western culture, beliefs, and values. Colonialism legacies perpetuate through laws, policies, systems, and physical infrastructures. At its very best, those touched by colonisation have reported it being unhelpful in maintaining an equilibrium of good health, at its very worst, colonisation has resulted in profound cultural destruction through denial of basic human rights. By the time European colonial powers reached Australian shores, the British were well experienced in implementing devastating colonial practices and had already invaded, settled, and exploited a large proportion of the rest of the world (Smith, 1999). The British had in their possession, a well-developed colonial playbook, refined over time and tested against a variety of formidable Indigenous populations across the globe. However, the British attempt to colonise Australia was botched from the outset. It was, even by the standards of the time, a total calamity.

Failure to Treaty; Failure of a Lie

Perhaps most calamitous was the British failure to make treaties with Australian First Nations peoples. By failing to make treaties as the British had established with the Indigenous peoples in New Zealand and America, the colonial authorities of Australia had to settle on a lie. The British settled with the lie that claimed Australia was

acquired through peaceful settlement, whereas truth-telling shows frontier violence and massacres were used to dominate the Australian Indigenous populations by both policies of extermination and exploitation.

Intents, Claims, and Conflicts

Retracing the colonial footsteps of British settlement provides a landscape of lingering injustice which still haunts Australia today. Despite planting a flag on what was subsequently named Possession Island in the Torres Strait on 22 August 1770, Captain James Cook and the voyage of the Endeavour had no interest at the time to colonise the Eastern half of the continent, nor was there any intent to establish a penal colony. The intent of Cook's voyage was one of scientific discovery in the Pacific Ocean, namely the island nation of Tahiti. His approach of the east coast of Australia was merely the result of entering the Pacific after rounding Cape Horn. Cook's planting of the British Flag on Possession warrants careful examination. His planting of the flag was a claim of British influence, an outward signal to the rest of the world, a claim against other European competitors, particularly the Spanish who were, at this point, offering strong colonial competition. There was no claim at this time against the Aboriginal people and their sovereignty of Australia. This would be decided later, if in fact, the British were to return at all. Reynolds (2021) points to the Dutch, who made a similar claim in 1642, where they planted a flag in what is now known as Tasmania, a claim which subsequently lapsed as the interest of the Dutch to return did not exist. In fact, the British did not plan nor expect to return to this claim and there were certainly no intentions to establish a penal colony on the east coast of Australia (Reynolds, 2021). Everything changed for the British, however, when their world was tipped upside down, after the British lost all 13 American colonies, involving the entire East coast of North America in the American Revolution. Thus, the capacity to transport British felons to America was crushed, and since this was still the preferred method to deal with criminals in Britain, finding a second option became one of great urgency.

At the same time, Cook and his crew had returned to England and reported back to London what he had found along the east coast of Australia. Cook had a very influential crew member on the Endeavour, Sir Joseph Banks, a wealthy aristocrat, scientist, and President of the Royal Society. His authority was held in high regard, and it shaped the future behaviour of the officers in the First Fleet when banks reported to the House of Commons Committee that Indigenous people along the east coast of Australia were scattered sporadically, were few in number, and the interior of the continent was totally void of an Indigenous population. When the First Fleet arrived in 1788, however, Captain Arthur Phillip and his fleet, quickly discovered, that in fact, there were vastly more Aboriginal people than they anticipated and that they lived in structured, clearly defined areas.

Declaration of the Terra Nullius Lie

Despite this knowledge, Phillip forged ahead and on 26 January 1788, he planted the Union Jack and officially claimed the annexation of the entire eastern half of the continent on behalf of the British crown. Initially called New Holland, then New South Wales, the claiming of the eastern seaboard to the centre of the continent, represents one of the most audacious and outrageous claims in British colonial history (Reynolds, 2021). This was a very different claim than the one made by Cook eighteen years earlier. Phillip's claim was one to directly impact the Indigenous populations and he perpetuated one of the greatest acts of colonial violence by declaring the land terra nullius (Hunter, 1996). Firstly, Phillip claimed that no existing populations in what became known as Australia had property rights, as the Indigenous peoples merely wandered about the place, as nomads, with no fixed homeland. Secondly, Phillip asserted that the Indigenous peoples were void of practising any laws, customs, or governance, and because of this, they did not demonstrate any evidence of sovereignty. As such, not only did Phillip claim the eastern half of the continent for the British crown, he did so under the premise and lie that the British were the first sovereigns of the land. This is a significant point. Henry Reynolds (2021) asserts that this was not a derived sovereignty, one gained either by conquest or treaty:

As has already been established, the Europeans did not attempt, and failed to offer or negotiate any form of treaty. Further in terms of conquest, even by the start of the 20th Century, there were large parts of the continent, particularly in northern Australia, where European people and British law had not reached. There was certainly no conquest. And everywhere the settlers – the invaders moved, there was conflict. They were engaged in a war with the Aboriginal people. But what were the Aboriginal people to the European authorities? Such was the failure of the colonisation of Australia, there was widespread confusion about whether Aboriginal people were rebels who were subjects of the crown or whether the settlers were at war with soldiers of an enemy nation. (p. 4)

Terra Incognita—Australia's Frontier Wars and Genocides

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the world's most ancient culture and civilisation was under attack. Indeed what came next was a human disaster, which, arguably, may have as much claim to be labelled genocide as any other historical event (Harris, 2003). The 'indomitable British pluck' regarding terra incognita was loudly trumpeted by Gill when the South Australians described their enduring capacity as colonists at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in 1886:

[South Australia is] a colony which, fifty years ago, was a terra incognita - a land previously trodden only by the uncivilised and wandering savage, and consequently without a vestige of a prior history, save what may be found in geological researches, the impressions of nature on its rocks and stones - a land not obtained by exciting wars or conquests by battles, but a history of conquests of wild and uncultivated regions by indomitable British pluck - a simple, peaceful history of the steady progress of British settlement. (Gill, 1976, p. 76)

At the time of British settlement, the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia numbered between 300,000 to 950,000 people (Behrendt, 2012; Parker & Milroy, 2014). The colonists without knowing it were looking on part of a marvel of adaptive culture.

Adaptive Populations Reduced by Massacres

From coast to coast, the adaptive cultures of ‘the continent peopled by upwards of 500 congeries of nomadic bands [which] were spaced in such a way that in plain effect was like an enormous spider web’ (Stanner, 1979, pp. 156–157). European settlement, itself a sticky web of deceptions including masquerading of militias, also resulted in brutal massacres and frontier wars, which in combination with horrific colonial practices, had a catastrophic impact on the Indigenous population (Baldry et al., 2015; Windschuttle, 2002). As Harris (2003) noted:

The awful but surely undeniable fact of the impact of colonisation on Australian Aboriginals, the one that transcends all other facts, all other estimates, reconstructions, and analyses, truths, half-truths and lies, is the immense and appalling reduction in the Aboriginal population during the first 150 years of European settlement. (p. 81)

While the precise number of massacres remains a matter of contention, several researchers assert that by the turn of the twentieth century, the European settlement of Australia resulted in the catastrophic collapse of the Indigenous population with at least a 90% mortality rate (Awofeso, 2011; Harris, 2003). Whatever the estimate, a calculated cover-up and the literal burial of the evidence of this war indicates that the documented murders account for a small fraction of the probable total (Bottoms, 2013; Pascoe, 2008).

Nonetheless, this genocide of the Indigenous population resulted in the destruction of social, legal, and religious infrastructures, all of which are critical to individual health and security, and a sense of community wellbeing for Indigenous Australians (Crotty, 2018; Short, 2016). The British viewed this rapid decline in the Indigenous population as evidence that the ‘primitive race of lowly intelligence’ (Foxcroft, 1941, p. 11) would inevitably become extinct (Broome, 2003; Rogers & Bain, 2016).

Attempted Civilising and Extinctions

Though it has been estimated that prior to colonisation, the Aboriginal population was upwards of 1,000,000 people, by the 1900s, this had reduced to just 60,000 (Milroy et al., 2014). Stanner (1979) provides perspective:

It is a fact that about five-sixths of the original black population have been wiped out in 150 years [since White settlement], a rate equivalent to the death every year since 1788 of two large tribes totalling 1700 souls. The position today is that if every person of any degree of native blood now alive in Australia were brought together in the Northern Territory, there would be only one person to every ten square miles. The rest of the Commonwealth – six states, including Tasmania would be completely empty of the former native population... as