

# Wandiny

Poetry Anthology



Artist: Dr. Hope O'Chin

**Indigenous and Transcultural Research Centre  
University of the Sunshine Coast**

# Wandiny

## Poetry Anthology

*Wandiny* is a Kabi-Kabi / Gubbi-Gubbi word meaning gathering together.

*Wandiny* was a very special opportunity to listen and respond to the poems, songs and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and artists. The experience was inter-generational and inter-cultural as we shared our journeys in a call-and-response gathering.

The anthology of poetry was collected in 2020 and 2022. Our first *Wandiny* gathering in 2020 was held online due to the impacts of COVID-19. Two years later, we gathered together in person on Kabi-Kabi / Gubbi-Gubbi Country in 2022, with video links to our colleagues in the Northern Territory.

### **Background to the project:**

The first ideas for this work emerged in South Africa where Catherine Manathunga heard about the transcultural South African Poetry Project (ZAPP), which was designed to work towards decolonisation through an African call and response approach to Indigenous poetry. Once Catherine arrived at the University of the Sunshine Coast, she was lucky to meet up with Shelley Davidow and Paul Williams, who are creative writers originally from South Africa. They knew some of the ZAPP South African team really well. We then invited a wonderful team of First Nations researchers, Elders and teachers to join us in creating a First Nations Australian poetry project where we combined the African call and response approach with Australian First Nations approaches to deep listening or *dadirri*, which we use with the permission of the Miriam Rose Foundation.

Dr Aunty Hope O'Chin is one of our key researchers and elders on the project and she has given us permission to use the term *Wandiny* which is a Kabi Kabi word for gathering together.

*Wandi* means to gather together and *wandiny* means (v tr (imp) gathering together (v tr (ipf)). In respectfully doing so, we listen with our hearts. Therefore, we buranga/hear; and in burang-am/hearing. We note we have burangami/heard.

This study draws upon a postcolonial/decolonial theoretical positioning that encompasses the work of postcolonial theorists and subaltern studies (eg. Chakrabarty, 2007) as well as empowering decolonial theories proposed by Southern and First Nations scholars (de Sousa Santos, 2014; 2018; Williams et al., 2018). Postcolonial/decolonial theories take as their central premise the argument that 'colonialism did not end with the end of historical colonialism based on foreign territorial occupation. Only its form changed' (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 109). In the Australian case, despite the overturning of *terra nullius* with the Mabo case, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty remains an unfinished business. As a result, there can be 'no global social justice without global cognitive justice' (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p. 42). Cognitive justice involves the full and equal recognition of *all* of the worlds knowledge systems, languages and cultural practices, not only Northern science.

Poetry evokes meaning through an oral, performative discourse and therefore offers a range of generative possibilities for the decolonisation of university curricula, offering a way to address the issues of the 'null curriculum' in Australian classrooms, the relative silence around First Nations experiences and history, and the reluctance of non-Indigenous teachers in schools and university classrooms to allow students opportunities to engage with Indigenous ways of being and knowing for fear of 'doing things wrong' out of ignorance.

A decolonised educational approach allows for a space in which marginal voices are positioned centrally using poetry not to be analysed but heard, lived, felt, and enacted. The approach questions the pedagogy of a critical analysis of poetry in the classroom and responds in kind as a creative writer, asking students to write poetry in response to Indigenous poetry.

### **Our method:**

**Call:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, poets, musicians and storytellers will share histories, stories and art.

**Respond:** Participants will have opportunity throughout the day to create poetic responses. The audience will comprise senior secondary students and teachers, university students and academics.

**Document:** Poetry written at the event will be collected and published (with permission) in an online poetry anthology.

We wish to thank the First Nations Elders, presenters and artists for their contributions to the 2020 and 2022 *Wandiny* events:

*Dr. Aunty Hope O'Chin*

*Dr. Aunty Sue Stanton*

*Dr. Aunty Judi Wickes*

*Taïta Thaiday-Shinn*

*Jackie Newton*

*Al Bartholomew*

*Lyndon Davis*

*Aunty Minnie Mace*

*Devi Telfer*

*Lexine Solomon*

*Wandiny* Research Project Team and Community Reference Group:

**Professor Catherine Manathunga**, Professor of Education Research University of Sunshine Coast, Leading Chief Investigator

**Professor Maria Raciti**, University of Sunshine Coast and Kalkadoon-Thaniquith/Bwngcolman woman, Chief Investigator

**Dr. Paul Williams**, University of Sunshine Coast, Chief Investigator

**Dr. Shelley Davidow**, University of Sunshine Coast, Chief Investigator

**Dr. Alison Willis**, University of Sunshine Coast, Chief Investigator

**Professor Tracey Bunda**, Professor of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, ,  
University of Queensland and Ngugi Wakka Wakka woman, Chief Investigator  
**Associate Professor Kathryn Gilbey**, Batchelor Institute and Alyawarre woman, Chief  
Investigator  
**Dr. Aunty Hope O'Chin**, Kabi Kabi Elder  
**Dr. Aunty Judi Wickes**, Wakka Wakka and Kalkadoon Elder  
**Uncle Michael Mace**, Koa Elder  
**Aunty Minnie Mace**, Koa Elder  
**Tennille Bainbridge**, Teacher and Indigenous Student Coordinator, Chancellor State College  
**Jackie Newton**, Teacher and Indigenous Student Coordinator, Chancellor State College  
**Alison Chan**, Head of Department, Humanities, Chancellor State College  
**Tania Waterman**, Head of Junior English, Chancellor State College

One participant described *Wandiny* to be like the passing on of generational wisdom:

*"I feel like this meeting place should be a regular thing. I had the overwhelming feeling of a calm Aunty telling a wild child what life is about, and just repeating until it is heard. I have some Maori blood in my family and it is pretty amazing how some of these topics resonate."*

Wandiny Team Member and Alyawarre woman, Associate Professor Kathryn Gilbey, reflected on the gravity of the inaugural Wandiny event in 2020:

*Jeanie Bell opened Aunty Hope's slides and I am struck that she is the conduit, the link between Batchelor and USC that her work and legacy lives on, that hers was a community activism and service that took place in a different shape and form from mine and others but is real and distinct and enduring.*

*The Shadow people and the stories they tell about us – but are not us – am I not a descendant of these shadow people – they are real they exist in our blood and work as well as in the land and breeze.*

*The songs on the railway line, the fettleers sing on  
Re-produced in this virtual space an eon on.  
They speak of the shadow people, like they know  
The little people who live in the hills  
Our ancestors that live in this land  
The shadow people live on in our blood  
Our ancestry, for guidance and wisdom  
As we navigate this hard terrain  
The old and the new but the stories and songs remain*

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## The Call

This section of the anthology presents poetry and stories from *Wandiny* artists and presenters. These are First Nations voices.

### Welcome and Acknowledgement to Country

Dr. Aunty Hope O'Chin

Diverse Nations co-existence  
Sacred promise with obligations  
This land for all living things  
Since time began  
Dreaming

Imprints by lore - through law,  
Mapped water, the skies our land  
Sustained life and living  
Australia's spirit  
Believing

Harmonious treaties Millenniums past  
Welcomed those that visited  
Pristine country  
Country Belong Kabi-Kabi  
Knowing

First Nations compacts  
Belonging to country  
That is spiritual  
No trespassing, no squatting  
Respecting

First Nations watched from shores  
Ships came, looked, traded, went  
Tall ships 1770-1788  
Smoke talk of newcomers  
Staying

Terranullius  
Invasion, pillage  
Exploration, pioneers, settlement,



Exploitation First Nations  
Felling

First Nations lands  
Genocide people, culture,  
Survivors Institutionalised  
Reserves, Missions  
Impounding

This land is Kabi-Kabi country  
Kabi-Kabi place  
Just being! Ontology!  
My place your place  
Belonging

We stand together to show respect  
First Nations and all  
on Kabi-Kabi- country  
A part of Australia on which we live  
Celebrating

## Our Hope In Us In You

Dr. Aunty Hope O'Chin

The droplets of water from the corner of her eyes  
Trickled down her face as she watched and remembered on Anzac Day  
The last host played by the lonely soldier illuminated by the glow  
Of the soft lights lighting the towers around the circle of remembrance  
Our Hope In Us In You  
In unison all stood and remembered those lost  
Their sons their daughters their fathers their mothers  
They too faced the towers in defense of country and spirit of loved ones  
Where the crow was once heard another time, another place  
Our Hope In Us In You  
But all just the same as was then and as is now we remember  
Instead of just one the thousands that fell  
On shores where poppies still grow to remind us of living  
We remember our dead, adorned by the red, their sacrifice for many  
Our Hope In Us In You  
She cries for family, Australians defending the blue on foreign shores  
Remembering too, First Nations fell on these very shores  
It made sense to honor, defend, their people, their country  
Response of love of people and country, they gave their lives  
Our Hope In Us In You  
She mourns, and remembers First Nations and Diggers true blue  
As the droplets of tears caress her cheeks and trickle down  
She cries for the colours black, yellow, red, and green on the shores of her ancestors  
In us, in country, their spirits still living, being true ...  
Our Hope In Us In You

## Natural Beauty

By Taïta Thaiday-Shinn

# NATURAL BEAUTY

On the days she'd embrace her  
natural beauty.  
Natural beauty passed down through  
ancient bloodlines.  
With a crown of thick curls,  
graced with a curvaceous figure,  
and skin like milk and golden honey;  
emerge a melanin princess.  
These days were most sacred,  
but sacred days quickly turned to nightmares.  
For these were the days where  
crown of tight locks  
turned into "unkempt mess".  
Where sunkissed skin and  
statuesque figure turned to  
"threat" against those painted  
with lighter pallets.  
The crown upon her head  
mangled by white claws,  
questioning authenticity.  
Suddenly, natural beauty became unsafe.  
Natural beauty became weapon  
used against she who wore her  
so fiercely.  
Natural beauty became a shameful secret.

Now she lived with beauty hidden,  
wearing an armor of long pants and oversized t-shirts,  
with her crown tucked away.  
This facade became her safety.  
With beauty hidden,  
Identity fades and anxiety takes hold.  
Be careful not to outshine anyone  
but "don't fall short of your potential".  
Be careful not to be too outspoken  
but "do not dare sit quietly".  
Be careful not to be too emotional  
but "don't appear apathetic".  
Be careful not to be too proud  
but "do not dare disown your heritage".

A battle between  
the two worlds in which she walks.  
A tug of war between her  
true identity and the facade that protects her  
from vicious words  
spoken by poisonous tongues

Tired and beaten  
by a society that has deemed her  
"other"  
"different"  
"peculiar"  
She found herself lost in an  
abyss of self doubt, hatred and misguided reality.

She wandered here,  
until she was uncertain.  
Uncertain of the reflection that stood  
lifeless in front of her.  
She cried.  
Cried for the girl she used to be.  
Cried for her ancestors to guide her back to natural  
beauty.  
Cried for letting hateful creatures  
disarm her.

On this day she felt weak.  
She could no longer carry the weight of two worlds.  
Sinking further into darkness and uncertainty.  
She removed her armour, bared her soul and lay  
waiting for peace.  
When peace finally arrived, it was not silence, it was  
not a "white light", it was deep echos of a voice  
unheard for almost 1825 days. Yes, she counted. A  
voice she had missed, a voice only heard in her  
dreams.

This seraphic voice from the heavens reminded her  
of the beautiful being she carried within.  
"Your beauty runs deep my darling, they cannot  
take that which runs through your veins. Put on  
your crown, shine brighter than ever before and  
show them just how magnificent you truly are."

Awoken by subconscious screams, begging for the  
strength to come back.  
She finds herself in a haze of confusion and  
gratitude.

She meets her reflection and finally sees the girl  
she thought lost. Lost amongst the battle between  
two realities.

With her crown of curls and her sun kissed skin,  
she had completely embraced her natural beauty. .

02/03/2020

By Taïta Thaiday-Shinn

02/03/2020

Today feels different,  
It feels calm,  
It feels good,  
It feels better than  
The day before.  
Today I feel different,  
I feel calm,  
I feel good,  
I feel better than  
The day before.  
The birds are singing  
As the sun creeps over the horizon.  
The water glistens with reflections of the sky.  
A sky painted with pinks, orange and blue.  
Intricate patterns form in delicate waves,  
Delicate waves that caress the rocks gently.  
The sounds of love between ocean and earth  
Are that of heavenly melodies.  
Sun rays kiss my skin as they  
Burst through the treetops.  
Today is different,  
It will be calm,  
It will be good,  
It will be better than  
The day before.

## Treaty

(Added verse by Al Bartholomew to the tune of 'Treaty' by Yothu Yindi)

Well, I heard in a freedom song  
Never saw it on no television  
Back in 2021, thousands marching in the street  
Tent embassy still standing strong  
Waters flooding Lismore town  
We're living in an age, love overcoming fear!

"The Book of Life"

Poems by Lynelle Louella Mace

Supplied by Aunty Minnie Mace. Read by Professor Tracey Bunda at Wandiny 2020.

"THE BOOK OF LIGHT".

"A PLEA FROM MANKIND".

How can I face the future,  
when I'm told I am born of sin?,  
that I can do nothing good by myself,  
and theres nothing I can win.  
I am told to believe in this "Jesus",  
as I am hopeless in sin as can be,  
but with these thoughts I feel like a robot,  
will someone have faith in me?.

I seldom read the bible,  
and I rise each day with the sun,  
I lead a drab existence,  
and long for a piece of fun,  
I work for my food and a roof overhead,  
and seldom get anything more,  
I'm but a small cog in the social machine,  
controlled by the hand of the law.

Is there really a god in heaven?,  
Is his plan for salvation true?,  
Can I land in a lake of brimstone,  
for all the small wrongs that I do?.  
Or is this just a plot of the system,  
to keep me under control?,  
if it is,I do not like it,  
I'm a person with feeling and soul.

If theres really a god in heaven,  
where-ever that place may be?,  
Put down your bible awhile,  
and stoop down and listen to me.  
You gave me life, and placed me down here,  
and made me the way that I am,  
because "Adam" sinned, dont you blame me,  
or is all this talk but a sham?.

I am hopelessly lost and dont understand,  
and somtimes I think out aloud,  
but like everyone else, I'm afraid to die,  
so just go along with the crowd.  
Give me something that I understand,  
ease my mind of its pains,  
give me the hope to carry on,  
break me free from my chains.

If I was hopelessly riddled with sin from birth,  
then why give me life at all?,  
I could not miss what I did not have,  
nor could I fear deaths call.  
Why let "Adam" and "Eve" have kids?,  
Why did you not start anew?,  
You had the power to do all these things,  
everything rested with you.

"THE GREAT FATHERS REPLY".

The great "Father" looks down from heaven,  
then gently speaks these words,  
My children look around you,  
listen to the song of the birds.  
~~They do not work, they sing and play,~~  
and my hand feeds them all,  
the trees they make their playground,  
they do not fear my call.

Now see the bees, they do, work,  
~~but to them its only play,~~  
they gather and store the honey,  
to enjoy it some other day.  
They gaily hum from flower to flower,  
whilst perfume fills the air,  
and whilst they take, they give in return,  
they do not have a care.

The trees that grow in the forest,  
The grasses that grow on the plain,  
I send the sun to give them life,  
and water them with the rain.  
The butterfly that flits around,  
he does not have a worry,  
The little snail that's on the ground,  
he does not rush and hurry.

Its only man that does these things,  
I often wonder why?,  
He wracks his brains and writes his books,  
and then believes his lie.  
I do not have a bible,  
man wrote that book, not me,  
my only words are acts of love,  
which all around you see.

I am your heavenly father,  
and when your bodies turn to dust,  
I give your spirits better things,  
as every father must.  
There is no death, for all is life,  
and what I take away,  
are only things you have outgrown,  
and these I let decay.

You say that I created you,  
but in this you'r truly wrong,  
you are as a grub that's just emerged,  
but one day you'll be strong.  
A child is not created,  
but a life that's born of love,  
you are not as pots and dishes,  
but a life, that's far above.

Though life may seem oppressive,  
its a path you have to tread,  
that you may form your finer selves,  
for the life that lies ahead.  
Your spirit is your finer self,  
and this is never stained,  
like the bee, it gathers what is good,  
and keeps what it has gained.

Whilst in your earth bodies,  
you are as a hand within a glove,  
you have lost your feel of former things,  
but you have not lost my love.  
I'll send the sun to warm you,  
~~and the breeze to cool your brow,~~  
and when its time to join me,  
I will bring you home, I vow.



## What My Ancestors Did

By J. Wano

I'm beginning to learn that much of my pain stems from  
having to mourn what once was

I must mourn my ancestors  
and the sad reality that I will never walk my country as they did

I will never feel  
the warmth of the country beneath my feet as my ancestors did

I will never know  
the mountains, rivers, lakes, lizards, birds, bees and trees as my ancestors did

I will never sing nor dance  
With the same joy and awareness as my ancestors did

However, out of all this loss,  
what hurts the most...

I will never be as effortlessly free

## My Grandmother's Song

By J. Wano

They stole her from country  
they cut out her tongue  
and stripped her spirit

she was forbidden to sing the songs of her mother  
nor was she allowed to dance

They ripped her off country  
they cut out her heart  
and stripped her spirit

she was forbidden to sing the songs of her father  
nor was she allowed to dance

now, her grandchildren are trying to find her song

they are searching for her tongue  
they want to sing the songs of their grandmother  
they want to sing the songs of their people

they simply want to sing

fortunately, her grandchildren hold her heart  
and possess her spirit

## The Response

The poems in this section were written at the *Wandiny* events in response to First Nations calls to listen with the heart. These responses have been offered by Indigenous and non-Indigenous audience members.

### It's time

By Catherine Manathunga

It's time  
For a treaty

It's time  
For respect

It's time  
For courage

It's time  
For hope

It's time  
For belonging

It's time  
To turn  
Tears into  
Natural beauty

It's time  
To turn  
Loss into  
Freedom

It's time  
For the ancestors  
To speak  
Through stories  
Songs, music  
And digeridoo

It's time  
For the spirit  
Of this land  
To triumph.

So much depends on....

By Maya Lishman-Mcgeoch

So much depends on....

The courage of the Aunties and Elders of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who fought all odds to attain their rights back to the land. Becoming leaders not only for themselves but for all Indigenous Australians. Passing on the history not just through colour of skin or heritage but by publicising the priceless land in which we live. Telling their journeys to those that will listen. Not just through speech, as words are easy, words are cheap but through poetry and artful meaningfulness. Created so that history is not forgotten. The ways of the land and people are not forgotten. The struggles that so many faced are not forgotten. To make sense of the madness that was made by the political system but also fixed as well.

Without

By Tania Waterman

So much depends on

The willingness and strength that

A person and  
society possess

To call out  
the shameful actions and laws at the time

Without this

warm hugs are never felt  
only the hard love of a belt

stories that meld souls are not shared  
only a narrative that can not be paired

unity is lost  
in an environment that should not be the boss

## Listening with an open Heart

By Bronwen Haralambous (in response to the poems shared by Taita Thaiday-Shinn)

So much depends upon ...  
Listening with an open heart  
My heart sings  
    with your Joy  
and aches  
with your Pain  
My heart feels  
    the tears that  
    tear our hearts apart  
My heart swims  
    in the waters of our weeping  
    in the rivers of our shared  
    happiness and sadness.

Heart emptying  
    sharing  
fills others' hearts  
with warmth of  
    Love.

Courageous  
sharing  
    of the stepping-stones you jumped over  
– marked points –  
    that helped you  
        find your way  
            so that now  
                others can follow you ... ..

## Duality

By Smylie Kylie

Born in Canada, Raised in Australia.

First Nations person of Canada, Raised in Australia.

Both countries have similar histories, similar mysteries.

60s Scoop in Canada,

Stolen Generation in Australia,

How did these occur under the radar? Why was there no public uproar?

Imagine if First Nations people attempted the same scenario, could you imagine the furore?

Colonisation, Assimilation, attempted eradication, Not the most positive words ending in –  
ation.

What if we flip the script to build a strong nation?

Develop a strong relation to the term First Nation.

Let's introduce native-style education,

Sharing knowledge from Elders, from nature, from thousands of years of survival.

Let's encourage integration,

First Nations presence in policy makers, politics and planning, part of a community revival.

Two countries bordered by an ocean with a name that means peaceful, Let's work  
together... co-operation.

I was born in Canada, Raised in Australia.

I am blessed and grateful to have two homes, two families, Although I wasn't raised with my  
culture, it came with me.

My respect and love for nature, acceptance and respect for all people, This is my culture, it  
came with me.

I was put up for adoption for a reason,

My parents were in Canada for a reason,

I was adopted and raised in Australia for a reason,

Many of my family in Canada lost their lives early for a reason.

I'm grateful that the strings of fate entwined to create a delicate web, a network, my family,  
my community in Australia and connections to family and friends in Canada.

This is where I belong; I have created my own culture, my own sense of place, my home.

We

By Maria Raciti

Where  
if not here  
can I anchor?

Where  
if not here  
can I be?

Where else  
could  
I possibly belong?

Than with you  
right here  
with me.



## FOREVER

By Mel Faulkner

aunties and uncles  
telling a yarn  
about before and now  
and into the future  
tears and laughter  
heartache, too painful to bear  
but inside you'll find  
that beauty rests there too  
to know, to have seen,  
to have heard and to have felt  
this knowledge is rich and important  
languages lost and sadness outpours  
but the knowing can never be taken  
it's there in the sea and the sand  
and in you and all of the  
brothers and sisters  
no one can take it  
it's yours this second,  
and today and tomorrow  
and FOREVER

it's not right  
it's not fair  
it's yours and no matter who tries  
it can NEVER BE TAKEN

## Knowledge

By Mel Faulkner

in response to Aunty Hope's phrase *'knowledge of the past thousands of years and light years ahead'*

knowledge exists  
knowledge is sacred  
it has been so for millennia and more  
it is right here in the now and  
it will be here forever more  
more  
we can't lock it up  
they tried  
but it's in the land  
in the sea  
and in the air  
a treasure to be celebrated  
a privilege and an honour  
to receive, even just a little  
knowledge is here to stay  
beyond the time of you and me

## WANDINY

By Mel Faulkner

**W**elcome to country: request, respect, reconcile  
**A**n abundance of stories, history and knowledge shared and  
**N**ever really lost, it runs deep in the land and the sea and its people  
**D**reaming and mourning the past through generations and for 'light years' ahead  
**I**t is the true wonder, awe, and treasure of this place we love to call home  
**N**ow if we focus on mining for knowledge we can really prosper as one and as many  
**Y**ears and atrocities will not go unspoken. I am SORRY and I want to know more, so thank  
**y**ou for this wandiny

What a pleasure to meet you.

By Alishia Grant

First-hand information

Finally, relief.

Living culture,

Optimism belief.

New family home,

Ancient hierarchical respect,

Connect, we never left.

Depth of wisdom, tidal wave.

Art speaks the deepest cuts.

Long awaiting riches, spirit land.

Fools try to capture light-years.

Such a relief to finally hear you.

Thousands of years beforehand,

Many light years ahead,

Wandiny.

Not knowing

By Gillian Hall

Reflection on the Wandiny 2020 experience

Surprised to click and on my screen opened up so many people.

Patience and calmness.

Words strung together with beautiful images and sounds.

Touching stories, connected to rivers, land and circumstances.

Far away places but closer through our stories.

Deep connections to everything.

Meaning in every well-chosen word.

Languages mixed easily to create deeper stories.

## Finding home

By Gillian Hall

Longing to find where home is, the place where I belong.

Searching for the land that connects me to who I am.

A mythical fixed place or something more.

The sky that wraps around us all.

The water that falls from the sky and our eyes.

Onto the land and into the rivers to the sea.

Home is everywhere if I can open my heart to feel.

To listen to a different way that opens my eyes to see.

## Be-longing

By Alison Chan

Longing for sand, sun, salt

Warm cheeks, liquor poured into a green coconut,

Laughter, and languages my heart knows even when my brain can't keep up.

Lunch: A gift, from the garden, from the sea, from my old people - new to me,

Soil, toil, the right amount of rain, a good day on the boat.

Coconut flesh scraped with shell, squeezed to make milk, onto the fish, and onto the fire.

Stories, old photos in shoeboxes, a litter of puppies chewing on tails in the dust.

Kids, and me, piled into the back of an overfull ute, in the breeze, at dusk.

The most beautiful sunset.

"This is yours too, you know," says my Uncle.

"Home. Mine." – I try the words on, but they don't quite fit right yet.

## Sharing Culture

By Geena Muller

Language and song  
A beautiful melody  
A soothing phrase  
Chords, keys, and words  
A strong and heartfelt story  
A culture

Each chord, each key  
Hold an emotion  
Tell a story  
Speaking to us  
Connecting us without words  
We can truly become one through music

Longing for a culture  
A culture filled with stories, poetry, music  
Longing for a safe place  
To share languages, to have a voice  
Longing to find home  
To find a place to belong



## Longing

By Maddison Payne

I long to learn about my land

The stories the land holds.

I long to learn the languages that have been passed on.

I long to be taught all there is to know,

From tales of Maroochy River to songs about one's home.

I love to hear other tales; all they have to share.

I long to learn about cultures and others' homes.

All the stories they have to share, that can be learnt from.

I long to be taught, to learn and be shown the wonders of cultures across our nation's globe.

## Seeing Home

By Alison Willis

When you dream about a place  
You end up there.  
In your visions, in your dreaming, In your actions  
We move toward home,  
Reclaiming our heritage,  
Both heavenly and temporal.

We yearn for home.  
A spiritual place of belonging.  
Peace. Rest. Laughter. Joy.  
Hope. Contentment.  
We sing for it. We listen for it.  
We prophesy it.

We remember we are created,  
The connection between the created and the Creator.  
For when heaven comes to earth,  
We are home.  
Found. Spiritually whole.  
Beloved.

## Imprinted on the land

By Vanessa Eldridge

I have lived on this land  
my whole life.  
And although it's mine, I know  
it's also yours.  
Tell me what you know.  
Share with me your beliefs.  
Help me to belong.  
Celebrate alongside me  
as we come to a treaty.  
Let's dream together.  
Let's have courage  
as we respect each other's  
connection to home. To land. To people.  
We will always be  
imprinted on this land.

## BELONGING IS

By Alister Bartholomew

I've never told you this before,  
but to me belonging is –  
Earth, land, sea... country  
Belonging is breath, like the first  
breath that travelled over land and sea  
Belonging is a oneness with all that is,  
what was, and what will be  
Belonging to Mother Earth and  
A belonging to one another  
in the wonder of life.

“FROM THE MISSIONS TO THE CITIES”

By Alister Bartholomew

The Purga Mission Aunty  
spoke about  
Was the place occupied  
By the old people  
The old people whose  
lack of freedom  
was the same lack  
of freedom experienced  
by many of us today  
What's changed?  
What's really changed?  
Having the courage to speak  
Is different to actually speaking  
Speaking up I will not be  
exempted from doing so.  
Nor will my ancestors voice remain  
silent

## Stories

By Mumma Hen

We all are one with the earth

Listen...

She is crying for us to hear her

Voice...

We are all a part of her family

Care...

The smell of the leaves scrunched in her hand...

Earth

Tread lightly where you walk

Respect...

Speak up and be heard

you mother, father, brother

sister, Aunty loves you

Family...

Share your stories, respect

the past, present future...

Australia, culture

History...

Today I acknowledge

By -understand-

Today I acknowledge the deeper story shared through poetry, art, music and song. Today I acknowledge courage, voices, knowledge, understanding and deep respect.

Today I recognised the deeper power of song, humour and the goosebumps that the Boona left within my being.

Today I say thank you.

## Knowledge

by Jackie Newton

knowledge is precious  
knowledge is sacred  
knowledge is culture  
knowledge is country  
knowledge is family  
knowledge is belonging  
knowledge is sharing  
knowledge is loved  
knowledge is courage



## I WISH

By Jackie Newton

This is just to say I wish I could turn back time  
Ask questions I didn't know I had till now  
I wish I listened with more intent  
I wish I could hug you  
I wish I could sit at the breakfast table again  
with you and eat fresh plum jam on toast with you  
I wish you told me more  
I wish it was not such a secret  
I wish you didn't have to struggle all those years ago  
I wish I wasn't teased as a child  
I wish to be understood  
I wish you were here.  
Much love and respect. love Jackie xo

By Jackie Newton

I've never told you this before but to me belonging is...

- being loved
- a part of family
- immersed in my culture
- a team
- the land and sea
- being touched hugged
- friends
- laughter and tears
- honesty and trust
- comfortable
- relaxed
- being appreciated
- caring
- kind
- understood
- sharing
- acknowledgement
- country

## Belongingness

By Rhys Cusack

together we achieve belongingness in hearts  
and mind for a minute or an hour

however long we have inclusion, together it is  
endless when time stops as well and thought

together we all respect each other and our  
emotions to sense of togetherness on all  
of our conscious minds

bringing all acceptance gives us belongingness  
from aunties, elders, and peers

all put together belongingness is what holds  
us together and keeps us young with courage  
spoken as one

Without

By Tania Waterman

So much depends on

The willingness and strength that

A person and  
society possess

To call out  
the shameful actions and laws at the time

Without this

warm hugs are never felt  
only the hard love of a belt

stories that meld souls are not shared  
only a narrative that cannot be paired

unity is lost  
in an environment that should not be the boss

The Old Story  
Shelley Davidow

If we listen with heart  
Will we hear the story of this land  
Before Australia  
Before houses, cities, concrete-over-grassland, smog, oil, coal, coal-seam gas  
Will we be able to act more like custodians  
Less like invaders  
Will we feel, remember  
What they are telling us  
How we are connected to every living thing  
And will we hear  
That there is a story  
Before invaders came  
As old as time.  
I listen to the ones who know  
How to save the land from  
Fire  
From destruction  
If we allow the poisoning of water and air  
So we cannot drink  
Or breathe  
If we cut off  
The branch  
We are sitting on  
We will  
Fall.

## That Night

By Dr Paul Williams

An old Zen Koan goes  
Those who speak do not know;  
Those who know, do not speak.  
For too long people have spoken over other voices:  
colonisers over colonised  
men over women  
words as bullets  
words used to conquer  
words to win arguments  
Those who speak this way do not know.  
That night Wandiny was about knowing  
We listened to voices who know,  
who have not been allowed to speak,  
who have been silenced.  
We also listened to the land.  
Devi Telfer said that if we sit long enough we can hear the land speak.  
That night we heard the land speak.  
We were on country. In country. One with country.  
We felt, smelled, tasted, breathed country  
And those noisy voices were silenced.  
I have grown up with call and response from my childhood in Africa:  
African poetry is oral, vibrant, lively and often noisy,  
but in the words is always a question,  
a call for a response,  
not a shutting down,  
not a silencing

but a connection to others.

That night, I was moved by the responses of young people  
who listened to old ways and responded with their hearts.

Call and response is dialogue,

not a colonisation of speech

– a negotiation

– a connection.

That night we made connection.

Deep connection to the silences between all the busy words.