The Living Archive of Aboriginal Art: Maree Clarke and the Circulation of Photographs as Culture-Making

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Left | **Figure 1**
The possum skin cloak made by Maree, together with her nieces and nephews, for the "Reimagining Culture" exhibition at the Mildura Art Gallery (March-May 2019). Photograph by Rimi Khan (April 2019), and reproduced with permission from Maree Clarke.

The term "living archive" refers to an Aboriginal community archive containing both tangible and intangible records. The living Aboriginal archive holds records that may be transmitted orally by members of the community or passed on through art, dance, or storytelling—that is, they are not captured in particular physical or digital form but are transmitted through interaction and connections between people. In addition, the living archive is considered to be not only a place for storing or gathering materials, but also a place where information can be contested. Multiple sources of records can be gathered, analysed, and debated, and new layers of information can be captured that reveal their context (Thorpe 903).

I'm a visual artist and a curator with more than 30 years' experience of revivifying the knowledge and practice associated with my Ancestors. This

process includes reclaiming the collections and archives holding my cultural heritage in museums and galleries around the world. My work is multi-dimensional—from the revival of possum-skin cloaks and kangaroo-tooth necklaces to the innovation in lenticular photographs and 3D-printed jewellery. My ambitions are to pass the cultural knowledge embedded in art-making on to future generations, handed down to my nieces and nephews so that they can explore their connections to their culture and identities in ways that are meaningful to them. I'm also keen to share this knowledge with anyone really who wants to support these practices, especially those that occur in my backyard. I want my work and all the accompanying stories—especially the humour and enjoyment connected to the art-making process—recorded in such a way as to ensure our archives remain representative of our living culture.

Maree Clarke
in ongoing conversation with Fran Edmonds

Setting the Scene

It's March 2019, the first weekend of (southern hemisphere) autumn. It's unusually hot—a heatwave grips Melbourne and a small house in the inner-western suburb of Yarraville is ablaze with activity. I (Fran) have arrived to join in the final weekend of an art-making frenzy with artist Maree Clarke. My contribution to the workshop is minor, though I'm always made welcome. Maree is Wemba Wemba/Mutti Mutti/Boon Wurrung/Yorta Yorta—these terms denote language and cultural groups of the region now known as the southeastern state of Victoria, Australia. This is a space where people continue to navigate what it means to be Aboriginal. Narrm/Melbourne is a city with a sense of itself as sophisticated, cosmopolitan. Here, Aboriginality is rarely seen, heard, or openly acknowledged. Yet, this house, and especially the backyard, are a vivid reminder of people's ongoing connections to Country and kin.

This weekend is the culmination of a series of workshops that began a month ago. Their focus is a family exhibition in Maree's hometown of Mildura, in northwest Victoria, opening next week.[1] The show features her deep commitment to sharing her knowledge and practices of art/culture-making with her nieces and nephews [Figure 1]. The exhibition will include a possum-skin cloak, a kangaroo-tooth necklace, a supersized river reed necklace, and projected black and white images of family and friends from her photographic collection made in the early 1990s [Figures 2-6]. Her passion for intergenerational knowledge transmission has developed from her own ambitions to revivify the material culture and cultural practices of her Ancestors. Maree has forged herself as a culture-maker, a mentor, and a facilitator who draws on a diverse network of immediate and extended family, friends, and colleagues, and urges their own contributions as experiential learning.

During the weekend workshop, while Maree and I are in her too-warm backyard working on the possum-skin cloak design, she reflects on her passion for photography and her early training. She has an extensive personal archive stretching back to when she was a photographic "cadet,"

[1] "Maree Clarke: Reimagining Culture: Contemporary Connections to Country" was held at the Mildura Arts Centre March 9 – May 12, 2019.

Figure 2

Sonja Hodge, Maree Clarke, and Aaron Clarke, nephew. NAIDOC march, mid-1990s.
Photograph from the collection of Maree Clarke and reproduced with permission.

or trainee. Maree and Kim Kruger (Muroona and South Sea Islander) were the first Aboriginal women to receive funding from the Victorian Women's Trust in 1990. [2] They worked with photographer (Jillian) Viva Gibb (1945-2017), who was instrumental in having the cadetships funded through that Trust. Maree relates the story:

> Viva had spent some time in South Africa, photographing people and communities. While there, she noticed there were lots of Black photographers, and when she came back to Australia—it was the late 1980s—I think there was only Mervyn Bishop. Merv was a press photographer based in Sydney and took some quite iconic photos. Aboriginal women photographers like Tracey Moffatt, Destiny Deacon, and Lisa Bellear each had their own individual photographic "art" practices but were only beginning to make headway with their work...There were few career pathways that provided Aboriginal women with opportunities to learn the "trade."
>
> Viva approached the Victorian Women's Trust to get funding to train two Aboriginal women in photography...Kim and I worked with Viva for two years, traveling to Aboriginal families and events throughout the state.

Maree's sister-in-law, Sonja Hodge (Lardil), was often included on these journeys. The women photographed many Koori events.[3] Maree's images range from NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Commemoration) marches held along the main streets of Melbourne [see figures 3-4], visits to country towns, and places of significance for family and friends [see figure 5]. There are images of missions where today people continue to reside; pictures of individuals, including beautifully composed head shots [see figure 6]; group photographs of people partying; snapshots of Elders congregating at the Aborigines Advancement League,[4] and glimpses of people going about their everyday activities. The photographs are significant reminders of the continuing depth of Aboriginal family, community, and culture in Victoria. They also make tangible Maree's ongoing connections to place and to political activism; they position her as a matriarch, a keeper of knowledge. Together, they demonstrate the resilience of a southeastern Aboriginality, and the alternative perspectives of culture as witnessed, experienced, and tenaciously maintained by a young Aboriginal woman.

An Introduction: the Living Archive of Aboriginal Art

It is the seamless movement between art-making, storytelling, recording, and mobilizing the photographic archive in Maree's backyard that led us to develop a project we're calling the Living Archive of Aboriginal Art. We're writing, assembling, revising, making, and learning together. We—Sabra Thorner, Fran Edmonds, Maree Clarke, Kirsten Thorpe, Rimi Khan, and Sharon Huebner, together with others—are a team with diverse backgrounds, expertise, and interests, who began working together

[2] The Victorian Women's Trust is a non-profit advocacy group for gender equity. Founded in 1985, it's one of the oldest women's funding bodies in the world.

[3] "Koori" refers to Aboriginal people from southeastern Australia (in the present day state of Victoria, and often extending northwards into southern New South Wales). The word derives originally from the Awabakal language from what is now northeastern New South Wales and means "person." "Koorie" is an alternative spelling preferred by Elder Uncle Jim Berg, one of the co-founders of the Koorie Heritage Trust, an Aboriginal cultural center in Melbourne.

[4] The Aborigines Advancement League is the oldest Aboriginal organization in Australia (founded in 1957), and long a place of significance for Victorian Kooris, supporting both social welfare and cultural heritage.

Figures 3-4
NAIDOC March, mid-1990s. Photographs by Maree Clarke.

in August 2018. Our goal (over the next few years) is to develop a digital tool that reflects the deep interconnectedness—for contemporary Indigenous artists in the land now known as Australia—of knowledge, culture, land, kinship, language, and performance.

I (Sabra) have taken the lead on this shared publication—I'm an anthropologist based in the United States who's been working with Indigenous people in Australia for about 20 years. I'm broadly interested in photography, digital media, and archiving as forms of cultural production and social activism. My participation in this shared project extends back to my dissertation fieldwork (2008-10), when I worked as a volunteer at the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne (during which time I met Maree, then the Exhibitions Curator there, and got to know Fran, who'd already long been working with Aboriginal artists and community members in Australia's southeast). More recently, over the last few years, Fran, Maree, and I have been working, writing, thinking, and making together, focusing especially on how Indigenous art-making is also culture-making, that these processes are in fact collaborative and intercultural, and that they seek to profoundly reimagine what archives are and what archives do.

I (Fran) am coordinating the Living Archive project. Almost 30 years ago, I began working as a remote area teacher, lecturer, and researcher in Australia's Central Desert, living and working with Warlpiri people in Willowra, then with Alywarre and Anmatyere people from the vast homelands of Utopia. Soon after, I worked as a historian/anthropologist involved in archival and genealogical research for Native Title claims across Australia.[5] Over the past 20 years, my work has focused mainly in southeastern Australia. The long-term relationships with artists and community-members forged through this work (and further progressed when Maree became my Ph.D. field supervisor in 2002) have deeply influenced the ethnography I conduct. This includes documenting, recording, and understanding the interconnection of art practices and visual cultures in relation to Aboriginal knowledge systems, alongside the intersection of digital technologies to support these processes. My research seeks to be collaborative, where Aboriginal voices and knowledge are a priority in achieving intercultural knowledge exchange, to progress Aboriginal control of their histories and stories located in the "archive."

We are led by Maree—her generosity, her passionate commitment to transmitting culture, and her insistence that this be collaborative and intercultural work—and are driven by Indigenous knowledge paradigms and a powerful sense of social justice: Indigenous people must be in control over their own cultural heritage.

The goal of the Living Archive project is to respond to, reflect, and further reinforce the holism of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing things (Martin and Miraboopa 2003), foregrounding the culturally-appropriate transmission of knowledge. The building of an enduring tool is one planned outcome, yet equally important is developing sustainable pathways for the education, training, and employment of young people—empowering Koori youth as the knowledge holders and cultural custodians of

[5] "Native Title" refers to the processes that allow Indigenous peoples in Australia to reclaim rights to their lands and waters, through the Commonwealth's Native Title Act 1993. The Act followed the decision of Australia's High Court in 1992 in the historic Mabo and others vs. Queensland (No 2) case, which overturned terra nullius (meaning "land belonging to no one"), the philosophy (and legal fiction) that allowed for European invasion/colonization of the continent.

the future. This work is both crucial and urgent in Narrm/Melbourne (and in southeastern Australia more broadly), where Indigenous people are deeply marginalized, ignored, and/or assumed to be located elsewhere (such as remote communities in Australia's desert center or tropical far north). The activation, preservation, and innovation of contemporary art practices contribute significantly to personal and community wellbeing (Edmonds and Clarke i-xvi, 1-56); these are also powerful political assertions of unceded sovereignty over lands, bodies, and cultural expressions (Balla 11-16, Bunda 75-85), increasingly led by a cohort of senior women (Thorner et al., 269-291).

Archives have become important sites of scholarly inquiry over the last two decades (Anderson "Authors, Owners and Archives" , "Access and Control"; Derrida 7-102; Gilliland et al 16-29; Jorgensen and McLean 1-428; Stoler 1-278); they are no longer taken for granted, but are now actively investigated as cultures, institutions, and/or technologies with their own logics (and logics that can then be resisted, responded to, and reimagined). There have been several successful projects to "Indigenize the archive," both in and beyond Australia (Anderson and Christen 105-126, Boast and Enote 103-113, Christie 61-66): these turn the focus away from text-based repositories of information (often enmeshed in agendas of state-making and/or surveillance of citizen-subjects) towards active, multimedia sites of creative knowledge production. They also turn the focus away from traditional collecting institutions back to community-focused archives (see Faulkhead 60-88; Timbery 145-178; Thorpe 900-934). The proposed living archive is among the first in Australia in which Indigenous people will be included as co-producers, urban Indigenous knowledge will be foregrounded (and so too, the wisdom of women and matriarchal structures of cultural transmission), and the foundational idea will be to preserve and activate objects and the stories they elicit according to local and holistic ways of knowing.

This piece is a hybrid, a first attempt to write together and very much part of our ongoing collaborative archival intentions. It includes ethnographic storytelling, academic analysis, archival photos and captions, and some additional reflection from an Indigenous archivist collaborator on the project. We are working at being reflexive and recursive at every step. In what follows, we think and write about photographic archives in two main ways. First, photographs are historical documents: these, from the personal archive of artist Maree Clarke, are an inspiration for storytelling, which is also culture-making. They are evidence of Koori connections to kin and Country, evidence of political activism, evidence of community and presence in the urban space that is 20th-century Melbourne. Secondly, photographs (and video) are mobilized as integral to the art-making process, always an archive-in-becoming. Art-making, here, is intergenerational and intercultural, collaborative and experiential, and simultaneously experimental and reliant on traditional designs, motifs, and materials (Figure 7). Maree visually documents every stage of her production; this is integral to her making and to her clear political intervention: to allow the knowledge that is made tangible through art-making, artworks, and the storytelling that inherently go with them to live beyond the here and now.

Figure 5

Alice Clarke (Maree's mother) with Alicia Clarke (Maree's niece) at Warrakoo, c1995-96. Photograph by Maree Clarke.

A First Photographic Encounter

When I (Fran) first arrive at Maree's house with a dynamic group of graduate students in August 2018, the space was relatively calm, yet the students are able to see and feel the place as one where art-making is a priority and is deeply embedded in contemporary Aboriginality. Maree introduces the students to her vast and eclectic collection of objects and materials, which she uses to create her vibrant works of art. From among the piles of river reeds (collected from the Maribyrnong River) [figure 8], the possum-skin pelts (ordered from New Zealand where the small marsupials are not protected) [figure 9], the kangaroo jaw bones (gathered up from roadkill animals along the highway north from Melbourne) from which teeth are extracted for making necklaces [figure 10], Maree produces six archival folders. Each folder holds pages of negatives inserted in plastic sleeves; some are labelled and some not. Altogether, there are almost 1,000 tiny black and white squares. We gather around Maree as she nostalgically opens folders and flips through the photographs-in-miniature. Soon, she retrieves a light box to see more clearly, and easily begins telling stories of people and places. Her narrative is interwoven with aspirations to return the images back to the people and communities pictured.

At the end of our visit, Maree entrusts us with the care of the folders. Later, I would take them to a digital archiving center at the University of Melbourne, where the students and the research team (myself included) would work with archivists to register the photographs and prepare a series ready for selection by Maree for the upcoming exhibition—"Reimagining Culture: Contemporary Connections to Country"—at the Mildura Arts Centre, in Maree's hometown.

Over the subsequent months, together with the university archivists' help, we developed a workflow and some protocols to ensure that photographs are retrievable. We built a shared Excel spreadsheet to hold all the scanned images and record as many details as possible; this will expand over time as we gather more information from Maree. Throughout this registration period, Maree was a visible presence, meeting with students, talking about events depicted in the images, and sharing stories about the Mildura exhibition and her intentions for recording the making of things in her backyard. The practice of ongoing recording is one that is yet to be captured in the registration process; films and photographs of Maree's work will all go into the growing archive. Maree avidly documents all her art-making projects—art- and archive-making are parts of the same process, all culture-making. The archive, in this context, is dynamic and flexible, something that we hope to be able to capture as we develop a digital platform that is interactive and non-linear.

The registration of photographs from Maree's beginnings as an artist and an activist in the 1990s has been imagined as a purposeful beginning, a framework for intervening in conventional archival practices in which "things" are categorized and catalogued, in the first instance, by type. This Western/European model of "order" in fact inhibits more circular and relational understandings of photographic and art practices, which reveal Maree's work as living and ongoing, always being layered upon, always being shared. These photographs are not confined to an earlier

Figure 6

Ruby Hunter (Ngarrindjeri), early 1990s.
Photograph by Maree Clarke.

Figure 7
"Reimagining Culture" exhibition at the Mildura Art Gallery; this wall featured three screens, including film footage by Simon Rose at left, black and white photographs from Maree's archive at center, and Simon Rose's short film "Cultural Activist" playing at right. Pictured at left is pokerwork being inscribed on a possum-skin cloak in the making during a backyard workshop. Exhibition photograph by Rimi Khan (April 2019), and reproduced with permission from Maree Clarke.

Figure 8
River reeds in Maree's backyard, February 2019. Photograph by Rimi Khan, and reproduced with permission from Maree Clarke.

Figure 9
Possum skins laid out for sewing, Maree's backyard, February 2019.
Photograph by Rimi Khan, and reproduced with permission from Maree Clarke.

time or another place (the colonial logics that construct and police "authentic" Aboriginality as rooted in skin color and/or remoteness) but resonate with and are creatively taken up by Koori people today.

Maree's Role as a Cross-Cultural Facilitator

Maree's work is both intergenerational and intercultural. I (Rimi) grew up in Australia as the daughter of Bangladeshi migrants against the backdrop of official policies of "multiculturalism," and in cultural spaces where I was regularly asked to perform my heritage for different kinds of publics. Later, as an academic and cultural researcher, I developed an interest in how communities are formed through art, and what kinds of art-making are ascribed value in a culturally diverse, contemporary Australia. "Multicultural art" has been an institutional and aesthetic category used to describe the work of migrant-background artists (Khan 184-199), yet the connections between migrant and First Nations artists and communities are rarely examined. I became interested in how Maree's efforts to revive and reawaken Aboriginal cultural forms and stories are inevitably positioned within settler-migrant and cross-cultural contexts. At Bunjilaka Gallery at Melbourne Museum, for example, Maree's works form part of a narrative of southeastern Australian First Nations peoples that is presented for large numbers of visitors and tourists. Reflecting on Aboriginal traditions of grief and mourning, these works are not just a representation of cultural history, but are also living, intercultural practices of knowledge-sharing and dialogue in a global context.

Maree's ways of transmitting knowledge emerge from an approach to art-making that is emphatically community-driven. Most of Maree's works are the result of many hours sitting and working alongside family and friends as co-creators and collaborators. Maree's works are tactile, large-scale, and multidisciplinary, qualities that lend themselves to collective and cross-cultural processes. The backyard workshops mentioned above, over a number of weeks, became open spaces of dialogue, learning, and conviviality. These sessions involved long hours of working with different materials—kangaroo teeth and sinew, possum skins, river reeds, cockatoo feathers and echidna quills—which we cut, sewed, threaded, burned, and glued, with the guidance of Maree and her community of collaborators. The work was detailed, painstaking, and physically demanding in the full heat of summer.

It is work that is ultimately seen in the formalized settings of galleries and museums, but made possible by deep practices of kinship and community-building. I felt that the students, recruited from a class I teach, had much to learn from these processes as a form of intercultural and intergenerational cultural pedagogy. These students, who aspire to be festival curators, performers, and media producers, volunteered to painstakingly register and scan the photos from Maree's black and white archive, and participated in the art-making workshops in Maree's backyard. The students approached these forms of cultural and physical labor with curiosity, industriousness, and humor. They were not paid for their time, but took part because they wanted to learn about the relationships between archives, art-making, and Aboriginality. The students themselves were

culturally diverse, as temporary visitors and settlers to Australia. They made sense of Maree's backyard as part of a wider global space. One student from mainland China described how difficult it was for her, as an international student, to find opportunities to connect with "local" and "authentic" Australian culture. Her life on and off campus was largely confined to studying and socializing with other international students. Yet she had a keen interest in art, and was enthusiastic about the opportunity to work with Maree. Accompanied by a friend, she participated in numerous workshops, sharing food, drinks, and conversation with Maree and her family as they worked together and spoke of arts practices of ethnic minority groups in China. The students' presence in Maree's backyard opened up the space to these other cultural trajectories, and their questions about the making of possum-skin cloaks and river reed necklaces drew connections to cultural knowledges from other parts of the world.

Significantly, these forms of exchange are only possible because of the ethos of generosity that characterizes Maree's approach as an artist. Her work is enabled by her willingness to share stories, skills, and ideas. The cultural knowledge that informs her art-making is not something that is owned or possessed solely by her, but by others in the workshops: nephews, nieces, friends, and aunties who themselves are developing and exchanging knowledge about these cultural practices. This emphasis on cultural and aesthetic exchange is unlike Western frameworks of art production in which expertise or genius is embodied in the individual artist. While aesthetic knowledge and skill can be cultivated or learned from others through training in narrowly defined institutional contexts (such as art school), artistic talent tends to be assessed as something that is the sole property of the individual. Maree's work, in contrast (and much Indigenous art-making more generally), is dependent on the community relationships forged via the processes of making-together. Instead of restricting or guarding the spread of this knowledge, Maree's approach is one of openness; sharing such knowledge in intercultural community contexts is crucial for ensuring the legacy and survival of these art-making practices, the objects they produce, and the stories they inspire.

This generosity is also reflected in Maree's role as an artistic leader in other art spaces. For a number of years, she has been a curator at the Wyndham Art Gallery, an arts center in the outer-western suburbs, funded by the local municipal government. Despite being an hour's drive from central Melbourne, Maree has mobilized her connections with arts stakeholders and communities across the region to turn the gallery into a space that attracts a wide range of artists and visitors. The institutional mandate eschews the usual divisions between the city and the suburbs, and the center and peripheries of the art world. Instead, the gallery promotes the work of emerging artists and foregrounds weighty questions about cultural difference.

A recent exhibition, *Bla(c)k Femmes Bla(c)k Visions* (February 27 – March 24, 2019), is a prime example. Mounting this show included working closely with young Black curators, building and affirming connections between African and Aboriginal women. Together, they explore meanings of Blackness, in the context of arts and cultural policy discourses that prefer not to

address difficult questions of race, exclusion, and colonial violence (Khan et al 25-34). The opening event showcased the words and performances of young brown and Black women and was explicitly intersectional. Speakers and performers highlighted their personal experiences of racism, and situated these in the diversity of Blackness, genders and sexualities, and the analogies between African and Aboriginal struggles for empowerment and self-determination. The catalogue explains the exhibition's title:

> Bla(c)k is helpful to us to emphasise the difference between sovereign Blak people here, [6] and displaced or settler Black folks with roots from elsewhere as well as pointing towards many of our shared experiences (Mag, Wol & Trambas).

The exhibition featured the contradictions of simultaneous hypervisibility and erasure shared by these Bla(c)k women from different communities and countries.

Bla(c)k Femmes Bla(c)k Visions offers an example in which Maree leveraged her position as a curator to enable the critical cross-cultural work of a new generation of bla(c)k femme artists and cultural leaders. The exhibition's guest curators – Adut Wol, Abbey Mag, and Aisha Trambas – are South Sudanese and Afro-Greek women, who describe themselves as "three young Black settlers on Wautharong and Wurundjeri land" (Mag, Wol & Trambas). Their connections and debts to local Aboriginal communities are the first thing they highlight in the exhibition notes, and by bringing together First Nations and African-background artists, the exhibition's frame is explicitly transnational and translocal. *Bla(c)k Femmes Bla(c)k Visions* presents a hybrid vision of intercultural solidarity, community-building, and exchange. Moving across the different artworks presented in the space is to observe disparate experiences and identities come into a sharp dialogue on visibility and erasure. The exhibition also provided a visual language for female bodies to reclaim their identities in a society that explicitly racializes them; photography is a powerful, effective medium through which to do so. It is by enabling these curatorial relationships that Maree's cultural work resists existing artworld disciplines, categories, and hierarchies, and instead emphasizes the community-based collaborative production of cultural meaning.

Precedents in Archiving and the Storytelling over Photographs

Photographs have been instrumental to the storytelling processes that are increasingly being recognized as integral to Indigenous pursuits of healing, heritage reclamation, and social justice (see Huebner 171–184; Thorner and Dallwitz 53-60, Thorner 1-18). Stories—the talking about the past in the present—are vital for regenerating and sustaining relationships between people, kin, and Country. I (Sharon) first met Maree at the Koorie Heritage Trust (KHT) in the early 2000s; Maree was the Exhibitions Curator and I was a researcher within the Koorie Family History Service. [7] The Trust is a keeping place for Koori(e) heritage; the collections include wooden artifacts and stone tools, artworks, photographs,

[6] The term "Blak" originates with Indigenous artist Destiny Deacon (Ku'a Ku'a and Erub/Mer), who coined the term in 1991 to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples "to refer to themselves specifically and separately from wider settler and international Black cultures" (Mag, Wol & Trambas 2019, n.p.).

[7] The Family History Service was established in 2001 following the 1997 Bringing them Home Report, commissioned by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Commonwealth Government, in 1995. The report brought to light the extent of Commonwealth and state government policies in effect in Australia 1910-1971 that led to the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and homes. Children were sent to orphanages, schools, and/or missions, often far away from their homelands, with the explicit goal of assimilating them into white society. These children are known as the "Stolen Generations."

Figure 10

Maree's nephew Mitch in Maree's backyard, working on the kangaroo-tooth necklace for the "Reimagining Culture" exhibition at the Mildura Art Gallery (March-May 2019). Photograph by Fran Edmonds (March 2019), and reproduced with permission from Maree Clarke.

oral histories, as well as contemporary cultural materials. Central to my work there was to build trusting relationships with community members and to conduct oral histories, often in the context of reinterpreting objects, photographs, and digital media "returned" from libraries, archives, museums, and record offices.

KHT is also a cross-cultural meeting place: its motto is "Gnokan Danna Murra Kor-Ki," meaning "give me your hand, my friend," intended to exemplify a spirit of intercultural partnership and collaboration. At the Trust, Maree and I shared a common interest in historical collections of photographs as a source for art-making inspiration, community-building, and cultural (re)vitalization. We are also both photographers ourselves, and taking photographs gave us a living platform from which to explore Koori identity, individual memories, extended understandings of kin and Ancestors, and how all of these emerge from, and are dependent upon, Country.

"Country," for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, refers to places that are considered homelands for generations of extended family. Country is geography, ecology, memory, and history; it exists out in the world and is also intrinsic to one's identity. Country is a way of referring, too, to the inextricability of personhood, Ancestors and their knowledge, cultural beliefs and practices, and the places which people identify as home, sites of nourishment, and responsibilities of care. Country is how you know who you are and where you come from, and where these sensibilities are generated and anchored. The dislocation from Country and kin experienced by Australia's Stolen Generations is a heartbreaking and enduring legacy felt by many contemporary Indigenous people across Australia.

The Koorie Heritage Archive (KHA), launched at the Koorie Heritage Trust in 2003, is an important precursor to our current work to reimagine archives as dynamic places that incorporate art-making, storytelling, and the audio/visual documentation of this cultural work. The KHA is a digital repository for historical materials, previously held only in public archives and private collections, which grants Kooris access to photographs of people and places important to them, images of cultural artifacts, digital replicas of artworks and manuscripts, film footage of community events, and audio recordings of Koori Elders and other community members telling their stories in their own words (Huebner and Cooper 18–32). The archive includes cultural heritage materials and a metadata collector for gathering information about those materials. Kooris are able to add stories and other information that often only they can provide, such as the date something was made or happened, the names of people and places, or the name of the person who created the stories that accompany a particular item. In this way, people regain control over their representations and have the opportunity to respond to, and often correct, (mis)representations of themselves or family members recorded in colonial government correspondence and reports. Users can also add, if necessary, cultural restrictions to materials they deem culturally sensitive.

Storytelling—over photographs, through art-making—is one of the ways Maree transmits knowledge for future generations. Stories of traditional lands, belonging, and the intersections of people and Country are crucial to Koori

community identity, kinship relationships, and cultural survival. Moving in and between these interconnections is integral to art/culture-making in Australia's southeast, led by Maree (and other matriarchal figures). Traveling between her Country in northwestern Victoria and her Melbourne backyard, Maree continuously animates historical photographs with contemporary storytelling and generates new photographs documenting her present, always with the future in mind. Via work with archival images and contemporary image-making, personal memories, family relationships, and senses of belonging to community, culture is animated and integrated into everyday life.

Circulating Photographs as Culture-Making

My (Fran's) attendance at the workshop on the hot first weekend of March is marked by the return of some of the photographs to the space where we retrieved them six months ago—Maree's home and studio. I have about 500 high-resolution images now on a USB flashdrive, transferred from the scanned files still being updated at the University. I sit with Maree as she hurriedly flicks through the photographs—now saved as TIFFs on my laptop. She searches for the ones she wants to use in the Mildura exhibition, opening next week. Maree's emotional connection to the images is palpable; despite the fact that she has very little time to contemplate them, or that it has been many years since she has seen some of them, she knows immediately which ones she wants.

There is still so much to do for the exhibition, opening in less than a week now. The possum-skin cloak requires pokerwork designs to be finished. Maree's nephew, Mitch Mahoney, following in his aunt's footsteps (and who recently accompanied her on a cultural exchange with First Nations buffalo-cloak makers in Ontario, Canada), requires guidance in the final stages of making the kangaroo-tooth necklace [see figure 10]. The threading of reeds and interspersing of bird feathers (galah, parrot, cockatoo) to create large-format necklaces also requires attention. The photographs are inextricable from this work. They have been part of Maree's training as an art-maker and cultural mentor and they endure to reflect an Aboriginal presence in an urban context where it has long been contested.

The nascent process of registering the images and interconnecting them with the places where they were made, and circulating them in Mildura (and elsewhere) as part of this new exhibition, reveal and construct the living archive as something that interweaves photographs with family, Country, significant events, and the role of art in transmitting culture to future generations. The images are not fixed in a time or place. Maree's eyes move quickly across thumbnail squares on the laptop screen, and within 20 minutes, we have selected some 80+ photographs. I upload them onto another memory stick and label it "Exhibition Pictures." Soon they will become larger-than-life, projected as a slideshow onto multiple screens, alongside contemporary renditions of traditional garments and adornment: the possum-skin cloak, kangaroo-tooth necklace, and supersized river reed necklaces that headline this exhibition [see figures 1, 7, 11, 12, 13].

In April, when I visit the exhibition in Mildura with my colleague and co-author Rimi, we remark on the return of the images to the town where

Figure 11
The nieces' and nephews' kangaroo-tooth necklace, on display in the "Reimagining Culture" exhibition at the Mildura Art Gallery. Photograph by Fran Edmonds (April 2019), and reproduced with permission from Maree Clarke.

many of the folks shown on screen continue to reside. It is in this instance that, although the images are untitled, they are obviously connected to this place. There are scenes of Mildura's main street with people photographed in front of iconic buildings; there are others showing Maree's family, people who are well-known in the local area. Community-members visit, stopping to view images and tell stories to each other of those they know or have a connection to. These photographs, appearing on a continuous loop in the exhibition space, offer a chance for new audiences to engage with the living archive. Returning the photographs, showing them in this way, this exhibition reveals and extends ongoing relationships of people with places, creating the space for new understandings of contemporary Koori culture.

Further Reflection: Transforming the Archive

I (Kirsten) have spent a considerable amount of my professional life being surrounded by records and collections that objectify Indigenous people. As an Indigenous woman (my family are Worimi from Port Stephens, New South Wales) working in government archives and libraries, I have witnessed the power and the potency of colonial and bureaucratic records of the state. These are records that were created to justify the policies and the processes of dispossession, they were used as an apparatus to control and categorise Aboriginal people. Over the past two decades, I have been involved in projects which seek to transform these institutional archives, to open them up for critique and for community return. However, the efforts to increase access and to develop protocols for respectful engagement do little to alter or reshape these colonial and bureaucratic structures. Whilst options such as a right-of-reply exist, the support for administrative processes to enable this elevation of Aboriginal voices is virtually non-existent in traditional institutional library and archive spaces.

I often say quietly to my close friends and family that I don't really like libraries and archives. This is an odd, and even conflicting perspective, given that I spend a lot of time talking about the importance of archives and information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. What I really mean is that I don't like the current landscape of archives that are clearly in view (and well-resourced), as I find that they perpetuate colonial models of collecting, models which do not encompass a view of the archive as alive.

Maree is herself a living archive and her work produces both tangible and intangible records, drawing from historic materials and transforming them into new sources of knowledge for cultural transmission. Through culture-making, Maree creates an archive that sits in stark contrast to institutional collections which are boxed, labelled, and categorized in ways which do not respect Indigenous worldviews and perspectives. A living archive transmits knowledge through relationships; it is not static or locked in time, but is an ever-growing source of nourishment and connection for the people who are connected with it. I am inspired by Maree's living archive as it requires you to listen and be in dialogue with the objects that are in the process of being created and recreated.

Maree's archive presents us with a challenge, a challenge that many Aboriginal community archives currently face. That is, it needs to be

Figure 12
Supersized river reed necklace at left, river reed canoe at center, "Reimagining Culture" exhibition at the Mildura Art Gallery. Exhibition photograph by Rimi Khan (April 2019) and reproduced with permission from Maree Clarke.

Figure 13
"Reimagining Culture" exhibition at the Mildura Art Gallery; this wall featured three screens, including film footage by Simon Rose at left, and black and white photographs from Maree's archive (including those pictured here as figures 2-6) at center. Pictured at left is Mitch Mahoney and Rocky Tregonning in one of the backyard art-making workshops. Exhibition photograph by Rimi Khan (April 2019) and reproduced with permission from Maree Clarke.

maintained, supported, and preserved in spaces and places which are linked and contextual to the person and her work: stories, experiences, art-making, knowledge-sharing. To move it from its current spaces (in and out of the backyard studio) into an institutional repository may potentially build systems and structures which permanently alter existing cultural connections. Yet we need to think of ways that we can facilitate the ongoing preservation, care for, and management of these materials—as an archive—over the long-term. That means thinking about preservation of Aboriginal archives (in digital and other forms) over generations so that they are adequately supported through resources and infrastructure. There is a major gap across the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums) sector in supporting living archives, an absence of valuing visual media as critical to self, community, culture, and history making, and a lack of understanding that dynamic and ongoing relationships are at the heart of this work. Our ability to transform what archives are and what archives might be will require a commitment to working with projects like Maree's living archive to model new conceptions of archives within the archival multiverse that accommodate diverse ways of knowing and keeping.[8]

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[8] The "archival multiverse" is a term coined by Gilliland, McKemmish, and Lau 2017 (see page 17) to encompass the archiving of multiple kinds of texts and materials, culturally-specific memory-keeping practices, various institutions, myriad bureaucratic and personal motivations, community perspectives and needs, and cultural and legal constructs.

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