

Telling our Stories

Aboriginal young people in Victoria and Digital Storytelling





Report Authors

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The project Reference Group is also acknowledged for its support of the project and includes:

Key Organisations

- Victorian Aboriginal Youth Advisory Council/ Koori Youth Council (Greg Kennedy)
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Authority Incorporated (Vaso Elifsiniotis)
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (Sarah Diplock)
- Koorie Heritage Trust (Nerissa Broben)
- Museum Victoria (Dr Richard Gillespie, Caroline Martin & Genevieve Grieves)
- Kultour (Marcus Hughes)

Independent artists and digital/media experts

- Dixon Patten, graphic designer
- Peter Waples-Crow, artist (VACCHO)
- Jirra Harvey (formerly Koorie WebWise)
- Caden Pearson, media studies graduate (University of Melbourne)
- Lyndon Ormond-Parker, digital archives expert (University of Melbourne)
- Dr Shannon Faulkhead (Monash University, Storylines project)

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Terminology

While the term 'Koorie' is preferred by many Aboriginal people in Victoria, in this report the term 'Aboriginal' is used. The authors acknowledge that some Torres Strait Islander people live in Victoria, however, the term 'Aboriginal' reflects the descent of the majority of participants in the project. The term 'Indigenous' is used to refer to specific references in published material and to those referred to in the report who do not identify as Aboriginal.

Front Cover

The images on the front cover are of the Aborigines Advancement League, Koorie Mural, painted in 1983-84 by members of the Victorian Aboriginal community. Permission to use the images was provided by Esme Bamblett (CEO, AAL).

Photography, Maree Clarke 2013.

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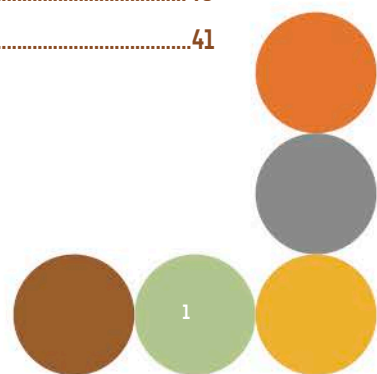
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Background to the Project

In 2012-2013, the Institute for a Broadband-Enabled Society (IBES) at the University of Melbourne provided funding for researchers to work with Aboriginal young people in Victoria on a digital storytelling pilot project. Findings from this pilot project will contribute to the ongoing research made possible through funding from the Australian Communications Action Network (ACCAN) and via an Australian Research Council Linkage Project. This report describes the aims, methodology and findings of the pilot project and considers outcomes that are relevant for the conduct of the larger project. These findings will contribute to future digital storytelling workshops to be conducted as part of the ACCAN and ARC LP grants in 2014.

The digital storytelling pilot project builds on information from the Aboriginal young people in Victoria, mobile phone and social media project completed in 2012 (Edmonds et al. 2012). The current project continues to work with Aboriginal youth under the age of 25. This age group forms the majority of the Aboriginal population in Victoria and is among the highest users of mobile phones, actively engaging in social media and other online platforms (DEECD et al. 2010). With the advent of Web 2.0 technologies, Aboriginal youth throughout Australia are increasingly using digital technologies, especially mobile phones and the internet, to produce and tell their stories in ways determined by them (Edmonds et al. 2012; Inge Kral 2010).

In this report we discuss the implementation of a pilot Digital Storytelling Workshop conducted over 3.5 days with young people and older community representatives associated with Bert Williams Aboriginal Youth Services in Melbourne. The workshop highlighted the importance of working with the Aboriginal community to find out how Aboriginal young people engage with digital technology. The outcomes from this workshop reveal that by expanding digital and medial literacy skills in culturally safe environments, this can support young people's potential to creatively use technology to build identity, affirm connections to culture and improve their capacity for positive self-representation.

Why do the project?

For Aboriginal people storytelling is central to maintaining knowledge and culture. Stories embrace the integration of all aspects of life in accordance with Aboriginal worldviews and span art, song, performance and other cultural expressions, assisting the transfer of cultural information from generation to generation. Using digital technology to enhance and support the transmission of this oral information and material culture, including connections to Country and kin, is integral to this project.

The project was developed in response to the limited information available about Aboriginal young people in Victoria and their use of digital technology. Most studies focus on the impact of digital technology in remote northern Australian Aboriginal communities (see Kral 2010, 2012). While there are some intersections between Aboriginal cultures – urban, regional and remote – the predominance of information from the north limits understandings of Aboriginal diversity. These limitations can also reinforce stereotypes about the 'authentic' north compared to the 'inauthentic' urbanised and regional areas (Davis and Moreton 2011; Peters-Little 2002). Such misunderstandings about Aboriginal culture also impacts Aboriginal people's experiences of racism, influencing mental health issues (DEECD 2010).

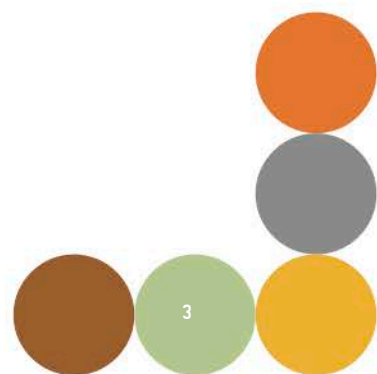


The digital environment provides young people and their communities with a creative space for articulating their voices without intervention by outsiders. Practices that support cultural creativity include Indigenous visual arts, which has generated economic and social advantages across Australian Indigenous communities for the last thirty years (Altman 2005). More recently, research has been conducted into Indigenous cultural festivals, which have a positive impact on community health and wellbeing (Phipps and Slater 2010). Creative spaces that support Indigenous 'ways of doing things' can provide people with a sense of control over their lives, enabling them to define their own experiences on their own terms (Martin 2003). This also provides a space for challenging the way many non-Aboriginal people understand Aboriginal peoples' lived reality, offering greater opportunities for social inclusion and more nuanced understandings of what it is to be an Aboriginal person (Morrissey et al. 2007).

In this pilot project digital technologies and new media are recognised for their potential to support cultural connections and contemporary Aboriginal knowledge. Preliminary research by the Young and Well Co-operative Research Centre (YAW CRC) also acknowledges the unprecedented opportunities for digital technology to 'support the creative potential and to build upon the social networking practices of vulnerable young people, including promoting social inclusion in a way and on a scale not currently offered by existing organisations and services.' This also includes promoting a 'sense of community, belonging and connection' (YAW-CRC 2013).

Young people's capacity to control and creatively share information via digital technology can support the wellbeing of marginalised groups, including Aboriginal youth, by enhancing learning through informal and online interactive communications (Collin 2011; Metcalf 2010). Aboriginal youth in Victoria are prolific users of mobile phones, social networking and media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, interactively and creatively communicating to establish social networks, form relationships and define their individual and social identities (Edmonds et al. 2012; Metcalf et al. 2010; Third et al. 2011). These young people are experts in using digital technology, producing and consuming all kinds of information through digital media. Some commentators have used the term 'producers' to describe young people's prolific online and other digital engagements (Collin et al. 2011). The digital storytelling in this project provided an opportunity for youth to explore and engage in a participatory media environment as responsible 'producers', supporting Aboriginal youth culture and identity.

Finally, for young Aboriginal people, creating, sharing and communicating content in the digital media environment can assist in developing their sense of identity (DCITA 2005; Notley and Tacchi 2005). Digital technology enables Aboriginal youth and their communities to articulate and display their worldviews and experiences when and how they choose, free from outsider interference. For the first time since colonisation, the digital realm provides control over self-representations giving young people platforms to perform and present Aboriginality from their perspectives. It also offers audiences new ways of seeing and interacting with Aboriginality and contemporary Aboriginal culture.





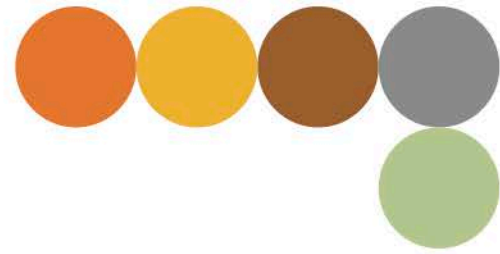
What is Digital Storytelling?

In 1994 a group of artists, performers and media producers established the Center for Digital Storytelling in San Francisco. The Center grew from workshops where facilitators worked with people who had little or no prior experience in multimedia, to produce powerful personal stories with new technology. In the 21st century, digital storytelling is widely used by community groups to provide 'ordinary people' with opportunities to tell their stories, often about their own lives. These are usually conducted in intensive workshops where participants develop stories that are 2-3 minutes long. Digital stories are recorded and illustrated using a range of images, sound and video, including films and animations, however, many rely on personal photographs. The final story is narrated in the first person and edited to produce a short film (Lambert 2013; cf. Hartley et al. 2008).

Digital storytelling has been adopted worldwide and is often conducted among marginalised communities as a tool to empower vulnerable participants, while also influencing social change. Digital storytelling provides participants with opportunities to voice their concerns and experiences to a broader audience (Lewin 2011; Sawhney 2009).

Digital storytelling also supports social participation across many contexts. It is often understood as 'co-creative media', a term that reflects the inclusive process of telling a story combined with using new technology. Group workshops are conducted with technology and filmmaking experts who work in collaboration with individual creators –the participants – to produce personal videos. In Australia, researchers from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) have conducted digital storytelling workshops with diverse communities across a range of projects. These mediated workshops have tapped into the potential of digital storytelling to build the creative capacity of communities, allowing individuals to engage in digital media production (see e.g. Burgess et al. 2010; Spurgeon et al. 2009; Klæbe et al. 2007).

The Aboriginal community has also been quick to adopt digital technology and digital storytelling specifically as a process that supports cultural identity, as well as oral histories in the digital age (see e.g. Davey and Goudie 2009). The *Pitcha This* digital storytelling project provides a significant model for the pilot project. *Pitcha This* was a grassroots production completed in 2007, involving six local Victorian Aboriginal communities. Participants worked in collaboration with the Aboriginal filmmaker Kimba Thompson (who was also the workshop facilitator on this pilot project) to produce mainly autobiographical digital stories, using personal photographs and film. The *Pitcha This* project 'aimed to inspire and give strength to the Indigenous population by promoting positive images of Victorian Indigenous communities' (Thompson 2010).



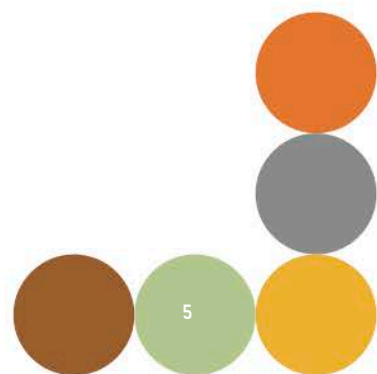
The 'Participation Gap'

Despite the increasing ubiquity and accessibility of mobile digital devices across the social spectrum, a 'participation gap' continues to exist. While low-income, marginalised youth and Aboriginal young people have equivalent digital expertise to those from middle-income households, there is a need to support their digital and media literacy development in line with the increasing use of digital technology (Commonwealth of Australia 2013; Watkins 2011).

In this project, knowledge of digital and media literacy refers to the limitations Aboriginal young people experience in accessing appropriate education and training. As QUT researchers argue, the participation gap 'is replacing the older notion of the "digital divide" as a way of framing issues of equity in the digital age – including the issues of cultural diversity and inclusiveness' (Klaebe and Burgess 2010:2). So, while Aboriginal young people are increasingly expert in managing and using new technology for their own purposes (including user-created content and online social networks), the mere adoption of mobile phones and digital technologies does not automatically further their educational and learning opportunities (see Edmonds et al. 2012; Kral and Schwab 2012; Third et al. 2013).

The American media studies researcher, S. Craig Watkins, agrees that the increasing use of digital and mobile platforms by youth does not correspond to equality of use by those who have limited access to appropriate education. Therefore, **'not all media ecologies are equal'**. Watkins argues that the notion that youth 'can thrive in the digital world without any adult support, mentoring, or scaffolding of rich learning experiences' limits the potential benefits of digital technology for learning and empowerment. Further, 'the myth of the "digital native" narrative' (Watkins 2011), which refers to the notion that youth can flourish in the digital world without adult support, does little to realise the potential benefits of digital technology to empower and provide marginalised young people with equal opportunities, including completing their education, in achieving productive civic engagement (including cyber citizenship) and in reaping the benefits of the digital environment.

This pilot project sought to redress some of the issues connected with the 'participation gap', which include the three key aims outlined below.





Aims of the Pilot Project

By working with the Aboriginal community, the digital storytelling project was designed to enhance Aboriginal youth's knowledge and expertise of digital technology, while supporting contemporary Aboriginal youth identity and culture.

One of this pilot project's primary aims was to provide opportunities for **intergenerational knowledge exchange**. The intention was to determine how older people gain awareness of the everyday use of digital media by young people and for older generations to better understand how youth navigate digital and online environments (Third et al. 2011). The digital transference of cultural knowledge across the generations supports Aboriginal approaches to learning within the community and can promote understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal culture more broadly (Collin et al. 2011; Edmonds et al. 2012; Kral and Schwab 2012).

Therefore, the project aimed to harness the **creative capacity** of digital media in a digital storytelling workshop, where young people worked with Elders and other community members to create and share their stories. The intergenerational approach aimed to assist youth in developing their knowledge of responsible online behaviour, including identifying what is and is not appropriate to share online. For Aboriginal youth, online lateral violence and racism present potential risks that impact young people's mental health and wellbeing (DEECD et al. 2010).¹ Creative content production, particularly that which allows diverse methods of self-representation, along with the sharing of information through social media and other digital platforms, has been identified by researchers as a viable way for establishing supportive social connections, for enhancing wellbeing, and for improving strategies that better connect Aboriginal people with each other and their culture (VicHealth 2010). This also encourages intercultural knowledge exchange among the broader community without reproducing persistent discriminatory patterns (Campbell and Robards 2013).

Furthermore, by providing opportunities for young people to participate in flexible and dynamic co-creative media production, in a structured workshop environment, this project aimed to improve **digital and media literacy** skills, including peer-to-peer learning. This potentially contributes to Aboriginal young people's capacity to engage in self-directed and informal learning opportunities, enhancing opportunities to complete an education, obtain employment and to participate in and contribute to the digital economy (see Watkins 2011).

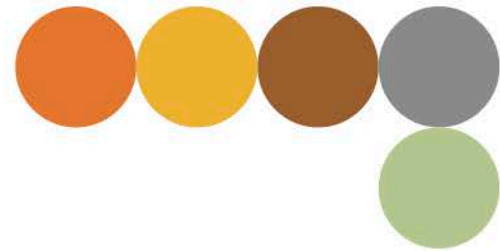
Thus the project's overall aims were to:

- Promote intergenerational knowledge exchange
- Harness the creative capacity of digital technology
- Improve digital and media literacy skills, which support informal approaches to learning

How the aims were addressed is discussed later in this report.

¹ Also see 'Young Koories say NO to racism and lateral violence online', Koorie Youth Council, Oct 2013

<http://viyac.org.au/kyc/what-is-kyc/news/>



How did we do the Pilot Project?

A Collaborative and Participatory Methodology

A collaborative and participatory methodology was adopted in this pilot project. Collaboration means engaging frequently with as many people as possible who are interested and involved in the project, and conducting the project with and in the relevant community. In this instance, the researcher, Dr Fran Edmonds, worked with members of the Aboriginal community in Melbourne, Victoria, who are involved with Aboriginal young people.

The Reference Group

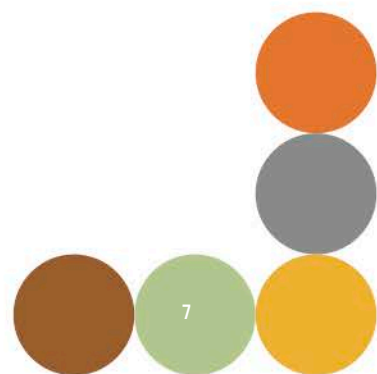
An Aboriginal Reference Group guided the project, with representatives from key Aboriginal organisations, including the Koorie Heritage Trust Inc, Victorian Aboriginal Education Authority Inc, Koorie Youth Council, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, and Bunjilaka at Museum Victoria. Individual artists and multimedia practitioners were also included. The Reference Group was kept informed of the project's progress by the primary researcher, Dr Edmonds, through email and/or phone correspondence. There were opportunities to meet with the researcher either informally or at scheduled Reference Group meetings. The Reference Group guided the development of the project and ensured that knowledge of the project was disseminated informally throughout the Aboriginal community. Reference Group feedback also contributed to the research design and recruitment of participants.

Bert Williams Aboriginal Youth Services

Following the relationship established with Bert Williams Aboriginal Youth Services (BWAYS) during the initial mobile phone project completed in 2012, participants were again recruited through that organisation. BWAYS is managed by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited (VACSAL) and provides assistance to young Aboriginal people who have experienced homelessness, are at risk of entering the youth justice system, and who have been disengaged from education, training and employment. It employs a number of young people who have previously been 'at risk', involving them in Koorie Youth Leadership Programs. BWAYS operates to ensure that young Aboriginal people are given opportunities to enhance connections with their families, schools and communities in ways that support Aboriginal culture. These include advocacy and support, intervention and prevention programs, and linkages with Aboriginal community agencies in collaboration with government and the nongovernment sector.²

In this project, the young participants and staff from BWAYS were extremely supportive in assisting the researchers to understand the way urban-based Aboriginal young people engage with digital technology and assert their identities through this medium.

² See <http://www.vacsal.org.au/bways.html>, accessed 12 January, 2014



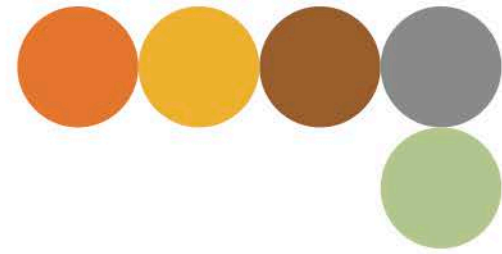


Knowledge partners

The pilot project's collaborative and participatory approach involved all the parties included in the research. The researchers, the research participants, staff at BWAYS and the Aboriginal consultants employed in the workshop (the Yorta Yorta, Mutti Mutti artist, Maree Clarke and the Indigenous filmmaker, Kimba Thompson) were knowledge partners, each contributing their expertise to the project (cf. YAW-CRC 2013). This is consistent with the approach of the anthropologist George Marcus, who considers research participants as experts in the research process. He refers to them as 'epistemic partners' and acknowledges their unique contributions to developing an inclusive and purposeful research agenda (Marcus 2007).

Importantly for this project, the inclusive approach to research was informed by an Indigenous knowledge system (worldview), where all aspects of life are regarded as interrelated (Janke 2007). For an Aboriginal person, learning about and understanding their place in the world is connected to Indigenous 'ways of knowing' (see Martin 2003; Moreton-Robinson and Walter 2009). As the Indigenous academic Martin Nakata asserts, Indigenous knowledge systems are embedded in land and place, where story-telling, memory-making, narrative, art and performance, cultural and social practices, as well as principles for relating to kin and socialising children are connected and transmitted with regard to these 'ways of thinking' (Nakata 2007:10).

Hence, in this project, culture is understood as central to learning. For Aboriginal young people particularly, knowing who you are and where you come from is essential for promoting positive health and social outcomes, including building resilience and supporting wellbeing (DEECD 2010). In southeast Australia where colonisation was rapid and intense, and where policies of assimilation were implemented earlier than elsewhere, many in the Aboriginal community continue to struggle to reclaim and assert their cultural connections and identity. This project encouraged participants to affirm their everyday experiences through telling their digital story, highlighting the diversity of southeast Australian Aboriginality.



The Digital Storytelling Workshop: some background

The main component of the pilot project was a Digital Storytelling Workshop, conducted by the researcher and the Aboriginal consultants over 3.5 days during May and June 2013 with seven Aboriginal participants. The aim of the Workshop was for each participant to complete and edit a digital story using a range of technologies (computers, mobile media pads and personal mobile phones). The stories were to be edited using the Final Cut Pro editing suite and uploaded to the Internet. On completion of the Workshop, the researcher, the Aboriginal consultants and the participants were to undertake a focus group discussion of the process and outcomes of the Workshop.

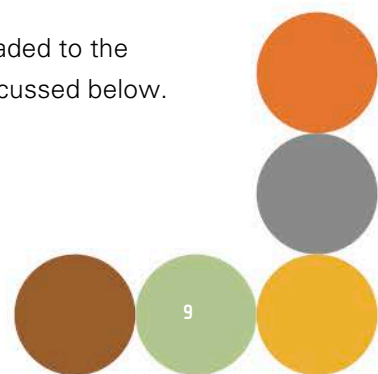
The digital storytelling project was conducted with 3 female (1 older) and 4 male participants. The young people were aged from 15-23 years.

The Digital Storytelling workshop took place as follows:

- Half day preliminary workshop (*The Story Mapping Workshop*) held on 9 May 2013 at BWAYS, with 3 participants: 2 female (1 older participant) and 1 male
- All participants had access to Huawei mobile media tablets from May until June.
- Three day digital storytelling workshop held on 18-20 June 2013. All participants from the ½ day workshop came to the 3-day workshop.
- One male withdrew from the workshop; another male had prior commitments and was unable to complete his digital story. This participant had attended the ½ day workshop and experimented with the mobile tablet and other technology available throughout the workshop period. He also contributed to the focus group discussion.
- Two days of the workshop (18-19 June) were conducted at the Aborigines Advancement League (AAL) in Thornbury. The final day (20 June) was conducted at Sista Girl Productions in Brunswick.
- Participants began editing their digital stories on the Final Cut Pro editing suite at Sista Girl Productions.
- Five participants were able to compile their stories as drafts by the end of the workshop. These were at various stages of completion.

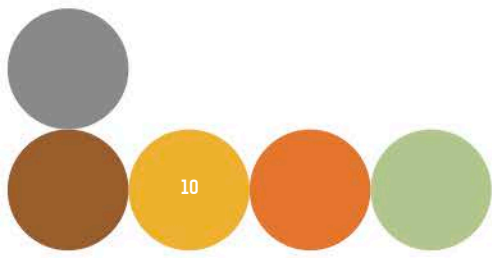
How additional information was collected:

- A debriefing discussion was recorded between the researcher and the two Aboriginal consultants immediately following the completion of the workshop on 20 June 2013.
- A focus group discussion was conducted and recorded by Fran Edmonds at BWAYS with 5 participants on 28 June 2013. Three females and 2 males attended, including the older participant.
- Postproduction work involved Kimba Thompson editing the stories, adding music and subtitles. Four participants who had compiled a nearly completed story by the end of the workshop received an edited version on DVD and/or memory stick in October 2013.
- Despite informed consent being given by the participants, no stories were uploaded to the Internet or made available online by the researcher. The reasons for this are discussed below.





The Workshop provided primary source data about Aboriginal young people’s ability to engage creatively with digital technology to tell stories that are relevant and meaningful to them. However, the adoption of a collaborative methodology has also informed the project’s findings. Conversations between the researcher and members of the Aboriginal community before, during and after the completion of the workshop have provided valuable information about the manner of conducting research with Aboriginal youth and digital technology. This information is discussed in the following sections.





Discussion

An Ethnographic Approach to Research

Organising and Conducting the Workshop

The collaborative methodology meant that the researcher (Dr Fran Edmonds) was embedded in the project as an ethnographer, a researcher who works with and in the community. Her fieldwork included regular liaison with BWAYS staff and management and working with the digital storytelling participants. Maree Clarke and Kimba Thompson were employed as consultants to assist in planning, implementing and facilitating the Digital Storytelling Workshop.

Research Fields

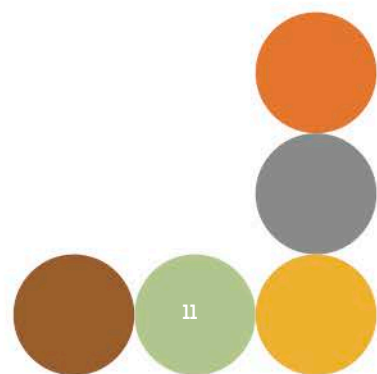
The ethnographic approach of this project embraced 2 key fields of research, which overlapped throughout the research period:

1. collaborating with the Aboriginal Community and learning from participants; and
2. working with the Aboriginal consultants to co-ordinate and conduct the workshop.

Research Field One: Collaborating with the Aboriginal Community and learning from participants

This research field will be a critical element in developing future digital storytelling research projects as the researcher maintains ongoing connections and correspondence with staff and participants connected with BWAYS and the Aborigines Advancement League.

The continuing research collaboration and relationship with BWAYS meant that it became a critical space for engaging with project participants. The BWAYS manager, Leigh Saunders, was supportive and instrumental in identifying and recruiting participants for the initial stage of the project, including giving staff time to commit to the 3.5 days of the workshop. He continued to support the project through to its conclusion.





Finding a workshop location

The half-day introductory workshop in May 2013 was conducted in the education room at BWAYS. This *Story Mapping* workshop is explained in more detail in *Research Field Two*. During this workshop, the three participants had the opportunity to borrow Huawei media pads supplied by IBES. The Huawei media pads remained at BWAYS between workshops so participants could borrow them. They were also used during the subsequent 3-day workshop.

Following Leigh's suggestion, the digital component of the 3-day workshop was held at the Aborigines Advancement League (AAL). The AAL is a place of significance to the Victorian Aboriginal community, being the hub for cultural and social activities, including the home ground of the Aboriginal Australian Rules Football team, the Fitzroy Stars (NMA 2008). Two days were spent at the AAL, with the final day shifting to Sista Girl in Brunswick, which is the multimedia production company owned and operated by Kimba Thompson.

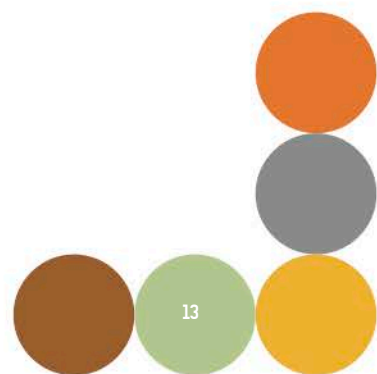


Figure 1: Mural on the football club change rooms, AAL



Figure 2: Entrance to Aborigines Advancement League

The AAL is managed and accessed daily by Elders, who are respected older members of the Aboriginal community. Many provide cultural support and advice, particularly for youth. The League also houses a Keeping Place (a collection of artefacts and photographs on public display in glass cases) and a digital recording studio, known as the Indigital Centre, where the digital storytelling workshop was held. The Centre offered access to computer equipment, which is mainly set up for music recording purposes and was not connected to the Internet. The Centre also houses a soundproof recording studio.





Limitations with the technology

Only limited Internet connection was available to participants over the 2-days at the AAL, the researcher and consultants brought their own laptops and prepaid USB dongles to enable some Internet access. Working with the technology at the Indigital Centre, provided opportunities for the researcher to observe participant's ability to adapt to and manage the digital environment. The participants demonstrated their expertise in manipulating technology to connect to the Internet by using their mobile phones and to search the web on the media tablets, including accessing Facebook and online music. This was short lived, as the Internet connection via mobile phones was costly and limited by the data plans available on individual phones. This was further frustrated by some of the design features and technical problems inherent in the media tablets. They had a very limited battery life and were difficult to operate compared to other mobile devices (e.g. personal mobile phones and iPads). While all the participants experimented with the media pads initially, they only used them intermittently during the project.

Despite these drawbacks, the workshop did provide all participants with an opportunity to 'mess around' with alternative digital resources (see Ito et al. 2010: p.244).

Male (21)

I thought it was a great step up. Getting us in [to the League] and sort of breaking away ... from one particular technology and moving on to others.

So [at the League] you had the recording booth and the Mac computers in there...Yeah, so the technology throughout the project, on a whole, was really cool and very useful. Just the fact that we weren't just sticking to this clunky little piece of machinery, the digital android thing...the media tablet.

So, the broad range of technology that we were using was a bonus.

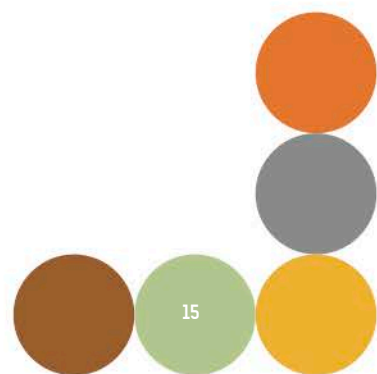


Figure 3: Multi tasking: participant using computer, media pad and mobile phone

Known-spaces: The Aborigines Advancement League

Despite limited Internet connection at the Indigital Centre, the AAL was familiar territory for most of the participants. This enabled them to develop and share stories in a culturally safe space. This was important as many stories were being told by participants for the first time in a digital format and were difficult for participants to share. Research conducted by the Indigenous Leadership Network Victoria (ILNV) has also identified the importance for youth feeling secure in a known environment where they can 'explore Aboriginal culture and identity with Elders and community leaders' (ILNV 2010:3). In this instance the AAL provided such a space.

Conducting the workshop at the AAL also allowed Elders to engage informally in the project, as they could see and hear what the young people were doing during the workshop. For instance, youth moved in and out of the workshop area – the Indigital Centre –interacting with Elders in reception when printing their written text, as well Elders were able to view the way the youth worked with the technology. The League also provided a comfortable space for one participant's grandmother, who attended the workshop for a day and supported her grandson in the creation of his story.





Working at Sista Girl Productions

While there were cultural benefits associated with being at the League, the limited Internet connection meant that the final day of the workshop was moved to Sista Girl Productions in Brunswick. Sista Girl is an Indigenous managed and owned multimedia production company. Working at Sista Girl allowed participants to access the editing suite Final Cut Pro, as well as connect to the Internet to collect data for their stories.

The Aboriginal consultants (Maree Clarke and Kimba Thompson) acknowledged that despite the limitations to technology at the League, it was imperative that participants were able to spend the first 2 days in a known space and then complete the task at Sista Girl. This was reinforced by comments from Kimba during the debriefing discussion:

Well, we made do today at my office space... But it wouldn't have worked on the first day because they needed to be in a safe, comfortable environment... After doing this many times working in communities, they're in that environment, they're safe ... but today was like... 'we're going somewhere, there's something different'...

Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange: BWAYS staff (Elders)

The researcher consulted regularly with BWAYS management and staff. These informal conversations have also contributed to the findings in this report. Establishing ongoing conversations with the Koori Youth justice Workers, Karin Williams and Jenny Kirby, was vital for obtaining support for the workshop, especially for recruiting and assisting youth participants during the workshop.³

Some young people connected with BWAYS are disconnected from their Aboriginal heritage, while others are coming to terms with their Aboriginality. Karin and Jenny emphasised that this vulnerability and marginalisation meant that while Aboriginal facilitators were employed in the project, 'just being Aboriginal' was not enough to entice youth to commit to the project (pers comm. Jenny, May 2013). Karin and Jenny's role, as familiar and trusted members of the BWAYS community, was significant in encouraging youth participation in the workshop.

For Aboriginal young people, working alongside Elders, family and community members who they are related to or have known for some time, provides the first step in building self-esteem and reinforcing cultural identity. Having a supportive network in place can enable youth to voice their concerns, while minimising the risk of feeling 'shamed' or becoming further disconnected from their community (see ILNV 2010; VicHealth 2010).

Although Karin did not participate in the workshop, she did provide advice and support to the researcher immediately after the ½ day introductory workshop. Karin reinforced the concept that research should result in outcomes that are relevant and productive for all those involved. She was happy to support this project, knowing that the participants could gain some knowledge of film production and a digital story. Following positive feedback from participants in the ½ day workshop, Karin assisted in recruiting more

³ Although Jenny and the youth participants all provided informed consent for their names to be used in this report, it was considered appropriate to maintain the young people's anonymity. Karin and Jenny, however, are well known in the community as the BWAYS youth justice workers. Using other names would have been superfluous. Both women provided Fran Edmonds with their approval to use their names in this report via a phone call discussion in December 2013.



participants for the 3-day workshop. Karin also encouraged one young woman to collect images on her mobile phone of her trip across the Nullarbor. This footage became a substantial contribution to that participant's digital story.

Jenny had multiple roles in the research project: as an Elder, a project participant and as a BWAYS employee with a background in social work. Her position in the project provides a model for engaging older members of the Aboriginal community as participants in future digital storytelling workshops. Jenny provided guidance throughout the project, including advising the researcher about recruiting participants and maintaining their involvement in the project. Also, the Huawei media pads were housed at BWAYS from the beginning of the project until the completion of the Focus Group discussion (i.e. May to July 2013). Jenny took responsibility for their management: collecting the tablets from the participants and organising a locked drawer for their storage at BWAYS.

Digital Storytelling as a 'Community of Practice'

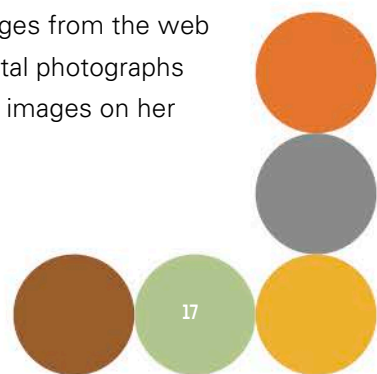
Jenny's role in the project was significant in the development of a whole-of-community approach to the research, where learning took place in informal settings between young people and older community members. This style of learning aligns with Etienne Wenger's idea of 'communities of practice'. This idea, which has largely developed from research about organisational change, resonates with and supports a community-based Indigenous approach to learning (Nakata 2007). Communities of practice encapsulate the notion of situated learning and knowledge management, which supports 'alignment between participants and tasks so that progress can be made on innovative solutions to difficult problems ... [T]he community of practice enables all those concerned to work together and to be respected for [their] contributions' (Hooley et al. 2013:30; cf. Wenger 1998).

Consistent with the concept of a 'community of practice', Jenny, as an older participant with many years experience working with youth, supported participants who were ambivalent about telling their stories. Many stories resonated with the repercussions of transgenerational trauma and grief, especially regarding loss of connections to family and Country, which are central to the experiences of many in the Aboriginal community (Australian Human Rights Commission 2013). The digital realm provided an opportunity for participants to share and create their stories in a novel, yet supportive environment.

The Experience of an Older Participant

Engaging in the digital realm also emphasised the differences between the young people's experience of technology and Jenny's, including how she uses and manages digital technology in relation to her everyday life.

Jenny's digital images were stored and retrieved from her iPad for her digital story. She was familiar with the iPad as a mobile digital device and was reluctant to experiment extensively with the media pad available to all participants. This was understandable, as the iPad was easier to navigate and already contained a vast personal digital archive of images copied from family photographs, images from the web relating to places and events, newspaper cuttings, copies of certificates, and recent digital photographs shared online between family and friends, including her own artwork. Jenny's wealth of images on her iPad was more than enough to tell a story.



The amount of personal information Jenny had uploaded on her iPad indicates her frequent use and knowledge of the benefits of new technology for preserving and managing information of significance to the user. As an active iPad user and someone who works daily on a computer, Jenny was also able to demonstrate her ability to adapt to the technology available during the workshop and to engage with the editing program, Final Cut Pro, **challenging the notion of the 'digital disconnect'**. This is the idea that older people who did not grow up with digital technology are less engaged or knowledgeable of digital technology (Collin et al. 2011). Jenny's everyday encounter with new technology supports research which acknowledges that the increasing use of mobile digital devices allows more people to engage in the digital world (Kennedy et al. 2009).

Although Jenny was unable to complete her digital story to a stage where it could be edited, she did actively engage with a previously unfamiliar digital program (Final Cut Pro), recognising its potential for telling her story using her digital archive and other online resources.

Jenny

I sat with my iPad at home and I went through and I numbered every photo I wanted to use...thinking that the story would flow. But then when we sat down [to use Final Cut Pro] ...I go, well I've got all my photos ready, [but] I didn't really because as I put them up on the [Final Cut Pro timeline] it didn't go with the story and that kept frustrating me... And then we started looking [online for additional images]...



Figure 4: Jenny searching through her digital family photo archive on her iPad



Youth as Experts

While Jenny used her iPad regularly and briefly trialed the Huawei media pad's Google Voice application,⁴ the younger participants readily adapted to the range of technologies available during the workshop. This ready uptake of technology, highlighted youth's expertise and capability in manipulating technology for their own purposes and supports findings from the YAW CRC, which acknowledges young people's proficiency in using new technology (Third et al. 2011).

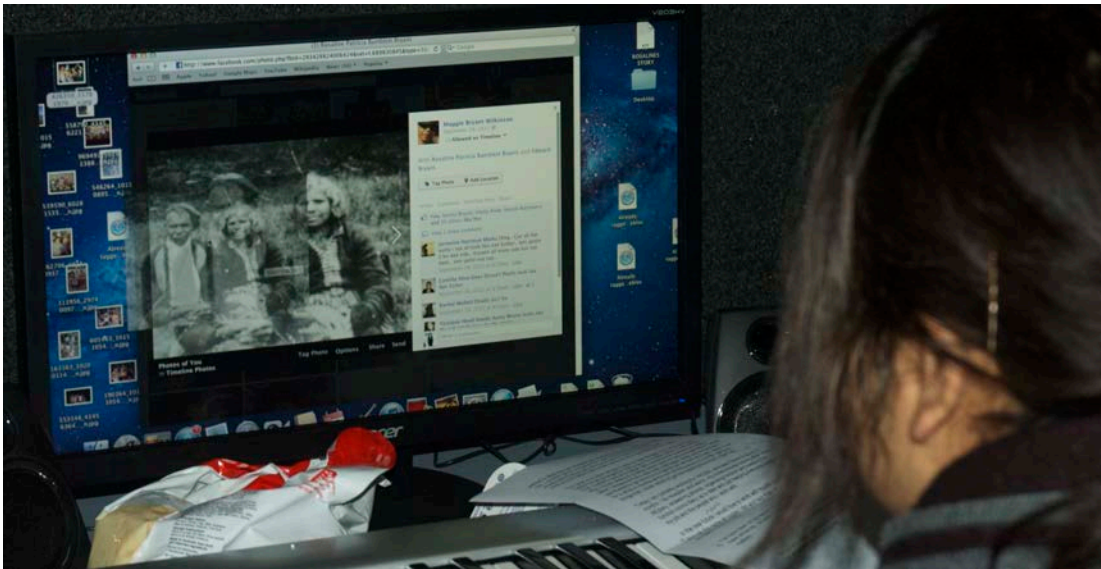


Figure 5: Navigating Facebook for photos

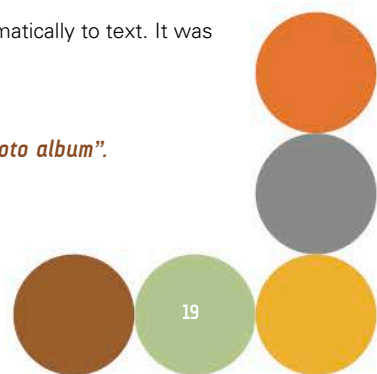
In this project, young people's digital expertise was demonstrated through writing, creating and collecting imagery for their stories. Skills used included:

- trialling Google Voice and sharing uploaded text on the Google Drive network with the researcher;
- navigating the internet for additional images to use on the media pad, laptop and computer;
- connecting their mobile phones to their media pads to download images from Facebook (the 'new family photo album'⁵);
- uploading most of their images to the Final Cut Pro editing suite timeline on the computer to accompany their narrative.

⁴ Google Voice is a voice recognition 'app' available on the media pads, which transcribes spoken words automatically to text. It was only available when there was an Internet connection.

⁵ For instance during the debriefing discussion with consultants, Kimba Thompson remarked:

'The thing...about social media and what they have got at their fingertips is that Facebook is our "new photo album". So, these kids have instant access and it's family, it's friends, it's everything'.



Young people's rapid uptake and ability to learn the Final Cut Pro editing program, as well as recognition that these new skills were transferrable outside the workshop, is indicated in the following quote:

Young woman (21)

That was deadly, like, how I learnt how to use that media...Final Cut Pro... I've always seen that on my brother's Apple Macs... but I've never really used it... So it was cool to learn how to use that program.



Figure 6: Using Final Cut Pro: digital story editing in progress at Sista Girl Productions

Despite the limitations to the technology available during the workshop, youth demonstrated a capacity to 'mess around' and multitask, using different media simultaneously to construct their stories (e.g. logging onto Facebook, while listening to their story and uploading content to their file using a range of technology such as media pads, mobile phones, lap tops and computers). In contrast, Jenny focused on doing one thing at a time, such as organising her images from the iPad or constructing her narrative.



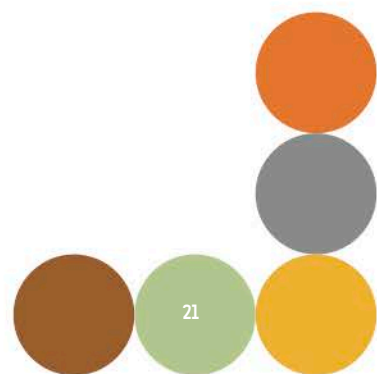
Figure 7: Experimenting with the media pads using mobile phones for Internet connection

Intergenerational learning: youth working with Elders and older community members

Jenny's support for the young people during the workshop also reflects an intergenerational approach to learning. Researchers from the YAW CRC, acknowledge the significance of this approach for the transferal of socio-cultural knowledge in ways that are 'flexible and iterative so that [communities] can keep pace with the emergence of new online and networked media technologies and practices' (Third et al. 2011:9,24).

One of Jenny's most valuable contributions to the workshop was allowing young people to view her digital photographic archive and hear about her life experiences. Significantly, her pictures enabled youth to understand some of the issues connected with the history of Aboriginal Victoria, including the effects of the assimilation policies, especially those in relation to the stolen generations (see HREOC 1997).

In relating her story during the workshop, Jenny revealed to the group the potential for such stories to maintain cultural knowledge, particularly about connections to Country and extended family members across the generations. Jenny shared this information with youth, particularly one young woman with whom she showed images of previously unknown mutual family members.





Jenny

I think of other things that may help ... people might hear my story and go, yep I've had a similar thing. But also I'm looking at [my iPad] and going, there are so many images of my family tree flashing up. Now what if a young person comes along and may come from my family line and have no idea and they'll see that and they'll go, oh!

Young woman (21)

That's where I fit in.

Jenny

I might help someone find their family.

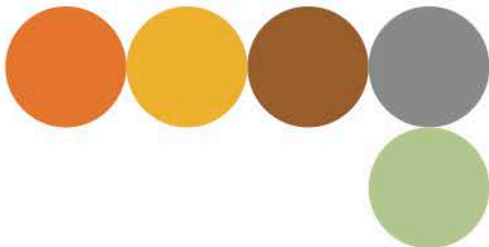


Figure 8: Jenny showing young participant family photos

Jenny also emphasised the potential for digital stories to contribute to preserving oral histories for future generations.

Jenny

At first I didn't feel comfortable about doing the story. But then at the end of the day, there's going to be something out there forever, for all of my grandkids, great grandkids.... Five generations down the track it'll be still out there for my grandchildren to see.



Intergenerational support

From researcher observations during the workshop and the focus group discussion, it was evident that most participants found the process of telling their stories difficult. However, the participants gained some satisfaction from knowing that their stories could be available for others to learn from. This was reinforced by Jenny, who was adamant that the young people's stories, as well as her own, should be viewed as achievements, arising from participants recounting and owning their stories, learning new digital skills to transmit the information, while building resilience through overcoming difficult life experiences.

Additionally, the digital storytelling workshop incorporated situated learning by bringing together youth and older members of the community to navigate the digital environment, and using their experiences to articulate how digital technology and new media could maintain strong cultural connections (see SNAICC 2010:45).

The following conversation from the focus group discussion reveals a community-based, intergenerational approach to digital storytelling, which enabled participants to support and learn from each other. The conversation emphasises the desire for positive stories to be available in a community where the negative effects of colonisation continue to resonate. In this conversation, Jenny refers to the younger woman as 'Aunt'. The term Aunt, like Uncle, is a mark of respect within the Aboriginal community often given to Elders. However, in this instance it denotes the relationship and family connections Jenny has with the young women in the workshop.

Young woman (21)

To me, it was ... like... 'this is my personal life ... do I really want everyone to know what paths I've been down'... I was struggling with that a bit.

Jenny

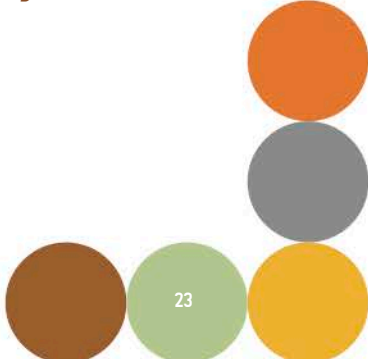
But I see it like this, Aunt. Some young girl who's gonna go through a similar situation as you, is gonna see that video, then listen to your story, and you'll probably help them figure out what they need to do... To move on with their lives...that's why I like those sorts of stories where you come from your inner experiences. Because another young girl may see that story and go, that's how I'm feeling and, you know, might seek you out. For your advice...

Young woman (21)

Yep... other people around the community, you know they might be like, 'oh well she was being a ... whatever, rah rah rah, why's she working where she's working'. Do you know what I mean?...

Young woman (17)

You're always going to have that past judgment but you don't listen to that... If they see you now, they're gonna think, 'but look at her now'...





Jenny

So, they're gonna be proud that you've actually dealt with your issues. You're still not wallowing ... You've actually moved on from them, that's the difference.

Young man (23)

Another thing, with us doing this [digital storytelling] ...do you think that ... talking about your past ... that [others] might think... 'you've got the balls to say that, one, in a video and two, put it online'. So you have no shame about it whatsoever, so that might encourage these young fellas to start opening up now...

Young woman (21)

And being more honest about it.

Young man (23)

Because I know a lot in our community [have] shame and all that, they don't want to open up and tell their stuff.

Young woman (21)

Well that was my biggest thing.

Young man (23)

But your big thing, you got up there and you said it. Like, I read your story and you got right into the heart and all the bad side of it. So with this getting online, I think it's 'shame' and all that, but you've gotta encourage young fellas to start opening up and probably start doing more videos.

Young woman (17)

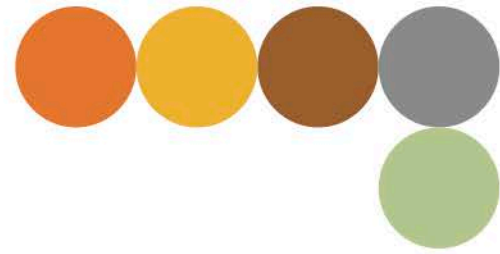
Seeing the better side to life

Jenny

Dealing with their own issues ... As much as we're sort of feeling a bit worried about how people are going to respond to our stories, I think we need to start seeing the positives in those stories too, so that we don't get ourselves so wound up about it being out there [digitally].

As this conversation illustrates, the digital realm enabled participants to demonstrate and advocate their own ways of doing and speaking about things, including producing positive expressions of identity (cf. Adelson and Olding 2013). By supporting cultural connections and preserving this knowledge digitally, it is possible to promote strong identities, a significant contributor to wellbeing among the Aboriginal community (VicHealth 2010).

However, there were limitations to the digital storytelling process, which are discussed below.



Overcoming the Tall Poppy Syndrome

The young woman's story generated responses from most participants about the positive effects of telling a difficult story. However, others in the group, including Jenny, felt a degree of 'shame' about having a 'good story' to share. In the focus group discussion this was referred to as the 'Tall Poppy Syndrome'. In the Aboriginal community this syndrome denotes a negative perception of someone who 'talks themselves up' or 'acts like a whitefella', at the expense of their obligations to the community. The Tall Poppy Syndrome demonstrates the intercultural spaces between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal domains, where Aboriginal kinship and community commitments are often in tension with contemporary Western approaches to community management, education and employment (see Moran 2010).

The Tall Poppy Syndrome can also be related to issues of 'lateral violence'. The Aboriginal activist, filmmaker and musician, Richard Frankland, describes lateral violence as a process of 'harmful behaviours that Aboriginal people do to each other collectively or as a group'. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Gooda explains that it is related to the effects of colonisation and is 'often the result of disadvantage, discrimination and oppression, and that it arises from working within a society that is not designed for our way of doing things' (Australian Human Rights Commission 2011:52; cf. Australian Human Rights Commission 2013; Commonwealth of Australia 2013).

The following conversation shows that the participants were aware that the digital environment potentially exposes their stories to a wider audience. Some were concerned that their stories could be perceived as being disrespectful to others in the community who continue to struggle with past experiences.

Jenny

Also ... I felt as if my story of the stolen generation, didn't par up to any of the others [who were stolen]. Cos I had such a great experience and was so loved [by my foster parents], that I didn't get the abuse, I didn't get treated badly... So I don't have the scars that other people have. So, I felt my story was less important.

Young woman (21)

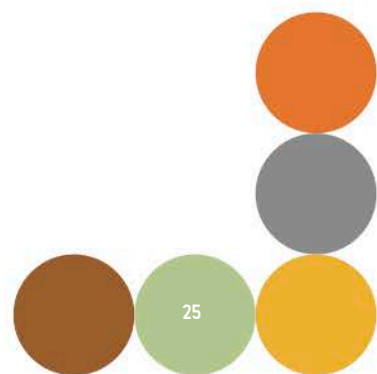
But I think your story was cool ... you don't hear stories like that much.

Jenny

That's just it Aunt, and I didn't realise that. See, maybe we should hear stories like that because...

Young woman (21)

Then you might start hearing more stories about [the good things]...





Jenny

And I assume there's a lot more out there. I know there are, but those ones that had such a great experience try and keep that to themselves because... they don't want to disrespect the people that have gone through the hard line of the stolen generation. So, for something like forty years, that story sat with me, but I wouldn't share it. It's only now I'm starting to share it because I'm getting older... I'm not going to be around forever. So, my kids need to know what my story was too.

Young man (23)

One thing I struggled with at the start... honestly, I haven't really done anything really... drastic or anything in my life and I kind of struggled. Seriously... I've been a good kid, never got into trouble. Um, I never done anything bad. I didn't think I had much of a story...

Just hearing everyone else's stories, I felt kind of shame to say it, my story ... just hearing recently [the others stories], the upbringings and that... And I didn't want to disrespect them, like you know, talk myself up, in a way...

Jenny

But you're allowed to be proud of the fact that your parents did a really great job...

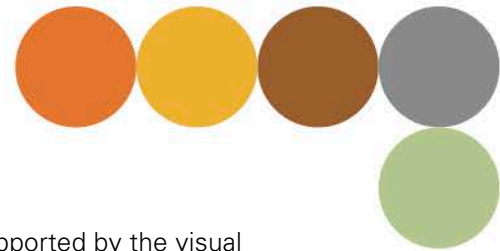
Young man (23)

Yeah, but just with the other kids [in future workshops] that are trying to fit in with the group, you might have that bit of trouble... if he is a good kid, he'll probably find it a bit challenging. Like, he doesn't want to open up to his story, to offend anyone else, [or] make [them] think he's better than everybody else, kind of thing... Yeah, just finding their interests more. My interest is football so that was a big thing in my story I can say a whole lot of good stuff about the football story, so probably just trying to find their interests.

Digital Storytelling is only one way of telling a story

As the young man's quote suggests, it is important that youth are provided with alternative opportunities to explore their stories. The autobiographical digital storytelling approach can be problematic, particularly when participants perceive that their story does not accurately represent themselves, their families or their communities. The limited opportunities in this workshop for using different media, such as digital photography, alternative audio-recordings, digital editing skills and developing approaches to digital art, meant participants relied mainly on personal photographs and a revealing voiceover, which constrained their creativity.

Although participants highlighted the benefits of telling their stories digitally, some of the images they used could be misinterpreted. For instance, personal photographs downloaded from individuals' Facebook sites or mobile phones might be taken out of context if the viewer focused on the images at the expense of the narrative, potentiality reinforcing negative stereotypes and feed online racism or lateral violence (Koorie Youth Council 2013). The stories also contained images of people who had not provided informed consent and who may not have approved their use in the digital realm.



In addition, the powerful content of the narratives was thus often not fully supported by the visual material. This can be attributed to limitations in the equipment used in the workshop, and the fact that only one person, Kimba Thompson, had prior experience in facilitating digital storytelling workshops, as well as expertise in managing the creative potential of digital technology. Participants, therefore, had fewer opportunities than anticipated to learn and explore the creative capacity of digital technology, particularly in honing editing skills, and producing alternative sounds and images through digital artworks that could enhance, rather than distract from their stories. Participants' ideas for developing the creative capacity of digital technology are explored in *Research Field Two*

Ethically researching with visual material

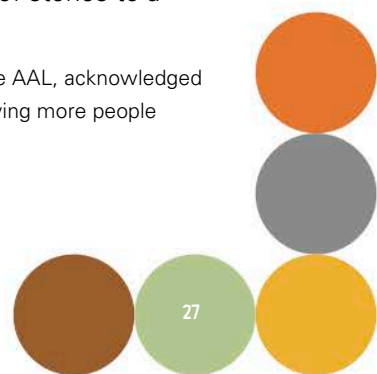
Once the stories were returned to the participants on DVDs, it was up to them to decide how they were to be shared. The participants did consent to the stories being exhibited (a practice endorsed through the digital storytelling process, as a way of celebrating the completion of the project and to allow other community members to view the stories see Lambert 2013). However, hesitancy on behalf of the participants to show the final cut of their stories to others meant this was not an option.


While the current participants' stories potentially enable other Aboriginal youth to explore their own stories, the visual content of most stories meant there were risks associated with exhibiting them in a public space or posting them online without appropriate restrictions. This issue was complicated by youth's willingness to share material, which they might regret posting in the public/digital sphere in later years. This aspect of the project highlights the need to continue negotiations with participants concerning the use of their digital stories post-production. In this project, despite having informed consent for displaying the stories online prior to their production, the possible negative implications of sharing them publicly meant the exhibition was reconsidered. In this situation, taking into account the participants' 'own ethical compasses that they use to navigate comparable issues in their everyday lives' (e.g. having ultimate control over who could or could not view the material) (Clark 2012:29), meant that one-off informed consent could not account for the way participants might feel about the end product, now or in the future. A better option is to leave participants' choices about the use of their material open for their later consideration.

Knowing what the story would finally look and sound like and how it was initially conceived were perhaps two different things for the participants. This experience highlights the need for ongoing participant consent for the use of visual and recorded digital material throughout the research (see Wiles et al. 2008). This also demonstrates the need for advancing digital literacy skills in future workshops, to provide the Aboriginal community with alternative approaches to using new technology, and in determining how such skills can contribute to supporting contemporary Aboriginal identity and culture.

This grey area in producing visual material digitally for public consumption also reveals the limitations of the autobiographical approach to digital storytelling. While digital stories are viewed within the community as the 'new oral history',⁶ there are avenues for broadening the highly personal context of stories to a

⁶ Kimba Thompson, in her introduction to participants on the first day of the digital storytelling workshop at the AAL, acknowledged digital storytelling as providing the Aboriginal community with new ways of sharing their oral histories, e.g. giving more people opportunities to connect with family and to reinforce cultural connections (Fieldnotes, 18th June 2013).





digital art program, where participants can explore their identities and experiences in more diverse and creative ways.

Research Field Two: Working with Aboriginal consultants to co-ordinate and conduct the digital storytelling workshop

The second research field involved the researcher working alongside the two consultants, Maree Clarke (artist) and Kimba Thompson (filmmaker), who were employed to assist in planning and facilitating the digital storytelling workshop. While their contribution in this regard was significant, the researcher also continues to learn and seek advice from them. They will also be involved in future research conducted in relation to the ACCAN and ARC LP grants.

This research field had two distinct phases:

- **Phase One: ½ day Story Mapping Workshop**
- **Phase Two: The 3-day Digital Storytelling Workshop**

Phase One: Encouraging Creativity – the *Story Mapping Workshop*

The preliminary ½ day *Story Mapping Workshop* described above was designed to allow participants to engage in a range of creative activities:

- a ‘yarning circle’, which allowed participants to discuss and brainstorm their story;
- watching a number of digital stories online (mainly from the *Pitcha This* archive) and short videos about digital storytelling and filmmaking;
- working with the artist Maree Clarke to develop ideas for researching their own stories; and
- a Story Mapping exercise as a way of developing stories through images.

The workshop was conducted at BWAYS in the education room, where there were a number of computers. Internet connection was enabled for the day, although this was restricted and did not allow access to Facebook or YouTube.

Working with the artist, Maree Clarke

Maree Clarke is a community-based artist. Her participation in this workshop enabled a depth of engagement with participants that would not have been possible otherwise. Her community connections and extended family relationships with some of the BWAYS staff facilitated relations of trust among the group. Her input was critical for creative guidance and cultural support, before and during the workshop. In addition, her role as an artist encouraged participants to share their stories and to explore them from different perspectives.

Maree assisted in planning and conducting the *Story Mapping* workshop. During the workshop, she shared stories about her work as a community-based artist via a PowerPoint presentation. Participants viewed images of her art and her photography, which focused on her connections to Country and family. This led to a discussion of the significance of using images and objects to tell stories through her art



practice, including her research into the cultural material of her Ancestors held in museum collections in Australia and overseas. Maree's work enabled participants to develop a sense of how they could gain 'ownership' of their stories. One participant commented that he would go to the library straight after the workshop and do some 'research' about his Country. He was also going to take the media pad to McDonald's for free WiFi connection and download Facebook photos of his family and Country to bring to the next workshop (Fieldnotes, 9th May 2013).

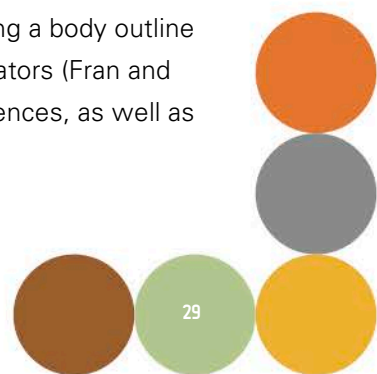


Figure 9: Maree Clarke presenting her 'art story'

Maree's story and her art practice also provide a model for supporting the dissemination of cultural information in the digital realm, including employing artists in future workshops to work with youth to create and use meaningful images suitable for digital stories.

Making a Story Map on a Body Outline: a creative visual method

The idea of a *Story Map* was introduced to support participants in developing creative approaches to their stories. The *Story Map* was developed from a range of 'mapping' ideas, including a Journey Map and a Body Map (see for instance (Solomon 2007)). In this project the story mapping exercise involved each participant's body outline being drawn on a piece of butchers paper. The concept of using a body outline was central to ensuring each individual connected personally with their story. The facilitators (Fran and Maree) emphasised the scope for participants to base their stories on a range of experiences, as well as



their imagination. Each person's story was then mapped on to their body outline, using the following headings as prompts:

1. A favourite location
2. An event enjoyed
3. An activity that you love doing
4. Anyone (or any number of people) that has influenced your story
5. What you would like to be doing in 5 years

Participants were encouraged to think about how each heading could be represented on particular parts of their body. For instance, for the heading 'favourite location', one of the participants drew waves and located them at her feet to represent walking on sand along the beach.

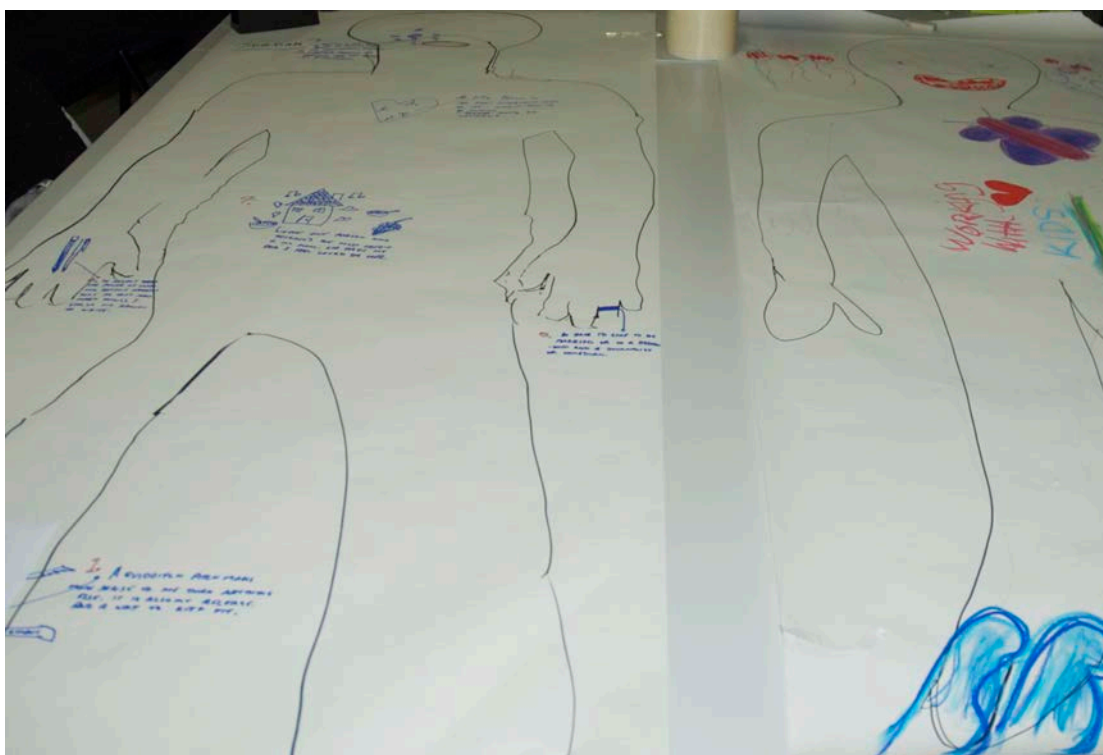


Figure 10: Participants body outlines as story maps

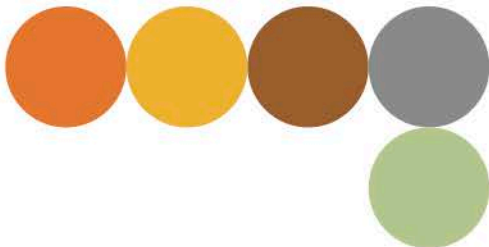
The ideas of the *body outline* and the *story map* converged in the process of eliciting a creative response to each person's story, enabling participants to connect with significant aspects of their lives, including symbolic representations of events or people who were important to them. The Story Map provided a space for participants to establish ownership of their stories in various ways, enabling them to open up to their own creativity.

Young woman (17)

Oh, I reckon the [body outline] was good because it's like, my feet, my hands, my mind.

Researcher

Did you feel ownership of it?



Young woman (17)

Definitely, yeah.

Young man (21)

It's a good place to start.

In this project the idea of the story map was used as an alternative to labeling the activity a body mapping exercise. The body map concept was initially developed as an art-therapy method for South African Women living with HIV-AIDS (Gastaldo et al. 2012; cf. Solomon 2007). In this project, however, the use of the body outline was not directly connected with the psychosocial notion of healing, or as a form of art-therapy. Rather, using the body outline in relation to the story map was intended as an inspirational 'warm-up' exercise for the forthcoming workshop. Nevertheless, participants did comment on the therapeutic nature of working on the body outline/story map idea, including how it assisted in focusing their thoughts.

Young man (21)

So the whole story mapping idea I think was a great tool ... I took a lot of enjoyment out of that and realised that something just as simple as that can be very useful in just plotting your story out... I suppose the other thing that I got out of it was realising that I did have a story, and then in the process of mapping it out it actually felt therapeutic.

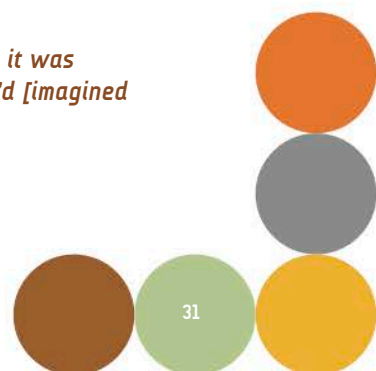
Jenny highlighted the significance of the Story Map in providing her with a way of exploring her emotions and understanding the extent to which they are carried in our bodies. For Jenny this related particularly to her hands and her ability to express her creativity through her art, which assisted her in coming to terms with issues from her past (pers. comm. Jenny Kirby, 15 May 2013).

While the *Story Map* exercise in this workshop was successful and participants engaged with the idea of the body outline, it is recommended that caution be adopted with this exercise in any future projects. Using a body outline is highly personal and some participants (particularly young people) may be reluctant to engage in this method (Chenhall et al. 2013). The process requires working closely with someone to outline their body. There are also potential issues regarding body image, as well as the risk of participants becoming upset if they revisit traumatic embodied experiences. In this instance, the small number of participants in the *Story Mapping* workshop made the body outline activity manageable. Further, all participants were familiar with and supportive of each other, and prepared to creatively interpret their stories in response to the 5 headings.

The creative possibilities generated during this stage of the project also resonated with participants who regarded this process as a helpful alternative to writing their story as text during the digital workshop (i.e. either digitally on the media pads or with pencil and paper).

Young woman (17)

Like, with the introduction [the Story Map] it kind of helped, putting my stories down... it was totally the opposite to the other ... days that I did [in the digital workshop]. The way I'd [imagined making my story] was easy. Putting it down was the hardest part.





The *Story Mapping* concept has the potential to be expanded into creative digital mapping and other digital art exercises, thus advancing the digital and multimedia skills of participants'.⁷ For example, the young female participant was adamant that there were opportunities for expanding the concept into a timeline, using photographs.

Young woman (17)

[Next time] we could use photos instead of the [drawings on the] map... Like, use the body that we've done, but I reckon get photos and place them... in line, [a] timeline.

The Aboriginal education academic Tyson Yunkaporta incorporates mapping and other creative exercises in his '8 ways' approach to Aboriginal learning. This approach is understood in terms of the cultural interface (i.e. the intersection) between Aboriginal and western knowledge systems (see (Nakata 2007), and informs responses to the development of learning through creative approaches, 'skilling all [participants] to operate creatively in the wider world without losing their own cultural standpoint' (Yunkaporta 2007: 17).

Cultural collections as creative inspiration for digital stories

Participants in this project also acknowledged that their storytelling would benefit from accessing and learning about the cultural collections housed at Bunjilaka, Museum Victoria and the Koorie Heritage Trust Inc. This method resonates with Maree Clarke's approach to her artwork, which includes researching and learning from the material culture of her Ancestors (Clarke and Edmonds 2013).

The participants highlighted the importance of having access to images of their Ancestors and cultural material held in collections, which are significant in maintaining connections to family and Country. While many of these collections cannot be accessed online (due to privacy and copyright issues), the participants were adamant that viewing such material would inspire their stories.

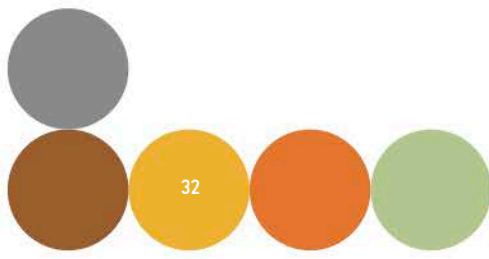
Jenny

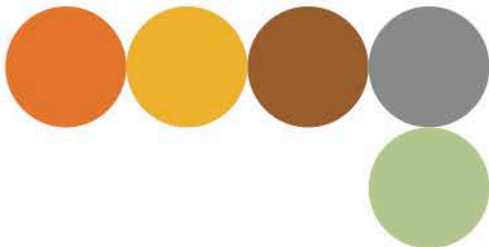
[Going to the Koorie Heritage Trust or Bunjilaka] would have inspired me ... to look at my story a little bit better.

Young women (21)

[It would] make you feel more comfortable about [your story]... they've got a lot of people that we know in there. Like, photos and stuff like that.

⁷ See for example <http://www.yijalayala.bighart.org/blog/love-punks-lead-the-way-at-rimf/> and <http://oneroad.canningstockrouteproject.com/>





Young man (21)

And not just that, but it's specific resources that are available at Bunjilaka, like some of those early documented stories of our mob... a lot of that historical stuff.

Young women (21)

My great grandparents are in those collections...

Young man (23)

You would have got photos from ... there that you wouldn't find on the Internet or anything like that... and [those] photos are more significant than finding anything on the Internet.

Phase Two: The 3-day Digital Workshop - Digital Literacy and Media Skills

Following the *Story Mapping* workshop, the 3-day workshop involved working with the Aboriginal multimedia artist Kimba Thompson. Along with the three participants from the previous *Story Mapping* workshop, four other young participants joined the program. Not all participants completed the 3-day workshop. In addition, two participants did not contribute to the focus group discussion.

Kimba is well known as a community-based filmmaker.⁸ Her work particularly addresses educational, health and social issues in the Aboriginal community. In this project, she supported and assisted participants to develop their personal stories and translate them into a film. The workshop followed the approach adopted by Kimba during the *Pitcha This* project, focusing on first-person stories that were told through still photographs from family photo album's, or retrieved from personal Facebook sites or Google searches (cf. Thompson 2010).

The 'Yarning Circle'

Kimba facilitated a 'Yarning Circle' at the beginning of the 3-day workshop. As in the *Story Mapping* workshop, the participants viewed a number of digital stories from Kimba's previous *Pitcha This* project and shared individual stories. The 'Yarning Circle' also introduced the workshop structure. In both workshop phases, the 'Yarning Circle' idea was adopted from Kimba's previous digital storytelling workshop experiences, where the individual's initial story begins to unfold and is later developed using digital resources.

⁸ See <http://www.sistagirl.com.au/services/>

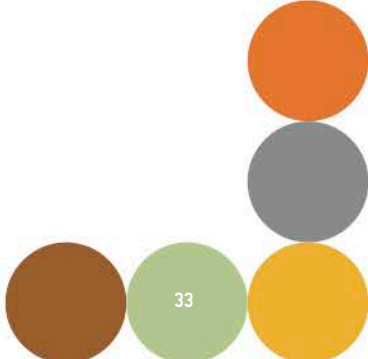


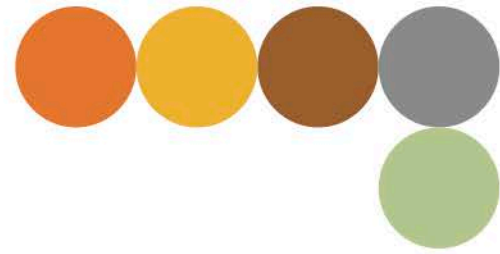


Figure 11: Kimba facilitating the 'yarning circle'

The concept of 'yarning' supports Indigenous approaches to storytelling, reflecting the oral traditions that continue to be important for the transmission of knowledge among Aboriginal people. 'Yarning' is a widely used term within Aboriginal communities around Australia and is used 'as a process of making meaning, communication and passing on history and knowledge... a special way of relating and connecting with ... culture' (Bessarab and Ng'andu 2010:38). As the Aboriginal academic Dawn Bessarab acknowledges, 'yarning' incorporates elements connected with Indigenous ways of knowing and is driven by a communal approach to discussion, building connections and establishing a relationship of trust in a culturally safe space (Bessarab and Ng'andu 2010:47). In relation to this project, 'yarning' is a dialogical process between participants, facilitators and researchers conducted in a relaxed and informal manner.



Figure 12: Collecting information during the 'yarning circle'



Peer-to-peer learning and digital literacy

'Yarning' among the group also encouraged participants to share their expertise, ideas and knowledge of digital technology throughout the workshop. This informal knowledge exchange extended to learning how to use the mobile media pads. Despite the devices limitations, they provided a medium for the researcher and facilitators to observe youths' capacity to manipulate digital technology (as discussed above). The media pads were the principle motivation for youth exploring ways to connect to the Internet through their mobile phones. They inspired self-directed, informal learning and peer-to-peer support.

Peer-to-peer learning was also evident when one participant conducted an informal presentation to the group about using the media pad. In the focus group discussion, he described how he learnt to use the device and apply it in his everyday life.

Young man (21)

As far as the digital pad goes ... trial and error was a big thing there. And I'm just fortunate that I had a significant amount of time over everybody else to play with it and work out some of its faults... I guess what I got out of it was, no it isn't the best piece of technology to begin with... but I suppose I made the most of it...

So when I was on the train or the tram or something like that, as opposed to fishing around in my bag for my notebook and pen, I'd just pull... out [the media pad] and get on the Google Office App and just be typing away. And you know, I'd kill hours ... so, creatively I think it's a great little device ... If I had the money, I'd go buy one (laughs).

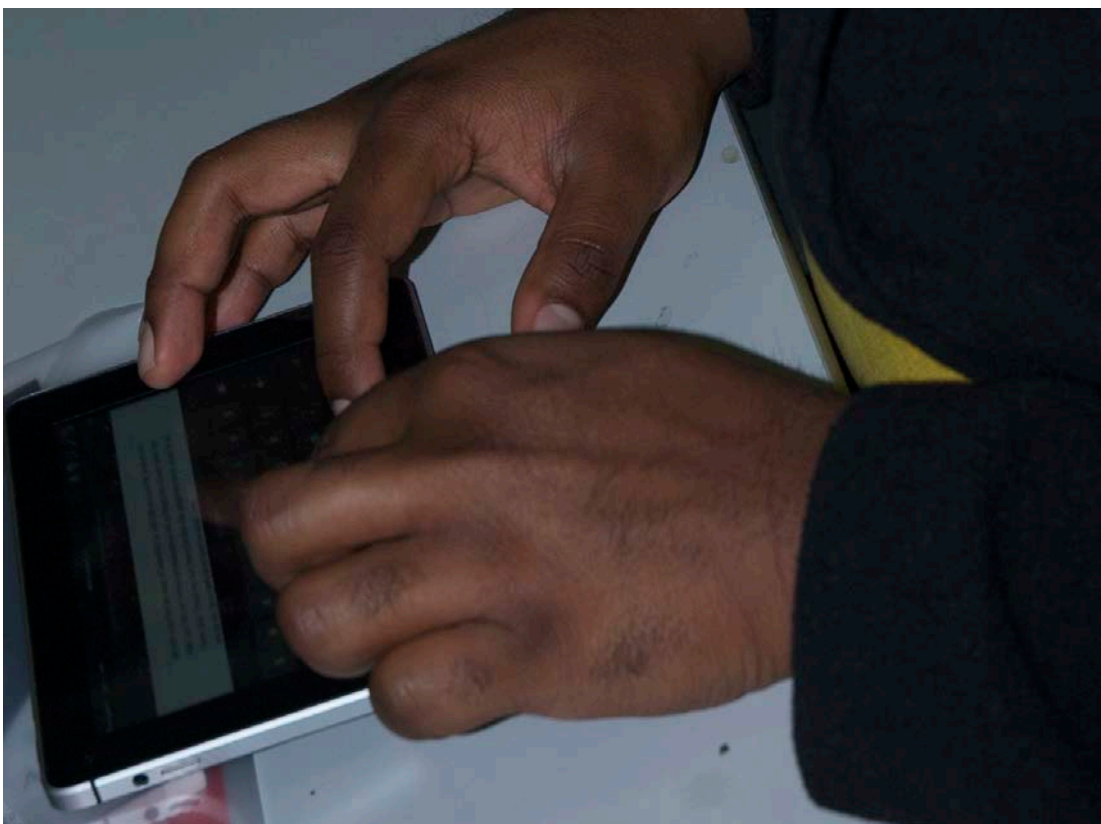
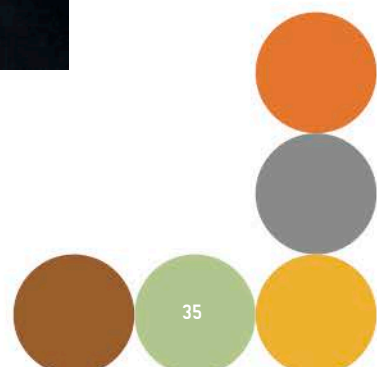


Figure 13: Writing notes for a story on the media pad



The workshop presentation allowed this participant to disseminate his knowledge of the media pad and its potential for enabling writing, filming and photographing elements for his story. His presentation encouraged others to continue experimenting with the device throughout the workshop.



Figure 14: Peer-to-peer learning: informal media pad presentation by participant

Finding a voice through 'yarning' and digital literacy

While the 'Yarning Circle' was a space for generating discussion and ideas at the beginning of the workshop, during the focus group discussion 'yarning' also emerged as a key concept in the participants' approach to articulating and narrating their stories, particularly when recording their voiceovers. This included recognition that their voiceovers converged with and were as significant as their images in telling their stories. 'Yarning' in this context is an important cultural signifier for presenting and retaining stories in the digital realm. It also illustrates a demand for supporting participants' digital literacy, including multisensory, creative approaches to digital storytelling.

Jenny

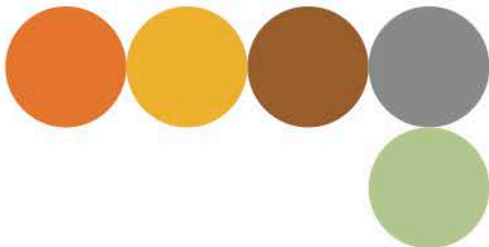
Even though I had two takes [in recording my voiceover] and Kimba said that she could... blend them in together... I suppose that when I was trying to put the pictures on, I actually didn't want to hear the voice because it didn't sound right. Yeah, probably no one wants to hear themselves, but I found that quite annoying because I kept thinking to myself I could have done that better...

Young man (23)

[In the recording booth] I started just breaking [my text] up and putting it in [smaller] stories... So when I was trying to say it, I wasn't trying to read it off the paper, I was trying to read it and put a little extra in it [make it] sound a bit more... like I was having a conversation.

Young man (21)

Having a 'yarn'.



Young man (23)

Yeah, have a 'yarn' instead of just like being boring, reading it straight from the text...

Jenny

It's really hard to sit there and try and tell a story when you're trying to read at the same time... I know we were time poor ... but maybe [next time]... spending a little more time on the audio stuff before you put them in the booth [would be useful].

An awareness of how information can be translated in the online sphere is evident from the participants' quotes above. This relates to ways of acquiring knowledge to safely manage their digital identity, which is discussed below.



Figure 15: Kimba and Jenny in the recording studio

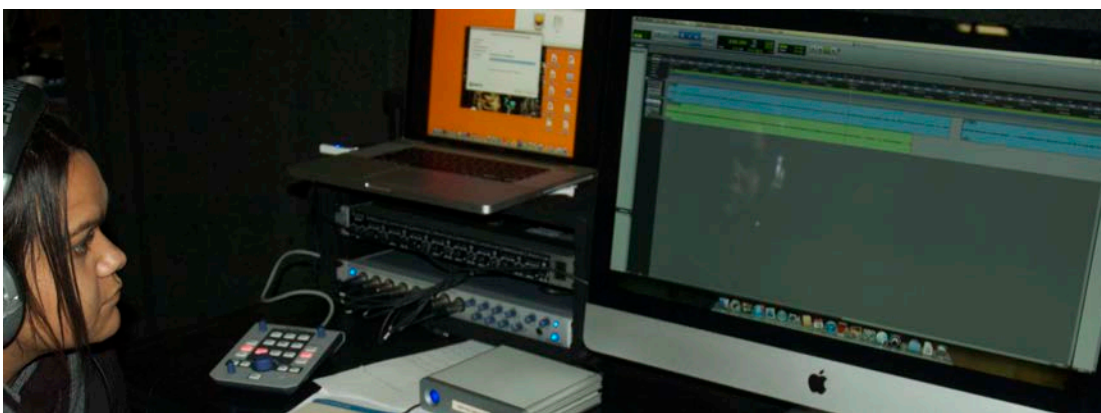
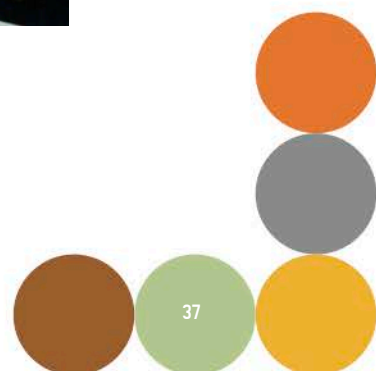


Figure 16: Listening to the recorded voice over





Digital literacy: Cultural Cybersafety and Cultural Protocols

As referred to previously, a recent parliamentary inquiry found that Aboriginal young people have technology skills equivalent to those of non-Aboriginal children, despite many not having a computer at home. This degree of digital literacy can be related to the influx and routine use of mobile technology among the Aboriginal community (Commonwealth of Australia 2013:12-13; cf. Watkins 2012). As also previously discussed, while Aboriginal young people are increasingly digitally literate, the type of information and imagery young people are willing to share online can potentially be problematic. Issues of cyber-bullying, racism and lateral violence are still concerns among the Aboriginal community (Hogan et al. 2013). However, as indicated by recent reports, cyber-safety for Aboriginal people is not limited to these concerns alone, but 'incorporates a wide range of issues, including protecting sensitive cultural information...' (Commonwealth of Australia 2013:30).

In this project, participants also agreed that there was a need to develop awareness of the availability of cultural knowledge online. While youth acknowledged that people should learn about cultural cyber-safety, Jenny articulated this in terms of her own experiences of sharing information online.

Jenny

For many years, I suppose you get told... you're quite protected about [what you can share]... Because for me ... only stuff that I know I can put up online is my personal stuff... pictures of my family, that sort of stuff. Now I knew that growing up a lot of stuff was kept [silent]. Now, that gap's there because of tradition and I understand that, but at the same time things have changed. But I still know, not to speak [my Ancestors'] name[s]... I don't do that ... I know that, it was quite drummed into me as a young girl.

Jenny's quote addresses the issue of cultural cyber-safety, which is not only restricted to online bullying and racism, but rests in the broader context surrounding cultural protocols and the use of material that may require permission from relevant authorities before being distributed online.

Digital Literacy: Self-representation, Creativity, Copyright and the Digital Archive

During the digital storytelling workshop, informal discussions were held in relation to copyright, including mediating between public and private distribution of cultural and family material and understanding the restrictions on sharing material that is not produced personally. This was most relevant when participants were searching online for images to fill gaps in their stories when editing them in Final Cut Pro.

While the online searches provided extra images for their stories, participants stated that they were not comfortable downloading images from 'Google' (despite only using those with a creative commons licence⁹), indicating a preference for controlling their own representations in the digital realm. For instance, Jenny suggested that 'instead of just photos and pictures, people could use their own artwork'. Maree Clarke was available during the 3-day workshop to assist participants in developing their stories with images. She took photographs during the workshop for their stories, taught some basic photography

⁹ See <http://creativecommons.org/about>



skills and supplied images from her own photographic archive – of people, places and events – to participants. Additionally, viewing the *Pitcha This* digital stories, shown during the workshop ‘yarning circles’, allowed participants to see what was possible using the technology, including editing the story, fading images in and out, using music effectively, and listening to voice overs.

While this phase of the workshop contributed to the participants’ knowledge of the creative capacity of the technology, they were concerned that the limited time and equipment did not allow them to fully control their self-representation and maximise the creative potential of digital technology.

Young woman (21)

I think we should have learnt...how to ... take a picture properly... That would have been deadly ...to learn... what angles and stuff like that...

I reckon [learning digital photography and editing skills] should be a part of the program as well, because when you think about it, you don't really do much with just adding the photo and the voice. ... that's just kind of it, and you kind of get bored with it... I was just like, oh I don't want to do this any more... But if we were learning how to do other stuff like [zooming in and out on the images], that would have been deadly. I probably would have been a bit more interested in it.

Young man (23)

Yeah, it was pretty kind of simple. Just get some photos, get your story, and kind of do that. I reckon there's time to really explore... Cos I've seen with [the Pitcha This] videos... that made a bit more of an effect... I reckon ... mine's just probably gonna be photos and it's probably gonna be boring a bit... So, next time we can probably start thinking about, and getting shown, all the elements... Like [making our own] pictures, video, audio, all that kind of stuff.

Aboriginal people’s control over their own representations in the digital realm extends to the development of digital applications for disseminating and retaining Aboriginal knowledge. Michael Christie suggests that developing a digital environment (e.g. a digital archive or database) that can assist ‘collective memory-making ...is fundamental to renewing ... knowledge in each new generation’ (Christie 2005:62), including contemporary representations of shared histories and identities. Although the conversation above focuses on young people’s desire to develop their digital and media literacy skills for creative and positive self-representations, determining how this information can continue to benefit and promote contemporary Aboriginal knowledge and culture remains an issue for the community to determine. As the Indigenous multimedia academic Samia Goudie and her colleague Natalie Davey suggest:

Each community needs the ability and agency to decide and control how media and technology should be used and importantly for whom it is produced (Davey and Goudie 2009:37).





Conclusion

In this pilot project, a group of Aboriginal young people in Victoria participated in a digital storytelling workshop, and shared their insights and recommendations about the way digital technology can be used to support their stories, culture and knowledge in the digital age. Significantly, this project found that for research to be successful, support from the Aboriginal community is integral to developing relationships with young people. Community support also contributed to a process of intergenerational knowledge exchange, where young people and older participants revealed how digital technology, through digital storytelling, impacts contemporary Aboriginal youth culture and identity.

The pilot digital storytelling workshop highlights the benefits of working in an environment that is known to participants and is a culturally safe space, enabling youth and older people to engage in an informal setting and assisting the process of improving digital literacy. Youth learned from Elders, particularly about family and cultural connections, and older people realised the significance of working in the digital realm for maintaining this knowledge for future generations.

Despite time restrictions and equipment limitations, young people could reveal their expertise in adapting to and manipulating digital technologies to produce their own stories. While these experiences were focused on the autobiographical approach to digital storytelling, informal and culturally inclusive learning about the technology was encouraged. These immersive experiences support Aboriginal 'ways of knowing', which include a whole-of-community approach to the project, fostering peer-to-peer learning, and allowing participants to 'mess around' with technology and develop understandings of the digital environment as a way of supporting the transmission of cultural knowledge. These approaches also potentially contribute to addressing issues associated with the 'participation gap'.

However, in this workshop, limitations to the autobiographical approach to digital storytelling were also revealed. It was found that alternative and creative approaches to digital storytelling could provide participants with greater opportunities to safely relate their experiences online. For participants seeking to assert positive reflections of themselves and their communities, being able to maximise the creative capacity of current and emergent digital technologies would assist them to explore and share their stories in the digital realm.

Finally, this project acknowledges that the uptake of mobile media devices and online social networks, such as Facebook, increasingly provides youth with ways of engaging in the digital realm that allow their experiences to be consumed and produced more expansively than ever before. Adopting innovative approaches to digital storytelling potentially allows youth to further their awareness of digital technology as a means for controlling their self-representations, including knowledge and dissemination of their culture and heritage, while increasing their capacity to reap the benefits enabled by the digital environment.



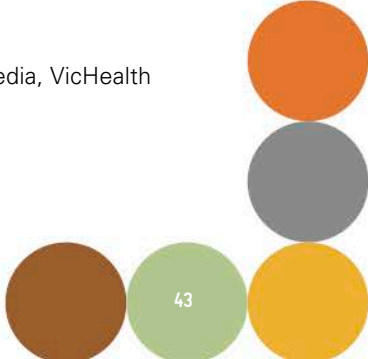
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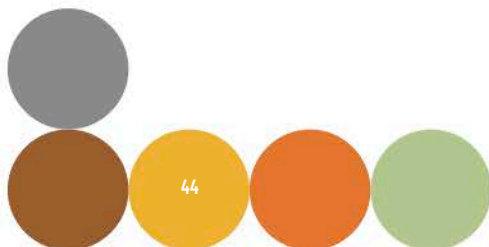
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