Excavations, Surveys and Heritage Management in Victoria

Volume 10

2021

Excavations, Surveys and Heritage Management in Victoria
Volume 10, 2021

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Front cover:
Particpants at the zoom webinar panel discussion by Traditional Owners at the 2021 Colloquium. Top row: Darren Griffin, Liz Foley, Dave Wandin—Wurundjeri Woiwurrung; bottom row: Racquel Kerr—Dja Dja Wurrung, Tammy Gilson—Wadawurrung, Ben Muir— Wotjobaluk and Jardwadjali. (Screenshot by Caroline Spry)e

Excavations, Surveys and Heritage Management in Victoria Volume 10, 2021
Melbourne

ISSN 2208-827X

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Editorial note

The papers included in this 10th issue of *Excavations, Surveys and Heritage Management in Victoria* were presented at the annual Victorian Archaeology Colloquium held on-line via zoom webinar between 1 and 4 February 2021. This allowed even more than our usual number of people to register as participants, including some from interstate and overseas: their commitment and involvement testifies to the importance of this fixture within the local archaeological calendar. Many were fortunate to be able to meet in person, under appropriate protocols, for an outdoor boxed lunch at La Trobe University on 5 February.

We have taken the opportunity of celebrating our 10th anniversay by looking back over the last decade, both through a more formal analysis and through a less formal panel discussion of the history of the Colloquium and this publication. Another panel discussion transcript allows space for some Traditional Owners to reflect on particular examples that they feel have been of value in the complex process of cultural revival through a form of experimental (perhaps better experiential) archaeology.

The other papers published here deal with a variety of topics and approaches that span Victoria's Aboriginal and European past. While some papers report on the results of specific research projects others focus on aspects of method, approach, education and the social context of our work and approach. These call demonstrate how our Colloquium continues to be an important opportunity for consultants, academics, managers and Aboriginal community groups to share their common interests in the archaeology and heritage of Victoria.

In addition to the more developed papers, we have continued our practice of publishing the abstracts of other papers presented at the Colloquium, illustrated by a selection of the slides taken from the PowerPoint presentations prepared by participants. These demonstrate the range of work being carried out in Victoria, and we hope that many of these will also form the basis of more complete studies in the future. Previous volumes of *Excavations, Surveys and Heritage Management in Victoria* are freely available through La Trobe University's institutional repository, Research Online <www.arrow.latrobe.edu.au:8080/vital/access/manager/Repository/latrobe:41999> and through Open at La Trobe (OPAL) <https://doi.org/10.26181/601a321a11c0d>. We hope that this will encourage the dissemination of ideas and information in the broader community, both within Australia and internationally. We have also now set up a website for the Colloquium <https://victorianarchaeologycolloquium.com>

For the first time we have included an obituary to mark the passing of a member of our community: David Rhodes of Heritage Insight, a long-time supporter of our activities. Here we should also mention that we have also lost Ron Vanderwal who made importatnt contributions to archaeology and the curation of heritage, although he was unable to participate in the Colloquia.

Once again we have been fortunate in the support given to the Colloquium by many sponsors: ACHM, Ochre Imprints, Heritage Insight, Biosis, ArchLink, Christine Williamson Heritage Consultants and Extent, while La Trobe University continued to provide facilities and a home for our activites, even if this year it was a virtual one. We would like to thank them, and all others involved for their generous contributions towards hosting both the event and this publication. Yafit Dahary of 12 Ovens was, as always, responsible for the catering, despite the limitations on her usual spread.

All papers were refereed by the editorial team. This year Deb Kelly managed this process and the sub-editing of this volume. Layout was again undertaken by David Frankel. Preparation of this volume was, like so much else in the last year, undertaken during the severe restrictions imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope that 2022 will be a better year for all.

The presenters, editors and authors acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and heritage discussed at the Colloquium and in this volume, and pay their respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

In the fine grain: Intimate materials and experimental archaeology on Wurundjeri Country today

David Wandin[1] and Angela V. Foley[2,3]

Abstract

T*his paper responds to and expands on the call for intercultural cooperation in projects that build upon existing stakeholder relationships between Traditional Custodians and non–Indigenous others (Griffin et al. 2013:64). The Aboriginal and non–Indigenous authors link with the recent experimental archaeology of Wurundjeri Country (Griffin et al. 2013) and discuss how the concept of intimate materials promotes stories which are more relational and transparently ethical than categorical. These stories from the cultural interface on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country connect with making a canaan (digging stick), a shield, and koorong (bark canoe). We do not shy away from the fact of our intercultural co–existence or its precarity, but rather we consider how making things has enhanced our ability to speak up about Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country in densely populated urban Melbourne. Contextualised, these objects materialise a sense of Country that is both personal and useful. As we engage with intimate materials we speak to Indigenous perspectives in respectful, local and culturally informed ways by talking, keeping diaries, and making recorded conversations consistent with Indigenous ways of knowing and storying (Phillips and Bunda 2018).*

Introduction: Experimental archaeology at the cultural interface

In the archaeological field, making replicas to experiment with re–making ancient objects is done to try to understand some of the technical and procedural materialities of ongoing ancient societies. That practice is referred to as experimental archaeology (Comis 2019; Griffin et al. 2013). In this paper we consider the making of such things other than in purely technical and procedural terms. We address replicas in the context of cultural revitalisations at the cultural interface on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country, in Melbourne, Australia. We argue that making things is a form of place–making that supports ongoing connection to Country rather than may be more typically imagined as a way of making sense of times gone by (Griffin 2017).

In particular, we pay attention to the importance of accepting various accounts of making and connecting with re–made cultural objects. Our key concern is to offer context, including the backstories of making and effects of making such as knowledge building, the feeling of belonging, and the development of meaning. In this way our paper is a narrative that is by nature both partial and storied, but which allows us to describe differences in how we account for things by paying attention to what is experienced, understood, and interpreted depending on the makers, the experience of making, and the making context.

For Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, today's revitalisation includes the identification and gathering of suitable materials, remaking tools, and re–learning how to make objects, sometimes through interculturally co–operative arrangements between Aboriginal and non–Indigenous people. Our material focus here is on the making of a *canaan* in a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Digging Stick Workshop (2011), making of a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung bark shield in a project called *Gum Meeting Place* (2012), and a *koorong* (bark canoe) in *Koorong Project* (2012). Ochre and two printed images (**Figures 3** and **4**) also materialise stories shared here. What links these materials and projects together stems from relationships between people from two organisations, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) and Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC). As Aboriginal and non–Indigenous authors of this paper we have been connected to all these projects and the things made, that derive from these projects.

As we move across Melbourne's communities and learning organisations, we recognize Wurundjeri

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Woi-wurrung Country according to our relationship with Country. As a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder, Uncle Dave Wandin identifies as Aboriginal and performs his primary relationship to Country through traditional custodial ways such as Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremonies. As an educator, Angela Foley identifies as non–Indigenous and expresses her primary connection to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country through an acknowledgement of Country.

This paper follows on from Uncle Dave Wandin's Welcome to Country and his contribution to an Indigenous panel addressing *Heritage, Archaeology, and Legislation* at the tenth Victorian Archaeology Colloquium, held on 2 February 2021. At the same Colloquium Angela gave a presentation titled *Pitching in: Working with the recent 'experimental archaeology' of Wurundjeri Country*. In keeping with this paper's goal to contextualise, we note that Angela, as a non–Indigenous educator, required permission to refer to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural heritage at the Colloquium. She received that approval from WWCHAC's Cultural Heritage Unit Elders, namely, Ron Jones, Allan Wandin, and Bobby Mullins (C Spry 2021, pers. comm., 2 February). Four other Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders also agreed to her presentation, namely Uncle Dave Wandin (2021, pers. comm. 26 January), Aunty Margaret Gardiner, Aunty Diane Kerr, and Uncle Colin Hunter (C Woolmore 2021, pers. comm., 28 January). We corresponded with WWCHAC Elders again (including the Cultural Consultations Unit and Cultural Heritage Unit) for their consideration of an advanced draft of this paper based on the Abstract. The Cultural Heritage Unit Elders did not have any issue with this proposed publication as long as Uncle Dave Wandin approved it (C Spry 2020, pers. comm., 11 August).

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people's continuation of material cultural practices is increasingly of mutual interest amongst Indigenous and non–Indigenous Australians. Although we explore the intercultural boundary of cultural continuance work by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community for the maintenance of their cultural practices (what is sometimes referred to as experimental archaeology), here we elaborate on our intercultural experiences of making. This includes our method of co–authorship, which is built on a practice of walking, talking, and developing transcripts. We co–write and co–edit using the 'Read Aloud' function (which echoes oral traditions of communication for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia) in repeated stages to finesse shared meanings and composition. Uncle Dave is the first named author here due to his cultural authority as well as his role in forming this text.

Intimate materials for intercultural spaces

For contemporary Traditional Owners, making things 'in the old ways' is about attending to the discontinuities of cultural practices, and is therefore anchored in storytelling, remembering, honouring Aboriginal ancestors, rediscovering, and re–instating cultural values of identity, place and well–being. When Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people see to the continuation of their cultural practices, traditions are recovered and reinvented that were disturbed by colonisation, dispossession, and related obstructions such as nineteenth century bans on speaking Woi-wurrung language and holding cultural gatherings. Relating to material cultural practices is important in educative settings where Country matters. We aim to expand on the recent experimental archaeology of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country (Griffin et al. 2013) to present material and storied accounts through the concept of intimate materials (Foley 2021:151). Our reading of things as intimate materials reaches beyond the technicalities of making or physical qualities such as shape and size

We bear it in mind and re–state here, that although our co–existence and place stories involve decolonial complications and limits, the importance of intercultural partnerships has been effective on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country where it has been noted that Traditional Owner groups may not have all the resources to run cultural revitalisation projects alone and find the formation and continuation of strong partnerships useful (Griffin et al. 2013:64; Parmington et al. 2012:57).

Thinking as storytellers and makers has allowed us to develop local stories of Country that ease the conundrum where it is impossible for Traditional Owners to do all the educative story work and impossible for non–Indigenous educators to call on Traditional Owners to do the educative story work for them. Aboriginal leader Bidjara/Pitjara, Birri Gubba and Juru writer and leader, Dr Jackie Huggins advised non–Indigenous writers: 'You should never expect Aboriginal people to do all the education because it's unfair and a personal drain ...' (Janke 2002:10). Such warnings are not without encouragement such as when Bidjara Nation scholar Marcia Langton spoke in an Indigenous Researchers' Forum in 2001 about 'the importance of relationships between the two sets of knowledge–holders' and the practical necessity for intercultural research (as cited in Nakata 2004:1–2).

Aboriginal activists and educators such as Dr Gary Foley say one of the great contemporary acts of racism finds urban researchers heading to remote areas of Australia, assuming 'real' Aboriginal people are elsewhere (as cited in Land 2015:179). That practice makes it easier for non–Indigenous people to ignore contemporary Indigenous communities around them

in urban areas (Fredericks 2013; Land 2015:182). Our experiences of making, talking, and now writing about making things inspires us to speak up and for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. We invite those around us who look for Indigenous Australia in remote areas and histories, not to look away or back in time, but connect with Traditional Owners and Country in urban places.

We do not mean to gloss over the complexities of creating intercultural stories that connect with Indigenous cultural heritage (see Nakata 2004, Grossman 2013, Janke and Sentina 2018). Sharing stories connected to objects of cultural significance such as shields, *koorong*, and *canaan* needs careful navigation by Aboriginal people as well as non–Indigenous people: In what context are stories shared? What are the boundaries for sharing? We argue that staying close and finely grained creates the conditions to show the ethical practices involved in the entanglement of materials, storying, and multiple moments of listening and speaking which animate Country today.

Legitimate reasons to abandon intercultural projects include lack of relationship and consent (Pascoe cited in Janke 2002:10; Janke and Sentina 2018). Stories with materials and making at the heart, benefit from details about the story–teller's positions and practices of storying as much as the materiality of stories themselves. As a result, where experimental archaeology may be confined to practical matters of method and material, we turn to the concept of critical intimacy to inform and contextualise our experiences of making. The critical intimacy concept comes from cultural theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who advocated for multiple practices of staying close in intercultural research interactions (Paulson 2018). We build on Spivak's critical intimacy to bridge the potential for critical distance in experimental archaeology.

The concept of intimate materials blends aspects of experimental archaeology with critical intimacy to obtain a closer sense of things, their makers and context. Our orientation towards the collection, interpretation, and representation of rich data (see Tilley 1991; Jones and Jenkins 2008; Hultman and Lenz Taguchi 2010; MacLure 2013; Koro–Ljungberg et al. 2017) informs our desire for an experimental archaeology that is more multi–faceted and relational than categorical or technical. As we relate stories through newly re–made objects, we aim to support communication about and connection with Country to acknowledge both tangible and intangible qualities as identified through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the ways in which Indigenous cultural knowledge is 'evolving and not locked in time' (Janke 2018:17).

Respectful construction of stories

Making things at the cultural interface produces more than replicated objects. Mindful of the pitfalls of cultural appropriation, acts of making offer pathways for non–Indigenous people to learn respectful practices of communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia. Our stories suggest how educative leadership can extend an appreciation of Country, build a narrative to situate local Indigenous perspectives, and offer opportunities to explore and practice culturally safe conduct.

We work together at the cultural interface (Nakata 2007:8) where we appreciate our differences (including agendas and responsibilities) as we share in the continuation of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples' cultural practices. Our connection is built on an understanding of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung protocols and respecting the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community as a family with three known ancestral families, at this time, the Wandins, Terricks and Nevins.

Sometimes we acknowledge times together as occurring in the contact zone (Pratt 1991) where it is useful to consider where we share or hold different perspectives and connections to Country and where we can acknowledge asymmetrical and shifting relations of power and knowledge. We use contact zone to situate ourselves, and our focus on objects to recognise places and spaces of co–existence, conscious of how this can be both mutually and simultaneously fraught and valued (Peters–Little 2003).

The following sections contain finely grained stories of making on contemporary Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. The first story touches on how Angela and Uncle Dave connected to Country in suburban Coburg with archives, digging sticks (Angela) and ochre (Uncle Dave).

The next account shares Uncle Dave's story of making his first shield in 2012 in a cooperative project between MCMC and WWCHAC. The story here has excerpts from a 2015 recorded conversation between Uncle Dave and Angela about making the shield (Foley 2021:134–142). Notably, this recording was preceded by a long process of negotiation with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community leaders who greatly informed the research which portrays Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country and contemporary acts of place–making in the contact zone (Foley 2021:39–68). A formal agreement made between representatives of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community and Angela was finalised on 9 August 2014 (Foley 2021:276) and incorporated into the formal consent application to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the University of Western Sydney (Approval Number H10878) (Foley 2021:277). Uncle Dave's contribution was governed by personal

consent arrangements and a plan for us to each bring an object for discussion (Foley 2021:278). Our ethical process to produce the thesis text was reinforced by a commitment to discuss Angela's associated academic presentations and repeated joint revisions of drafts before thesis submission (Foley 2021:148–9).

The last story here takes up the making of a *koorong* in 2012 in a project both Uncle Dave and Angela were closely connected to, and which has been described elsewhere as experimental archaeology (Griffin et al. 2013; Griffin 2017). Our contribution to that project is to elaborate with the lens of intimate materials.

Into the fine grain with *canaan* and ochre

The 2011 *canaan* (digging stick) workshop began as a gesture of reflection towards past cultural practices and to equip the harvest of newly established edible Indigenous Murnong plants using traditional methods and tools. To some extent the making of *canaan* was a form of experimental archaeology although this was not the way it was referred to. We expand on that workshop to connect with and extend the concept of experimental archaeology and to present additional context about Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural revitalisation through the *canaan's* making, makers and subsequent uses.

The workshop was organized through WWCHAC's Arts and Crafts Program and, after an earlier proposal faltered, was held at their offices at The Convent in Abbotsford. It was culturally informed by the understanding that female Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung ancestors tended to edible plant foods and therefore *canaan* was Women's Business.

During the initial planning, the idea of conducting the *canaan* workshop on Country at Galada Tamboore in a grassland beside Merri Creek in Campbellfield had been considered. Advantages included that this place could provide opportunities for women to identify and collect suitable material to make digging sticks in situ using young Sheoak trees. Making *canaan* requires removing the tree's bark and straightening it and is best done quickly after it is cut before the wood and bark rapidly adhere to each other due to the lack of water pumping through the plant. Another advantage of making *canaan* directly on Country is the possibility of straightening the stick over a nearby fire directly after the removal of bark.

Knowing, making, and sharing canaan

Instead of going to Galada Tamboore, Angela was invited to an indoor workshop led by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung women to experiment with making replicas of digging sticks. It is unknown by us what reference material informed the workshop, but some reference to women harvesting Murnong yams with digging sticks is shown in John Helder Wedge's drawings (1835—36). A more important nineteenth–century drawing is by a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung man born about 1838 who lived at Coranderrk between 1863 and 1875 (Clark 2010:32). This artist's whole life was as a witness to nineteenth century colonisation after John Batman came to Melbourne in 1835 to dispossess Aboriginal people of Country, culture, and law. This is not just a drawing showing *canaan* but is a rare record of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung culture.

The witnessing artist is variously referred to as Woorook–koonong (Sayers 1994:22) and Timothy Koorook–Koonong (from the 1863 Coranderrk census, see Clark 2010:32). Timothy signed himself as Timothy Korkanoon on his marriage certificate in 1865 (Clark 2010:32–33). Within Timothy's famously complex pencil drawing of animated scenes of Aboriginal life, five women stand casually together, holding hands with three children, their *canaan* held upright, close to their bodies (see Sayers 1994:22–23). Their *canaan* appear to be about two metres long with plain tips. The base at ground level appears more tapered than at the head height indicating the digging end.

In the group of five women who sat together making *canaan* one afternoon in 2011, we somewhat mirrored Timothy's drawing of five women from another time. We each used Stanley knives to slowly carve stubborn bark off one of five slim, lengthy sticks brought to the

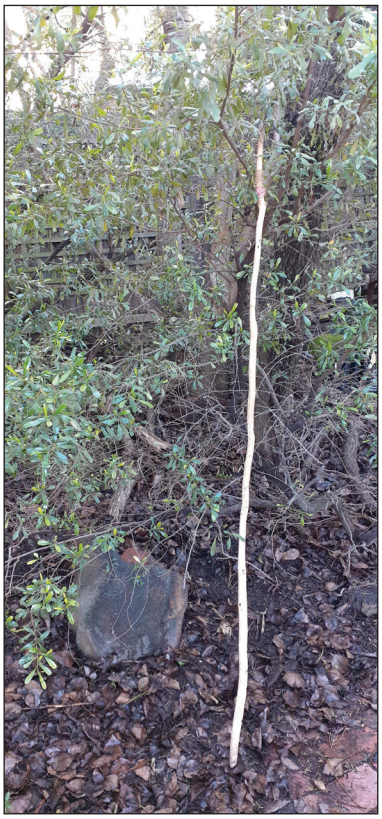

Figure 1. Angela's replica canaan (Photograph: Angela Foley 2021)

office by the coordinator of Wurundjeri Council's Arts and Crafts Program. Since then, Angela's *canaan* (**Figure 1**) has been used beside Merri Creek at 11 annual ecological and cultural events, called Murnong Gatherings. In keeping with contemporary Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung understandings, where digging for the edible roots is Women's Business, Angela's *canaan* has only been shared with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung women and girls, or other females. These gatherings centre around the revival of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural practices in Coburg led by WWCHAC with the Merri Murnong Group (a local subgroup of Friends of Merri Creek).

Aunty Diane Kerr has often been the senior Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder at Murnong Gatherings overseeing the use of *canaan* to gently prod and scrape at the earthen base of leafy plants such as Murnong and Bulbine lilies. As the edible roots from within hardened, crumbling earth are exposed, they are usually washed, wrapped in soft wetted paperbark, and cooked in the coals of a specially dedicated fire to experiment with cooking based on possible traditional methods. Aunty Di has often been accompanied by her adult daughter who has watched over the shallow fire pit and the food parcels to trial different cooking methods.

Canaan stories are part of what situates Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung descendants as they dig, cook and revive their cultural practices publicly and speak to their unceded and ongoing Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung sovereignty. By researching, making, carrying, and sharing the digging stick, Angela's *canaan* is imbued with meaning beyond how it might otherwise be known as a replica of a cultural tool.

Sharing ochre

Uncle Dave noticed at early Murnong Gatherings that while ochre marked the bodies of mainly Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung performers in the dance groups *Jindi Worobak* and *Djirri Djirri*, ochre could also be shared. Although the source of the ochre is generally guarded information to protect aspects of cultural customs and knowledge, white pigmented ochre is often collected before Murnong Gatherings, then softened in a big bucket with water. People line up in groups of friends and family to dip their hands into the slurry and then move close to press white ochre handprints onto the nearby quarried stony basalt wall.

People move slowly in concert, both absorbed and delighted to make tiny and large handprints that form an ephemeral sign of intercultural gathering that celebrate Country. Since then, Uncle Dave has brought this ochre handprint practice into some of his educational work with schools which includes the children making the slurry by pounding the ochre and mixing it with water. This impermanent practice of place–making and marking has been very well–received as children then have a way to mark the passage of time and remember the interactions after Uncle Dave has left.

Intimate materialities testify to contemporary Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people's revival and continuation of cultural practices in the contact zone. These accounts around and with *canaan* and ochre, mingle multiple strands of information and encounters across materials and archives. Intangible aspects of Country are felt when scratching the soil, wetting bark, watching a fire, being carried away by the song and dance of *Jindi Worobak* and *Djirri Djirri*, sitting together with Stanley knives to shape *canaan*, and in moments of gathering, wearing, and sharing ochre, all finely grained moments to story Country.

A finely grained story: Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung shields

During 2010 and 2011, in response to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung men's ambitions to cut bark in the manner of their ancestors, MCMC and WWCHAC partnered to explore that possibility. The aim for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung men was to develop bark–related cultural practices in the urbanised estate of their ancestors (Melbourne). For MCMC, it was a chance for people to get to know each other and build a sense of the Merri Creek catchment as a cultural place (Foley 2012). The resulting *Gum Meeting Place Project* was led by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung educator Uncle Bill Nicholson and a group of men, including Uncle Dave. Project work such as preparing a funding submission, facilitating the agreements and meetings, reporting, and arranging permits was done by Angela at MCMC.

Although the *Gum Meeting Place* project group had anticipated making shields near the confluence of Merri Creek and Birrarung (Yarra River), various complexities were overcome through project revision and relocation, a factor of resilience that also marked the determination to re–make *canaan*. Shield–making plans moved upstream to an area between an old quarry and Merri Creek in suburban Coburg, where Murnong Gatherings had been successful.

Bark shields

Just as the *canaan* workshop was understood as Women's Business, so shield–making was self–determined as Men's Business. *Gum Meeting Place* became part of a space where Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung men gathered at WWCHAC, tested their theories of taking bark, with the aim to build skills for future cultural revival projects. Although the effect of profound disjuncture over several generations meant that making a *canaan* or bark shield was to face many questions about technique, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community determined the processes of making.

In practical terms, there was little useful or accessible reference material locally—on the ground—due to the lack of long–fallen or removed scar trees. Valuable insights about traditional practices of making Aboriginal tools and shields lie depicted within the eighteenth and nineteenth century paintings by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung *Ngurungaeta* (leader) William Barak and the pen and ink hunting and fishing drawings by Aboriginal artist Tommy McRae (Sayers 1994). Other related material from further north in New South Wales and Queensland also reveals some techniques and practicalities (Porteners 1974:24–25; Jumbun Elders Reference Group and Pedley 1997:24–27; Long 2005).

Other information could have been of interest to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung men's shield–making plans. For example, during 2011, at the beginning of the shield–making project, some of Melbourne Museum's collection of Victorian Aboriginal artefacts from the Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre, including shields, were displayed in a massive semi–permanent wall installation at the Ian Potter Gallery.

Given our intimate material lens, we note that such museum and gallery displays ordinarily dealt with the confusion about an Aboriginal object's provenance (such as a maker's name, language group and Country) and note instead that makers are 'Unknown'. This style of interpretive signage provoked a counter response in a 2018 exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria entitled *Colony: Frontier Wars*. One Aboriginal artist exhibited a pile of replica shields, clubs, spear throwers and spears in direct response to the indifferent conventions for Aboriginal provenance. The 'Unknown' status was replaced by referring to Aboriginal makers of such cultural things as 'Once Known'.

We add these details here in the spirit of the fine grain of the *Gum Meeting Place* shield–making to contextualise contemporary responses and representations of cultural heritage on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. On the one hand there is public interest, acts of decolonising texts in museums by re–contextualising attribution, and the potential availability of material from the past for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung men to examine. However, these concerns did not inform the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung shield–making project, perhaps because museums and such exhibitions were not generally on the radar of the group participating in the project. Through the critical intimacy concept, where making things becomes a personal, technical, material, and cultural act, many processual and affective matters combined with many uncertainties in the lead up to cutting the bark.

Making a bark canoe instead of bark shields was discussed. It was agreed that making shields could inform the envisioned *Koorong Project*. By sharing what each man knew based on their own experiences and the principle of Caring for Country, the group researched the appropriate season, ideal location, permits, and equipment needed to cut bark from *beal* (gum tree). Advice was sought to select and care for *beal*, the right age and girth. How does water run through a tree? When was the best time to cut? How to gauge the appropriate depth of bark cutting? Choosing a suitable tree required attention to the tree's shape and orientation to avoid exposing the new scar to too much sun or wind.

Questions, concerns, and plans were resolved in summer January 10, 2012, quietly attended by nine people on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country beside Merri Creek, in a significant act of cultural revival. Relatively shielded from public view, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung men with determination, advice from a local ecologist, and a variety of sharp tools set about cultural bark cutting. Three pre–selected gum trees were then marked by representatives of the Wandin, Terrick, and Nevin families. Although the work was Men's Business, Angela was invited to attend, to make the small fire needed to shape the bark shield, provide lunch, take some photos, and display the formal agreement with the City of Moreland.

One thing that couldn't be known in advance was how long it would take for the bark to come away from *beal*. We found that instead of taking half an hour or more as had been estimated, the bark unexpectedly detached in minutes:

> *Foley Journal Notes January 10 2012:* The pressure of the tree's upward moving water from roots to leaves was broken and immediately water ran from the new scar, leaving the tree's outer bark surface marked below with rivulets. Dave replaced the shield to enact cutting it for a picture. The next step involved the fire and smoothing the edges with a rasp. Dave knelt to work on the grass and his shield took on a fine slim shape. (Foley 2021:137)

Uncle Dave's shield

After talking about that first shield–making experience, we recorded a conversation in 2015 to reflect on what had emerged afterwards. The recording was framed by formal consent arrangements described above. It was not an interview as such, so both our voices shape excerpts from the conversation included below when Uncle Dave spoke about his experience of making the shield:

> *Uncle Dave Wandin:* At the time of making that shield, my cultural knowledge [pause] I was very nervous about it. It's one of the first things I've sort of done out on Country

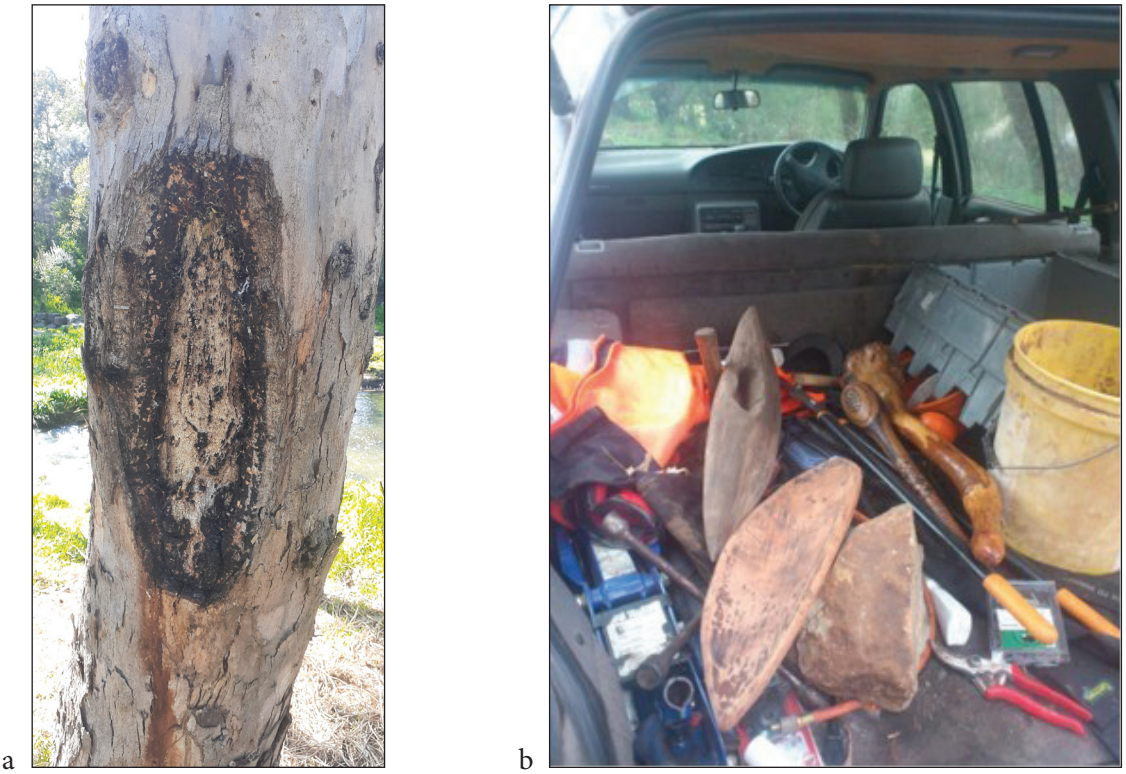

Figure 2. a. Scarred beal in 2021 after bark taken by Uncle Dave Wandin in 2012. b. Uncle Dave Wandin's 2012 shield made beside Merri Creek in the contact zone in the back of his Commodore in 2014. With permission from Uncle Dave Wandin. (Photographs: Angela Foley)

> [pause]. Anyway, that shield's shown, shown me some, some personal growth really, because from the time of taking it off [pause] that was an introduction that I had, to *actual cultural practices*. So, I'd never done that type of thing before. (Foley 2021:137)

When Uncle Dave made his first cultural object in 2012 he used a variety of traditional and mainstream tools and what he knew of his ancestor's shields (**Figure 2**). It was a time of cultural and material learning including working with pieces of the bark over a small fire immediately after cutting and removal:

> *Angela Foley:* [Pause] Why were you trying to get it to flatten out? [pause] Wasn't it flat when you took it off the tree?
>
> *Uncle Dave Wandin:* No, no. And if you don't flatten it out above, back further than it, what it's going to go, it'll just curl up. It wants to curl up. You need to dry it relatively quickly [with the fire] and keep it stretched against what it wants to naturally do [pause], not stretch it too much while it was still too hot. As it dries out you need to dry it relatively quickly, keeping it stretched against what it naturally wants to do.
>
> *Angela Foley:* Oh ok. Did someone's break?
>
> *Uncle Dave Wandin:* Yes, one of them did. And that was because we tried to stretch it too much while it was still hot. And it did crack. (Foley 2021:138)

In the 2015 recording Uncle Dave commented on using white ochre on the scar after the bark was cut away:

> *Uncle Dave Wandin:* Ah, that was just my feeling about healing the tree. Yes. Yeah [pause]. To actually help it heal, rubbing the ochre over the Cambium layer. Yeah, which seemed that [pause] it seems that [pause] it did heal faster. (Foley 2021:138)

Uncle Dave's sense that the ochre could affect the tree's recovery mobilised him to return frequently to check the scar. When talking about using ochre, Uncle Dave moved from a provisional sense of feeling about the tree and corrected himself to say assertively, 'it did heal faster', registering knowing something new through the experience of making (Foley 2021:138).

The shield–making prompted continuing transformations for Uncle Dave's knowledge. As a rich topic for conversation, we noted how one object, his shield, gained potency in meaning over time. In 2013 and 2014, Uncle Dave spoke about being conscious of the shield, how he'd like to decorate it, yet couldn't make that step. Concerned that this somehow showed up a lack of knowledge and experience on his part, he

felt he was only partially closer to knowing how his Elders did things.

As Uncle Dave continued to reflect, he realised why he could not go further with the shield: he had hit the edge of his cultural knowledge. Talking about the shield together, Uncle Dave was also in conversation with the tree and the shield, and it seemed that both the gum tree and the shield spoke back to him. The tree, scar and bark shield were part of our conversations, not only in material ways, but in epistemological ways. Uncle Dave explained that the shield had come to represent a gap in what he knew, and helped him think about his background and family, and what he had not been able to learn during his difficult years of growing up in the contact zone. To us both, the experience of shield–making was a reminder of how colonial silencing seeps across the years like a gag and so we became resolved to share these stories.

The finely grained knowledge that emerged after the shield was made could not have been foreseen but resonates with multiple, relational, tangible, and intangible details: *beal's* grain was exposed by the removal of bark, the bark–that–became–a–shield exhibited its own fine grain, and there is the fine grain of exchange in shared conversations where our understandings and interpretations have shifted and continue to grow over time.

Making the shield, Uncle Dave felt confident about the right way to stand and hold the tools. However, in the absence of passed–down cultural knowledge, there was recognition of a void, where not knowing how to mark the shield was a result of colonisation and enforced silences. The shield was a metaphor for the limits of his cultural knowledge, the limits on what could have been shared with him by his Elders. For Uncle Dave, despite the difficulties, being concerned about the health of the marked tree provided fresh ways to look at Country and connect with ancestors. In retrospect, Uncle Dave became mobilised towards stronger cultural identification as a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung man.

To Angela, the shield–making day and Uncle Dave's bark shield were crossing points that forged her identity as a non–Indigenous Australian and fostered her emerging sense of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country (Foley 2021).

Shielded places

Making things may be private and subsequently shielded from scrutiny. While the details of making, as understood for experimental archaeological purposes, may focus on the measurables of material practices—such as the depth of a cut, the surface extent of the bark removed, and monitoring tree regrowth changes during scar recovery—we observed the health of the tree without collecting such data.

Instead, Uncle Dave's absorption with the outer surface of the bark shield shifted and he asked a new question in 2014 as he turned to the shield's inner curved surface and talked about 'artwork' in the recording of 2015.

> *Angela Foley:* When you say artwork, you're talking about all those finishing touches, are you? [pause] Like marks, colour [pause], what are you thinking about?
>
> *Uncle Dave Wandin:* All of that, yeah. Like now I've found this picture on the inside of the shield. So, for a couple of years that shield has sat there, up against a wall in my house, it's never been presented. I don't know what drove me to it. I was just sitting there looking at it and I thought [pause], hmm, I'm going to do something with this. So, I picked it up and grabbed a bit of sand paper and instead of sanding the outside of it in preparation to do some artwork, or someone to do some artwork for me, I started sanding the inside and slowly, over about half an hour, an actual picture just developed in front of my eyes on the inside of the shield. (Foley 2021:140)

Uncle Dave's experience with the shield evolved as he had more opportunity to think about, handle and sand it, wondering how to decorate it.

> *Uncle Dave Wandin:* I'm definitely not an artist. If it can't be done with a ruler, I can't do it. *Or so I thought anyway*. (Foley 2021:140)

The fact of there being two sides to the shield was a new factor for Uncle Dave to consider and at one stage affected how he spoke about it. In the recording, Uncle Dave described seeing a long face in the bark's natural markings. There was the suggestion of a familiar face with a long, wavy beard, which reminded him of the face of his direct ancestor, William Barak. Keen to share this new view with his son, Uncle Dave said that his son also saw Barak straight away. Uncle Dave's story evolved, marking a shift in the work of the shield and its meanings.

Confronting the shield's surfaces began with not knowing the 'right way' to decorate the shield. As this stirred up the idea of feeling guarded, Uncle Dave considered the shield's traditional use against thrown spears in an attack and brought him to reconsider his changing role as a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung man.

> *Uncle Dave Wandin:* If I ever become a good artist and I put something on the outside of the shield [pause], that would be the first thing that my enemy, or the people I'm trying to educate, would see. Then, I could show them the progression of the artwork if you like—

> from what I kept hidden from everybody else (because I wasn't sure about it)—to what I'm actually able to put out to the rest of the community. (Foley 2021:140)

These conversations did not go over the same story again and again. In writing this paper Uncle Dave reflected on his primary concern with the tree's health and the reciprocal relationships there, but in those last two recorded sentences from 2015, complications in Uncle Dave's relationship with the shield are evident, such as the gradual loading of notions of hiding, educating, showing, and being unsure. His comment, 'what I'm actually able to put out to the rest of the community', reflects reservations about both his entitlement and ability to speak. Uncle Dave has been spurred on by making the shield and realising a new personal link with William Barak. His status as a speaker and leader has evolved dramatically since then and is evident in his position in a range of organisations and his role in key forums.

To remember the relatively fleeting shield–making day in 2012, Angela mapped the occasion in an etching that represents the shields made, the stone quarry, a stand of eucalypts, and a stretch of Merri Creek in Coburg (**Figure 3**). In the fine grain of making this etching in 2012, several Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders were shown the image which fostered discussion about respectful visual story–telling and cultural appropriation. Aunty Di Kerr commented, 'It's okay. It's your story about our story' (Foley 2021:59).

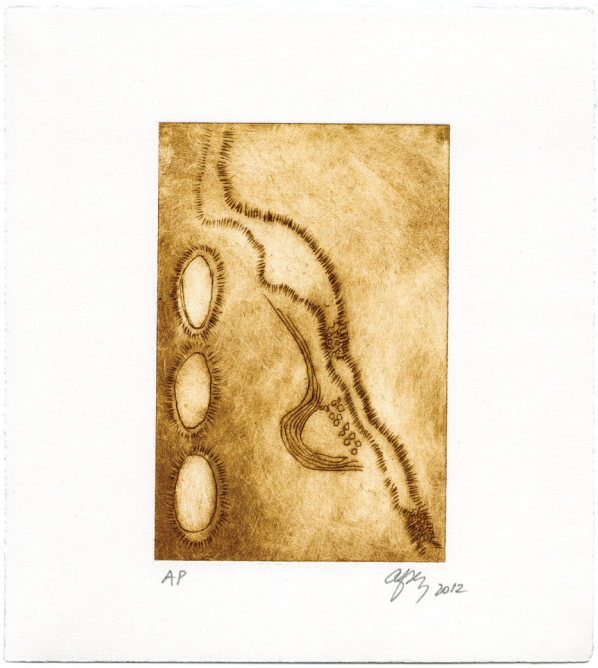

Figure 3. Shielded places (2012). A.V. Foley. Dry point etching. Australian Print Workshop.

The fine grain of cultural continuation

The intimate business of speaking, recording, and writing has emotional counterparts that makers understand. There are shifting emotional tides encountered to bring something into existence and then to live with the thing and the experience. It is more than the shadow of the object and offers the potential to go beyond more static and sterile conceptualisations.

Catharsis and mimesis are parts of the maker's world. For Angela, the experience of sharing the story here, to re–make a *canaan*, visit Galada Tamboore to explore making such a thing on Country, then joining the *canaan*–making workshop in the WWCHAC offices continues to enliven interactions with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community at Murnong Gatherings and with Indigenous and non–Indigenous communities in other educative settings.

Uncle Dave's experience of making involved culturally sensitive questions such as how to mark the shield he made and wonder what was 'right' according to his ancestors and peers. He still asks, 'What is right for the tree, what is right for Country?' In his fifties, Uncle Dave came to a point where he became able to share knowledge about shield–making and culture with his children and grandchildren. Prior to what Uncle Dave describes as his 'cultural awakening' through the shield–making outlined in this paper, such practices of making had skipped many generations. The words of Uncle Dave's father in 1996 echo for him today: 'Learn all you can about your culture because one day, Australia will ask Aboriginal people how we lived in this country for so long.'

Koorong

Making a *canaan*, bark shield and *koorong* provided an opportunity ...

> ... where Wurundjeri descendants can carry out traditional roles of resource procurement, ceremony and manufacture in the estate of their ancestors. These tasks are a performance to anchor Wurundjeri representation into the landscape (Griffin et al. 2013:65).

The knowledge gained by removing bark for shield–making in January 2012 was valuable for the *Koorong Project* in October 2012. Making the *koorong* was also preceded by consultation and field inspections to identify suitable trees (Griffin et al. 2013). Inspections also followed the bark removal, especially to check on the tree's response to being scarred through bark cutting and removal.

However, there are gaps in knowledge and some Aboriginal people's traditional material practices are rarely referred to, such as the 'storing' of heavier items like canoes, until needed, perhaps in handy places near rivers or near known trees. This practice means

that from the 1800s to today, Aboriginal 'artefacts' have been 'found' and removed by people occupying land during 'settlement' (Allen 2012:14). During the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' watercraft gathering, the *National Nawi Conference* at the Australian National Maritime Museum, 2012 (see Gapps and Smith 2015), a Victorian Aboriginal bark canoe was reported as having been 'found' after it was 'misplaced' in storage in Museum Victoria (Foley 2021:132) and a story was shared about a 'Yarra canoe' 'collected' and then offered to Melbourne Museum (Allen 2012:14).

In 2010, as Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung men spoke about removing bark in the old way they triggered other creative cultural revival work, such as making a stone axe in 2012 drawing on traditional cultural practices (Griffin et al. 2013:59–62). This meant that when the *koorong* was removed on 10 October 2012, some of this cutting was undertaken with a newly made, hafted, ground, greenstone axe from *Willam–ee–moor–ing* (Mount William Greenstone Axe Quarry). Shortly after making the *koorong*, a significant land handback of *Willam–ee–moor–ring* and the Sunbury Earth Rings occurred on 19 October 2012, with much ceremony at *Willam–ee–moor–ring* (Griffin 2013:60). Newer tree–related cultural projects have continued to be negotiated (Merri Creek Management Committee 2017). All these events were intercultural in attendance, performance, and governance, modelling the possible benefit of 'stakeholder relations' (Griffin et al. 2013:64).

Responding to cultural continuation

After participating in the stakeholder group for the *Koorong Project* and being there on the making day, Angela reflected on the achievement and complicated relations for people involved and *koorong* stories that stretch across time. To remember the 2012 *koorong* story she produced a preliminary sketch to discuss with a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrungeducator before finalising the design. It was pointed out that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung patterns incorporated there were not hers to make, and so these were excluded in the final print, *Writing from the ground up* (**Figure 4**).

Australian Print Workshop.

The image is a visual narrative that layers, unifies and compiles material traces to 'write' a message of relational interconnections. In marking *beal* Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung men conducted a traditional practice of writing into the landscape. The print includes an impression of a local invasive weed, a mapped stretch of the Plenty River, the exact shape of the koorong, and a ripped, enlarged portion of the government document that permitted the tree marking and officially enabled *koorong*–making on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country in 2012 (Foley 2017:28). The image plays with the idea that the river, weeds, *beal* and various mark–makers all witness and form a story of the cultural landscape. The image stories the *koorong* event in a way that none of the thousands of photographs or hours of film footage produced that day could realise.

Adopting the concept of intimate materials as a finely grained matter that combines cherished relationships with tangible materials, we have rolled together some inseparable interrelationships amongst experiences of making. In the examples referred to here of cultural continuation of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung traditions, strong co–operative partnerships with non–Indigenous others formed new cultural interfaces and contact zones. Notably, encounters described here involving Angela were fittingly monitored by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community wherever possible. It is a practice of regulating 'outsiders' in the way Noonuccal academic Karen Martin (2008) discussed, where various measures can be used to confirm Aboriginal agency and drive cultural respect and safety.

Conclusion: Intimate materials at the cultural interface

These stories are from the intercultural boundary of cultural continuance work by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community for their maintenance of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural practices. With little money and limited knowledge, but with energy and enthusiasm for cultural practices of Country, one question for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community

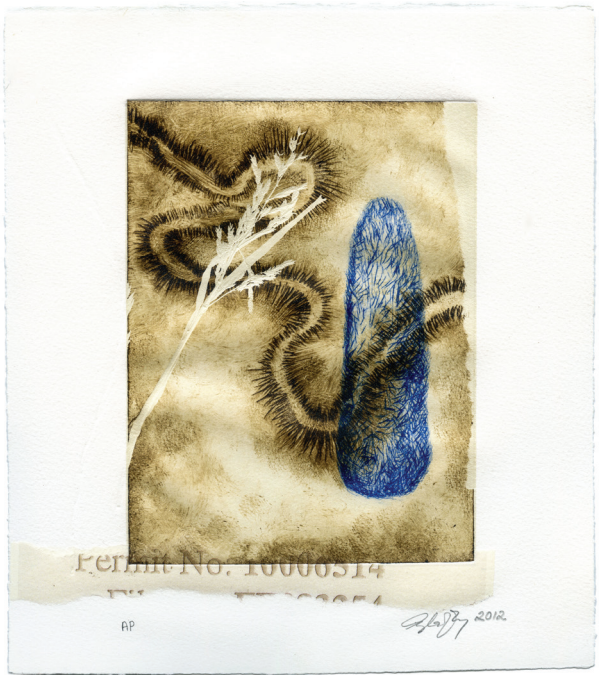

Figure 4. Writing from the ground up (2012). A.V. Foley. Dry point etching with chine–collé.

in 2011 was, 'Could we recreate what our ancestors have done and made?' The response involved sharing ideas, theorising, and experimenting in interconnecting loops of knowing, being, doing and becoming.

Connecting with the dynamic forces in play when making culturally related relics does several things. It provides a pathway to acknowledge and contextualise some of the intangible qualities of tangible cultural materials in contemporary terms. Stories with newly made replicas can develop and strengthen intercultural understandings and representations through ongoing commitments to relationships, agreements, and shared review processes without downplaying, denying, or being defeated by all manner of differences, struggles, and tensions.

Paying attention to making replicas of cultural objects beyond procedural and technical matters can trigger or reinforce necessary care, such as to culturally safe practices of collaboration in the contact zone. Stories that lean towards the understanding of things as intimate materials become rich with opportunities to acknowledge archival sources and assert the dynamics of cultural protocols, and in our case, help us to speak about Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country singly or with each other, to organisations and schools, and in community gatherings.

We don't proclaim to have all the answers. We choose to move towards more conversation and to demonstrate how Aboriginal people utilise agency and creativity within urban environments through reconnection to places, the re–making of signs, symbols, images and representations, the possibility of ethical intercultural conduct, and the potential to nurture educative opportunities.

Learning about respect for process, intercultural sensitivities, and other internal cultural matters for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community continues to inform us. We also benefit by pausing to learn and reposition our understandings. In a non–negotiable process of slowing down to talk, which we continue to appreciate, and which enabled us to shape this paper and its stories, we respectfully mess with the otherwise impassive categorical and technical inclinations of experimental archaeology.

We offer our experiences of this unfinished business with intimate materials to non–Indigenous educative leaders who work towards a respectful appreciation of Country and Indigenous perspectives. We advocate for work that pays attention to the materialities of making, reflecting on processes over time, listening, talking, and storytelling in an explicit context of respectful practices of sharing. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people's re–making of things in the old ways offers opportunities for intercultural cooperation and nurtures our capacity and ability to speak up, for, to, and about Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country.

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge all respectful efforts that value unceded Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. We are grateful for the opportunities afforded to us from those at Wurundjeri Land Compensation and Cultural Heritage Council (re–named WWCHAC) and Merri Creek Management Committee who supported projects and the preparation of this paper. The shield–making in 2012 couldn't have moved ahead without Uncle Bill Nicholson and valued input from cultural ecologist, Dave Crawford, Yorta Yorta men Ralph and Chris Hume, and Wiradjuri man James Symin. This paper is our own work. We take responsibility for any errors in the discussion and representations herein: Authors.

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