Reconnecting: Women and Reconciliation

Lucinda Aberdeen and Julie Mathews
University of the Sunshine Coast

Abstract

This paper highlights the activist and intellectual work of women in relation to reconciliation and emphasises the importance of woman’s perspectives in considering the nature and purpose of reconciliation.¹ The paper is the outcome of our participation in a women’s gathering where we conducted interviews with seven women activists, six of whom were of Indigenous background. Reconciliation in this context was not a straightforward set of practices but a way of living which reconnects country, kin, culture, sharing, knowing and learning. If reconciliation is to assist women in their efforts to address the contemporary effects of colonial dispossession, it must take heed of the knowledge and pedagogical work which this paper demonstrates are already at large.

We understand that research undertaken with Aboriginal people involving the production of a representational resource, no matter how well intentioned, must grapple with the politics of representation concerning who can speak for whom. By way of partial solution to this problematic we adopt a methodological approach which is sensitive and mindful of the complex and often contradictory ways in which women are positioned and position themselves in representational practices and meaning making.

Introduction

Australia’s history comprises a turbulent chronology of invasion and conquest in which Indigenous people have been dispossessed and confined in reserves and missions. Communities and families have been dispersed, children removed, citizenship rights withheld, and culture destroyed (Ticker, 1991: 21 cited in Jacobs, 1997: 209). Australia is the product of violent colonisation and yet the dominant Anglo Australian population regards it to be an ‘extraordinary peaceable’ nation (Pettman, 1992: 7). The brutal two hundred year history of settler colonialism had been expunged from the Australian historical archive and replaced by a self-image of harmony, equality, justice and a ‘fair go for all’.

Over the past thirty years the view that Australia was an empty land and that Aborigines were a ‘dying race’ who had shown little resistance to the occupation of their land, has been challenged by the revisionist histories of Rowley (1972), Evans et al. (1975), Reynolds (1981) and Attwood (2005). In the public arena revisionist accounts now circulate in an increasing number of forms - monographs, essays, novels, plays, poetry, feature films,

¹ Our work falls under the broad remit of the Rethinking Reconciliation and Pedagogy in Unsettling Times ARC project, involving Rob Hatam, Peter Bishop, Pam Christie, Pal Ahluwalia and Julie Mathews, which examines reconciliation pedagogy in the work of high profile and grass roots reconciliation activists, and school teachers in South Africa and Australia.
documentaries, exhibitions and so forth (Atwood, 2005: 244). Such accounts have prompted vitriolic debates about the production of over exaggerated and unnecessarily gruesome ‘Black Armband’ histories (McKenna, 1997). Nevertheless, the image of a harmonious, peaceable, reasonable Australia is no small feat of imagination.

The context of contemporary Australian reconciliation is thus one where mainstream historical understandings of ‘settlement’ have been ‘unsettled’ by new histories, which have themselves become contested and challenged by new racisms, nationalisms and the ‘politics of resentment’ (Hollinsworth, 1996: 197). These manage a curious set of reversals where ‘we/Australians’ claim victim status based on the erroneous view that Indigenous Australians now receive ‘too much’. In a similar vein, popular discourse promotes the view that ‘we’/Australians are surrounded on all sides by the engulfing tide of ‘threats to national security’ and ‘new evils’ variously labelled refugees, ‘illegals’, terrorists, foreigners and even peace activists.

It is under such conditions that reconciliation in Australia seeks to acknowledge and address the effects of Indigenous disadvantage. Its primary concern being the promotion of community education and provision of advice to government and other agencies. In line with this, a great many discussions of reconciliation revolve around practical matters of teaching and learning the ‘truth’ about past injustices and/or practical reconciliation and redress. There is however a different dimension to reconciliation - one that cannot be conceived of as a straightforward set of practices, but a way of living that reconnects country, kin, culture, sharing, knowing and learning. This understanding of reconciliation was at large in women’s gathering we attended where we conducted interviews with seven women activists, six of whom were of Indigenous background. We argue that to assist women in their efforts to address the contemporary effects of colonial dispossession, reconciliation must comprehend the fundamental centrality and importance of reconnections to ‘country’ and the revisions to knowledge and understanding that accompany such comprehension. Country\(^2\) can be understood as follows:

‘Country’ refers to more than just a geographical area: it is a shorthand for all the values, places, resources, stories, and cultural obligations associated with that geographical area (CAR, 1993).

Cheri, cited later in this paper articulates the knowledge and understanding that resonates around ‘country’ when she observes that ‘the country own the people, not the other way around’.

We begin this paper with a discussion of the experience of Indigenous women under colonisation. We proceed with an account of the research context, namely a gathering of women at Nungeena Aboriginal Corporation for Women’s Business located in the Sunshine Coast, Queensland where we conducted interviews with seven women activists, six of whom were of Indigenous background. Here we provide a brief account of feminist research and respond to the charge that such research comprises a colonising methodology. The paper then

\(^2\) Understanding Country is one of eight key issue papers and information sheets released by The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, the others include: Improving Relationships, Valuing Cultures, Sharing History, Addressing Disadvantage, Responding To Custody Levels, Agreeing On A Document, Controlling Destinies, and Addressing The Key Issues For Reconciliation and are available at http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/pubs.html#publish
sketches arguments and critiques of the reconciliation initiative in Australia over the past decade.

The violence and dispossession of colonialism in Australia resulted in 'extraordinary brutality' towards Aboriginal women (Jebb & Haebich, 1992). The sexual exploitation and frequent rape of Indigenous women by European men was rarely reported and remain largely invisible in the historical record (Sykes in Lake, 2003: 148). Although Indigenous women have long borne the brunt of colonisation their experiences have been largely absent from the historical record (Saunders and Evans, 1992), and overlooked in Federal and State policy. What is visible are depictions of Aboriginal women as available and immoral, and Aboriginal men as the aggressive and threatening predators of white women (Pettman, 1992: 27).

Such accounts misunderstood Aboriginal gender relations, prior to, and after colonisation. The Eurocentric assumption that Aboriginal women had little control over sexual relations has since been challenged. Sexual relations in colonial contexts involve Aboriginal women in complex negotiations but they women are not invariably the victims of men. However unlikely the possibility of egalitarian social relations in a male-dominated racist patriarchal society, not all liaisons with European men were devoid of affection, indeed such relationships enabled Aboriginal women to move across racial boundaries to gain particular privileges for themselves and their families and communities (Hollinsworth, 1998; Jebb & Haebich, 1992). The governance of Indigenous people has also constituted a predominantly male-dominated 'Aboriginal bureaucratic elite' embedded and dependent on the state' (Pettman, 1992: 91). Women issues have been neglected and men have been in the position to reconstruct themselves as the main representatives of Aboriginal culture.

Aboriginal people are over-researched and monitored in comparison to other groups, and non-Indigenous researchers and academics are often involved in 'the process of constituting knowledge about them, about Aboriginality' (Pettman, 1992: 91). An important task then is to undertake research which engages with the actual experience of different women while retaining sight of institutional structures and power relations to engender critique (Pettman, 1992: 17; Smith, D., 1987). The challenge is to represent the past without obscuring the multiple complexities of women's everyday lives as they act to challenge and negotiate the constraints and restrictions of racist patriarchy. Such work is important and necessary if we are to comprehend how the structure of domination orchestrated by the state has made the Indigenous population in general, and women in particular, a major target of governance. This paper seeks to make visible the intellectual and activist work of women in relation to 'reconciliation'. It closes with the argument that women's perspective and knowledge engage with hope and possibility for the future, even as it recounts the vile histories of the past and the ongoing oppressions of the present.

The Gathering

In March 2005 the Noosa and Hinterland Branch of the Queensland Greens initiated a gathering of women at Nungeena Aboriginal Corporation for Women's Business at Mt Beerwah, Sunshine Coast. The Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisers invited women to meet and share ideas and issues; to develop networks, links and actions so that Indigenous women's knowledge, experience and vision could become a resource for all women to access.
and share. The authors of this paper were invited to assist with the collection of notes and observations. In their opening introductions, the organisers explained the presence of cameras, students and lecturers in the following terms:

these are ladies that have come here to record on behalf of the University so we can have a record of this but it’s being funded by the Australian Research Council so we’re really pleased that they are able to be here to support us today and maybe the document that we have then will be able to be shown. It would be good for others to see these powerful women here that are doing such good things. If you have any objections please let us know.

Prior to the main business of the day we video taped interviews with seven activists, elders, welfare professionals and welfare workers. Each interview lasted for approximately fifteen minutes and addressed the following questions:

1. What are the main issues you face as an Indigenous woman?
2. How do you maintain your enthusiasm and optimism?
3. How does your work relate to reconciliation?

The visual interview data was analysed for key themes or recurrent themes and compiled into a twenty-five minute digital video. Copies of the film were circulated after the gathering to participants for comments and feedback. It was also screened in November 2005 at the Nungeena property to an audience of indigenous and non-indigenous women and their comments sought.

In the morning discussions took place in groups of 5-6 women with non-participant students taking notes. The women were invited to express how they felt things were going, what needed doing and their dreams for the future. Each group then reported back on the main points raised during their discussion. The meeting closed with an open forum which generated inspirational and practical actions as well as sharing a deep and irresolvable sense of loss and sadness. Actions included a day of grieving, and action to respect the Stolen Generations by gathering around or placing flags around the Apology Plaque in King George Square, Brisbane to stop people from walking on it.

Participants identified several issues of concern and possibility. First, that young women were still having their children taken from them. This destroyed family relationships, community, culture and respect for Elders, as well as impeding their capacity to develop strategies to deal with violence. Second, that women were forming support groups and networks to share ideas and resources but they needed to align with other groups and organisations to ensure that their voices were heard in policy and party political forums. Third, that Indigenous women needed a body to advocate on their behalf at local level – not just in legal matters but also in relation to education and housing and in relation to policy advocacy with political parties. Finally, government funding to maintain community independence was emphasised as of paramount importance.

3 Thanks are due to: Phil Gorbett (production advisor); Sarah Copeland (camera); Emma Kill (second camera); Amanda Murrell (sound); Sondra Smit (editor) and Kate Coupe (production assistant).
Colonising Methodology

Our methodological approach seeks to be sensitive of the pitfalls and complexities of colonising research. We are mindful of the fact that the production of a representational resource, involving Indigenous people, no matter how well intentioned, must address the fraught politics of representation concerning who can speak for whom (Smith, 1999).

Feminist research in Australia has a long and troubled history in this regard. In the 1970s it was challenged for presuming a myth of ‘sisterhood’ where non-Indigenous women spoke about sexist patriarchy on behalf of all women. Indigenous women challenged these assumptions arguing that their struggles were against ‘the state, the system, social injustices and primarily racism, far in excess of patriarchy’ (Huggins, 1991: 506). White women and non-white migrants were identified as ‘colonizers’ and the beneficiaries of Aboriginal dispossession (Lake, 2003). For Lake, it is precisely these provocations and dialogues, including the production of Aboriginal women’s life stories, that have changed Australian national history and ‘contributed importantly to the popular movement towards ‘reconciliation’ that remains one of the most important political challenges for Australians at the beginning of the twenty-first century’ (Lake, 2003: 159).

We are deeply committed to reconciliation and regard this paper and the production of the video as a small contribution to the process. While we take full responsibility for the narrative production and analytical directions of the paper, and thus for the knowledge it constitutes about Aboriginal women, we want to emphasise that the women we spoke to were highly informed and articulate activists and professionals who where establishing mechanisms of support and action, as well as ways of documenting and circulating their concerns in a wider forum. These women were certainly able to make informed judgements about who to speak to and what to say (Huggins cited in Pettman, 1992: 146). Nevertheless, research does have the capacity to ‘reveal damage and conflict within stigmatised communities or groups which may then be used against them’ (Pettman, 1992: 147). Speaking out can thus be problematic if it risks confirming stereotypes of ‘Aboriginal men as brutal and savage, or provides excuses for further state intervention’ (Pettman, 1992: 28).

A final methodological point concerns the pedagogical power of visual resources. To see and hear these women speak is to be drawn into their lives and stories. It is to be humbled by their strength and fragility. Not surprisingly our analysis of the video interview transcripts was informed by image, sound, colour and movement; an incomprehensible expression, the tenor of voice, a smile - our momentary sharing of the intensities of ‘their’ lives. We came to realise the pedagogical potential of video-taped interviews for enabling the viewer to see others, and themselves. We felt that visual data had the capacity to prompt the desire to know more and do more. Visual engagements generate a deep affective relationship which makes it difficult to walk away unmoved and unchanged by the experience of seeing and hearing.

The extracts discussed below are based on testimonies and interviews with seven women. Two of the women were high profile public figures in Australia and the Solomon Islands, two were elders and three were welfare professionals in social work, youth work and counselling. The women spoke of a common experience of hardship, oppression and

---

struggle; the result of dispossession and the removal of communities to reserves; the forced removals of children; loss of cultural heritage and identity and a lack of access to resources such as transport and housing. For them maintaining enthusiasm and optimism required commitment to culture along with commitment to organising for change to better the lives of all women.

After lunch Erykah Kyle, the Mayor of Palm Island, and Ethel Sigimanu, the Secretary-General of the Solomon Islands Department of National Unity Peace and Reconciliation, delivered an account of the situation for women in Palm Island and the Solomon Islands. Their speeches were interactive inasmuch as they were interrupted by others who wanted to share similar stories and offer suggestions and advice.

Erykah described the sheer hopelessness on Palm Island; the poor health of women due to the lack of a female doctor, illiteracy, the absence of employment opportunities, overcrowded housing, family disintegration, incarceration and finally, the media’s greater interest in self-proclaimed male leader over elected female representatives. She stressed the need for strategies for action and people to produce their own projects and programs, the need to feel part of a community, and the open door policy she had introduced on the Council. Erykah noted that Aboriginal women were ‘at the bottom rung of the ladder’ and that it was the responsibility of those who ‘make it through’ to ‘find a way of pulling others through with us’. She went on to observe that:

Throughout Australia there were many many deaths in custody. Those deaths were a great loss to families especially the mothers who bore those sons and who died in that alien environment. I am one of those mothers. I lost my son and for the mothers you never, never get over that, you never get past it, you never have the peace that you think would come. I continually hear people saying, and especially non-Aboriginal, you have to move on. There is no such thing as moving on when you are deep in grief and that grief stays with you all your life. I’d like us to stand for a minute’s silence. Remember all of those who lost their lives in custody and especially our hearts are with all of those mothers especially who bore them but also to the families.

The moment was leaden.

Ethel, speaking of the Solomon Islander context, opened with the following passionate and eloquent address:

I know what it’s like to want to be a doctor and not become one. I know what it’s like to want to live a life free of violence but don’t have a choice. These are things that Solomon Islands women are also faced with. The kind of problems that your women are facing are also problems that we are also facing. There may be different magnitudes but the commonalities are so real that I can almost think for Aboriginal women as well. I do not want to dwell on the problems because I think we know them so much and we’ve been talking about them for ages. I think we should now look at what we need to do as individuals, as families, as women, as communities and as a society. I think we should start looking at the way forward. How do we ensure that there’s equality, how do we ensure that are voices are heard? How do we ensure that the respect that is our right is guaranteed? How do we ensure that we are recognised in the society that we are marginalised?
Ethel’s speech showed us that the issues raised by Indigenous women also resonated with those faced by women in the Solomon Islands. She reminded us that the desire to live a violence free future, a future of respect, choice, and equality was the desire of women everywhere.

Cheri delivered a powerful and eloquent speech during the feedback session. The speech is replicated below:

I’m crying because I’m in my country and it’s just an amazing experience for myself and my family who are here today to be in our ancestor’s land walking on this beautiful land. Our land cries for our people. Our country cries for our women because in the tradition of Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal women made the statements about our law. It was the men that carried out that law but we women were the ones that formed and made our law and we were the ones who made and formed how our systems, how our family systems, how our cultural systems worked and the men were then able to carry it out.

Today we talked about so many things but the thing that I think was on the heart of all of us was this, if we as women continue to allow ourselves to be the victims of politics, of social injustice, of government policies we as women will always be victims and we will never change this political system that controls all of us men and women. We believe that it is time for us to take off that victimisation that all of us live by. We have been schooled to be victims. Men are there to speak for us. Men come and take our voices away from us and they speak on our behalf.

I believe that we as women have to be strong enough to become a force in this nation that owns all of us a voice, a voice, a voice and not allow that voice to be snatched away by our dear brothers who will say to us, ‘You don’t have to speak my sister, I’ll speak for you’ and they shut our mouths. We see it in our organisations, we see it in all of our community. We see it even in government politics.

Cheri challenges the patriarchal practices which have neglected and silenced women and uses the emotion generated during the workshop sessions to condemn the loss of women’s involvement in law and politics and strengthen resolve to address the matter.

Reconciliation

In her interview Cheri observed that reconciliation has to happen; it has to be a way of life that works at all levels and reconnects to country, to kin, to culture, to sharing and learning. It is a vital part of all our struggles for justice and a better future:

Reconciliation for all of Australia has to happen. It’s 215 years too long. Aboriginal people have not had the space or been given the opportunity as a nation of peoples, which we are. We have not been given that place and that space to bury our dead, to grieve for our dead and to mourn for our dead as the non-Indigenous people have, with Anzac Day celebrations. They can actually mourn for those heroes that gave them what they have today.
We, as Aboriginal people, haven’t had that opportunity, and to me, reconciliation is about the recognition that we, first of all are the first nation’s people of this country, but more importantly, that this country owns us. We don’t own this country, and neither do those that have come to this country and who call themselves Australians. This country owns all of us, and that, to me, is a real facet of reconciliation, the recognition that the country owns the people, not the other way around.

And I really believe that if we approach reconciliation from that perspective, then the things like the economic outcomes, the materialistic outcomes that sometimes seem to be overwhelming and sometimes seem to impose upon this spiritual sense of ownership belonging to the land itself, rather than to the people who walk across it. I think, to me, that’s part of true reconciliation. Without reconciliation, we will continue to be a disenfranchised people.

Cheri demands formal recognition for the losses borne by Indigenous people. She accounts for country beyond that of materialist accounting practice. In state policy reconciliation seeks to assuage effect of the colonial past and deal with its historical fall out. For, Cherie reconciliation means more - it means reconnections to country which first require formal acknowledgement of what has gone before, and second demands that we all relearn and reconnect to our place this ‘country’.

The history of Nungeena and its purpose was described as relating fundamentally to the work of reconciliation. Cassy explained that Nungeena was principally pedagogical and reconciliatory, not in the sense of teaching non-Indigenous Australians about Indigenous Australia but in the sense of reconciling Indigenous women with their heritage and reconnecting all women with women’s issues:

One of our constitutional objectives is the inclusion of women from different ethnic backgrounds and our foremothers, our founding mothers, they had the wisdom enough to know that all women, doesn’t matter what colour they are, they all go through the same types of issues. So their idea was to have a place where all women, and especially Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander women, can come and relearn, reconnect themselves back with their culture. And, as part of that process too, to help other women to be proud of their culture as well and to share and learn with us, and we share and learn with them.

These accounts recall Mick Dodson’s view that practical outcomes are not at the heart of reconciliation, rather it is about reconnection and belonging to the soul and spirit of this place and this nation:

Although issues of the health; housing and education of Indigenous Australians are of key concern to a nation, they are not issues that are at the very heart or the very soul of reconciliation. But they are - quite simply - the entitlements every Australian should enjoy. The tragedy is that they are entitlements successive governments have denied. Why should they be given some higher order of things in the reconciliation process?
Reconciliation is about far deeper things - to do with nation, soul and spirit. Reconciliation is about the blood and flesh of the lives we must lead together not the nuts and bolts of the entitlements as citizens we should all enjoy (Dodson, cited in Leigh, 2000: 387).

**The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation**

We would now like to undertake a brief analysis that highlights the disjuncture between the formal processes of reconciliation as a state policy as taken up by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) and revisionist history. We then want to argue that the arguments of the Indigenous women reported here remind us that reconciliation must be informed by a mindfulness of the future, and this requires careful and resourceful engagements with revisionist accounts of the past.

In 1991 CAR was set up under a Federal Act of Parliament to administer the process of reconciliation (Hollinsworth, 1998: 207) and was disbanded in 2001. The policy emerged out of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) was a response to the testimonies of ‘routine victimisation and disadvantage of Indigenous people’ made during the hearings (Hollinsworth, 1998: 201).

RCIADIC Commissioners did not find a ‘common thread of abuse, neglect or racism’ (RCIADIC, 1991a: 1), neither did they find that Aboriginal inmates and detainees were more likely to die in custody than were non-Aborigines. Rather they identified ‘Aboriginality’ as an important reason for disproportionate numbers of Aborigines being in custody. Indigenous people in comprise 2 per cent of the total population of Australia and 20 per cent of the total prison population.

Although ‘the entire history of colonisation was blamed for current levels of Aboriginal deaths in custody’ (Jacobs, 1997: 206), the final recommendation did not address conditions of incarceration, but reconciliation to that history:

> all political leaders and parties recognise that reconciliation between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Australian must be achieved if community division, discord and injustice to Aboriginal people are to be avoided (RCIADIC, 1991 cited in Jacobs, 1997: 206).

State reconciliation policy sought to address Indigenous disadvantage through community education and the provision of advice to government and other agencies (Aberdeen & Matthews, 1999; Hollinsworth, 1998). Its core task was to disseminate knowledge and understanding of the history of colonial settlement and contemporary conditions, to change attitudes and to forge closer interpersonal relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Leigh, 2000). As a state response to an unacceptable situation or crisis (Matthews & Aberdeen, 2004), its key task was to rebuild the nation (Attwood, 2005; Jacobs, 1997) and create:

> A united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and provides justice and equality for all (CAR, 1998).
**New ‘truths’ to heal us?**

Reconciliation assumes that the provision of new ‘truths’ will ‘heal the wounds of the past’ unify and bring us together. (Jacobs, 1997: 205). The point we want to underline here is that while this notion of reconciliation may be dominant and pervasive, it is not unproblematic. First, it assumes that on hearing the new historical ‘truths’ people will be prompted to right previous wrongs and become reconciled - as if past colonial conditions are no longer present or valid (Attwood, 2005). Revisionist histories are not simply corrective narratives which automatically generate settlements, understanding and reconciliation. Indeed, such accounts can be radically unsettling, and no less able to prompt exclusions and new versions of racism. Such reversals have been noted by Jacobs (1997), Attwood (2005) and Aberdeen & Matthews (2004). Second, as Jacobs observes the very establishment of Australia as a national entity was based on the exclusion of Aboriginal culture and Australia continues to sustain its sense of unity and national identity through processes of exclusionary ‘othering’. A reconciliation premised on a revised insider status of Indigenous Australians is troubling if it bypasses or is regarded as irrelevant to new sets of postcolonial exclusions and boundary making. Third the effort to unify Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can serve at the same time to constrain moves towards Aboriginal sovereignty and self-determination (Attwood, 2005) and fourth, the production of a singular revisionist historical narrative contains and constrains the nation’s ‘pastness’ in a way that glosses over cultural and gender differences between Indigenous people, and presses multiple testimonies and memories into a singular historical account.

Attwood notes that revisionist history has:

> articulated a national history that was new content wise but quite conventional in terms of its form. It was a single, factual account of the nation’s history, compiled by objective historical research which would constitute a common or unified collective understanding of its past (Attwood, 2005: 246).

We do not want to imply that there is one best way to do reconciliation or that it can be ‘fixed’ by adding a gender perspective. Reconciliation may be a contested concept with different kinds of salience in different political contexts, but it nevertheless serves as an important ‘rallying point’ and thus requires us to heed of its various pedagogical processes, practices and potentials.

**Conclusion**

As women academics and researchers concerned with reconciliation, we believe that our work should quite rightly support the work of Indigenous women. However, as one of the non-Indigenous organisers of the gathering observed, we must be mindful of the fact that: ‘the suffering and struggles of Indigenous women are not merely resources for the edification of non-Indigenous Australians’.

This paper highlights the intellectual and activist work of women in relation to reconciliation and emphasises the importance of a women’s perspective in considering the nature and
The purpose of reconciliation. The professional and local work of the women we encountered and interviewed at the gathering worked the space of the local, particular, general and political. They related the issues and problems encountered in the everyday with the immediate strategies necessary to sustain hope, the long term movements required to change policy and practice, and the fundamental shifts in knowledge and understanding necessary to address the contemporary effects of colonial dispossession. Reconciliation in such a view brings together knowledge and understanding – it is not a final state of settlement or compromise, but one which invokes and ongoing, constant and fundamental reworking of what we ‘know’ about ourselves, our place, and our ‘country’. It recalls the importance of reconnections and new connections in the struggle ahead – a struggle that cherishes hope and possibility for the future, while refusing to disregard the ongoing histories of the present.

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the inspiration, vision and commitment of the women attending the Nungeena gathering, the Nungeena Board and the Noosa and Hinterland Branch of the Queensland Greens.

References


Saunders, Kay & Evans, Raymond. (1992). Introduction. In Kay Saunders & Raymond Evans (Eds.), *Gender*