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ARTICLE

Towards an Indigenous-Informed Multispecies Collaboratory

Sandra Wooltorton[1,2] and Peta J. White[3]

[1]The University of Notre Dame Australia - Broome Campus, Nulungu Research Institute, Broome, WA, Australia, [2]Centre for People, Place & Planet, Edith Cowan University, South Bunbury, WA, Australia and [3]School of Education, Deakin University, Burwood, VIC, Australia
Corresponding author: Peta J. White; Email: peta.white@deakin.edu.au

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Abstract
How does Australia's latest Indigenous defeat relate to Environmental Education? The answer is *direct complicity*. This paper begins with the premise that the failure of Australia's 2023 referendum on "The Voice to Parliament" is directly connected with education. The chapter builds on the proposition that local and Indigenous public knowledge could — *and should* — be the heart of environmental education. We apply a post-qualitative practice that is underpinned by innovative feminisms and the post-qualitative methods within a Multispecies Collaboratory, an experimental way of transforming our learning by attending to the responsive, relational world of all beings. We use this practice to *think with* while exploring socio-ecological relations, especially our own. Collaboratory colleagues include rivers with their kincentric ecologies, urban park ecosystems and backyard kin or families. Journaling, creative writing and photography record our learning journeys. The article concludes that continuing colonisation, epistemic violence and a culture of denial reinforce the dominant paradigm of silencing Indigenous voices. We argue that an Indigenous-informed onto-epistemology of living place can — *and should* — inform the heart and practice of environmental education, and an Indigenous-informed Multispecies Collaboratory is one way to deepen the multispecies engagement that underpins environmental education.

Keywords: Multispecies collaboratories; Indigenous knowledge; environmental education

Opening

For many Australians, sadness and anger accompany the defeat of the Voice Referendum, which was "A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice" (National Indigenous Australians Agency, 2023; Uluru Statement, 2023). Analysis of the referendum polling booth counts shows that by and large, Indigenous communities voted yes to the referendum[1]. Saturday, 14 October 2023, becomes yet another Indigenous defeat since colonisation, alongside a history of multiple massacres in every state, Land[2] theft, the stolen generations, the end of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), over-imprisonment and silencing of the Land's voice (Carter & Nutter, 2005; Falk, 2004; Jebb, 2002; Poelina, Brueckner & McDuffie 2020; Ryan et al., 2022). Indigenous commentator Stan Grant refers to Australia as a mean country — one that is

[1]Further information and results — AEC Tally Room.
[2]Land and Country are capitalised to denote a relational understanding of living, responsive, sentient landscapes.

still a penal colony (Anderson, 2023). The evidence for this assertion is in plain view and well documented (Behrendt et al., 2016).

By Monday, 16 October 2023, two days after the referendum, academic comment flourished: we should all listen (James, 2023), it will be a long healing journey (Saphore, 2023), lies produce racism (Strating & Carson, 2023), and the nation missed an opportunity to help redress the most grievous injustice in its history (Strangio, 2023). In a subsequent public lecture, Stan Gran says:

> We who dare to speak of justice or racism, we are cast as the provocateurs. We are the troublemakers. We are the truth that dare not speak its name. (Grant, 2023)

Author positionality

By way of introduction, we are multigenerational Australian women of mainly Anglo-Celtic ancestry — lifetime environmental educators committed to feminist, anti-racist (inclusive), anticolonial and democratic notions of what it is to be Australian. As allies, we stand with Indigenous voices. Sandra is currently located in southwest Australia and acknowledges Wardandi Noongar custodians, *boodjar* (Country[3]) and knowledge. She has been learning Noongar language and co-researching with Noongar Elders and guides for many years (Wooltorton et al., 1992) and more recently also with Kimberley mentors (Poelina et al. 2023b). Peta lives in the Dandenong Hills outside Naarm, Melbourne, and acknowledges Wurundjeri people and unceded Country. She co-directs the Centre for Regenerating Futures where decolonising practices are foundational. We acknowledge our commitment to truth-telling, Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous-inspired environmental healing through our lives, particularly via our agentic role and practices as educators/academics. Taking inspiration from Grant, we dare to speak of justice and racism, and we take some responsibility for promoting transformative action (Wooltorton et al., 2022). We do our best to decolonise and synthesise our thinking, with reliance on published Indigenous voices to inform, guide and support.

In this article, we write a post-referendum reflection on the question:

> How does Australia's latest Indigenous defeat relate to environmental education?

A second question is:

> What can environmental educators do to improve this situation in Australia and beyond?

We take the view that Black Australia has a White problem that White people need to take responsibility for and act on. Our intention is to disentangle how we see, interpret — and act otherwise in our places (Hart & White, 2022). We accept at the outset that places are alive, sentient, communicative and responsive — whether we are aware of this or not (Bawaka Country et al. 2019). We use a Multispecies Collaboratory within a relational methodology to bring the agency of places to bear upon our thinking and action, taking care not to reproduce colonial ways of being and knowing (Poelina et al., 2020).

Multispecies Collaboratories, according to Nelson and Drew (2023), "create a supportive milieu for reconceptualizing more-than-human place relations in ways that bring shared life and collective responsibilities into view" (2023, p. 1). For this learning purpose, we develop a collaboratory for ourselves and our places, rather than with children as used elsewhere (Taylor et al., 2021). We could have used the term multispecies collaboration, but we wish to retain the experimental notion for transformative learning, drawing attention to the relational, responsive,

[3]The use of Country (capital C) conveys an Indigenous English understanding of place that is broader and more inclusive than the normal English meaning. Capitalised Country includes socio-ecological-spiritual connection.

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response-able world — that is, a world that is communicative within an experiential, practical, reciprocal place-language (Bawaka Country et al., 2019). As educator/academics, we practice for ourselves in our place communities with Indigenous authorial voices and our kin species (Kimmerer, 2017) on stolen Indigenous Country.

In this way, we report upon a creative-practical journey that requires repeated cycles of thinking-in-action, ample practice, reflection, and relearning. First, we revisit the colonial enterprise to devise decolonial methods in spirit and practice.

The referendum on racism

Australian referendum discussions reveal the breadth and depth of racism in Australia, a complicity involving all teachers and academics, by its presence or absence in our work. We do not automatically assume a "no" vote means a racist respondent, and we acknowledge the depth and breadth of fear as an impact of the no campaign (Anderson, 2023; Begley, 2023).

What is racism, and how does it work?

Fuentes (2023) explains the way racism remains as a frame of white supremacy, whereas race as a biological concept is false. He stresses that race as a lived experience emerges from racism, not the other way around, and there is no such thing as racial variation in humans. Race as a social category exists only under colonial and settler colonial mandates and is active, day to day and harmful. So, the question to be asked is, does Australia have a racism problem? Race Discrimination Commissioner Chin Tan (2023) says we do. Racism, he comments:

> . . . is a tentacled monster that feels impossible to slay, and its venomous nature seems to have only mutated in recent times. (Tan, 2023).

Tan (2023) writes that whilt the referendum discussion has sometimes showcased respectful listening and optimism for a better Australia, there have also been bigoted, racist stereotypes and hurtful rhetoric left uncontested. People have been called "un-Australian," while misinformation and falsehoods have brought racism to the fore. He pointed out that some of the unchallenged ideologies were extremely dangerous. Some Indigenous groups described the vote as an "unparalleled act of racism by white Australia" (Canales, 2023). We conclude that the quality of the discussion leading to the vote comprised significant elements of racism, and we accept that the outcome provides evidence of the existence of racism and racist ideologies even if the main intent of the no campaign was to engender fear. We write more about experiences of fear within families later in the paper.

Countering racism through education

Through the learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities, the Australian Curriculum (n.d.) enables all students at all levels across Australia to learn the truth of our history and the structural and agential ways in which our society operates. Thecurriculum allows students to learn to critique society from socially just perspectives and encourages them to gain experiences they reflect on through Indigenous, multicultural and ecological perspectives. Here, student rights and educator obligations are assumed. By this logic, agency through active and informed citizenship in education is essential, as is the need to explore complexity and politics.

Colonial continuities and epistemic work as resistance

Colonisation continues to have massive a impact on Indigenous Australians by mining Indigenous land without full Indigenous consent (Poelina, 2019; RiverofLife Martuwarra et al., 2020), by

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top-down decisions on matters of Indigenous well-being (Poelina, 2021), by structures creating inequitable educational and social outcomes (Commonwealth of Australia, 2022) and more. As academics and educators, we need to understand colonisation including academic colonisation, which is appropriating Indigenous knowledge without acknowledgement, recognition, engagement or partnership. What has this to do with the referendum on the voice, you might ask? Let us investigate epistemic knowledge, the core of our work.

It is essential that Indigenous knowledge and information from academic publications is read as a whole, in full as intended. Mining sentences that might seem useful is yet another form of extractive colonisation (Poelina et al., 2020). Academic colonisation is associated with White ignorance or believing one's opinions without awareness of not knowing — thus denying complicity in racism and structures of colonisation. Not knowing — ignorance — is also a systemic syndrome, an element of continuing colonisation (Moreton-Robinson, 2011). Epistemic violence is an outcome of systemic ignorance, causing the subsuming of minority and Indigenous knowledge systems within dominant orders of knowledge and structures of oppression and marginalisation. To not act on these violence for reasons of ignorance is a form of White privilege that perpetuates colonisation and continued injustice. As academics and/or educators, our work is to read and heed Indigenous writers, taking action to inform and involve others and paying attention.

Epistemic violence includes not listening, not hearing and intentional silencing — such as denying a voice or avoiding the truth. There is an element of such structural violence deeply entangled in national and international politics (Brunner, 2021; Moreton-Robinson, 2011). Epistemic violence is enacted by dominant knowledge systems, as an invention of modernity in its production, organisation and separation of knowledge spheres, creating dysfunctions of "otherness" (Brunner, 2021).

Hage (2017) writes that racism is an environmental threat, in the sense where both racism and speciesism reinforce and reproduce the dominant societal structures. It is in the "generalised domestication," he says, where the generative structures of these two meta-issues are located. He argues that overlapping oppressions take place by "straitjacketing the imagination," in the process marginalising both ethical and moral discourses. Politically, he says, it is imperative that combined generation of racial and ecological crises be acknowledged, to inform action for change. A range of studies exemplify the interconnectedness of crises. For example, the operation of water markets co-produces environmental racism, ecocide, unfairness to local farmers and state-facilitated water theft. Solutions include recognising allies who already practice modified management based on ecological justice and citizenship and mentoring in Indigenous and local ways of knowing for multilevel change. For example, see Lobo et al. (2024) — particularly the chapter by Baird, chapter 3 — and Penteado et al. (2024).

Because of their generative co-productivity, societally embedded structures of oppression are difficult to dislodge in universities and schools. We heard these oppressions voiced as assumptions during the referendum, purposefully launched to obfuscate and confuse and complexify. For example, it was argued by Senator Malcolm Roberts that the Voice would "effectively create apartheid in Australia, giving a minority of Australians more political franchise than the majority based on race" (Chan, 2023, Claim 7), which as a whole resulted in officially maintaining the ongoing silence of an Indigenous Australian voice.

As part of the task of decolonising our work, educators/academics need to reconnect separated knowledge spheres such as society and environment by acknowledging and using Indigenous sciences. We can unmute epistemic silences by including Indigenous voices as part of regular teaching, learning and research, revealing and enabling relationalities and including Indigenous philosophical wisdoms (Poelina et al., 2023a). To understand relationality, we need to practice being-as-relationship. Towards this goal and to contextualise the methodology applied in this article and practice, we use a worldview of living place, which we now describe.

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A worldview of living, breathing, animate place

We begin with the idea of thinking-with Indigenous theory, to encounter and act upon thoughts arising as we do things. While nurturing and deepening complex understandings of more-than-human relations, our research is feminist in the sense of learning to locate within configurations of power. We bring our thinking-with practices to question the performative actions we engage in, producing an episteme such that as individuals we each *experience* our own ideas, practices, bodies and places fusing (Nelson & Drew, 2023). This conflation is an agentic expression of post-qualitative practice: we are our data in action, in place.

Salmon (2000) describes kincentric ecology, a worldview of truly relational existence in the sense where familial or kin relationships exist with local species such as trees and animals. He suggests this is the only viable way of being human on the planet. We see our starting point opening a pathway through Indigenous-inspired methods set within diverse philosophical histories and trajectories (Mathews, 2022; 2023). Everything is connected — everything is relation.

Upon this foundation, we address racism (Fuentes, 2023) by White people against Indigenous interests. We integrate insights from critical environmental educators such as Chet Bowers who has long argued the existence of a culture of denial — featuring denial of climate change and denial that mainstream cultural patterns cause environmental disasters (Bowers, 1997). We include the denial of racism and its environmental connectedness within this culture that Bowers asserts is produced as high-status economic knowledge by universities and schools.

Bowers explains that within the last century, the purpose of education was recognised as improving democracy; however, it is now about improving economic goals (see also Glaeser et al., 2007). As well as separating knowledge spheres, this economistic reorientation produces social division and marginalisation, poverty and exclusion and environmental disasters, along with structures and practices of racism (Strakosch, 2015). So how to deal with this situation? And what does it have to do with environmental education? To further address this question, in the next section, we intentionally interweave Indigenous environmental humanities with critical education theory while practising agential relationality.

A relational methodology: multispecies collaboratory

Within a relational way of being, we respond to this recently rearticulated post-referendum racist and colonial Australian sense of itself by developing different kinds of knowledge (Wooltorton & Reason, 2023). Stan Grant describes: "The witness of poetry: how history is too heavy for democracy" (Butler, 2023). Poetry can awaken feelings and enliven the soul, in our case particularly when we used practices of our Multispecies Collaboratory, deliberately foregrounding relational reflections.

Nelson and Drew (2023) remind us to avoid collapsing significant differences in Multispecies Collaboratories, thereby retooling colonial logics and losing sight of obligation, reciprocity and relationality. Van Dooren et al. (2016) show that the arts of attentiveness help us remember that living and knowing are deeply enmeshed, and paying attention ought to be the foundation for crafting better prospects for shared lifeways. Wooltorton et al. (2023) propose a process for learning this, particularly noticing the agency of other-than-human worlds, learning how to look and look again. In this way, they recognise a poetic ecology such that an occluded view of the living world comes into view.

Watts (2013) describes in exquisite detail the Indigenous Place-Thought agency among humans and nonhumans within Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. Within these societies, humans do not have a special place as they do within Euro-Western thought. Rather, Land is animate, that is, "full of thought, desire, contemplation and will" (Watts, 2013, p. 23). In these societies, the cosmological creator, Sky Woman, creates the land and becomes the territory. Watts stresses that these events took place — they are not lore, myth or legend — and these ever physically present histories of creation may take days to retell. In this way, interactions between the worlds of the female, the spirit world and the mineral and plant world and animals constitute

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society itself. Place-Thought is the space where thought and place can never be separated. They co-become, to use the words of Bawaka Country et al. (2016), towards an ever-deeper relationality.

The agency of Indigenous Place-Thought underlies a very different worldview to that of Euro-Western societies, where things exist separately and a category: nature is deemed less important than human society. Within a conversation among an Australian and a Canadian Multispecies Collaboratory, Pollitt et al. (2021) use improvisation as a way of unsettling historically created boundaries, enabling recognition of the world's inherently poetic nature. They describe an ethos that prioritises embodied visualisation, emergence and relationality — particularly that through situated improvisations. In these ways, everyone and every being participates in co-becoming with their places (Bawaka Country et al., 2019).

We said earlier that "we are our data." In this sense, the material we use derives from journaling, creative writing, photography, video, poetry and drawing. This is how we will discuss our learnings within the collaboratory. Being physically located in different Australian states is not necessarily relevant: first, we are deeply connected by histories of the same place, and second, our connections to kin with Country are always diverse and ever changing.

Collaboratory preparation: attention to feelings post-referendum

Vignette 1 Sadness. Peta

I wrote to an indigenous colleague expressing my sadness at the general lack of futures thinking; community, intergenerational and kin relationality; and lack of generosity of Australians . . . Her generous response was to encourage me to not be sad – but to rage! That helped! I saw the decisions based in fear colonise Australia all over again. I was reminded how those with power retain the power.

Can transforming sadness into rage address what Stan Grant calls the mean spirit of Australia?

Vignette 2 Processing Grief. Sandra

As time passes following the referendum and I process my grief and anguish, I begin to recognise Australia anew: this time, one underpinned by a culture of denial. Denial of action needed for climate change, denial of Indigenous rights, denial of the impact of modernist lifeways on the environment and now, denial of Indigenous acknowledgement through a constitutionally embedded Indigenous voice. Silencing continues, clearly intentional and calculated.

Clearly, I am walking against the tide of an economistic flow of lies, misplaced patriotism and thinly veiled Trumpism – an analysis that extends beyond yet another Indigenous defeat (Bongiorni, 2023). How and why could I have ever believed this was surmountable by a notion of 'good people'? The referendum has certainly revealed the capability for damage and the ignorance of many.

Vignette 2 Processing Grief. Peta

I retreated to my garden where kin co-exist. I feel-with and engage-with.

The need to notice and rage against the injustices remains, as does the growing appreciation of the complexity and political nature of our daily decisions.

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It seems to us that rage and determination — that we both feel — are fundamental to our actions as environmental educators.

Vignette 3 A Single Sadness, Different Hues. Sandra and Peta

Peta and Sandra both experienced a similar story, so this account is co-written.

> Now recognising the return of some (small) capacity to discuss the referendum without tears, vitriol, or accusation, I asked my friend about the referendum. She said her extended family households have been divided and verbally aggressive, unable to discuss anything from the referendum to the news. She explained that all her family – except for her – voted 'no' to the question of the Voice. She said they live in fear. They watch Sky News and fear everything from climate change to species loss to spectres of the end of fossil fuel. The fear includes an Indigenous voice, for fear Indigenous people might take over her family's farm, prevent the building of a new dam[4] or even somehow reduce the freedoms of all Australians. We begin to understand what happens when an individual 'buys' the arguments of the 'no' campaign along with related denials. We start feeling very sorry for these families. It seems to us that without a basic knowledge of the ways in which politics and media collude, and some capacity for critical thinking, the negative campaign simply caused an accumulation of fear across the Land. We hadn't understood the depth of this earlier. This sentiment seems to help explain disempowerment associated with a societal culture of denial that is built on fear.

We had not previously recognised such generalised fear in Australia. It does not completely explain the mean spirit of Australia Stan Grant describes, as this is also systemic, but fear is a powerful emotion that may foster irrational feelings and actions.

We acknowledge that we need to find better ways to reveal the epistemic violence and generate decolonising practices for ourselves and society. With the guidance of Indigenous literatures, the practices of our Multispecies Collaboratory involve feeling possibilities for new ways to heal epistemic wounds and enable regenerative, flourishing communities.

Focused attention within Multispecies Collaboratory

Vignette 4 Paying Attention: Grey Fantail (*Kajinak* in Noongar Language). Sandra

This time of year, we regularly sit and watch *kajinak* in our backyard – they seem plentiful now. I notice *kajinak* accompanies me through a local forest where I regularly take my walks. (Perhaps this is several different individuals – it is hard to know!)

Kaya Kajinak, I see you with your kinfolk, watching over the garden we share.

Kajinak, with me on my walk today – observing, watching, overseeing,

Kajinak, always on the move – flitting in front, behind, beside, and above,

Kajinak, bold and brave today, flying away with my heart!

Kajinak, often by my side, just being there, fluttering; darting, sometimes calling,

[4]This was mentioned in the NO campaign but was not widely refuted by the media in Western Australia.

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Kajinak, teacher and leader, will you share with me your purpose?

Kajinak, I miss you today, and search for you in trees,

Kajinak, companion today, giving care, luring my attention to yourself,

Kajinak, alongside today, are you here to teach me response-ability?

Kajinak, how can I be there for you? What do you ask me to do?

Kajinak, I bow to you, and present my gratitude and deep respect.

Kajinak, guiding me – as escort, mentor, personal totem,

Kajinak, kin continuity during my walks, it's not my imagination I know,

Kajinak, I feel a relational sense.

In this writing, Sandra notices feelings of relationality, guidance and companionship and, beneath these, communicability and responsiveness. *Kajinak* brings forward Sandra's response-ability — an ability to respond to more than humans that many Indigenous cultures embody and that all humans carry (Bawaka Country et al., 2019).

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(Sandra). There seem to be more crows than usual in the southwest this year, and sometimes very few smaller birds are visible when crows dominate the numbers and sound waves. Birders in the southwest say some species, such as crows, are out of ecosystem balance.

It is November, and the weather feels unseasonably hot. In Sandra's backyard, a fig tree has grown through the washing line after being left on the ground in a big pot a couple of years ago. The intention was to keep it pruned and manageable in our very small yard.

Vignette 5 *Kajinak* Builds a Nest. Sandra

Something different happens this year. I notice two *kajinak* in the backyard, carrying small twigs and pieces of fibre while beginning to construct a nest. They seem to take fibre from spider webs, and they appear to find dog hair interesting. So, when sweeping our floor next time, I take a handful of dog hair and attach it to a spider web. I notice it is gone two hours later, and it is not on the ground below. The nest seems to be coming along beautifully.

After a week or so, *kajinak* sits on the nest. The partner is never far away, and as we watch, we notice the partners swap places from time to time. A birder-friend tells us this is what they do – female and male take turns sitting and eating (Figure 1).

In late November, while *kajinak* is still sitting on the nest, hot weather records are broken – 2023 is the hottest spring in southwest colonial history. We notice *kajinak* standing in the nest. We dare not go close enough to look at the egg/s. The heat wave lasts for four days.

On the seventh day of sitting on eggs, we are dismayed to see just an empty nest – no eggs or *kajinak*. We presume it is too hot to sit, but a birder friend suggests the nest was probably raided by a crow.

I feel grief. Again.

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Figure 1. Kajinak nesting.

The overarching process of paying attention, writing, discussion and reflection helps me to feel settled within this place (rather than outside and separate, as we in our society have been schooled and disciplined by media). I look around with more clarity in my vision. I hear the birds' "we are here" tone that I hadn't noticed before. It seems to begin with the capacity to respond — response-ability — that humans have, attracting a reciprocity in others. I perceive this all around me. I believe this is accessible to everyone irrespective of Indigenous knowledge, as it is a skill based on openness and sensual awareness of place.

Vignette 5: Where do we belong? Peta

Species that flourish in this Dandenong area are diverse, yet not all are considered 'endemic'. Those not from here fall into two categories in my mind – liked and disliked. I have spent long, physical days enacting the decision to remove those not liked. But have I? The disliked species return and perhaps they should. Who makes that decision? Are there decisions I should make that enable us all to enjoy community?

We weed (and then compost), we prune (and then mulch), we pay to have the large, beautiful trees trimmed or removed (and then plant new smaller ones). I pay attention to the advice offered us about ways to manage. We question the ethics of it all . . . we all have a right to be here – don't we? – liked and disliked, weed and vegetable, yam daisy and camelia, people – Indigenous and not. Who allocates those rights? Who decides?

A sense of belonging feels inextricably interwoven with an agentic relationality with community and kin. Euro-Western, colonial societies enforce such violence on each other (and all kin) in attempts to belong.

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We reflect on the power to own and power to make decisions for other beings. It is massive. It comes with great responsibility and needs to be learned by us all as response-ability.

Kincentric ecologies: walking with river

Vignette 6: *Derbal Elaap* (Sandra)

I am walking along *Derbal Elaap* (Leschenault Estuary) on wet sand, where the high watermark meets dry sand and salt tolerant vegetation. I have been walking with river in this way for about five years now, and I feel at home here. I sing out to *Ngangungudditj walgu*[5], the hairy faced snake, and tell him it is me, Sandra. I mention that when I sing out in that way, I feel *Derbal* opening out – breathing – and starting to engage, becoming alive, becoming responsive. I accept this is my response – because *Derbal* is always awake, breathing with the tidal rhythm and responsive with life. However, I get out of my business-as-usual mind frame, and I respond. I tell *Derbal* I am happy to see kin[6] and I notice the little waves splashing in the wind on the water with tiny breaks on the edge. I look towards the setting sun and notice a golden path connecting me to clouds, *Derbal*, wet sand, water, and wind.

River beckons me to walk in the water. As I walk, I appreciate the birds flying against a light wind. Evening is a stunning time of day when the place is full of energy. I feel the lure, the magnetism of *Derbal*. I cannot participate with *Derbal* without feeling 'alive', without feeling a zing in my step. Even if tired when I go to River Country, I always return feeling revitalised and fresh, and happy to have walked here where *Bilya* (River) joins *Derbal*.

Bilya - River

I have turned east and am walking alongside *Bilya* now (the Collie River). There are always people fishing here at the confluence. People have fished where *Bilya* meets *derbal* for millennia. There are about a hundred medium-sized birds on the sand bar behind Bar Island. While walking, I practice using imagination to visualise a Noongar sense of time in Noongar *Boodjar* (Country).

I walk where people live together with persons of all species within place. This is a long now, where past, present, and future fuse into the present [seasonal] time, so that as I look around, I know that all that has been here is still here as species or in spirit, shadow or just out of sight. I visualise myself connected to all things, within nature. This is my home.

I (Sandra) feel I am glimpsing participation in a culture of life. Humans are not exceptional. White people carry no privilege except what they themselves claim. I become aware that my Indigenous language and cultural learning heavily influences what I see, feel, understand and interpret. It informs who I am and my worldview. White people can also respond to birds, grasses and trees — and living water with its glassy, rippled or wavy surface. My experience is of unmuting of previously unnoticed voices in everyday common worlds — even though they have been "in my face" since childhood.

[5]Thanks to Joe Northover for publishing the cultural narratives for these stories in Northover, J. (2008). *Joe Northover talks about Minningup Pool on the Collie River*. South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. https://www.noongarculture.org.au/joe-northover-minningup-pool/.

[6]After Kimmerer (2017).

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Williams (2021) warns that dominant forms of power and power relations can obscure or misappropriate a place-language and its potential as agency to strengthen Indigenous communities and interests. In other words, to undertake re-familiarization with place using Indigenous knowledge, we must practice response-ability with utmost respect. There is an obligation to Indigenous language speakers, to value Indigenous knowledge and place-histories shared in the interests of a better world. This requires de-colonisation, enmeshing relationships, collaboration, democracy, humility and respect together with a learning attitude. It interweaves the Indigenous/non-Indigenous binary and the society and environment binary, enabling common worlds of practice with persons of all species and kinds (including rocks, clouds, mountains). In this world, there is no racism.

I (Sandra) connect these vignettes and wonder about my initial condemnation of *wardang* the crow for raiding *kajinak* nest, causing grief. I recognise this as an anthropocentric perspective, one of colonial control and power-over. Colonial, power-over decisions are made outside of ecological systems within which people exist and interdepend — knowingly or otherwise — and Indigenous people and ecosystems often suffer as a result.

Reflection on action: deep attentiveness

Incorporating Indigenous authorial wisdom in a Multispecies Collaboratory, we notice that flourishing includes a presence of something deeper, more visceral, powerful, compelling, embodied and carnal. It accepts common *worlds* of meanings and ways of knowing, being, experiencing and creating (Bawaka Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020; Country et al., 2019). Flourishing acknowledges living landscapes and uses protocols of welcome. It shows respect for beings of all species including humans. It takes a lot of work, fun and playfulness to get there. Commitment to response-ability does not feel heavy; rather, it feels right. We experienced it as the foundation for obligation — to place and to the people who have so generously shared language, story and explanation since the dawn of time.

Reflection on action: post-referendum

Multispecies thinking enables one response to the initial question of how Australia's latest Indigenous defeat relates to environmental education. The reflective process within the Multispecies Collaboratory enabled us to recognise the significance of Indigenous philosophies (Poelina et al., 2023a) in multispecies engagement. Here is a significant implication for environmental educators — that experimenting within an Indigenous-informed Multispecies Collaboratory is an important way to relearn place-engagement in a way that facilitates relationships of care and familiarity. Local Indigenous partnership and authorship offers an important way to begin this and potentially offers a way of working anew post-referendum.

To begin to make change in academia, there are multiple Indigenous authorial viewpoints as podcasts and Scopus-listed academic articles within most disciplines, enabling incorporation of Indigenous voices within reading lists and ordinary academic teaching and learning. This is another way academics can intentionally unmute Indigenous wisdom and unmask silenced ways of knowing and being that can address climate catastrophes resulting from denials and fear. Learning to hear and apply Indigenous voice is a significant goal of an Indigenous-informed Multispecies Collaboratory.

Conclusion

We took the view that Black Australia has a White problem and asked how Australia's latest Indigenous defeat relates to environmental education. With the guidance of Indigenous authors,

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we used a Multispecies Collaboratory to learn-with places and species, to experience and reflect in ways that reveal Place-Thought (Watts, 2013), response-ability and co-becoming (Bawaka Country et al., 2019). A preparatory Collaboratory phase opened to experiencing and reflecting upon feelings in response to the referendum commentary and result. This was followed by a direct engagement process of focused attention, immersion and later, with what we now call academic walking to experience/feel and reflect with Indigenous place-histories.

Using a method that places people as kin relations with more-than-human existence requires a dismissal of separate data — we are our data in action in place, exposing our responses, feelings and "being" our actions. We are the walkers who live within and choose to regenerate a storied place-history. This enables action on the colonial obligation to Indigenous voices, knowledges and shared interests in a better world. The outcome is unmuting imposed silences. We now argue this stance — all education workers/academics, particularly non-Indigenous teachers, need to accept responsibility for changing the racist sense of who we are as Australians. As educator/academics, it is our work to unmute, to undo neoliberal systems of oppression and learn within our ecological communities. It needs to be intentional, determined and focused, and it can reveal cognisance of one's own complicity in systemic oppression — which can be confronting.

Likewise, Indigenous-informed multispecies engagement is a clear response to the second question of what environmental educators can do to improve this situation. One of our insights is to incorporate Indigenous-informed ways of knowing, being and doing into the heart of environmental education to broaden and deepen worldview. It is essential to begin with Indigenous voices and to use these knowledge systems as a whole — without extractive mining of Indigenous information to illustrate a particular perspective. Truth-telling is vital in this multispecies learning journey.

There is a massive gap though between Indigenous-informed multispecies thinking/feeling and mainstream responses to questions of voice (such as the 2023 referendum). Colonial decision-making systems have no sense of ecological embeddedness; rather, they directly oppose Indigenous ways of knowing and being as demonstrated in the referendum campaigning — particularly the NO campaign — and in the referendum result. We have seen that ignorance — and the privileging of this to protect colonising power, which has informed such elements as the fear which drove some of the referendum NO campaigning. This is directly implicated in structures of racism. Not all NO voters or campaigners are racist or informed by racism of course, but ignorance, fear and powerful protection formed part of the contribution of certain high-profile campaigners. We see that the privileging of White ignorance has informed much of the referendum outcome. Three insights that emerge from this study are as follows:

1. Colonisation, epistemic violence and a culture of denial lurk behind academic and educational work in environmental education — as other parts of the academic project. It is very easy to reinforce the dominant paradigm of silencing Indigenous voices from people and environments as this is the knowledge structure of the academy and of mainstream Australia.
2. An Indigenous-informed way of relating within place should inform the heart of environmental education. This has sustained Australia for many millennia and urgently needs reinstatement.
3. An Indigenous-informed Multispecies Collaboratory is one way to deepen the multispecies engagement that underpins environmental education.

We find ourselves left with an uncomfortable perennial question, however, which is that of how to address the epistemic gap between mainstream responses and those that are Indigenous-informed. In this paper, we have only begun to address this. That said, given the scale and depth of the overarching interconnected oppressions — climate change, biodiversity loss, war and violence and now deliberate, publicly evident silencing of Indigenous voice — environmental educators can

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lead this change. We must learn better ways to become kin with Indigenous authors, custodians and places, and we argue this is the true heart of environmental education.

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Author Biographies

Dr Sandra Wooltorton is a Senior Research Fellow and Professor at the Nulungu Research Institute, University of Notre Dame Australia (Broome Campus, located in Yawuru Country). She is also an Adjunct Professor at Edith Cowan University. Sandra has received national teaching awards and has published substantial interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research across fields such as sustainability education, research for social change, Aboriginal education, environmental philosophy and cultural geography. Sandra leads research which applies transitions theories and discourses to Australian contexts. She is best known for her collaborative research using Aboriginal language insights to question the integrity of mainstream Australia's place-based relationships.

Peta J. White is an Associate Professor in Science and Environmental Education at Deakin University. She Co-directs the Centre for Regenerating Futures - a Faculty Centre that explores Anthropocene challenges and decolonising practices while building researcher capacity. Her current research follows three narratives: science and biology education; sustainability, environmental, and climate change education; and collaborative/activist methodology and research.

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