RESEARCH AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING:
AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES RELATIONSHIP
TO THEIR ENVIRONMENT

by

Scott C. Wainwright

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APPROVED:

Paul J. Kelsch, chair

Terry L. Clements

Deland S. Anderson

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Committee Chairman: Paul Kelsch
Landscape Architecture Department

(ABSTRACT)

This thesis is about gaining an understanding of the complex relationship of Australian Aborigines to their environment. By coming to an understanding of another cultures relationship to the environment, it is possible to come to a greater understanding of ones own environmental relationships.

The problem involves the issue of context transference. Aboriginal and Western thought processes are different. Whereas in Western society analysis is achieved through hard factual evidence, in Aboriginal society hard factual evidence is replaced by feeling and intuition.

A model was devised to study this problem which consists of the use of four different perspectives, each being the view of an 'expert' who has something to contribute towards a fuller comprehension of the Aboriginal/environmental relationship. The perspectives were that of an archaeologist, an anthropologist, the Australian Aboriginal, and the journal I wrote while participating on a Songline walk.

An archaeologist digs into the past and finds clues into the behavior patterns of contemporary Aborigines. An anthropologist, through first hand experience, has gained many valuable insights into the
complexity of this environmental relationship that is not accessible to the archaeologist. The Aborigina!
illustrates this environmental relationship in his own words. And my journal is a record of a unique
opportunity at knowledge enhancement through experiential learning.

The use of Aborigines-as-teacher has revealed Western culture’s connections (and lack of
connections) to the environment and the implications this knowledge can have for our society. As a
landscape architect, this knowledge can be used to influence design and land use decisions.
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Also thanks to Jim, whose ‘conrections’ allowed me the opportunity to participate in a Songline Walk.

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THESIS INTRODUCTION:

"With ever increasing populations and technological advancements, indigenous populations all over the world are not only being threatened, but they are diminishing at an alarming rate. Running parallel to this phenomena is a third disparaging fact, the desensitization of modern man to the natural environment. The connection to the land and how natural systems works is vital to our survival... By continuing to threaten the few indigenous peoples left around the world and assimilating them into our culture with our own societies’ values, we may very well be contributing to our demise. What our technological advancements can’t teach us, to gain enough value and respect for the natural environment to keep from abusing it and depleting its resources, these ‘primitive’ cultures can...”

I had written this paragraph at the onset of this study, it was motivated by a nine day ‘Dreamtime’ hike along an Aboriginal Songline. This became the catalyst for choosing the Australian Aborigines as the focus of this thesis.

This thesis is an attempt to gain an understanding of the complex relationship of the Australian Aborigines to their environment. The question of this thesis is: By comparing the Australian Aborigines’ environmental relationships to our own, can I acquire new insight or perspective into my own culture’s relationship to the environment on a general level, and on a specific level, as a Landscape Architect?

I have devised a model in which to study this problem. This model consists of the use of four different perspectives, each being the view of an ‘expert’ who has something to contribute towards a fuller comprehension of the Aboriginal/environmental relationship. The knowledge gained from combining several perspectives, as opposed to using only one, contributes to a more well rounded understanding.

The choice of what perspectives to chose was based on which were most accessible, and which supplied an adequate amount of data pertaining to the question. These perspectives were that of an
archaeologist, an anthropologist, the Australian Aboriginal himself, and the journal I kept while on the Songline Walk.

Individually, each has its own advantage. For example the archaeologist digs into the past and finds clues to the behavior of contemporary Aborigines by studying the remains of their ancestors in the form of rock art, sacred sites, camp grounds, etc. The anthropologist, through first hand experience with contemporary Aborigines, has gained many valuable insights into the complexity of their relationship to the environment that is not accessible to an archaeologist. The Australian Aboriginal illustrates this relationship in his own words. And finally, my journal is a record of a unique opportunity for knowledge enhancement through experiential learning.

Analysis of the journal helped me distinguish, and find correlation’s, between the perspectives researched. There are two types of perspectives. One conveys a distinctly Western thought process in which analysis is achieved through hard factual evidence, such as that of the archaeologist and the anthropologist. The other perspective conveys a distinctly Aboriginal thought process in which hard factual evidence is replaced by feeling and intuition. My journal is a combination of both thought processes because, as witnessed throughout the entries, I shift back and forth between the two thinking patterns.

The relationship between the two different types of perspectives and the journal is a reciprocal one. The two different types of perspectives gave me the means to analyze the two types of findings, Type I and Type II, that were discovered throughout the journal. The findings labeled Type I show how my perceptions of the Aboriginal’s relationship to his environment has changed or been influenced after researching the perspectives. The findings labeled Type II show how my own attitude and perceptions change as I walk along the Aboriginal Songline. Furthermore, understanding that the Aboriginal thinks differently than the Westerner allowed me the means to go back and make more sense out of what was being conveyed in perspective three, the view of the Aboriginal. Finally, coming to an understanding of
the Aboriginal material made me realize how limiting the perspectives of the archaeologist and the anthropologist are when viewed alone.

Through this approach, a fuller comprehension of the relationship of the Aboriginal to his to environment was achieved. More importantly, a methodology was developed to compare contrasting cultures, and in doing so, new insights into my own culture were realized. It should be noted that the picture of the Aboriginal/environmental relationships presented here are of traditional Aborigines (pre-European contact). There have been many rapid changes in their society’s attitudes and philosophies towards the land since that time. Since this thesis is an attempt to gain insight into one’s own culture by looking at another’s, rather than an anthropological study whose goal is to learn about the changes that have taken place in the Aboriginal society since pre-European contact, it is not necessary to look at the behavior and attitudes of contemporary Aborigines.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter I, Methodology, presents each of the four perspectives and shows their usefulness on an individual level. Chapter II, Methodology Conclusions, compares the four perspectives and states the importance of the holistic method of analysis. And the final chapter, Thesis Conclusions, presents the study findings and the implications of the study.
PERSPECTIVE # 1: ARCHAEOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The human story has been unfolding for over forty thousand years in Australia, and for ninety-nine and a half percent of its human history it is Aborigines who have been on the stage. Yet for years, their rich cultural history has been virtually ignored by Australia’s newest arrival, Western man (Flood, Archaeology 11). Furthermore, Western society’s aggressive colonization tactics have been devastating to the Aborigines’ traditional way of life.

To get a truer glimpse of the way early Aborigines related to their environment before the disruption by European civilization, archaeology can be used as a vehicle. “There are only two sources of knowledge about the really distant human past of Australia: archaeological evidence and Aboriginal oral traditions passed down as myths and legends about the Dreamtime” (Flood, Archaeology 11).

Traditionally, the archaeologist establishes theories and hypothesis through factual remains. These remains are discovered through excavation, or digging through layers of topsoil which correlate to different time periods. The archaeologist studying Australian Aborigines, however, has a unique resource that may not be available to archaeologists studying other cultures. This resource becomes evident when one recognizes the profound accomplishment of the Aborigines in maintaining a cultural continuity for tens of thousands of years. Thus, contemporary Aborigines, through communication with the anthropologist, can give the archaeologist clues about where to dig. Because of this enduring cultural continuity, the archaeologist is justified in putting more validity in the identification and interpretation of themes such as myth, ritual, rock art, campgrounds, and sacred sites.

One of the main roles of the archaeologist studying traditional Aborigines includes discerning how they related to their environment. To do this the archaeologist concentrates on issues such as place of
origin, how and when they arrived in Australia, and the dispersal rate of the population throughout the continent. For example: “The expansion of habitable environment at times of very low sea level no doubt caused the expansion of population, but when the sea rose again, the habitable area would have shrunken within a few thousand years. The loss of hunting grounds may have been a factor in the dispersal of population to previously uninhabitable environments” (Flood, Archaeology 38). Therefore, it can be said that a change in environmental conditions caused a change in the way prehistoric Aborigines related to their environment.

Another role of the archaeologist is witnessed in their ability to assess the Aborigines capability and probability to alter their environment, an example would be through the use of fire. This is accomplished through the study of remains such as bones and ash throughout soil layers. Furthermore, we can look towards the archaeologist to address questions such as why Aborigines never made the transition from the role of hunter-gatherer to that of cultivator. As also will become evident in the research, Aborigines had all the necessary requirements to make this change.

Most of the references included within this perspective are of a contemporary nature. “The first true archaeological excavations in Australia didn’t begin until the 1920’s. Any information written before this time on the subject is just speculation” (Flood, Archaeology 15).

Archaeology is a science which traditionally bases most of its data on stone remains, and the Aboriginal culture was a wood based culture. Thus one of the archaeologist’s main weaknesses becomes apparent because wood remains do not last long. The few stone remains that have been found are limited indicators of what Aboriginal life was really like. Therefore, the type of research and analysis that an archaeologist studying traditional Aborigines undertakes is somewhat different than his peers studying other cultures.

I have separated the information gathered from the research into several categories, which it is felt helps clarify the relationship between the Aboriginal and the archaeologist. The first three categories—Origins, Myth and ritual, and Rock art allows the archaeologist a window to peep into the lives of early
Aborigines, while speculating about how they used their resources and related to the environment. The next three categories—Fire, Signs of harvesting, and Lack of agriculture—are used to show the progressive nature of Aborigines by presenting examples of technological adoption. The last category, Other physical remains on the land, points out some of the limitations of the archaeological method of inquiry. These give a well rounded introduction to how the archaeologist perceives the Aboriginal/environmental relationship. A description of each are as follows:

1) Origins

A brief introduction to Australian Aborigines and their possible origins are given. Furthermore, the prevailing theory as to why Aborigines migrated into the Central Desert region is presented.

2) Myth and ritual

Due to limited stone remains, archaeologist’s have relied more and more on myth and ritual to extract information about Aboriginal/environmental relationships. This section examines myths, rituals, and ceremonies through the eyes of the archaeologist.

3) Rock art

The most significant stone evidence is found in rock art. Information about social, environmental, and spiritual connections to the land is presented.

4) Fire

Aboriginal use of fire often had dramatic effects on the landscape. Here the prevailing attitude of the archaeologist that Aborigines drastically altered their environment in the short and long term through extensive burning practices, is presented.
5) Signs of harvesting

For years Aborigines have been stereotyped as ‘lean and hungry nomads’. This notion is challenged with evidence of ingenious environmental manipulation.

6) Lack of agriculture

It has been said that the Aboriginal culture was too primitive to make the transition from a society of hunter-gatherers to a society of farmers. In this section I present evidence which challenges this notion.

7) Other physical remains on the land

In the last category a few examples of the rare physical structural remains left by early Aborigines are presented. One of the weaknesses of the archaeological method of inquiry is pointed out when attempting to assess these structures which shows the importance of the collaboration with several disciplines.

* * *

ORIGINS- an introduction to the Australian Aboriginal

In order for the archaeologist to begin to understand the Australian Aboriginal, it is necessary to go back to their origins. It is speculated that the first Australians came from South-East Asia in two major waves when the sea level was the lowest. This occurred between fifty-three thousand and twenty thousand years ago. “The first Australians may have been the world’s earliest ocean voyagers, or at least the first successful castaways. New finds in Australia suggest that people had reached the necessary technological level to cross substantiated bodies of open sea and adapt to a new continent at least forty thousand years ago... This adaptation to a strange, new continent at such an early date must be counted as one of the major achievements in the world’s human story” (Flood 39).
Gracile people, a hominid of a slight build, were camped along the shores of Willandra Lakes in Northern Australia more than thirty to fifty-five thousand years ago, and it is agreed that they were not the first migrants, but they were preceded by robust people, a hominid with a dense skeletal composition, perhaps twenty thousand years earlier (Flood 74).

The evidence about how the first Australians related to the land is rather vague, mainly because of the vast time frame being dealt with. There are three current views about the colonization of Australia, however most archaeological evidence supports the following theory. Although this theory seems the most probable at present, there is still much excavation work in the center of the continent to be done to support or refute it.

According to archaeologist Sandra Bowdler’s theory: “the early Australian’s had a marine-based technology and economy, with a heavy reliance on scale fish, shell fish, and small mammals. Their economy underwent little change for many thousands of years, but gradually they did expand towards the center along major river and lake systems. It was not until about twelve thousand years ago that the dry heart of the continent was occupied. At this time people had developed techniques to hunt large kangaroos and began to use grindstones to exploit grass seeds as foods” (Flood 78-79).

The reason to move inland is not clear, the most probable answer can be found in the rising of the sea level. “When the sea rose again, the inhabitable area would have shrunken within a few thousand years. The loss of hunting ground may have been the factor in the dispersal of population to previously uninhabited environment” (Flood 38). Therefore, the catalyst that initially caused Aborigines to move into the harsher desert region was not due to issues such as overpopulation or an increase in technology, but a loss of land due to natural occurrences. Technological innovations came about from a result of natural, rather than man made reasons.

By setting up the preceding type of framework to study early Aborigines, the archaeologist gains the means to assess contemporary Aborigines relationship to the environment.
MYTH AND RITUAL

According to Webster’s Dictionary, “A myth is a legendary narrative which explains a belief or phenomenon.” For the archaeologist, myths provide clues as to what events may have taken place in the past, which aid in explaining why modern Aborigines perform the rituals and ceremonies that they do. Understanding why Aborigines perform specific rituals and ceremonies assists in the clarification and comprehension of their relationship to the environment.

The accuracy of events that take place within Aboriginal myths is astounding. Factual ‘proof’ in many Aboriginal myths and legends is found in events such as the ending of the ice age.

The end of the ice age was a period of dramatic change, rising temperatures dried up the lakes of inland Australia while rising seas drowned vast areas around the coasts. While the sea was rising most quickly, it could, within one generation, have drowned a strip of environment over one hundred kilometers wide, which would greatly reduce coastal territory... The evaporation of the inland lakes and formation of huge salt pans are commemorated in a number of stories that tell of a time when all the waters of the earth were fresh but then became salty. (Flood 179-180)

The facts, figures, and dates gathered so far all support the Aboriginal oral traditions of how they have come to live in Australia since before time could be counted, since the Dreamtime.

The importance of the myth is seen on many different levels. It has often been commented that it is a tribute to the intelligence of Australian Aborigines that they were able to subsist for so many generations without outside help, and without man-made changes on the natural resources. One explanation is found in the statement made by archaeologist, N.B. Tindale, as noted by Mulvaney:

Ancestral Beings who ‘created’ natural resources protected these resources from over exploitation by developing a system of taboo, enforcing dietary restrictions on social groups and age grades. This creation mythology embodied empirical wisdom, gained from trial and error, intended to ensure survival and endowing tribal territories with an organic relationship with their owners. (Mulvaney, Ancient 49)
The rituals and ceremonies were created in order to give more validity to taboos on certain actions and foods, and in the process made each member of a specific tribe acutely aware of what had to be done, or not done, in order to maintain their fragile balance with nature. To further clarify:

The idea of restraint in taking animal and other food is supported by the system of taboos... Among the Walgalu tribe of the Tumut Valley it was forbidden to eat Emu eggs, which must have been a conservative measure in this highland area, where Emus can never have been plentiful and are now reduced to two small flocks at the northern and southern ends of Kosciusko National Park. (Flood 232)

There is a more practical reason, besides the act of remembrance, why Aborigines performed these rituals which commemorate these great event. “Re-enactment of myth through ritual is believed to cause the natural animal or plant species to remain fertile or multiply...” (Mc Niven 80).

The Aboriginal myth is an invaluable tool to the archaeologist, but it does have its limitations. The Aboriginal did not hold value in man-made shrines or altered landscapes, but found most spiritual significance in the ‘natural’ environment. These are sites of significance to Aborigines but they generally contain no material traces of Aboriginal culture. Even when structures were built for ceremonial purposes, most Aboriginal ceremonies left no material traces.

After a large corroboree or other event, the structures built for the ceremony were not repainted, maintained, or re-used but allowed to rot away naturally...The investment that had gone into making these structures had been made into the intellectual and not the material sphere of life. (Flood 243)

The life of the spirit is all-important in Aboriginal society, and these sites that lack tangible remains hold as great or even greater significance for Aborigine than sites containing spectacular rock paintings.

One of the most troubling problems for the archaeologist, when dealing with the topic of prehistoric Aboriginal ritual, is that the participants left very little traces of their activity behind.

In a country where every major topographic feature was endowed with mythological significance, it was not part of Aboriginal culture to build monuments such as megalithic tombs or pyramids...Natural landmarks were, as today, the centers of religion and ceremony. The places where Aborigine people gather for the great ceremonies are not marked by formal structures—the environment is their cathedral. (Flood 240)
Nevertheless, because the Aboriginal stories have proven to be so accurate, information about the Aboriginal relationships to the environment (such as, the importance of unaltered natural landscape features, the increase rites potential of sites, and mythological associations with taboo), are conveyed through myth, ritual and ceremony for those who know how to interpret their meaning.

**ROCK ART**

Rock art is the painting or carving of rocks on a spot considered sacred by the Aboriginal. It is another field that is used by the archaeologist to learn about prehistoric Aboriginal culture, and for the purposes of this thesis the Aboriginal’s relationship to the environment. It is generally accepted in many scientific circles that Aboriginal rock art helps clarify how early Aborigines colonized Australia, and in doing so, it also helps explain the nature of human settlement. Furthermore, the retouching of old paintings was seen as a method to assure that nature will thrive.

There are two types of rock art; practical and spiritual. Practical rock art can be compared to an archival record, giving information such as the types of foods that were eaten during certain time periods. Spiritual rock art, through the act of remembrance, assured the survival of the species being represented.

An example of practical rock art can be seen in this example dating from around the Pleistocene period.

Several changes took place in the development of the Aboriginal rock art...One change is thought to reflect environmental change at the end of the Pleistocene. This was the development of Yam figures, in which both humans and animals were given the outward form of a yam. This is the first known portrayal of any edible plant in Australian rock art. This introduction of the yam may indicate that the yam was becoming an important food source at the end of the Pleistocene period when rainfall increased. (Flood 133)

Another example of the practical nature of Aboriginal rock art is witnessed when it is viewed as a map. "To an initiated Aboriginal some rock art are, in a sense, formalized maps of the region, clearly
indicating wells, tracks, and other topographic features; in another sense, they are a symbolical portrayal of his tribal territory; they also possess deep ceremonial significance, for they testify to the complex wanderings and activities of totemic ancestors” (Mulvaney, Ancient 174-175). Thus, it could be said that the Aboriginal society wasn’t solely based on oral tradition, for they communicated pertinent information about everyday life through rock art.

To some, it is felt that the best and most significant rock art is a manifestation of spiritual beliefs. As noted by archaeologist Josephine Flood; “It conveys aspects of myth through symbolic representations of the great spirit beings. It is the tangible expression of the relevance and reality of myth and of Aboriginal unity with nature” (247). For an archaeologist who feels most comfortable with factual evidence, this is quite a testimony to the power of Aboriginal art. The following further clarifies this concept.

Aboriginal rock art is best comprehended in its natural setting, and alone. It was dusk on a wintry evening in 1960 when I reached The Tombs. The frieze of predominately red stenciled hands seemed almost luminescent, while the curved rock amphitheater was dominated by a single figure—the stencil of a man with arms outstretched, standing before the entrance to a low, deep cave. It was a memorable occasion, and to me, the brooding stillness and chill in the air are an essential element in recalling the aesthetic or intellectual impact of the site...An uncongenial spot to linger in, presumably it was even more so for Aborigines this was no gallery dedicated to the purpose of ‘art for arts sake’. (Flood 171)

This personal testimony serves to illuminate the dual nature of Aboriginal rock art. The site itself was seen as more meaningful than the art which covered it. For the appropriate social group, it was the locality which possessed life essence or mythological reality.

The drawings on significant sites were merely the medium through which Ancestral Beings continued to influence everyday life. Because of the personal relationship between man and so many of the topographic features of his tribal domain, it is probable that although both secular and sacred themes are illustrated, ‘sacred’ subjects dominated. Some related more directly to the increase of the natural species, as in the case of the Wandjina and associated animal drawings, when ceremonial retouching produced rain or perpetuation of the particular species. (Mulvaney, Ancient 172)
Through continued study of the prehistoric Aboriginal rock art tradition, a more well rounded view of the Aborigines’ relationship to the environment starts to form. Rock art was not just a method to express ones creative potential. By conveying information such as what plants and animals are edible and where to find watering holes, it was a key for survival. Furthermore, it gives the archaeologist the means to view the everyday life of prehistoric Aborigines in both the physical and spiritual realm.

* * *

“A critical aspect of the environmental picture is that it was not static. Over the period of human occupation, approximately fifty thousand years, there have been two major causes of environmental change: non-human and human” (White, O’Connell 15).

For years there has been a continuing debate in scientific circles of whether Australian Aborigines were nothing more than parasitic elements in the environment, or whether they made a profound impact on their surroundings. It is becoming quite clear that Aborigines did leave their mark on the environment, and in some remarkable cases, dramatically altered it.

The traditional Aboriginal society was much more dynamic then most people would imagine. Considerable change did occur, and over the last few thousand years the pace of development and innovation quickened. It is only within the last five thousand years that the highlands have been occupied with any intensity...The intense occupation comes after the beginning of the small tool tradition, which seems to mark the adoption of new food management techniques. This apparently led to an increase in population and expansion into areas relatively poor in food resources. (Flood 200)

This illustrates that although prehistoric Aborigines may have developed new technology out of the necessity of resource scarcity, contemporary Aborigines (past five thousand years), developed new technology in order to move into previously uninhabited environments out of conscious choice. The last few sections will set about to prove the validity of this statement.
Perhaps one of the most extreme cases of early Australian Aborigines altering their environment can be seen in the use of fire.

* * *

**FIRE**

Within Australia, fire seems to have been one of the most important prehistoric agents. It is well known within the archaeological community that many early environment altering fires were started by man, however, the reasons as to why are varied.

There were many short term and long term reasons for the Aboriginal extensive burning practices. Some of the more prominent short term strategies included signaling; making travel through dense scrub and thicket easier; getting rid of undergrowth; and as an aid in hunting (by flushing prey out of the bush)... Some of the long term strategies included regeneration of the bush after firing (new grass would spring up and attract kangaroos and other herbivores, on which the hunters could prey); encouraging the regrowth of eucalyptus trees and of edible plant foods, such as bracken roots, young leaves, and shoots; and finally, the ashes acted like manure, and sweet new green shoots would spring up after the first hard rain following the burn. (Flood 213)

Far from being parasitic, as many early researchers believed, early Aborigines actually created many of the environments that the earliest European arrivals so greatly admired.

It is ironic that the Australian parklands and open woodlands so admired by the early settlers should have been created by Aborigines they regarded as ignorant nomads. Yet when Aborigines were driven off their land and the regular, light burning ceased, the old grass turned sour, scrub invaded parkland, and the settlers fine houses, fences, and sheep became victims of uncontrollable bush fires. It has taken over a century for the European settlers to learn from such mistakes, and now a system of controlled, regular burning has been instituted in many National parks. (Flood 214)

As with most of Aboriginal life, there were restrictions and taboos on the use of fire in order to prevent overuse and abuse. There were many different fire regimes used depending on which part of the country you were from, for example, in Arnhem land the Anarbara practiced a fire-management program
that maintains the existing vegetation. They spare fire-sensitive areas, such as jungle thickets, which contain many edible plants that do not readily regenerate after burning.

Here there are strong ritual prohibitions against burning; jungles are the home of spirits who, if disturbed by fire, would send smoke into the eyes of the fire-lighters and make them blind. Fire-breaks are formed around such thickets by carefully burning an area about a kilometer broad soon after the wet season. Thus, when the main burning is done between June and August in the dry season, the jungle thickets are protected by a fire break of already burnt grasslands. (Flood 214)

To control the alteration of an environment as dry as the Central Desert of Australia would have taken a profound knowledge of your surroundings. For Aborigines, fire usage changed the environment to better suit their needs. “Fire was the most versatile and important tool of the hunter-gatherers. It was used for warmth, light, cooking, hunting, signaling, track-making, and, whether intentionally or not, had the effect of improving food supplies” (Westbroek, Collins 4).

SIGNS OF HARVESTING

Another interesting Aboriginal use of the environment is the practice of harvesting. In certain areas of Australia there seems to have been a direct correlation between population increase, environmental manipulation and an advance in technology.

At least one hundred, seventy eight plant species were utilized for food in Central Australia. Vegetable foods composed between seventy and eighty percent of the total food supplies. Seeds of several acacias and grasses, together with various rootstocks, appeared to have formed staples, while fruits, leaves, and stems provided more short lived and less certain food sources. Large groupings of people came together when plant foods were plentiful and surface water was still prevalent. (Mulvaney, Golson 254)

Technological advancements in harvesting techniques allowed Aborigines to remain sedentary in a particular area for longer periods of time. The best example of this is seen in the harvesting of the Macrozamia nuts and other cyads. “The food value of cyads is exceptionally high; forty three percent carbohydrates and five percent protein. And many species produce huge quantities of kernels, yielding more food per hectare than many cultivated crops...this provided adequate food for ceremonies, when
hundreds of people were gathered in a camp for weeks or months at a time..." (Flood 201). Although Aborigines were still engaging in nomadic activities, this shows the first intensive occupation of a site by a large group of people, for a period of time longer than normal hunting and gathering activities would permit. It also allowed Aborigines to move into the harsher regions of the country where food was not quite so abundant.

As the Aboriginal society became sedentary for longer periods of time, impact on the land increased. This environmental impact, however, was often balanced with a profound sensitivity towards the environment. This is seen when looking at the practice of daisy yam harvesting.

These have large yellow daisy-like flowers and fat, sweet, milky tubers which were dug up and roasted... the daisy yam was a major Aboriginal food. So extensive was the digging for these tubers that sometimes the area was left looking like a plowed field... And, like Macrozamia, the range of the daisy yam could be extended by firing. (Flood 202)

Although harvesting for the yam did have a rather large impact on the environment at times, Aborigines were still able to maintain a harmonious balance with nature. “When yams were dug out, the top of the tuber was left in the ground so the yam would grow again...” (Mulvany, Ancient 176).

These examples show that prehistoric Aborigines were not only capable of ingenious manipulation of food sources, but the environment well. This manipulation increased food production and the regularity and reliability of food sources, making possible regular large tribal gatherings and a semi-sedentary way of life. Alterations of the environment also allowed the early Aboriginal to move into harsher regions of the country.

As a society becomes more complex, it increases its demands on the economy, and ultimately, a more intensive social system is linked to more intensive food management. Although Aborigines seem to have had a profound impact on the environment at times, they seem to have counteracted this impact with an extensive working knowledge of natural systems. “This is a far cry from the traditional picture of the Aboriginal as a lean hungry nomad continually roaming the country, spear in hand, in search of his next meal...” (Flood 206).
LACK OF AGRICULTURE

Aborigines did undertake some harvesting practices as far back as five to seven thousand years ago, but they never made the transition to a society of farmers. There are several possible explanations for this, the main ones being cultural conservatism, lack of suitable plants and animals to domesticate and deliberate choice (Flood 219).

Conservatism:

“The argument that Aborigines were too conservative to adopt agriculture is hard to sustain in view of all the other elements in Aboriginal culture adopted from overseas. These include outrigger canoes, platform disposal of the dead, wooden sculptures, fish hooks, complex netting techniques, and various art designs, myths and rituals” (Flood 222).

It seems Australian Aborigines were selective, taking what was most useful or appealing from overseas, but rejecting other items. That they had a great capacity for change is apparent. In prehistoric, as well as modern times, people successfully adapted their technology and lifestyle to the changing environment. Conservatism, or at least a very slow rate of change, is the normal state of affairs in human societies. “Conservatism only seems exceptional to us living in the twentieth century because we live in a period of immense change and tend automatically to equate progress with change. Thus, what should surprise us about Aboriginal society is not how little they have changed, but how much” (Allen 153).

Lack of suitable animals and plants to domesticate:

Another prevailing theory is that the Australian continent lacked the necessary plant and wildlife that are ideal for domestication. Flaws in this theory should already be apparent when looking back at the harvesting practices of prehistoric Aborigines with the Macrozamia nut and the daisy yam. There are two further semi-agricultural practices that will further discount this theory.

The first, which was practiced more along the coasts, involves the peculiar practice of what we would probably refer to today as garbage composting.
The first semi-cultural practice was the deliberate spitting out of fruit tree seeds into the debris of fish remains and shells in refuse heaps at the edge of the camp. These midden posts with their compost of decaying organic matter and lime from shells provided an ideal environment for tree growth, so in a few years the campsites would be well supplied with fruit trees. Indeed, there is a consistent association between old campsites and trees with edible fruit. (Flood 226)

The second semi-agricultural practice involves Australia’s one native cereal grain, wild millet. Cereal gathering was mainly an adaptation in the arid environments of the dry heart of Australia. One of the main problems with gathering seeds is that the seeds tend to ripen at different times, making it difficult to harvest large quantities of grain at any one time. Aborigines overcame this problem by gathering the grass when the seed was full but the grass was still green. The grass was then stacked in heaps and the seeds left to dry and ripen, then they were threshed so that the seeds all fell to the ground in one place. This harvesting of grass seed was done on a large scale. (Flood 227)

**Deliberate choice:**

The Australian Aborigines, particularly those of the Central Desert Region, seemed to have all the necessary prerequisites to make the change from cereal gathers to cereal cultivators, that they did not seem to have been a deliberate choice.

It may be that the hunter-gatherers of Australia were so affluent that they had no need to increase the yield of food plants or to store food. This affluence may have been achieved by the establishment of an equilibrium, in which the population was kept below the level the country could support, its carrying capacity. In other words, the available food could have fed far more mouths than actually had to be fed. (Flood 229)

There would have been no stimulus to increase the food supply by developing agriculture unless some environmental or population stress was experienced. The people kept their own population in balance so there would have been no need to increase food supply. The return from their highly efficient foraging was so great that expenditure of additional effort on cultivating crops was not worthwhile.

Because of the constant state of equilibrium Aborigines kept with their environment, there was no need to worry about the extra food supply farming would have granted.
The Aboriginal population was controlled by the food sources available... the number of mouths that could be fed was regulated by the food available at the leanest time of the year. Therefore, the summer abundance of food was used, not to feed more people by collecting and storing surplus food, but as a time when there was more leisure for intellectual life. (Flood 233)

Aborigines could also respond to food shortages by moving elsewhere, so the motivation to cultivate was never likely to be very strong. When times were hard, people could simply move further afield (Allen 149).

Thus, the Aboriginal’s thorough understanding of the carrying capacity of the environment seems to have kept him from making the transition from hunter-gatherer, to cultivator.

OTHER PHYSICAL REMAINS

The evidence presented on how prehistoric Aborigines impacted their environment thus far had to do with impacts of a practical nature, methods of survival. There is also evidence of environmental impact for religious or ceremonial purposes. “Corporate activities which left their mark on the environment were varied, but few have been sought or surveyed. Early accounts indicate that burial mounds and other earthworks were particularly common in Eastern Australia” (Mulvaney, Ancient 168).

There were also relics left for ceremonial purposes. The most common surviving relics are stone arrangements or alignments.

The intimate links existing between the Aborigines and their territory, topographical features, plants and animals were an unquestioned, integral part of existence. From a knowledge of the living people, through the anthropologist or ethnographer, an archaeologist realizes that rocks did not just require ‘human arrangement’ before they played an intimate role in ceremonial life. However, unless human agency was involved in erecting these structures, he cannot identify them archaeologically. (Mulvaney, Ancient 168-169)

Although the archaeologist can excavate these structures and possibly figure out their function, it has been virtually impossible for him to discern their religious and ceremonial significance. In order to answer questions such as this, he must turn to the anthropologist.
SUMMARY

After reviewing the categories in this perspective, it can be said that there are several missions of the archaeologist who studies early Aborigines. The first category, shows an in depth look into the origins of this society in order to find hints into their unique philosophy and relationship to the environment. For example, by looking back to the origins of the Aboriginal society, the archaeologist has been able to conclude that the earliest Australian had a technology advanced enough to allow them survive in a completely foreign environment; something that some would say Aborigines of today are not even capable of. Furthermore, the archaeologist has been able to speculate that Aborigines were forced to move inland because of the rising sea level. This occurrence forced them to adopt new technologies for the hunting and gathering techniques that would have been necessary for their new environment. Therefore, outside forces brought about technological progress for the early Aboriginal.

Within the next category, myth and ritual, the archaeologist supplies evidence that gives validity to Aboriginal myths. This allows one of Western society to view these myths as more than just a story. Being from a society that does not have a tradition of story telling, this type a validation is necessary. Furthermore, the importance to the Aboriginal of unaltered natural land features becomes evident. This points to a vital difference between our two cultures, where Western society sees innovation and technological progress in environmental alteration, Aborigines view it as an impingement on the sacred. Finally, myths were set up in order to put a check on overexploitation of resources by an areas inhabitants which to ensure future resources. This is seen in the idea of the taboo.

It is often been said that the Aboriginal culture is an oral tradition, therefore, all information is passed from generation to generation solely by word of mouth. Evidence within the category of rock art, however, falsifies this notion. On the practical level, Aboriginal rock art can be viewed as an instruction manual for generations of younger Aboriginal. It describes what foods can and can not be eaten, and provides topographical information, such as where specific water holes can be found. On the spiritual
level, the importance of maintaining sites is revealed. To maintain rock art, repainting when necessary, is to ensure the multiplicity and fertility of specific species.

Within the next few categories, several examples of environmental manipulation are shown. Adoption of fire usage caused severe environmental alteration. Aborigines must have had a profound knowledge of their environment in order to understand the consequences of these short and long term effects. This is evident in the idea of taboo. Aborigines created certain restrictions on the use of fire in areas that would not readily regenerate after being burned, such as jungle thickets.

Within the next two categories, harvesting practices and lack of agriculture, one witnesses an increase in the rate of technological advancement within contemporary Aboriginal society (the last five thousand years). Aboriginal harvesting practices, such as the exploitation of nuts and yams, allowed them to be sedentary for longer periods of time. This led to more time being spent performing rituals and maintaining sacred sites. Therefore, the reasons for contemporary Aborigines to adopt new technology is in direct contrast to the reasons given for prehistoric Aborigines, which was necessity. Although Aborigines did adopt several harvesting techniques, their accumulated knowledge and understanding of their surroundings allowed them to consider environmental impacts.

The Aborigines had all the necessary prerequisites to become farmers, but they did not by deliberate choice. Aborigines understood enough about how natural systems within their environment worked to know that adopting agriculture would upset the natural balance of their surroundings. Furthermore, Aborigines learnt how to maintain the human carrying capacity within their environment, so they did not need the additional food that farming would produce.

The last category ends the archaeological perspective by looking at several examples of man made remains. The importance of this category is not to show what can be learnt about the Aboriginal relationship to the environment, but to show what cannot be learnt. The archaeologist’s limitations are revealed which stresses the validity of the use of several perspectives.
Through the use of various categories such as myth and ritual, rock art, etc., the archaeologist begins to discover the numerous interrelationships between Aborigines and their surroundings throughout different time periods. Hence, these discoveries can be used as a marker to measure the correlation between the progression and change of this society and the environment in which they lived.

It can be said that the Aboriginal’s relationship to the environment has changed as the society has progressed. Some of these changes, such as the adoption of harvesting techniques, has allowed Aborigines the time to become a more unified cultural entity, as witnessed in the strong adherence to the Law by all tribes of Australia. Moreover, the profound knowledge of their environment seems to have allowed Aborigines the means to make conscious decisions about what technology to adopt, and what technology not to adopt.

To conclude, it is not the current job of the archaeologist to prove that the Aboriginal society has changed throughout prehistoric times, by now this is a well known fact. Yet it is felt that neither the depth or the extent of these changes has been appreciated. Therefore, in order for the data of the anthropologist, or even the data of the Aborigines themselves, to be fully appreciated by one of Western society, an examination of the archaeologist’s data is useful in terms of more general theories of human and material behavior. Thus, a framework is set up that will aid in telling the full story of the Australian Aborigines.
PERSPECTIVE #2: ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION:

An anthropologist can be classified as one who studies another’s culture through first hand experience by living with a particular tribe for a given period of time. They collect ‘data’ through note taking or tape recordings of conversation, questioning, observation, and/or participation. As stated within Webster’s Dictionary: “they strive to gain an understanding of human beings in relation to distribution, classification of races, physical characteristics, environmental and social relations, and culture.” For the purposes of this thesis, the definition of the anthropologist will be limited to the understanding of Aborigines in regard to their environmental relationships.

There are some dangers that the researcher can fall into. To start, it is difficult get an idea of how Aborigines lived traditionally by studying them in the post-contact period. Years of assimilation tactics and contact alone have had their toll on this culture’s traditional lifestyle.

Furthermore, there is the problem of information translation and interpretation. As ethnographer Fred Meyers states:

The task of seeing things from a native’s point of view is that of grasping those concepts which, for another people, ‘are experiencing near’. An experiencing near concept is defined as one which an individual, in our case an informant, might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others of his culture. What the ethnographer perceives from this information may certainly be what the informant was trying to convey, but he may also just as easily misinterpret the information. (128)

Not only does the ethnographer receive solely what the informant wants him to know, but by the time it gets to his audience, its already third or fourth hand interpretations (the original source, the informant, anthropologist, and the audience). I have attempted to lessen the possibility of the problem of interpretation by using several different researcher’s studies.
In spite of its pitfalls, this perspective is valid for several reasons, the most evident being the knowledge that can be obtained of another culture through first hand experience. As anthropologist Deborah Rose states; “Answers emerge in the lived experience of relationships in shared time and place. Ultimately, answers are a sharing of perceptions, attitudes, experience, and, I think, compassion” (26). Thus, the anthropologist can be viewed as a translator of information from one culture to another.

Today, the role of the anthropologist is becoming even more valuable because as Aborigines are deciding that the ‘white man’ know ‘their true story’. Therefore, the knowledge that is being obtained by field research on traditional Aboriginal life is becoming more accurate. As one ethnographer explains of the information received from Paddy Roe, an Aboriginal elder, on their relationship to the land, “There will be more to come, following in Paddy Roe’s footsteps, or ignoring them. But one ignores the local guide at one’s own peril, for he is telling us how to survive in his country” (Roe, Benterrak 23).

Furthermore, much of the information that an archaeologist obtains regarding such issues as where to look for sacred sites, etc., comes from Aborigines, as translated by the anthropologist. Therefore, the anthropologist can be viewed as a middle man, or translator of information not only between Western and Aboriginal society, but between the archaeologist and Aborigines as well.

The amount of information compiled over the years by the anthropologist is enormous. I have extracted only information from the anthropologist’s perspective which directly describes how Aborigines related to their environment. Nevertheless, several overriding themes stand out, the two most notable being the concept of the Dreaming and how complex the Aboriginal/environmental relationship really is.

The Dreaming is not a set of beliefs which is being lost because it is no longer valid, it is rather a way of talking, of seeing, of knowing, and a set of practices. Reading its present and public forms as religious, apolitical, and as relics of past customs is to deliver it a death blow. Except where it appears in books, embalmed as it were, it depends on people living in the country, traveling through it and naming it, constantly making new stories and songs. (Roe, Benterrak 14)

To make the material more comprehensible, I have divided it up into categories of my own creation, all of which provide a brief look at one of the several manifestations of the multi-leveled
relationship between Aborigines and their environment. The categories, along with a brief introduction, are presented below:

1) **The relationship of creation and the natural world to the Dreamtime**
   
   A brief introduction to the relationship between Aborigines, their environment and the Dreamtime is given. Many concepts are introduced which are discussed in more detail in proceeding sections.

2) **Own country**
   
   Aborigines have an intimate relationship with their local environments. This is demonstrated in the term ‘country’.

3) **Boundary and Region Demarcation**
   
   The Aboriginal definition of boundary shows little resemblance to that of Western society's. As is apparent in most of Aboriginal philosophy, boundaries were created by the Dreamtime Ancestors.

4) **The relationship of the physical body to the earth in life and death**
   
   Aborigines view themselves as interconnected to their environments on multiple levels. These levels, which range from birth (conception) to death, as well as to the reciprocal relationship of nurturing, are presented.

5) **The Law and its proven stability over time**
   
   Aboriginal Law is not only important but it has endured for thousands of years. This section discusses the law's importance and enduring characteristics.

6) **Responsibility to the country**
   
   It is imperative for Aborigines to take care of the country. This concept, as well as how one acquires the knowledge to do so is presented.
7) Land as text book as well as teacher

'Knowing' the environment for Aborigines means being aware of the slightest changes in the ecosystem. This category discusses this notion and how one gains this knowledge.

8) The delicate balance/relationship between all living things

Aboriginal philosophy stresses that there is a vast web of interdependency between all beings, living and non-living. This theme, which is discussed throughout the perspective of the anthropologist, is summarized.

*   *   *

RELATIONSHIP OF CREATION AND THE NATURAL WORLD TO THE DREAMTIME

Life for Aborigines cannot be conceived of as separated from the stories of creation (the Dreamtime), and therefore the earth itself.

Earth is the initial mother and, by virtue of being original, is now and forever the mother of everything. All the different kinds of living beings, and all knowledge, are ultimately born of earth... The earth as she is now- Covered with vegetation, marked by different land forms, home to a great variety of living things- is the visible and constable record of origins. Those (such as Australian Aborigines), who know how to look can see in the earth the story of our beginnings. Those who have the knowledge to understand can find in this visible story, the meaning and purpose of life. (Rose 42)

One sees the beginnings of a philosophy in which the sacred quality of the earth is still alive. Therefore, the preservation of that earth has become the main objective of life. For fifty thousand years or more, the environment which sustained life and culture became bound intimately with every aspect of human life, the person and the environment were one and the same. Ownership of the land in the European sense did not exist. Aborigines considered themselves part of the living systems because through their mythology they
understand that their ancestors created the environment and the life on it including themselves, with each part playing a role in the maintenance of the whole dynamic world. The most important role that an individual could play in this system was that of custodian of the common environment (Niedje, Kakadu p10-11).

Although the stories may vary, the creation acts of the Ancestral beings are seen within every tribe of the Australian Aborigines. As a child builds up a perception of a place through accumulated experience, so these early generations assembled a richer and richer accumulation of perceptions of their environment. To give authority and coherence to the perceptions so that they could be effectively accumulated and passed on from generation to generation, creation heroes became tied into and linked the growing net of perceptions.

The environment and humans became parts of the same processes of the living world... Over the generations, traditions of the people developed an incredible complexity which became woven into the structure of society, into the relationships between people, between people and their habitat, and between ages of experience. Without a written language this wisdom of the people remained in living minds, but the minds were living in an environment every part of which was a ‘permanent’ reminder of perception and explanation. The environment, therefore, is critical in maintaining the Aborigines, physical, mental, and spiritual life. (Niedje, Kakadu 10)

The Ancestral beings created every major landscape feature through a specific act, and in order for the landscape to be preserved it takes the intervention and care of all living things.

The accumulated knowledge of Aborigines was so great that even the oldest individual could not retain it all. Proof of the validity of this knowledge is seen below:

Stephen Davis while teaching at Millingimi, Arnhem Land made many offshore fishing trips with local Aboriginal people. He soon became aware that his hosts avoided some areas of seemingly imaginary lines. When asked for an explanation the people shrugged and said that the place was someone else’s place... In every instance he has found that the imaginary lines follow undersea ridges and valley bottoms. Accurately bound into traditional behavior is knowledge of ice age geography, an environment that disappeared thousands of years before the birth of Christ. Some places under thirty meters of water are still maintained as sacred sites. (Niedje, Kakadu 11)
The cultural continuity that must have taken place to pass this information down for thousands of years is unfathomable. Furthermore, avoiding an environment that has been under the sea for a millennia attests to the strength and power that the sacred sites held for these people.

Within these examples, one begins to see how inextricably bound Aborigines are to their environment and the influence the Dreamtime has on this relationship. The Earth is still considered ‘the sacred mother of all’, and in order for it to be preserved, the people must ‘take care’ of the country. The information which conveys how to act as a custodian of the land is passed from generation to generation by one’s elders. This demonstrates the cultural continuity within this society. These concepts, will be further explained in the following sections.

OWN COUNTRY

For Aborigines, the term ‘own country’ brings up a whole range of relationships and connotations. It is a term that has many meanings and can be used in many different contexts. For the purposes of this thesis, the term will be used solely to clarify the Aboriginal’s relationship to the land.

Walking through the scrub with a Pintupi, one cannot help but be impressed with the authority and confidence with which they move so easily through their environment... The way of thinking which enables a people to make camp almost anywhere they happen to be, with little sense of alienation, is the way of thinking which creates a universe that is mythologized country... To understand what the ‘country’ is, one must relate it to the lives of the semi-wandering hunters and gatherers who imbue it with significance. They who move and shift about almost constantly from place to place truly have culturalized space and make out of impersonal geography a home, a ‘ngurra’. (Meyers 163)

The term ‘own country’ can be split into two groups. There is the ‘groups’ or ‘tribes’ country, and their is the ‘individuals’ country. In reference to ‘groups’ or ‘tribes’, the term ‘country’ is mainly describing social and kinship affiliations. Since the purpose of this thesis is to come to an understanding of Aboriginal’s relationships to the environment, the term will not be used. However, when referring to the individual, the term describes an intimate bond to a particular area. This is truly seen as ones ‘own country’.
There are several ways a person becomes part of a country or 'owns' country.

It may be the identification of an individual with his point of entry into a departure from the visible, material domain shows an implicit expectation or ideal on the part of the Pintupi with whom I talked that a person should be conceived, born, and die in his own country. And thus the comment about people living away from their dreaming place that they 'for no purpose' moved away, emphasizing that they belong at that place. (Meyers 363)

Not only do Aborigines see themselves as belonging to the land, as opposed to the land belonging to them, but this relationship starts before life, and continues on after death.

The first and foremost relationship of an individual to his country becomes evident upon conception. "One's home carries images of security... It has great emotional depth; perhaps also it is the place of one's own entry into the corporeal world, one's Dreaming place" (Meyers 346-347). The places a person is conceived and born are extremely important to the individual and is reason enough to call these spots one's 'own country'. These two places hold a direct link to the person and their Dreaming Ancestors. An individual is identified with his Dreaming. He is frequently referred to by terms stressing his identity. The identification is expressed in narrative in which people describe Dreaming events in the first person: 'I did this, went here and there, etc.'... In this sense, an individual is, from conception, identified with a Dreaming and through it to a place. The place marks the manifestation of activity by the Dreaming, where something happened, where an individual appeared on the visible plane. In a sense, the place, a transformation of the Dreaming, and the person, similarly became real, actual (Meyers 356).

Another important connection for a person and 'his country' can be seen in death. "Being of one's country could come to mean persons and country are mutually embedded. This is expressed in the frequent reference to dead persons by the name of the place at which they died" (Meyers 323). To continue: "the death of an individual within his own country would pass back his spirit to its Dreaming, its spirit home, ready for the next incarnation. We might imagine on this model, Dreaming spirits cycling through countrymen and back to the land where they die" (Meyers 369).
There is another attachment to the land, the emotional or sentimental one. Aborigines are very compassionate, and this is expressed in their actions towards sharing, others, and the environment.

"Another context of occurrence is related to mention of one’s home country: ‘poor fellow, my country’. The emphasis is on the sentiments of a feeling of relatedness towards a country" (Meyers 132). This is a powerful notion, the country has taken on what would be considered human traits. This point is further illustrated below: “Narratives of travel to visit distant relatives often explain that as they grew more distant, the travelers ‘grew homesick’ for their country and went back... The men cry because they were worrying for Papunya, their homeland, and returned ahead of schedule” (Meyers 139).

There may seem to be a conflict in what ‘own country’ actually refers to because more than one person can be conceived or born at a particular place, but it is a misconception. However, as seen in the quote below, besides not being a problem, this situation is encouraged.

It is not one man that holds a country, many do. As shown above, many people have an interest in a place; many persons can claim some form of identification with a place. They are all, consequently, considered kinsmen, and are concerned that it is properly looked after... The idea is that many people have rights to a place, and that they are concerned it should be treated properly, and that they may be suspicious what others do. (Meyers 411-412)

Within this culture, there is a system of checks and balances so that the land does not get abused and is properly looked after.

To ‘look after’ these sacred sites is a man’s duty and responsibility; for it assures the continuity of things, makes the animals and plants increase, and so on. More than once I have heard men say that once the Gibson Desert had a lot of kangaroos and such, but now they have all gone because they got ‘lonely’ for their kinsmen, those who belong with them. (Meyers 413)

To conclude, the intricate connection of Aborigines to their country can be witnessed in conception, life, death, sentimentality, and custodianship. Therefore, it can be said that the notion of ‘own country’ is a relationship that can be seen on the physical, spiritual, and emotional level. “Ones own country is a place of security. Here there are no dangerous noumenal forces: the spirits know you and you
know the proper ritual that maintains the ongoing relationship... The country is an image, then of identity, security, familiarity” (Meyers 416).

BOUNDARY AND REGION DEMARCATION

The term boundary has a much different meaning for Western and Aboriginal cultures. Within Western society, boundaries are set up by roads, fences, and divisions between public and private domain, all of which disregard the natural environment. Within Aboriginal society, the few boundaries they acknowledge were set up by the Dreaming Ancestors and natural laws (such as a stream or mountain).

There are two types of boundaries within the country of the Australian Aboriginal, the first being the nonphysical boundary. Nonphysical boundaries differentiate things such as language and culture; they were created by the routes the Dreamtime Ancestors choose to follow in their travels. These routes are often referred to as tracks. “Tracks and songs are the basis to Aboriginal maps and are often called boundaries. To say that there are boundaries is to say that there are differences, the universe is not uniform” (Rose 52). Unlike maps of Western society in which boundaries are lines which divide, tracks connect points on the landscape, showing relationships between the points. These are the ‘boundaries’ that unite. “The fact that the Dreaming demarcates differences along the line is very important to creating variation, but ultimately a track, by its very existence, demarcates a coming together. The Dreaming Ancestor’s creativity made possible the relationships which connect by defining the differences which divide” (Rose 52).

For a culture that is used to boundaries being set up in order to divide, the concept of boundaries being set up to unite is not an easy one to grasp. However, the issue is simplified if one realizes that tracks do not appear on the landscape in parallel lines. On the contrary, they are constantly intersecting, much like a spider’s web. Therefore the Aboriginal nonphysical boundary, expressed as Dreaming tracks, creates a set of identities which cross-cut each other. Since people of different regions are associated with specific Dreaming tracks, they are forced to come together where particular tracks intersect. “Every track defines
both difference and similarity, and as the tracks cross-cut each other, forming elaborate webs and stories, so people assert their rights and obligations both to differ and to come together" (Rose 55).

There are several non-physical types of boundaries within Aboriginal culture, however, there is also a physical type of boundary which demarcates ecological zones. These were also set up by the Dreamtime Ancestors.

Distinct plant communities serve as particularly salient marks of difference and of Dreaming activity. An example of this can be seen in the Dreamings of the black headed python. The black headed python traveled from the salt-water in the west to the salt water in the east, carrying in her coolamon, and scattering along the way seeds of a variety of types of plants. She deposited the seeds of plants which are confined to coastal regions along a portion of the track; then she left her coolamon behind and moved into a different zone which she marked with a different set of plants. (Rose 52)

To conclude, although nonphysical boundaries distinguish different languages, cultures, etc., they are set up in a way that brings people together, not separate them. This way of thinking allows Aborigines to think of the country as equally everybody’s. “It (the country) was not like a paddock, if he saw smoke from a fire, he would be happy to go see who it was; the groups may have fought but this was considered a natural part of encountering people...in other words, the country is ‘one country’, everybody’s family, the country is a continuous entity” (Meyers 183). Furthermore, although Aborigines acknowledge certain physical boundaries, they too were created by the Dreamtime Ancestors.

RELATIONSHIP OF PHYSICAL BODY TO EARTH IN BIRTH AND DEATH

Human beings are identified with parts of the cosmos. All human bodies maintain a stable temperature when they are healthy, but women are thought to be hotter than men, particularly during their fertile years. Associated with the sun and with fire, women’s heat ‘cooks’ or grows babies much as the sun cooks the earth and grows life. Men are associated with water and with the rain which cools the earth. Both rain and sun are necessary to the continuity of life on earth, as of course, are men and women. (Rose 59)
As mentioned in the preceding section, Aborigines feel that the life of all living things starts out long before birth, even conception, in another form.

A human being begins its existence as a baby growing inside its mother. Prior to its presence in its mother life exists, but is not entirely human. Yimaruk is one of the terms for life in this continuity. It is not confined to humans, and is frequently absorbed through humans. Baby centers are also sources of human life. From one of these centers a baby enters its mother and grows into a human being... The significant point is that a human being has its origins in the world beyond its immediate parents. (Meyers 59)

Because Yimaruk, is an earthbound entity, Aborigines feel that a newborn child belongs just as much to the country in which they were born as to the mother which gave them birth. This relationship is expressed in a ritual known as ‘cooking the baby’.

This ritual, which women perform for their children during the first year of life, brings the child out of the ground, ‘cooking’ it to make it strong, healthy, and ‘grounded’... There are many symbolic resonances in this ritual. ‘Cooking the baby’ replicates the process by which the Dreaming Ancestors emerged from the ground. Detaching the child from its extra-human origins and delivering it both from and to the earth as a complete (cooked) human being, this ritual seems to autochthonise the person. Born of woman, and by woman ‘born’ of earth, the infant becomes a person with specific attachments to country. Being born onto the ground, confer rights to a place, expressed as rights to knowledge. (Rose 62)

This relationship of nurturing between child and country continues throughout their youth.

For the traditional Aboriginal, a child’s first solid foods, usually provided by its mother or other maternal relations, were vegetable foods which grow directly from the earth... Food of the country gives a child body-one shares flesh with country, and country, like the earth more generally, can be understood as a life-giving and nurturing presence. (Rose 61)

Once again, this is a reciprocal relationship, and country has an obligation in return- to nourish and sustain its people.

Aboriginal people take countries obligations seriously. They are thoroughly at home in a county that Europeans define as wilderness, believing that they will never go hungry of thirsty for long... Where I have worried and planned ahead for a lack of food, Yarralin people have simply gone, confident that the country will take care of them. To my knowledge, they have always been right. (Rose 109-110)
The nurturing relationship between a person and his country goes beyond the physical realm, but is, however, interconnected with it.

When the Yarralin talk of ‘growing people’ they refer to the actions which include feeding, protecting, singing, and teaching. The term does not distinguish between physical, mental, social, and spiritual being, nor does it distinguish between country, Dreaming Ancestors, and people: These are all part of being alive... (Rose 65)

As with birth, the strong attachment of the physical body to the earth can be seen in death. One can see an understanding of the full cycle of life, and the importance of revitalizing the earth. Aborigines see the earth as life giving, but they must take care of the earth, and give, in order to receive.

‘When a person dies their Yimaruk (spirit) goes free... The bones of the deceased were returned to the earth and placed in a cave in the dead persons country. Occasionally they were taken out and rubbed with fat and red ochre to improve the health of the country. As country grew the person, so bones nourish the country that gave them life, and some people say that part of the reason why the country is not as rich as it used to be is that people no longer put bones back as was formerly done. (Rose 69-70)

This is further illustrated below. "As bones disintegrate they become part of the earth, as does life. In this way country contains its own life, Dreaming life, and the traces of all those other lives that belonged to that country. Plants, fish, animals, and birds and people are all made healthy by the presence of bones’’ (Rose 70).

Hence, Aborigines view themselves as connected to their ‘country’ in conception, birth, life, death and in the reciprocal relationship of nurturing. It is no wonder that Aborigines are so careful to protect their ‘own country’, for it is their true home.

THE LAW AND ITS STABILITY OVER TIME:

The ‘Law’, as understood by the Australian Aboriginal, is quite different than our governmental laws of today. The law of the Aboriginal is the adherence to and the continuation of the myths of the Dreamtime ancestors that created the environment. In a sense, it the true law of the land.
What the Pintupi mean by ‘Law is clearly expressed by them as an external rule or pattern to which they must conform. That is, ‘It is not our idea; it is a big Law’. Law is experienced as external, as not coming from within the self; it is not arbitrary or motivated by self interests. Furthermore, in order to maintain the Laws continuity, each generation must conform to the objectified Law as mediated by the preceding generation. (Meyers 548)

The statement, that the law of the land is external has a profound meaning. Unlike a self-centered universe, such as that of Western culture, where rules of governing and behaving initially came from within ones self, ‘Law’ for the Aboriginal come from an outside force.

It was explained to me early on in my time with them that I must observe Aboriginal rules because there could be no exceptions under the Law: ‘You see that hill over there? Blackfellow Law like that hill. It never changes. Whitefellow law goes this way, that way, all the time changing. Blackfellow Law different. It never changes. Blackfellow Law hard-like a stone, like that hill. The Law is in the ground’. (Rose 56)

Moral force is seen as lying outside the individual in objective forms handed down from the Dreaming.

Adherence to the law is itself a basic value... As the law originated in the Dreamtime, it is beyond critical questioning and conscious change. The totemic philosophers assert that man, society and nature are interdependent components of one system, whose source is the Dreamtime; all are, therefore, amenable to the law, which is coeval with the system. The law not only embraces ritual, economic, residential and kinship rules and conventions but also what we would call natural laws and technological rules. (Meggitt 252)

All living beings and heavenly bodies have a part to play in the adherence of the Law, this is further evidence to the claim that the Aboriginal view all things as interconnected, they are not the master of all, just of themselves.

Everything comes out of the earth by Dreaming; everything knows itself, its place, its relationship to other portions of the cosmos. Every living thing has, and knows, its own Law...The system works best when nothing happens that can be marked as significant change... The most significant point to this concept of systems is that there is no hierarchy: the same meta-rules apply to all. (Rose 220)
The Law was set up in the Dreamtime external to conscious choice, however, it is implicit that all living beings have a choice in following Law. They can do what is necessary to maintain life or they can turn their backs on responsibility and, in doing so, allow destruction.

Law is a serious life and death business for individuals and the world; it tells how the world hangs together. To disregard the Law would be to disregard the source of life and thus to allow the cosmos to fall apart. The autonomy of country, species, and people is sustained by an intense interdependence. Most Aborigines choose to uphold the Law and culture; the burden, therefore, of responsibility is shared among all living things... (Rose 57)

In summary, the Dreamtime Law has worked for so many generations because it is based on the permanence of the land. Law is intertwined with the land, and the environment was seen as unchanging. “Dreaming life has this quality which defies change: those things which come from the Dreaming-country, boundaries, law, relationships, the conditions of human life- endure. Compared to the ephemeral existence of living things now, Dreamings carry on forever” (Rose 57). Because all living things have a responsibility to uphold and maintain the Law, the Aborigines feel closely associated to all of creation. It is no coincidence that with the introduction of Western world technology and land manipulation techniques that the permanence of this Law that has resisted change for so many years is starting to deteriorate. The manipulation of the land causes the death of the Law, which in turn breaks the bond between man, nature, and the environment.

RESPONSIBILITY TO ‘COUNTRY’:

Aborigines feel they have a part to play in the maintenance of the Law to protect all living things and the cosmos. This maintenance of the Law is directly related to the custodianship of the earth.

The identity of an Aboriginal person, is much more than the legal title to the land. He must fulfill the responsibilities with which his people were charged by ancestral beings in the creative epoch. For Gagudju man: Big Bill Neidje...land is life. (Niedje, Kakadu 27)
To take care of ‘country’ takes an intimate knowledge of ones surroundings. The knowledge that allows one to take care or ‘hold’ a ‘country’ is obtained through instruction by ones elders through the stories of the Dreamtime, as well as through experiential learning.

To know a place means to know its story, to know the associated ritual, songs, and dances. In fact what one holds and what one losses or passes on is a story of knowledge... Many people can claim identification to a site through conception, but they do not hold it unless other ‘holders’ agree to accept their claim and teach them about it. (Meyers 401)

Many Aborigines point to knowledge as a marker of their right of ownership- rights which they believe to have been in no way nullified by conquest. “They do not say that Europeans have no rights or knowledge; rather, Europeans rights and knowledge are located elsewhere, and they have never taken the trouble to learn from the people who know this place. The people who follow the Law from the beginning day” (Rose 68-69).

Taking care of country has to do with the intimate link between people and country. Because of the interconnectedness between humans and ‘country’, it is imperative that everyone ‘take care of all’. “When people are attacked, country suffers, and when the country is damaged, its people suffer. When people and country are punyu (in balance) life is nurtured, and both remain strong, healthy, and fruitful” (Rose 68). This is further illustrated below:

When an ‘old man’ (reference to ones ancestors) died, a Walujapi (black headed python) Dreaming tree broke in half and the water it contained all ran out.... The reciprocal proposition is also true. Damage to country, and to Dreamings in particular, causes death or injury to people. Intention is not a factor. If damage occurs, it ramifies; hence the overt need to protect the integrity of country and Dreamings. (Rose 107-108)

Aborigines feel it is crucial to take care of ones own country. In order to do this, a profound knowledge of the environment is necessary. When you take care of country, the country takes care of you. To obtain the knowledge to do this, one must turn to their elders. Therefore, although Aborigines feel that every living being on the Earth is connected, when they refer to taking care of the country, they are speaking on a localized level.
LAND AS TEACHER AS WELL AS TEXT BOOK

Just as knowledge is important to take care of one’s ‘own’ country, it is also important for survival. In order for Aborigines to survive they have to be sensitive to the very slightest changes within the ecosystems in which they live. They have to know the land as one knows their own children. Knowledge (relating to land relationships) that Aborigines acquire is localized. “One of the reasons why Yarralin people feel uncomfortable in a strange environment is that they do not know what is being said; without knowing they cannot respond appropriately” (Rose 225).

Knowledge of the environment comes in two forms: kin, and experience. In the case of the former, the only way to pass on the wealth of information is through story telling. Thus, myths of the Dreamtime as well contemporary stories become methods to teach the young what has been learnt about the land, and how to survive in it. For Aborigines, physical objects and other environmental features are only a part of the myths, codes for those who have the knowledge to decipher them. “The process by which space becomes country, by which story gets attached to an object, is part of a habit of mind which looks behind objects to events, which sees in objects a symbol for something else, for a story” (Meyers 212). The physical landscape feature becomes a symbol for the Dreamtime Ancestor personified in it.

The ‘parts’ which are received by the observer carry a meaning about the missing parts and is information about those parts. Named places or geographically significant features are a code from which Aborigines can read off an event in the Dreaming. (Meyers 217)

Therefore, in order to be able to decipher the ‘code of the land’, one must turn to their kin who have in turn been entrusted with this knowledge from generations past. “Through initiation and subsequent instruction, men gain knowledge about the structure of their universe. For example, they learn that a clay pan is there because it was made flat and unvegetated as a ceremonial ground in the Dreaming” (Meyers 217).

Experience also plays a big role in an Aboriginal’s attainment of knowledge. Much of the accumulated knowledge of the environment has come from patient observation of other beings.
Knowledge of animals to the men, like that of plants for women, is tied into Dreaming Law and Dreaming identities.

Country is alive with information for those who have learned to understand. Event, rather than calendrical time, provides information: the world talks about itself all the time. Crocodiles, for instance, only lay their eggs at one time of year. Yarralin people know that it is time to hunt for crocodile eggs when the black march flies start biting. These annoying flies carry a message: ‘the march flies are telling you the eggs are ready’. (Rose 225)

Every creature follows their own Law, and in doing so communicate themselves. Those who know their environment well enough to see the interconnections obtain valuable information.

Knowledge of the environment is viewed on many levels. Not only do the Aborigines view their environment from their own perspective, but they understand it from the perspective of other beings.

From observing other creatures Aborigines have gained an encyclopedic store of knowledge relating to resource management. They understand the workings of the food chain, both from their own perspective and from the perspective of many other species within the system; they apply this knowledge systematically as part of their own food quest and as part of their responsibility as living beings (Rose 99).

An example of knowledge relating to resource management can be seen in an example of food gathering techniques of Aboriginal women.

Women know a broad range of foods which are edible for humans, including the many varieties of fruits, vegetables and medicines, the location at which they are likely to be found, the correct seasons for gathering them, the signs by which they are detected if they are underground, methods of preparation and cooking. Women also know about plant propagation and are careful not to destroy by over-gathering... Furthermore, women know which other species are dependent upon the same resources and, when they are collecting are careful to leave some food in situ for these other species. (Rose 100)

In order to act responsibly, humans and others must be constantly alert to the state of the systems of which they are a part.

Awareness is achieved by learning a huge body of facts concerning types of behavior of living things, ways of interpreting behavior, basic sets of messages, geography, Dreaming Law and places, and by continually observing and assessing what is happening.... From this perspective the cosmos cannot be human centered.
(Rose 225-26)
Aborigines are continuously learning the processes of living from their environment. "In every physical and metaphysical way they are inextricably bound into the Australian ecosystems. I can find no adequate word in English to describe the personalization of the environment by Aborigines..." (Niedje, Kakadu 15).

Thus, for Aborigines, the country is a teacher as well a text book.

DElicate Balance/Relationship of All Things in the World

Aboriginal life, death, and survival all depend on one's perceptions of the environment in which they live, as well as a vast web of interdependency between all living things. This is seen in peoples relationship to plants, animals, other people and the Dreamtime.

Knowledge of animals, like that of plants, is tied into Dreaming Law and Dreaming identities. Associated with the Emu, for example, is a set of small birds whose presence signals waterholes and springs; they tell the Emu when it is safe to put its head down to drink... This knowledge assists the hunter. (Rose 100)

Another example of the interdependency between all things is seen in the relationship between the sun and water.

Water, characterized most forcefully as the rainbow, is associated with all the manifestations of water and with all water resources. Fire, characterized most forcefully by the sun, is associated with ripening, growing, and cooking, as well as with land reserves. The sun cooks the earth, making it hot and fertile; if allowed to go out of control, it would kill the world. Likewise, the rainbow waters the earth, cooling it, making it clean and new again. If allowed to go out of control, it would mandate the world, killing everything. (Rose 98-99)

The actions of the sun and rain exemplify a kind of relationship which triggers more action in such a way that a balance is maintained and the cosmos is kept healthy.

Sun and rain exist in a relationship by which each brings the other into action by being itself. The process of knowing what is happening with the other is built up over time, and this knowing links these two beings into a relationship. Each has its own Law of being which includes knowing and responding to the other. (Rose 99)
Above, we get a glimpse into the Aboriginal philosophy of good and bad. Neither the sun or rain are seen as the ultimate in good, or bad, however, they each carry a bit of both. Aborigines have a keen understanding of the notion that nothing is absolutely good or bad, but they do have a sense of morality.

Good and bad are all part of life on earth, and what is good in one context may be bad in another. However, moral actions are those which sustain balance, and immoral ones are those which violently threaten it. Human actions are considered in moral evaluations, but usually it is the act and its results which determine the context... What we hear in Dreaming stories is not so much about good and bad as it is about balance and order. Dreamings make mistakes but others right the balance so that mistakes do not accumulate to the point of being destructive. (Rose 103)

A sad but effective way to further illustrate the interconnectedness of all life within Aboriginal society is to show how the land has changed during the post-contact years.

Since the arrival of Europeans, extinction’s and a drastic loss of life support systems have been occurring at a vastly increasing pace... the topsoil is being eroded, river banks are badly degraded, the rivers are silting up. Many springs and small billabongs have dried out, the plants that once grew there are gone, and the animals that depended on them have had to seek water elsewhere, putting more pressure on surviving systems. Changes in plant communities suggest early signs of desertification, and a number of plant and animal species are locally either extinct or in severe decline. (Rose 102)

When an outside factor is brought in, allowed to disrupt an environment and continually go unchecked, the harmonious balance within nature will be disturbed and cause a chain reaction of devastation. Aborigines physical and spiritual beings are bound up with many of the species, plants, and animals which are being lost or threatened, and many apprehend this loss in a very immediate way, and for this reason have given up on life.

SUMMARY

Through first hand experience, the anthropologist has been able to obtain information about the Aboriginal's relationship to the environment that would not be possible for the archaeologist. The various
categories not only allow us to get a glimpse at how intricate the multi-leveled relationship of Aborigines to their environment really is, but by explaining it in Western terminology, we can begin to understand it.

Aborigines consider the earth sacred, therefore, the main goal in life is its preservation. The whole Earth is interconnected, yet, one's responsibility to the planet ends at the local level. This responsibility, known as Law, is bound into the natural features of the landscape. Therefore, it is permanent and cannot be changed.

Furthermore, the anthropologist would say that Aborigines believe that all living beings have a role to play in the maintenance of the Earth, and in order for the system to work, all must participate. All beings are interconnected by a responsibility to uphold the Law; if one's actions did not counteract another's actions, the whole cosmos would fall apart.

Another important point conveyed by the anthropologist is that Aborigines have a profound storehouse of knowledge about the workings of their local environment, which is seen in their cultural continuity. This knowledge is important not just to take care of the country (adhering to the Law), but is also pertinent for survival and resource management. Besides understanding how the natural systems work from the viewpoint of humans, Aborigines have learned to understand it from the perspective of other living beings. This knowledge was obtained through countless generations of patient observation, and is passed down from generation to generation by elders.

Although the anthropologist has proved to be useful as a translator of information from Aboriginal culture to Western society, there are some points to note. The anthropologist obtains information from an outsiders' perspective, which can put limitations on his perceptions of the data. For example, although they acknowledge that Aborigines view the Dreamtime as alive in contemporary times, the anthropologist is seen time and time again talking about it as if it were a thing of the past. Furthermore, the anthropologist often refers to the Dreamtime Ancestors as a fictitious element of this society which is used by the elders to pass down information from one generation to the next, while Aborigines feel that the Dreamtime Ancestors are as real as any other landscape feature.
PERSPECTIVE #3: THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL

INTRODUCTION:

Attempting to present the case of ‘experts’ in their particular field of interests has been challenging, however, when attempting to present the perspective of a completely different culture a whole range of new issues arise.

The first issue involves the very nature of Aboriginal life itself. It has been argued by Aborigines, as well as many researchers, that unless people actually ‘know’ the Aboriginal way of life through first hand experience of living it, they haven’t fully gained access or understanding of this culture. “To be an Aboriginal means to be the land, an ant, tree, a rock- to identify with a complete sense of oneness, a dedication to maintaining order, a balance... An acceptance of Aboriginal thinking is beyond most Westerners, particularly those who have lost their connection to nature” (Niedje, Speaking 7).

Furthermore, when talking about the Aboriginal viewpoint of their own culture, it is very difficult to narrow down to specific topics such as narratives, art, myth, religion, dance, or song. As we have seen within the other perspectives, Aboriginal life and connection to the land is inseparable. This is also true of these topics. Nevertheless, because of the amount of information included within each topic, I have chosen to focus on Aboriginal stories (narratives and myths).

Although Aboriginal stories include many mythological and cultural heroes, they are not about the people themselves, but they are stories about the environment. Therefore, the frustration and confusion that arises for a Western reader or listener when characters seems to come and go with no apparent importance should be overlooked for the more important message that is being conveyed about the environment. It may be helpful if one reads with the mindset that some of these stories or myths are verbal maps rather than narratives. A Westerner may think of a map as conveying specific information about the
environment, but an Aboriginal verbal map (the narrative) ‘tells’ the environment. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the environment is ‘told’ through the deeds of the Dreamtime Ancestors.

It is well known that for Australian Aborigines religious beliefs are inseparable from the land to which the different language groups, families and individuals belong. Thus, narratives which describe the travels of the ancestral figures also describe actions which caused the natural features of the land, particularly water, rock formations and trees, to come into being. The ancestral figures are also sometimes food, either vegetable or meat. The narrative is simultaneously an account of the creation of the places in the story, and a mnemonic map of the country with its life-giving features for the purpose of instructing a younger listener (Roe, Galarabulu xvii). For Aborigines, it is possible to always be oriented in a world that has a sacred history, a world in which every prominent feature is associated with a mythical event.

Super natural Beings, commonly designated ‘Dreamtime Ancestors’, began to wander on the surface of the earth, giving the central Australian environment its actual physical features... When all these Supernatural Beings had accomplished their labors and completed their wanderings, ‘overpowering weariness fell upon them...’ Thus they sank back into their original slumbering state, and their bodies vanished into the ground, often at the site where they first emerged, or turned into rocks, trees, or tjurunga objects (sacred objects in which Ancestral Beings are said to reside). The sites which marked their final resting places were, like their birthplaces, regarded as important sacred centers, and were called by the same name. These are sacred sites... (Eliad 46)

It is noteworthy that in an environment of desert wastes and infertile soil, as well as in well watered country, the imagination of Aborigines should produce tales that are both beautiful and amusing, and that they should find human characteristics and poetry in bird and beast, in the sky above them, in sun, moon, and stars, and even in reptiles and insects (Reed 9). Mythology, as well as other forms of Aboriginal narratives, are not just a matter of words and record, but action and life. The totemic lodges do not spend their time at meetings reciting and chanting only; they also reenact myths, and do so because the heroes and ancestors were real. What they did in the course of their labors must now be done in ritual, and the places associated with them must be visited and cared for (Reed 10).
The mythological era... is regarded as setting a precedent for all human behavior from that time on. It was the period when patterns of living were established, and laws laid down for human beings to follow. Everything which fully exists— a mountain, a water place, an institution, a custom, is acknowledged as real, valid, and meaningful; because it came into being in the beginning. (Eliad 43)

The two criteria used to select the narratives and myths are: 1) They have to deal in some way with Aborigines relationships to the land; 2) They have to be primary sources, or directly transcribed from the Aboriginal telling the story. To illustrate the importance of the second issue, I will use my own experience. As I started researching Aboriginal literature and other myths I found a wealth of information. However, at least ninety percent was not primarily from Aboriginal sources. The stories, therefore, read more like an Aesop fable than an Australian Aboriginal myth or narrative. The literature was too much our reality and too little theirs; they had been ‘Westernized’.

The stories presented below are the form of word for word transcriptions from tape recordings. As far as is known, this is the first time that Aboriginal texts intended as narrative art have been presented this way. Most editions of Aboriginal stories, originally told orally, have been written by Europeans. Presenting the stories as narrative art is a way of justifying a writing which tries to imitate the spoken word. When language is read as poetic, it is the form of the language itself, as well as the underlying content, which is important. Just as it would be unjustifiable to rewrite a poet’s work into ‘correct’ English, or take away the poets ‘license’, so it would be unjustifiable to rewrite the words of the Aboriginal’s stories. They are organized according to the conventions of oral narrative (Roe, Gularabulu v-vi). “Told with wisdom and elegance, these narratives evoke the integral relationship between the Australian environment and Aboriginal spirituality” (Napaljarri, Cataldi 101).

Although the narratives are word for word transcriptions, most of the stories were originally meant to be heard orally. The simple act of writing down stories inevitably involves departures from Aboriginal narrative style. Because of the attempt to make the texts in this collection true to the
Aboriginal oral narrative style, the reader may experience some difficulty in reading the stories (Roe, Gularabulu vi). It is felt that this is necessary in order to give the truest perception of these stories possible under the limitations mentioned above.

The following narratives and myths presented can be categorized into three types, which correspond to the three sections this perspective has been divided up into. The first section could be classified more as a 'discussion' rather than a narrative or myth. It is the words of an Aboriginal elder named Bill Niedje who is from the Kakadu region. Bill attempts to explain to the white reader the vast interconnectedness between an Aboriginal and his land, and its importance. It is an attempt for an understanding of his culture from an inside point of view. Although sometimes hard to follow, what Bill Niedje has to say is one of the most direct sources about an Aboriginal's relationship to the land that is available. For this reason, the majority of the Aboriginal perspective will concentrate on his words.

The second section is a modern story told by an Aboriginal elder named Paddy Roe, from the Roebuck Plains area. Paddy's narrative is unique because the characters and places can be found and located in time and space. In other words, it is a personal account about something that happened within Paddy's lifetime.

The final section within this perspective includes two traditional Aboriginal myths from the Warlpiri tribe. These myths are supposed to have taken place within the Dreamtime, and are Law. It should be noted that the versions of the story told here are 'public' knowledge as opposed to 'secret'. Secret stories may only be told in the presence of initiated men of the tribe because they provide more detailed and intricate knowledge about sacred places and deeds (Women have their own Law from which men are excluded) (Roe, Gularabulu viii). The two myths are important because they begin to describe either the importance of an Aboriginal's relationship to the land, or how certain land features came to be.
Section one:

As mentioned above, the first section I have chosen to present is the words of an Aboriginal elder named Bill Niedje. This section is important because it is a primary source, and is among the most direct information available regarding an Aboriginal’s viewpoint of his people and their relationship to the land. Although the information is direct and straightforward, it does have its limitations. For instance, with a myth or narrative, you are getting the collective thought of a group or tribe which has been passed down from generation to generation. Within this discussion, you are getting the thoughts and opinions, although influenced greatly by his culture, of a sole individual.

Bill Niedje has a point to this discussion, and that is to educate Western society to the lifestyles and philosophies of his people ‘before it is too late’. He feels his people are a dying race, and he hopes to influence western thought to be more sensitive towards the earth. Bill’s message is simple, “Begin to care for nature and nature cares for you, sometimes in unsuspected ways” (Niedje, Story 2).

Based on the various topics Bill has chosen to discuss, this section will be divided up accordingly. All pertain to the Aborigines relationship to the land, but more specifically, they all discuss the importance of caring for the earth, and how to go about it.

The various topics will include:

1) Rain
2) Fire
3) Tree
4) Spirit

Although difficult to understand or follow at times, in order to get a fuller picture into the life of the Aboriginal it is important to present the discussion in Bill Niedje’s own words with as little interpretation from the researcher as possible. However, it should be stated that when Bill uses the letter ‘e’, he is referring to either ‘he’ or ‘she’.
A term that will be found within many of the topics should be discussed. That word is ‘feeling’. Feeling is used by Bill Niedje to explain the vast interconnectedness between all living things. No matter what it is, an animal, a rock, a star, etc., ‘you can feel it with your feeling’, and you know that it is somehow connected to you. “Listen carefully, careful and this spirit he come in your feeling and you will feel it... I feel it... my body same as you. This story e can listen careful and how you want to feel on your feeling. This story e coming through your body, e go right down foot and head, fingernail and blood... through the heart. And you can feel it because e’ll come right through you” (Niedje, Story 19).

RAIN

Although Bill Niedje presents these categories as separate topics, each can be seen as being part of a bigger whole. In other words, they all have their own job to perform in order to keep the natural balance of the world intact. The story is the same for living and non-living things, animate and inanimate objects, and story for rain is no exception. Below Bill talks about why there is water in a section of his county called the Alligator region.

Sky... this cloud for us. Your story, my story. Yes anybody can see cloud because e bring new water, e comes along wet season and goes dry season. E making more new fresh water for us. Rain for us...for anybody. Rain give us everything new...yam, fish, everything. All things are have own personality and this makes alive. Everything helps everything else also. Man, nature, animals work together and not against each other... (Niedje, Kakadu 40)

Water running down in the stream... Because rain helping. Something made there. E can make eggs, mussels, any kind but must have rain! If you can’t get rain what happen to us? Something be happen! You must get im because Law says you get rain. Each Billabong can be dry...no fish, turtle, nothing. He wants new water, then fish and turtle, make him new one. New rain coming up, that rain make everything again...plenty fish, turtle, lily. (Niedje, Story 59)

FIRE

As seen within the perspective of the archaeologist, there probably isn’t a topic that emphasizes the idea of human impact on the land within Aboriginal society as well as with the use of fire. This is also true from the Aboriginal point of view as well, though the explanations are a bit different.
This earth...I never damage, I look after. Fire is nothing, just clean up. Rotten tree...you got to burn him. We get gray hair, that tree e got hollow because too old now. So e’ll burn. Sometimes strong wind e go knock im over because not enough strong now. Use him to cook. He’s finished up...cook or roast in coals. White European cook in oven...from Univ (Aboriginal reference to Western education system) that Aborigine didn’t know that before. Now all this come up with Toyota. (Aboriginal reference to all automobiles) -(within this quote, Bill is referring to the young rejecting their traditional culture and adopting Western culture)(Niedje, Kakadu 36)

When you burn, new grass coming up. Burn him off...new grass coming up, new life all over. That mean good animal soon...might be goose, long neck turtle, goanna, possum. They didn’t want this rotten grass. They say... ‘Might as well rid of im. Burn im and new life, new grass coming up.’ I don’t know about white European way. We, Aborigine, we burn... (Niedje, Kakadu 35)

Grass can burn when e dry; well e’s no good. We got to burn it because that King Brown, e made that fire. E said... ‘I’ll burn im because e’s finished. New one be coming...’ (refers to a myth about how the king brown snake started the practice of burning) (Niedje, Story 25-28)

No matter grass im burn but roots there... e’ll grow. Even tree. E burn leaf all right but e come back. If young one, e’ll come new one, e’s still alive. You can cut im down, top, but e’ll come back again because root e still alive. If e burn whole lot... doesn’t matter... might be roots e got green. New plant e come up... same tree! (Niedje, Story 28).

TREE

It would be argued by very few that the connection between man and nature in Aboriginal society is nothing less than extraordinary. For reasons mentioned in the introduction, however, direct examples of this, from an inside viewpoint, have not always been easy to uncover. Below, Niedje attempts to clarify this strong bond between people and nature using trees as the vehicle.

Listen carefully to this, you can hear me. I’m telling you because earth just like mother and father or brother of you. That tree same thing. Your body I suppose, I’m same as you... anyone. Tree... grass... I love it tree because e love me too. E watching me same as you- tree e working with your body, any body, e working with us. While you sleep e working. Daylight, when you walking around, e work too... That tree, grass...that like our father. Dirt, earth, I sleep with this earth. Grass...just like your brother. In my blood in my arms this grass. This dirt for us because we’ll be dead, we’ll be going this earth. This the story now. (Niedje, Story 3-4)

Tree... he watching you. You look at tree, he listen to you. He got no finger, he can’t speak. But that leaf...he pumping, growing, growing in the night. While you sleeping you dream something. Tree and grass same thing. They grow with your body, with your feeling. (Niedje, Kakadu 52)

If you feel sore, headache, sore body, that mean somebody killing tree or grass. You feel because your body in that tree or grass. You feel because your body in that tree or earth. Nobody can tell you, you got to feel it for yourself. Tree might be sick...
You feel it. You might feel it for 2 or 3 years. You get weak... little bit, little bit... because tree going bit by bit... dying.

Tree not die when you cut it. He not die tomorrow, he still green. Might be 5 or 6 weeks, might be two months. You feel it then, your body, you feel it. (Niedje, Kakadu 52)

To make this notion a bit clearer, Niedje uses the following example:

I drive, I see big lumber log lying down. That way you get pain in your back. You know, that tree he push. Bulldozer he pull it out big roots. That one e cut your back, E should stay in ground for us... That tree for us, that tree for anybody. That tree e cutting... that his feeling. If we chop im that tree, might be bad headache or feel funny e his body because e cutting it our body. Somebody killing tree- you feel- because your body on that tree or earth. You cut im little bit, you got water coming out. That's his blood, same as your blood. So e alive. (Niedje, Story 21-23)

Niedje makes one further connection between people, earth, and tree.

I look tree but I say... 'Just like mother, father, or brother, grandma.' Old man (Aboriginal elder), he say 'Course your granny, your mother, your brother because this earth, this ground, this piece of ground e grow you.' This story you got to keep im, in your feeling. Tree for us, eagle... anything. Eagle, bird, animal, rock... this story. Because you pull it up from the earth this tree, you feel it. Not myself but everyone, anybody, no-matter who. We all feel it. (Niedje, Story 32-33)

ABORIGINAL-LAND RELATIONSHIP

Within this topic, Bill Niedje uses several discussions to give a glimpse into the vast associations and connections Aborigines have to their 'country'.

Each man stay...stay on his own country. He can't move his country...so he stay there, stay with his country. Language is different...like skin. Skin can be different, but blood same. Blood and bone...all same. Man can't split himself. (Niedje, Kakadu 38)

That plain can change...wet season, him mid. You get lily, you get fish. But, he dry up...that's all right. Then people can get long neck turtle. Same for animal. People look for food, animal look for food. We all same. All these places for us...all belong to Gagadju (tribe Bill Niedje belongs to). We use them all the time. Old people used to move around, camp different place. Wet season, dry season... always camp different place.

All Gagadju used to visit...used to come here to billabong...dry season camp. Everybody camp, like holiday. Pelican, Jabiru, White Cockatoo...all got to come back, make him like before... We got to look after, can't waste anything. We always use what we got...old people and me. (Niedje, Kakadu 41-42)

Bill then continues on the philosophy of the importance of not wasting.
My culture’s hard, but we got to be to keep im. If you waste anything now, next year...you can’t get as much, because you already waste. When I was young I never wasted, otherwise straight away I get in trouble. Even bone not wasted, make soup or burn that bone. Watch out.. That might be dreaming one too.

‘You dig yam?’ Well you digging your granny or mother...through the belly. You must Cover it up, Cover again. When you get yam you Cover over, than yam can grow again.’ When kids dig yam I say ‘Cover im up. You leaving hole, you kill yam. You killing yourself’! That story change him now. It should still be, but young people won’t listen. Just chuck im away...waste im, destroy im, destroy everything.

(Niedje, Kakadu 41)

Aborigines and their countries resources have been taken advantage of, and exploited by the Western world for over a century. They have been promised money and other modern conveniences for their troubles, and in some cases have even received them. The unappreciative response of Aborigines to these negotiations has caused much misunderstanding and resentment between each culture. This is due mainly to a lack communication, very few Aborigines have attempted to tell their side of the issue. Below, Bill Niedje does just that.

This story for all people. Everybody should be listening... We got to hang on to story. Don’t think to much about money too much. Money mean nothing. You can get million dollar...but not worth it. Million dollar...he just go ‘poof’. Couple of weeks you got nothing.

This ground never move. I’ll be buried here. I’ll be with my brother, my mother. If I lose this, where I’ll be buried? I’m hanging on to this ground. I’ll become earth again. I belong to this earth. And earth should stay with us. (Niedje, Kakadu 58)

Half the ground e take; White European. Spoiling it. E take it half our culture doing that mining. Not fair because Aboriginal can’t do anything about it. E can’t take White European country half of it because no good. Another country e can’t. E got to stay where e belong to. (Niedje, Story 159)

Niedje further states:

These very important places, but we frightened that Europeans might touch him. He want that place, that why we frightened... I worry about that place... secret place. That got painting there, inside cave. If that painting got rubbed off there might be big trouble. That important story. It for all round this area. That biggest story...biggest place.

My grandpa teach me. That painting is true. Fish, Python, Goose, all painting there. Grandpa say, ‘You see painting, Fish...you got to eat. Python...you got to eat. Mullet...you got to eat. Lily, turtle, all same. They for you’. (In this instance the painting seems to act as a guide to what you can and cannot eat or do)

Earth... same thing. You brought up with earth, tree, water. Water is your blood. Water... you can’t go without water.
All my uncle gone, but this story I got im. They told me... they taught me... and I can feel it. I feel it with my body, with my blood. Feeling all these trees, all this country. When this wind blow you can feel it. Same for the country... You feel it. You can look, but feeling... that make you.

Feeling make you, out there in open space. He coming through your body. Look while he blow and feel with your body... because tree just about your brother or father... and tree is watching you. (Niedje, Kakadu 49-51)

As seen within the perspective of the anthropologist, one method to examine the profound relationship between Aborigines and their country is to look at their perception of what happens to the spirit and body at death.

I look at moon. It tell me story, like stars. Moon... moon is man. He said, ‘These people will die, but they’ll come back... like I do. They’ll come back to earth again’. I know I come back to my country. When I die I come to (become) earth. I love this country and earth. (Niedje, Kakadu 57)

Tree same as me. When he get old he’ll die. He’ll be dead and burn. He’ll leave his ashes behind. Tree become earth. When I die, I become skeleton. I’ll be in cave. That way my spirit stay there...

Coffin no good for Aborigine, coffin not supposed to be for Aborigine, got to put bones back where they belong. Man die. Soon as him ready, pick him up, take him. Take him to cave. His shadow, his spirit, will stay with him. (Niedje, Kakadu 59)

They used to put up bones. Soon as ready... pick im up and take im to the cave. Because they was saying... ‘Well e got to stay with his spirit’.

If people, if you go in the cave, you must yell out. Give signal because if you got new man with you, new man might be stranger... you go to yell out. Each place, no matter here, all over... they doing that because otherwise you get sick. You know, Aboriginal, that’s all. You might get sick or very bad sick because wrong spot, wrong place. Signal, must signal, sing out first because they used to tell us... ‘Yes... your father, your granddad, your aunty, they’ll be waiting for you. You must signal, yell out... they’ll listen. They know you. They will know. So that stranger man they can’t hurt im.’.

Because that’s the dream... (Niedje, Speaking 78-79)

Rock stays, earth stays. I die and put my bones in cave or earth. Soon my bones become earth... all the same. My spirit has gone back to my country... My mother. This story is important. It won’t change, it is the law. It is like the earth, it won’t move. (Niedje, Kakadu 62-63)

The discussion about the Aboriginal’s connection to the country will be finished with a plea of Bill Niedje to the younger generation of Aborigines.

I’m telling my son... This ground, tree, water, anything... for us. Body in your body. You Cover, you sleep, you sleep with earth. Earth for us, lily, any sort of a thing, plum. This toyota not for us but we learning something. But e don’t want to forget. I don’t forget.
So I’m saying now, earth is my mother or father. I’ll come to earth. I got to go to same earth. Tree is mine. In my body that tree. (Niedje, Story 169)

TAKING CARE OF COUNTRY AND WHY ITS IMPORTANT

Within this next topic area, Bill explains the importance of taking care of the earth. He also describes some of the consequences of not abiding by the Law. In order to make the material within the discussion more comprehensible, it has been divided up into three sections. These sections include; what is a sacred site, and why it is important to preserve it; a detailed account describing the reality of the sacred site in spiritual as well as physical manifestations; an Aboriginal’s view of the difference between his and Western thinking regarding the treatment of the earth.

The sacred site is one of the most important components within Aboriginal culture. Below, Bill tries to describe what is meant by this and why.

This story not for myself... all over Australia story. No-matter Aborigine, White-European, secret before, didn’t like im before White European...

This time White European must come to Aborigine, listen Aborigine and understand it. Understand our culture, secret, what Dreaming.

Big name... ‘Dreaming’. Dreaming e listen. E say... ‘Exactly right!’ Because that Dreaming made of all us. We say, ‘Djang’. Our lingo... ‘Djang’. That secret place... Dreaming there. (The sacred site)

We sitting on top that Djang. You sitting on this earth but something under, under this ground here. We don’t know. You don’t know yourself. Because that Djang we sitting on under, e watching, that Djang, what you want to do. We fright. Might be something there. You might get hurt or you might spoil something there. If you touch, you might get cyclone, heavy rain, or flood. Not just here, you might kill someone in another place. Might be kill him in another country. You cannot touch him...

That why we fright little bit we can stop im mining. Oh, some mining might be all right... this Ranger mine but we said... ‘You try. E might be all right.’

This story is true this one. Secret might be e kill somebody or something come out or kill other place or wind. That way they fright. (Niedje, Story 78-81)

Next, Bill talks about the most powerful secret place within his country, and what may happen if disturbed.

Some sores... what we call ‘mia mia’ but this one, ‘mia mia’, biggest... just like boil. So one Dreaming over there, rock but if you touch e kill straight away... very bad. So we’re watching so nobody can go. Because first people, old people, they said...

‘Don’t go touch it. If you touch it you wont get better because you only killing yourself.” So that way secret.
If you can’t listen, Europeans, to Aborigine... you go there, something wrong... well your own fault because you breaking Law you see. No-matter White European... this story same!

Someone in your country there, something happen there... what you feel like? You might be feel yourself... worry. You won’t say. Any Aborigine feeling, they doing like that because I know. E worry slow and e get very weak. E won’t say... ‘Hey! What for you done...’ E won’t!

This Djang is there all right because dream made that. So we don’t know, might be important. Might be you only spoil it world or spoil our eating. (Niedje, Story 83)

In the next section, Bill gets more detailed in regards to the sacred site and the Dreaming Ancestor, or spirit, associated with it.

Spirit kept alive in story, abiding by Law, and in the Earth. Jabiru...
Badbanarrwarr. That spirit of that Badbanarrwarr, Jabiru, e’ll be longside to you. If you listen to this story here, e’ll be with you and e’ll be with me. This story for me, for anybody, for you too.

This one we say, ‘only nest’ but not really. That rock, nest sitting on near plain over there, river but something went in, went under ground where the spirit for us. That spirit watching us. For you and me that spirit. Never lose. Always with us. With you’n me.

Dreaming places... Jabiru, Turkey, Barraumundi, little island, some billabong... but this the one. This man e said... ‘Must keep it. You must keep in story because e’ll come through your feeling. Even anybody.’

Jabiru, e not story. I give you story all right but that thing with our spirit and I only explain. That rock e got to stay for might be million, million year. E stay, e can’t move. That story with it. We got spirit our story and spirit with us.

E special spirit for us. You might dream. I don’t know but you might find something. You might do that because is longside with you. Or e can feel it your hair... because e might be standing behind your back or longside, sitting. While you listen this story, e might be longside with you and your feeling. E tell you... ‘Listen! Listen that story!’ (Niedje, Story 110-111)

No matter who is. E can feel it way I feel it in my feeling. You’ll be same too. You listen my story and you will feel im because spirit e’ll be with you. You cannot see but e’ll be with you. You cannot see but e’ll be with you and e’ll be with me. Is story just listen careful.

Spirit must stay with us. E longside us. E can feel it spirit e’s there. That way all that Dreaming they left... to see. (Niedje, Story 115)

Finally, Bill uses the example of a mining company to show how he perceives the difference in Western an Aboriginal thought regarding the earth and its resources. Once again, he emphasizes the importance of keeping the land in its original state, or the condition created by the Dreamtime Ancestors.
A conversation between Bill and some men from a mining outfit illustrates the differing perceptions of land usage:

‘What this road for? What for big road?’ They want transport from Oenpelli... three four, might be more than six Toyota. We went follow that ‘Djidbhjdjibi’, Mt Brockman road. Seen it all that bore. E wasn’t bore looking for water, no. E was looking for that mining.

Oh I ask question; I said... ‘Hey! What under?’ E said... ‘Couple a ton!’ I said... ‘Oh!’ I didn’t know people was sitting down there, sitting on this land here and the riches underground. I didn’t know’. They said... ‘That million, million dollar!’ I said... ‘Why you dig up?’ Because... ‘We want money.’ ‘But money for white man. This ground for Aborigine’.

That last piece e find it now... ‘This mining now, high ground.’ I get heart crack, you know. I said. ‘Oh! What for? That uranium’ we might get sick.’ E said... ‘It’s all right, e can come out.’ I said... ‘No! Uranium is poison. If you stick on your foot well you get sick’.

Well e can make money. E get im from underneat’ riches in the ground. E make million, million might be. But trouble is... dying quick! People... big mob they might die because lot of money.

That why you want to hang on country, stand for it. E come and ask... stand, fight! ‘No! E not coming through’. E can make money all right, somebody make money but money no good, not worth it. But country e stay, e can’t move, e can’t shift around. Plenty money all right but you got plenty money... this world now enough.

E give us something to eat, give us life, tree, water, grass, yam... Where the one from underneath? Should be leave im alone. That one make you worry.

Yes, this country, your country, my country... I love im. I don’t want to lose country, somebody take im. Make you worry... If somebody take im your country, you’n me both get sick. Because feeling... this country where you brought up and just like you’n me mother. Somebody else doing it wrong... you’n me feel im. Anybody, anyone... you’n me feel. (Niedje, Story 146-153)

The point Bill Niedje is trying to get across is if you kill the country, you kill yourself.

But that man e need plenty of money... e digging all right but e killing himself. Killing his body where e digging. Killing his granny or grandpa... no matter e white! Because this riches, riches place in the ground, under this ground. E might go find something, e’ll find. E dig, e might find im... not yellow something, mining, uranium e find it... but something else. E want badly that money but e killing it himself. Killing us. Because e humbug. E shouldn’t be humbug on the ground we sitting on.

Never touch anything and spoil country. Would have bin stay like used to be and people should feel better... We sitting on for us. Not for me, yourself or somebody else, no... for world. Everybody... bird, dog, dingo, buffalo, horses and man. (Niedje, Story 155-158)
The final topic in this section is a discussion of the importance of the preceding stories, the permanence of the stories, and why it is necessary to listen to what they have to say. What Bill Niedje has called a 'story', is the Law.

When that law started? I don’t know how many thousands of years. Europeans say forty thousand years, but I reckon myself probably was longer because... it is sacred. Dreaming place...you can’t change it. (Niedje, Kakadu 48)

This story exactly strong. Want to hang en for ever and ever. You got children... You teach it! You teach im, teach im, teach im. E can pick im up. E don’t know... you teach him! (Niedje, Story 123)

Our story is written in the land... It is written in those sacred places. My children will look after those places, that’s the law. No one can walk close to those sacred places. No difference for Aborigine or white European, that’s the law. We can’t break the law.

Old people tell me, ‘you got to keep the law.’ ‘What for?’ I said. ‘No matter we die but that law... you got to keep it. No camping in secret place, no fire there, no play for kids, you can’t break the Law. Law must stay’. (Niedje. Kakadu 47)

Law never change... always stay the same. Not like the European law... always changing. If you don’t like it, you can change. Aborigine Law never change... Ground and rock... he can’t move. Cave... he never move. No one can shift that cave, because it dream. It story, it Law.

This law... this country... this people... No matter what people... red, yellow, black or white... the blood is the same. Language little bit different... but no matter. Country... you I other place. But same feeling. Blood, bone... all the same (Niedje, Kakadu 63)

Culture, story... story for anybody, kid woman. Must hang on this story and understand. Listen carefully White European, ‘What for?’ Because e might feel his body with the blood, water, feeling. Story good for you. That way e build this world for us. That way that story... We came this world, animal and man and woman.

Story for us, no-matter where... grow up our children. E’ll forget some of them but good for kid. Got to keep going. (Niedje, Story 121)

This story I’m telling it because I was keeping secret myself. I was keeping in my mind with the culture and see other people what they was doing and I was feeling sad you know. White European different story what we new generation now, different story. Because school doing it and something else and our people forget that. They going little by little. They shouldn’t be, they not supposed to, should be the man with the pressure... put it on this. No matter about that White European, e can go with that one but White European got to be listen this culture and this story, because important one this. (Niedje, Story 168-171)

Now you know this story, and you’ll be coming to earth. You’ll be a part of earth when you die. You responsible now. You got to go with us... to earth. Might be you can hang on... hang on to this story... to this earth.

You got children... grandson. Might be your grandson will get this story... keep going... hang on like I done.

This story is for all people. Everybody should be listening. Same story for everyone, just different language.
Section two:

The next section is a story told by Paddy Roe, an Aboriginal elder from a different region. As mentioned above, Paddy’s narrative is unique because it is of a contemporary nature, and the characters and places can be located in time and space. It is a personal account of something that happened within the speaker’s lifetime. Therefore, it may be easier for a Western reader to associate places with events, and in doing so, further ones understanding of an Aboriginal’s relationship to the land.

The story that Paddy tells is about two mining companies searching for oil. One company goes about it the correct way and hires local guides to show them where it is safe to drill (avoiding sacred sites), and the other company takes it upon themselves to drill where they see fit. It is an account of how the Aboriginal belief system, the Law, may fit into or work within contemporary society. As with traditional myths, the underlying message stresses the importance of upholding the Law.

Oh this is some oil people went through- in Damper Down country- But that’s our country too, Nyigina country proper that’s where my uncles come from my mothers, relations, proper- Now one place, they got two camps- oil people, THESE people very good (Indicated area by drawing in sand)- they bring in two young fellas, you know, to look out for their country-

When they finish- he get another two blokes come in- what know THIS country (Indicates further north) You see?

Ah, all right- when this two finish- then he get another two more man belongs to this country he must go that way bit mere further, this two come back- back to their home (laugh), its a thing like that- these people.

But these other people working this way (indicated direction in sand)- they haven’t got anybody- they just went on they own- cutting line an’ everything.

So they musta knock some stone over- ‘cos some stones, that sneke you know (laugh), stone outside you can see it-

Sometime we want a rain we- chip (hit with stone tool)-- Right!- ‘We want rain in Broome’- we say you know- (laughter). Sometime we chip im again- we want rain here- oh very big thing, you know (laughs).

Well somebody musta made a mess of this one- you know these oil people didn’t ask nobody- they just went in they own ways- never worry about, any Aborigines-

So when they alone that, that sun, cloud bin come right over- right up- an I was sleeping here in dis, block out here you know, Coconut Well country-

So--- when I, when I seen this cloud it’s only long like from here to, oh the wireless station, you know the old wireless station, that long- but you know (Laugh) he’s
a cloud- aah- Ah- when I get up night time, I look, ‘Hello, cloud, mm, very short one, that funny’ - so I come back to sleep-

i was thinking, ‘Hello, something wrong- Might be my countryman somewhere’- So I get up again- that thing was straight up- but I see him he went down now next time I come out the door- going down in that reef-

Aah must be my people- told the little fellas, I with two little boys ‘Here y’are- see that one?’ ‘That’s me people’- Snake-- ‘Yungurugu’, i say, ‘That’s yungurugu’-

Two or three days after that- this bloke picked me up- Cos he come to me all the time these people- There might be something wrong with my country, my people (laugh)- ‘My people’, I say, it’s a spirit, you know?

So they tell me, ‘How these people, they good people?’- ‘Oh very good, only THESE other people no good- you know what they done these people they went straight across the country- never- they got nobody with them- they just help themselves anywhere’- ‘Ooh’- (referring to mining companies)

‘You know what happen’, this other bloke tell e, ‘you know what happen’?- ooooh he seen the cloud straight away coming- straight across- you know- I stop quiet, you know- ‘What sorta cloud?’ I said- oh you know- ‘Yeah’ ‘Ooh yeah’--

‘An where did he go??- ’I guess something wrong this side’, they said- ‘Yeah’, I said- ‘I know’ I say, ‘He (the cloud) come straight up- to my place- (laugh)- you know they know my place too-

An that’s where he come down finish- something wrong this end- I dunno what gonto happen in the rain (laugh) Rain time- might be-- this cloud musta come let me know- something wrong.

But once they start to bore- that’ll be the time (laughter)- you know-

Today they only clearin- but they must knock something over- stones, you know- (soft) So--- that’s the thing. (Roe, Bentrerak 195-198)

Section three:

Finally, this last section within this perspective includes two traditional Aboriginal myths from the Warlpiri tribe. These myths are supposed to have taken place within the Dreamtime, and are Law. It should be noted, again, that the versions of the story told here are ‘public’ knowledge as opposed to ‘secret’. (Secret stories being told only in the presence of initiated men of the tribe). The two myths presented within this section are important because they begin to describe either the importance of an Aboriginal’s relationship to the land, or how certain land features came to be. “Told with wisdom and elegance, these narratives evoke the integral relationship between the Australian environment and Aboriginal spirituality” (Napaljarri, Cataldi 101).
myth one: How I Came Back To Yajarlu

This first myth is about the theft of a child from his home at Yajarlu and how important it is for the mother to get him back to his homeland. The story is about restoring things to their rightful state and position. There are two aspects of the authors narrative technique that should be noted in order to better follow the narrative. One is the allusiveness, which both compliments and teases the listeners by demanding they supply details they should know…. The other is the humor of the dramatized exchanges, the words put into the mouths of the different characters, and also the way the characters act these out (Napaljarri, Cataldi 43).

This is about the Dreaming that belongs to Yajarlu. There was a woman digging a big hole. Nearby there was a small child, crawling about. The woman emerged from the hole and she walked about nearby. The child was still crawling about, crawling about near her. Another woman arrived. She saw the child.

‘Ahh, look at this child here! How beautiful it is! This child is truly lovely!’ She looked at the child, but she left it alone. She went away, and walked around. ‘Ahh, I am going to take that child with me. Indeed, I am going to carry it away.’ She put her child down instead, and left it there.

The first woman had come back. Without noticing anything, she started digging again, down inside the hole. She saw nothing. She did not see what happened while the other woman was walking about. From down inside the whole she could not see, and so, without noticing anything, she continued to dig.

The second woman asked herself, ‘Is she still there, I wonder?’ She was unable to see anything. ‘I am free to take this child away without being noticed.’

She took it away. She put her own child down in the same place, a child belonging to other people from here, from Karnilpa near Yarmumturngu, from that place nearby. That mountain is a very important place.

Suddenly the woman who was digging realized what was going on. ‘Hey, where has that child gone that was here?’ She could not see it anywhere. She searched for it. ‘Why has someone taken it away? This child here belongs to someone else.’ Still nothing. She searched the area all around. No tracks... She searched everywhere, she looked for it everywhere.

Then she saw something. ‘Ahh, the woman came this way. The woman has carried the child this way. She went south. I am going to get the child back.’

She went. As she went she looked everywhere. ‘Where is that child’ Where is it sitting? Where can it be?’

She saw many other children belonging to many other people. ‘Ahh, there is the one I was looking for, sitting there!’ She picked it up. She put the other child in its place. Picking up her own child, she took it away. She went back to her home. She went back home. She and the child went together. (Napaljarri, Cataldi 38-41)
myth two: The Two Kangaroos

The story of the two kangaroos is about totemic Ancestors and ‘the creation of waterholes, and other important features of the environment. Although entertaining, I feel it clearly illustrates how a myth is used by the Aboriginal as a map of the environment in order to find waterholes, food, etc. It should be noted that although a major men’s initiation myth for many tribes in the surrounding area; “this version of the story is one told for an audience of young people including children. Although the basic outline of the event of the myth is present, what is esoteric and secret is not” (Napaljarri, Cataldi 101). Furthermore, “the section of narrative in which the kangaroo creates another kangaroo, a companion, out of the rat and then teaches it to hop properly, is an innocent and emblematic way of mirroring the much more serious matter of the creation and education of a man in the course of his initiation. Thus, another feature of the traditional narrative becomes clear; as young people growing up are deemed ready to hear more and more powerful versions of central myths, so the narrators of these stories are able to select the material to include for a particular occasion, and also to choose an appropriate style” (Napaljarri, Cataldi 101).

These are my two kangaroos. There they went, along the east side. The two kangaroos traveled along the east side... They went to Parntarla. They stayed at Parntarla. Then they departed. They stopped again. They went to Lawarri next. There they stayed, the two kangaroos belonging to that place. These two places belonging to them, Lawarri and Parntarla. These two places belonging to them both. They are the two who belong to these places. They brought many places into being, many soakages, in the surrounding area.

They stayed. Then they left. A little later on they set off, then they stopped. You know, in the old days they walked about during the Dreaming. There they were traveling, the two of them. They traveled south, along the west side of the Granites, then back along the east side again. From the Granites they went along the west side again, near the Granites. Then they left the Granites.

Then one of the two kangaroos was taken away. He was carried away in a big flooded stretch of water. Thus he was taken away. The other looked for him all around.

‘Now I will have to travel alone. What has happened? Maybe he was carried off by all that water? The water has been running everywhere. That lake, that lake swallowed him up.’

He was taken from there, one of the two was taken away. Then, from that place the one who was left, went away. He went off, and put the other out of his mind.

He looked around. ‘What is this sitting here?’

It was a type of little mouse, a little rat, somewhat related to a mouse but slightly different, called a wulyu-wulyu. He approached it and picked it up. He looked at it closely.
‘Ah, it has two ears. Two ears and it has a tail, it has two feet, and it has a tail.’ He looked at it carefully, in particular he looked at its tail.

‘What will I do with this creature? I’ll take it with me, I’ll take it along.’ He carried it to Mulyu. There he remade it, he remade it completely. He made it into a kangaroo. Now that he was a kangaroo, he started to hop about. Where did he go? He went away. Now that he was a kangaroo, now that he had been completely remade into a kangaroo he went away.

Now there were two kangaroos. One had come from the little animal we called wulyu-wulya. The two kangaroos stayed in that place for a considerable time, in that place which belongs to them. The two kangaroos stayed there for a long time.

‘Let’s go on a journey.’

The one who had spoken was probably the older brother, I am not sure, probably the older brother. The other was now also a real kangaroo, the one that had been made from a little rat. At first it hopped around on all fours, on all four legs. It went, it stopped. It went on.

‘I am going on a journey, I am going on a journey.’

‘Yes, yes, on a journey then, yes.’

He made the little one, the one made from the little rat, travel in front of him. In this way, he went along. They found another place, called Nyurrirjardu, which is a very important place. They created that place, the two of them, and there they stayed for a while. They stayed at that place, the two of them, and there they stayed for a while. They stayed there at that place for quite a while. They were the two belonging to that place. In that southern part of the country there are all those places that belong to them, all those soaks, there in the south.

Then they traveled east to Jalyirrparnta. They slept there, they stayed out there. Then they went on into the south for a long time. They also visited a soak on the way. Now what is the name I am looking for? Somewhere behind Jalyirrparnta... I have never visited that particular country.

From there they went to another soak, further away, to Kuyjarra, Kuyjarra. I do not know of another: soak there, either to the south or to the north... From Kuyjarra to Yintawalyarri. From Yintawalyarri they went along the west side to Warnirrparnta. They went a long distance away, along the west side. There they encountered another dreaming. At that place, the Pirilara dreaming follows the same path.

Then they arrived at Lirrawurnupatu. At Lirrawurnupatu, they mistakenly made contact with that other dreaming. From Lirrawurnupatu they went to Japiyajarra. In that area, many, many soakage’s, some very big, lie across the basin there. I learned about those places when I was growing up, a little at a time. I can follow this dreaming as it goes along the west side, as it has been told to me, as it has been show to me.

The two kangaroos continued their journey. They went in to Japiyajarra. From there, now, into another country, into Yintaramuru, which is in the west... That country is in the west. They went over there. There they put down bush tomato plants, the fruit which we call ngayaki which is like jarlparra as well. In that country they deposited bush tomato plants.

They came back this way. At Yarrpawangu, there is a stone knife, a stone knife at Yarrpawangu. From there they went back to eat the bush tomatoes. They went back to Yintaramuru. From there they went further still. They went for a long time.

From there we will leave them as they go from Butcher Creek to Yanjwarra... They went away towards that place, they climbed up towards Pikilyi, from Yanjiwarra. That is as far as I will take the story, as far as Pikilyi.
That is all. (Napaljarri, Cataldi 47-52)

The narration style in Aboriginal myths and how one approaches it is important. The stories seem to be very allusive and 'beat around the bush'. However, this method adds humor to the story and clues us in a bit on Aboriginal attitudes. It is not always imperative to 'get right to the point', but a round about method can prove to be more effective and leave more of an impression in the long run on the listeners. However, although, allusive, the myths seem to have a central point. This method, along with the story tellers own style of narration, is most effective when heard (as it is supposed to be, rather then read). "It is also told in a most dramatic and vivid way. Much of the speaker's skill and passion in this style of narration is expressed in the acting out of what happens, in the different speaking voices the narrator imitates, and in the energy and emphasis of the narrators voice in describing what is happening. Unfortunately, some of this cannot be transferred to paper" (Napaljarri, Cataldi 21).

* * *

SUMMARY

After reviewing the material presented above, one begins to realize how complex and intricate Aboriginal life and their land relationships really are.

What seems to be peculiar to the Australians is the mysterious connection between their land, the mythical history of that land, and man's responsibility of keeping the land 'living' and fertile... Through the initiation rites the neophyte is gradually introduced to the tribal traditions... This knowledge is total- that is to say, mythical, ritual, and geographic. In learning what took place in the Dreamtime, the initiate also learns what must be done in order to maintain the living and productive world. Moreover, a mythical- or mystical-geography is revealed to him; he is introduced to the innumerable sites where the Supernatural Beings performed rituals or did significant things. The world in which the initiate henceforth moves is a meaningful and 'sacred' world, because Supernatural Beings have transformed it. (Eliade 55)

The Law for the Aboriginal is all encompassing and absolute. In order for this to be, the Aboriginal has to have complete faith in the stories of the creation of the environment, and more
specifically, the sacred site. "Giving shape to the land, the Supernatural Being at the same time made it sacred, the present countryside is the result of their work" (Eliade 42).
PERSPECTIVE #4: THE JOURNAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION:

Now that the viewpoints of the experts within each perspective researched have been investigated, it is time to apply the findings to attempt to gain a better understanding of how Aborigines relate to their environment. Although the differing perspectives may at times compliment, and at other times contradict each other, one thing is painfully clear; the Aboriginal/environmental relationship is extremely complicated. This relationship is not something that can be defined neatly, or put into a specific category, it extends on various levels throughout every aspect of their lives; from kinship associations, to birth and death, to the perception of another reality, the Dreamtime.

This chapter entails the revisitation of the journal kept along the Songline Walk that I participated on. Presented below are some of my thoughts and feelings, and an analysis of how my view of what I had written has changed, stayed the same, or been influenced since researching the perspectives of the archaeologist, anthropologist, and the Australian Aboriginal. It will be divided up into two parts, which correlate to the two seemingly different types of findings that are apparent.

The first type, type I, includes some examples of how my perceptions of the Australian Aborigines’ relationship to the environment has been changed or influenced after researching the perspectives. These can be explained using Western reasoning. For instance, examples from the perspectives of the archaeologist and anthropologist can be used to support my speculations.

The second type of finding, type II, are considered to be the more profound revelations. Here one witnesses the changing attitudes and perceptions that take place within myself as I walked along the Songline. Therefore, it is imperative to present these findings in the very sequence that the journal events were entered. It is felt that these findings cannot be explained using Western reasoning, thus, one turns to the perspective of the Aboriginal himself in hopes of clarification.
Journal revelations and/or discoveries:

Type I:

This first type of analysis, type I, shows examples of how my perceptions of the Australian Aborigines’ relationship to the environment has either been changed or influenced by the knowledge that has been gained through researching the various perspectives noted above. In order to illustrate this, it is necessary to present some of my perceptions of the Aboriginal during the Songline Walk. The material will be presented in the form of journal entries.

The first example presents an early clash I had with the natives because of our differing perceptions of the notion of time.

Yesterday I started our walkabout along the Luijarri dreaming trail. I must admit I had my doubts... the Aborigines had us waiting until 4:30 PM before we started. (We were led to believe we were leaving between 12 and 1:00 PM) This last annoyance I found out is due to the fact that I am just not used to modern society and scheduling. The waiting made our first legs of the walk one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had...

We will be following mostly along the coast, so our movements are dictated by the positioning of the moon, which adversely affects the tides. What this meant for us last night is we left late afternoon (the start of the hike, which was 2 k. south of Cable Beach, Broome, Australia.) and walked into an amazing sunset, and continued a few hours into nightfall.

As is apparent from this first journal entry, our notions of time are completely different. Although Western culture seems to live around a schedule based on an eight-hour work day which may leave little flexibility for change, this indigenous culture still lives according to nature’s cycles. This example may be a start in explaining the difference between our two cultures’ conception of time. “Time, in whatever form a culture may perceive it, is treated as an organizer for all activities, a synthesizer and integrator, a way of handling priorities and categorizing experience... A complicating factor in intercultural relations is that each culture has its own time frames in which patterns are unique” (Hall, Dance 3).

The next two examples are ones in which my beliefs were supported by the research.
As I am starting to realize, although the Aborigines might seem like a sedentary race, this is not the case. They can sit around for hours, then pack up what little supplies they carry and be on the go in the blink of an eye... Furthermore, the Aborigines numbers fluctuate, by that I mean some times their there, and sometimes their not-I can’t explain it.

A speculation about this phenomena that I had at the time was that the Aborigines profound knowledge of the land allows them to travel with very few supplies and become invisible to the eye. A further example of this is seen in the following journal entry:

We followed Frans and Joe west into the bush country for a short walk. It is a harsh land... Frans showed us how to find fresh water in the desert where none is apparent. You look for a certain tree, (special vegetation that grows over underground wells) and start digging. About 6’ down, he struck water.

Evidence to support these speculations is found in anthropologist, Deborah Rose. “Where I have worried and planned ahead for a lack of food, Yarralin people have simply gone, confident that the country will take care of them. To my knowledge they have always been right” (109-110).

In the next example I comment on my surprise about how well Aborigines eat. A stereotype I had of was that the Aboriginal was a half starving scavenger for lack of resources.

Being the last to the carapiste does have some advantages. When we arrived, well after dark, the fire was blazing and our meal of curried meat, rice, and vegetables was already cooked. They eat well around here.

After doing the research, clarification of my error becomes clear. Although the meal noted above is probably a far cry from a traditional Aboriginal meal, the tradition of eating well is not. As archaeologist, Josephine Food states: “It may be that the hunter-gatherers of Australia were so affluent that they had no need to increase their yield of food plants or to store food... In other words, the available food could have fed far more mouths than actually had to be fed” (229).

Below I comment on how happy and carefree the Aborigines seem to be. A common stereotype that I had was that they were a very stoic and serious people.
The night was spent playing Yatze around the campfire and joking about the
days mishaps... If there is one thing I can say about the Aborigines without reservation it
is they are a happy people. Always laughing, joking, singing, and smiling. It rubs off on
you.

My speculations are supported by an observation made as long ago as 1770, by Captain Cook, as
noted in Archaeology of the Dreamtime, by Josephine Flood. "From what I have said of these natives
peoples they may appear to be the most wretched people upon the Earth, but in reality they are far happier
than we Europeans. They live in a Tranquility which is not disturb'd by the Inequality of Condition"
(234).

In the next journal entry, I reveal my surprise about another crumbling stereotype that I held of
Aborigines. I thought Aborigines were probably very territorial and violent toward neighboring tribes
because the competition for resources was so fierce. However, this notion was seriously questioned at an
early point in the walk.

After dinner, we told (listened) to stories, played the digeree doo, drums, and
boomerangs (you clap them together like clapsticks). Incidentally, boomerangs are the
only original musical instrument of this particular tribe. They were used much more
frequently for music than as a weapon.

Again, the research clarifies another suspicion. To have rights to a territories resources one has to
be a member of that particular ‘resource exploiting group’ (see section entitled ‘Own Country’ within
anthropologist perspective), but the Aboriginal definition of ‘boundary’ is found to be much different than
typical Western societies definition. “Every Dreaming defines both difference and similarity, and as the
tracks cross-cut each other, forming elaborate webs and stories, so people assert their rights and obligations
both to differ and to come together” (Rose 55). With this type of social system, it becomes very difficult to
be violent or warring towards ones neighbors.

The next journal entry presented is an example of how my understanding of an experience is
enhanced by the perspectives researched.
We went back to camp and watched Phillip make Damper. (homemade bread)

Very good stuff.

recipe:
1- Mix flour and self raising flour (1/2 and 1/2)
Add in either milk or water till you get a doughy consistency
You can cook it one of two ways:
Dig a hole, burn a fire in it till all that is left is hot coals.
put a pot in the hole, with oil in the bottom, and add the dough.
Cook until ready (Usually 30-40 minutes) turning over once in the process.
2- Burn a fire over the sand.
When coals are all that is left, remove them, dig a hole, and put the dough in.
Cook for 45 minutes, dig it out, turn it over and repeat the process.

This example shows how the Aboriginal may cook without an oven. However, as seen through an observation by Deborah Rose, their may be a much deeper symbolic meaning. Here we see a correlation between cooking the bread in the earth and ‘cooking the baby’: “This ritual, which women perform for their children during the first year of life, brings the child out of the ground, ‘cooking’ it to make it strong, healthy, and ‘grounded’... ‘Cooking the baby’ replicated the process by which the Dreaming Ancestors emerged from the ground...” (Rose 62).

A final example from the journal that will be used to illustrate this first type of analysis, is seen in a change brought about in vegetation and the problems being caused by it:

After dinner, about half of us set up a second campsite away from the others on top of a sand dune. The main campsite is in a valley about 1/2 mile from the beach and is overrun by burrs. Phillip and Joe were more than a little upset about this because a few years ago there were none and they were introduced into the area by tourists trespassing illegally onto the land.

Although Aborigines provide a sufficient answer as to why the campsite has been overrun by burrs, the researched perspectives have given me insight into what might be a bigger problem or cause of the changing vegetation. This can be seen in the archaeologist’s discussion about fire usage.

It is ironic that the Australian park lands and open woodlands so admired by the early settlers should have been created by the Aborigines they regarded as ignorant nomads. Yet when Aborigines were driven off their land and the regular, light burning ceased, the old grass turned sour and scrub invaded the parkland. (Flood 214)
Type II:

The second type of journal analysis, contains what are considered the most profound revelations. The first revelation attests to the strength of the belief in the Law by Aborigines in today's society, and the second shows the change in my own attitudes and perceptions as I continued along the walk. These two revelations are presented together because they are both imperative to understand the change in attitudes and perceptions that took place within me as I walked along the Songline.

Since the change in attitude took place in a linear sequence, or as the walk progressed, it is important to present the journal entries in the order they were recorded. Because of the personal nature of the discussion, the journal entries presented below will not be backed up with specific examples from the perspectives. It is felt that trying to categorize the experience with someone else's thoughts would not only trivialize the data, but would be a far stretch of the imagination. However, after the whole experience has been presented, an explanation of how the research has influenced or changed my understanding of the experience is given.

The first journal entry, which happens to be the very first line of my journal on the first day, sets the tone for my attitudes in the beginning.

Yesterday I started our walkabout along the Luijarri Dreaming trail. I must admit I had doubts.

The next journal entry, is the first of the second day:

This morning I was the last to wake up (I'm beginning to wonder what everybody else thinks of me), almost everybody else was up with the sun... As I was packing up my gear the group left. I was very far behind - again.

The first two journal entries emit either a negative tone, or a detached acceptance of the information being presented. In other words, I am willing to accept the information only as a story, and record it as such.
In the next quote, which also takes place on the morning of the second day, one of the guides, a man named Collin, tried to explain the Aborigines' relationship to the land as follows:

The land is sick. Whenever a portion of the land gets destroyed or built upon by a white man, an Aboriginal must either get sick himself or die for it. Each spot has a spirit that protects it, and the spirit demands this. The person chosen by the spirit is always a member of the tribe that the decimated lands Songline crosses over. (The Aborigines still firmly believe in this tradition). Once someone has either gotten sick or died for the land than that spirit is at ease, although the sorrow and misery over the events will always be with the tribe. This is one of the reasons Aborigines feel that their days on earth are numbered.

In the next example, which was recorded around noon on the second day, I subconsciously begin to associate environmental features with living creatures that have disappeared long ago. At this point I was still unfamiliar with the concept of the Law or the Dreamtime Ancestors.

After about 2 hours or so we headed inland. We walked over a line of gray rocks (that looked like the spine of some colossal dinosaur) with bush country to our right and ocean to our left- Quite a contrast.

The next few examples include more descriptions of some of the countryside that we walked through.

At midday we came upon ‘the creek’. The creek was actually about a thousand meters across. We had to take turns, in twos and threes, going across in a small dingy. We were now well into crocodile country, so no matter how beautiful and blue the water looked, we didn’t swim.

When we all were across, we camped out for a while on white/gray sandstone under some low lying shady trees. We ate lunch, slept, fished, and told stories. I even tried spear fishing- without much luck.

Carlo, Alicja, and I fell behind while we were shell collecting. Beautiful shells, untouched by tourists so they are in abundance. When we came upon a creek we had to cross (because we were so far behind), the tide was coming in. Barred Creek: We paid for our delaying. Although only up to the ankles of the rest of the group a half hour before, it was now past our waists, and fairly strong. While we crossed one of the older Aborigines (Richard), kept a lookout for salt water crocs with his spear.
The most striking feature of this whole day had to be the incredible change of scenery every couple hundred feet or so. One minute you’re in a wasteland of low lying shrubs and sand, and the next you’re in a grove of mangos.

There are several things that are important within these journal entries. The first is the descriptions of the countryside that are becoming more detailed. I feel this directly correlates to my growing interest in the countryside and the walk itself. Secondly, one sees an acceptance of the Aboriginal lifestyle by my spearfishing and taking naps during the middle of the afternoon; a very common Aboriginal trait.

Another interesting observation is that when I refer to shell collecting, I fail to associate myself with the ‘tourist’ who usually shell hunts. However, a lack of respect for the Aborigines’ countryside can still be witnessed in my not thinking to ask if it was all right to take the shells. This lack of respect can probably better be termed as ignorance, or lack of understanding.

In another example from the second day one of older teenagers tells us a little about the initiation rights of boys.

After lunch, Daniel taught us a little bit about the initiation rights of boys. It includes circumcision at age 15 (this age fluctuates between tribes), but he wouldn’t tell us much more because he feared some bad omen would fall upon him if he did.

This example shows a profound belief in the Law. At this point in the walk, this firm belief even by the youth of the tribe is still beyond my comprehension. How could someone in the modern twentieth century still believe in such superstition? What I am still failing to grasp, however, is that I am no longer in the modern twentieth century.

In the next example, the beginning of the third day, one finds me still sleeping late. However, my interest in the unique countryside is growing.

Woke up last again today. Because we walked so much yesterday, we plan to spend another night at this sight. After breakfast we went to the beach down the road. Very nice surprise. There are beautiful red cliffs you must walk down in order to get to the beach.
The next few examples are two stories that were told by Paddy Roe, the tribal elder. What fascinated me the most about these stories is not so much their content, but that Aborigines believe in them so faithfully.

noon: We went back to camp for lunch and had another surprise, Paddy was there. The women took the females fishing while the men stayed with Paddy. He told us stories about the Dreamtime, especially about the Dreamtime totem of that area, the snake, also known as Old Man Warbirdin. The snake has three manifestations, the physical body, the metaphysical body (the rocks that are its dwelling), and the spirit body. Two stories of particular interest were as follows:

1) 'Three Orientals were sent to mine for gold by their boss on a sacred site of the snake. The locals warned them not to do it, but they laughed it off. The three were caught in a cave a few hours later and all died. The boss, still not learning his lesson, came over with another three men. Within 48 hours two were crushed in a rockslide, one lost his mind (went crazy), and the boss was struck by lightening. Today, nobody disturbs the sight'.

2) Many years ago, some Poms (English) were doing a documentary on Paddy and his people. As they were filming him, Paddy was telling the story of the snake. The filming crew was very skeptical. Suddenly, behind the camera men the snake (in the physical body), stood straight up to its full 8 feet. Their life was in danger until Paddy walked over to the snake and told the it to leave the men alone. So it went away.

At one time stories like this would have seem like fiction to me, but after a couple days in this country, that is no longer the case, there are too many coincidences.

There are several important observations within these journal entries that must be noted. For one, it is interesting how the group is beginning to acclimate to the Aboriginal lifestyle without even a thought of it being strange. For example, the men stay with Paddy and the other Aboriginal men, and the women go with the Aboriginal women. No one even thinks to question this seemingly prejudicial act. Another interesting observation is that there is starting to be a change in my writing style which reflects a further acceptance of the Aboriginal relationship to the environment. I start reporting the stories as fact rather than fiction. For example, I say 'the snake has three manifestations', not, 'the Aboriginal say the snake has three manifestations'.

Finally, at the end of the entry I begin to consciously accept the Aboriginal’s beliefs by commenting on how fact and what I believe to be fiction is beginning to collide. It is interesting to note that I don’t attribute it to the Aboriginal, but to the country.
In the next example, which is the end of the third day, one sees a further acceptance of me to the Aborigines and the Aborigines to me. This acceptance on the part of the Aborigines leads me to believe that they were beginning to notice the change in me and our whole group.

After dinner, we told (listened) to stories, played the digeree doo, drums, and boomerangs (you clap them together like clapsticks)... Franz put on paint and danced and sang as we played music. It was quite a site. It is interesting to note that the Aborigines wouldn’t put on ceremonial paint in front of us. To demonstrate this tradition, one of the ‘adopted’ white members of the tribe did it.

Once again, one sees a firm belief in the Law. The Aborigines are not willing to break a taboo of the tribe by performing a segment of ritual in front of us.

The next journal entry, the beginning of day four, reinforces this belief in the Law by the Aborigines.

We all woke up with the sunrise (5:30 AM), had an uneventful breakfast, and began our walk. We traveled all day on the beach. I talked a majority of the time with Daniel, Uncle, and Collin as we went.

About a quarter of the way through our walk we climbed up and over the first wave of dunes. It was like stepping back in time 100 years. The dunes were literally covered with artifacts from their ancestors which dated back between 100-150 years ago. Among the most common were...
- shells used as knives (edges filed into points)
- spear heads made out of shells and quartz
- various tools
- red ochre: rock used to make red paint (you rub it together with another rock, wet it, then apply it to your body). After I tried this, from the look on the Aboriginal’s faces, I got the feeling I probably shouldn’t have.

At first I wondered why all these artifacts were in such abundance, but Danielle explained how the wind blows the sand around the dunes continuously covering and uncovering them. Furthermore, it is taboo to take them off the sites; you may become sick. This may only be a myth, but after some of the strange stories and occurrences I’ve heard about, I wasn’t about to attempt it.

The strength of the adherence to the Law by the Aborigines can be seen in almost every journal entry. These observations are important to keep noting because they play a big role in my own change in attitudes and perceptions. For example, I began to feel that if these people who know this environment so
well take the Law of the Dreamtime so seriously, maybe there is something more to it than superstition. Evidence of this change in attitude can clearly be seen in the last sentence of the entry. Within this entry I seem to start ‘thinking before I act’, or as an Aboriginal might say, I am ‘becoming more sensitive to the surroundings’. Whereas just a couple of days before I was willing to take shells off the beach without asking if it was acceptable, my attitude has changed so drastically in this similar example that I would not even consider such an unspeakable act. However, I can still be found demonstrating what might be considered typical Western behavior when I put the red octane on my body. I had only to look at the Aborigines to know the extent of my error.

One begins to get a sense of the ancient quality of this environment by witnessing occurrences such as the one described in the journal entry below.

Later on down the walk, we came upon the fossilized remains of an Emu. Its foot and feather prints could clearly be seen in the rock. (It was hundreds of thousands of years old) We were fortunate to see this because 2/3’s of the day it is covered by the sea.

Although not consciously realized when writing this journal entry, I am now beginning to understand how elements, such as the fossil in this environment, make the belief in something as ancient as the Dreamtime Ancestors more comprehensible. Occurrences such as this are commonplace. This can also be seen within the very soil of the continent itself, which is the oldest in the world. Although not mentioned in the journal entries, this became less fact and more reality to me by the second day when I decided to walk barefoot instead of wearing hiking boots. The ancient quality of the soil could actually be felt in its consistency, which is very much like volcanic ash.

In the next few journal entries, the unwavering belief in the Dreamtime Law, and the adherence to taboo, is again witnessed through the natives own words.

Along the walk, Danielle (Aboriginal youth) told us about some of their spirit protectors: ‘When we are born, we each get a spirit protector. Mine is the croc
(crocodile) because a week before I was born my father speared a crocodile in the same place that I have a mark on my shoulder.

Paddy’s protector is the lizard. He made one out of wood when we made our boomerangs. Nobody can make this but him—just as he could not make somebody else’s spirit guide.

One of the teenage boys with us (William) is now called Walky. I thought it was just a nickname till Earl (Danielle’s older brother) explained to me the reason:

‘Walky’s father, who had the same name as him, was shot in the head by his own brother. Once they are dead, they are not allowed to be talked about or mentioned again, for this may disturb the spirit, so young William’s name had to be changed’.

In the first example Danielle has some proof to support his belief in spirit protectors, the mark on his shoulder. It should be noted that the Aborigines faith in their belief system is so strong that proof is not necessary. For someone who is brought up within Western society, such as myself, this proof is important. However, acceptance that this type of proof may provide some validity to what Danielle is saying should be considered a big step on my part in beginning to understanding this culture.

In the journal entries from day five, a further step in my change in attitudes and perceptions is witnessed.

Not one of my better mornings. The young aboriginal kids were up singing and playing two hours before sunrise… We were all soaked through our sleeping gear from the heavy dew. I was stiff as a log from all the walking on the beach and the cliffs the last few days. The porridge was watery (food supplies are getting low). I almost scalped and gave myself a concussion when I walked head first into a large branch. And, to top it all off, Frans was standing on top of a dune screaming ‘hurry up, we’ve got to get started.’ (I know he was only doing his job but that didn’t suppress the urge I had at that moment to throw him off the cliffs!!) All right, enough complaining...

Incidentally, we all had to be awake before the sun came out anyway. We had to get a very early start to beat the high tide along the beach. Otherwise, we would have been trapped between the ocean and the cliffs.

Soon as we started to walk I cheered up. Another beautiful day of walking over rugged terrain of beaches and red rocked cliffs. It was very exciting dodging the surf as we had to run from rock stand to rock stand along the beach.

When we stopped to take a break in the shadow of a sand dune, we saw whales and porpoises splashing around on the horizon!!

At the beginning of the day, I wake up in a bad mood, not that uncommon for someone who has slept indoors for ninety-nine point nine percent of their lifetime and is used to having all the comforts of

75
home close at hand. In other words, trying to live the life of an Aboriginal is starting to take its toll on me. However, the relevance of this entry can be found in its second half. “Soon as we started walking I cheered up.” I am finding not just comfort from my ‘suffering’, but also joy in a distinctly Aboriginal activity, walking the Songline. In the process of walking the Songline I am also learning about these new surroundings.

The beginning of day six presents a further acceptance of the Aboriginal lifestyle.

Lazy morning, laid in bed till at least 7:00 AM... Out here that’s very late. Ate a leisurely breakfast than headed up to the beach to do some fishing with a hand fishing line... the rest of the afternoon was spent eating, sleeping, swimming, and generally, being lazy.

Although a trace of humor is attempted within this entry, the relevance is apparent. The attitude presented seems rather non-chalant for one who, before starting this walk, was regularly getting up between ten thirty and eleven in the morning. This change is witnessed again when discussing the early morning activities. Where fishing for my next meal with something as ‘primitive’ as a hand fishing line would have seemed ludicrous a few days earlier, I seem to be completely comfortable and accepting of the situation at the beginning of day six. Finally, the last line of the entry seems to show a stark contrast to one who is used to being on a set schedule and feeling guilty if every minute of the day is not filled with productivity.

Within the next journal entry, a number of other interesting observations are noticed.

A couple of hours before sunset the tide became low enough to walk out on the reef. Another shock... It was like walking on another planet. There were sponge corals of greens, browns, blue-greys, greys, yellows, tans, etc. All mixed into an incredible coral-rock of red brown. There were also a mixture of giant oysters, hairy crabs, and strange but beautiful fish. I cut myself twice in the reef. Supposedly, coral cuts don’t heal easily, I guess I’ll soon find out. I was walking along the reef with Richard, Alicje, and Shanti when we spotted a small Gummi shark. It looks like a great white but doesn’t exceed 2’ in length.
We went back to shore and met up with Tony and Carlos and we all watched
another incredible sunset of oranges, blues, purples, reds, and yellows. There is no doubt
that I will miss this country.
Tonight was also the first sitting of the moon. It is just a small sliver.

Above, one notices the obvious excitement of witnessing an environment never before
encountered. However, the most revealing observations are the seen in the excitement over common
natural occurrences, such as a sunset (although the sunsets were rather incredible), and the first sitting of the
moon. Although rare that I would ever notice the first sitting of the moon before this walk, here it is seen to
be of such importance that I am describing what it looks like. Being bombarded by nature is making me
aware and attune to it. I am finding awe and wonder in the common place, what Eliade might describe as
‘finding sacred in the profane’.

One further observation to point out is my reference to the country as an entity when noting that it
will be missed. This is another distinctly Aboriginal trait, expressing ‘sentimentality’ towards the land.

At the beginning of day seven, one sees a further change in my attitudes and perceptions.

Determined not to be the last one ready today, I got up and packed and was
ready before anyone else. I may be getting the hang of this after all.

We walked along the beach again. We came to the white cliffs today, which are
the body of the metaphysical snake. We made white paint out of the White Ochre. You
take a piece of it, chew it, and smear it all over your body. White Ochre is the most
sacred of all the colors to these peoples, they use it for war, ceremonies, and other
serious occasions. (Such as a Corroboree) We were careful not to take any off the sight.

In the first line of this entry, a conscious effort is being made on my part to cohere to the
Aboriginal morning pattern, or ritual. Although there are many examples of a subconscious change within
myself, the few examples of a conscious adherence can be considered just as important.

In the second portion of this journal entry another level of acceptance of the Aboriginal belief
system is witnessed in my choice of wording about the description of an important landscape feature: “the
white cliffs are the body of the metaphysical snake”. Also, there is a further level of respect witnessed in
the last sentence: “We were careful not to take any (ochre) off the site.” By this point I seem to have
learned the importance of sites such as this to the Aborigines. This becomes apparent in my thoughts and actions, as well as in the fact that they no longer had to mention that we (the guests) should not disturb these sites; it was by now an accepted fact.

At the end of day seven we reach another campssite. Here a series of events takes place which makes me fully aware of the change within my own perceptions of this environment, the catalyst being contact with others from Western society.

We got to camp just before nightfall and were not in the best of spirits. This camp (which is called Minarri) was filled with 80 hippie-type people who are doing the same walk, but in the opposite direction. They arrived a few days early.

Our group was greatly dismayed at seeing so many people, making so much noise, and such a mess. (At night, they got out their drums and started making a lot of noise) Joe, Paddy’s grandson and protégé, however, just smiled and kept repeating, ‘Minarri is going to be mad’. We didn’t quite know what to think of this till later on in the night...

Up to now there has not been a single cloud in the sky, but tonight we started to see a few...

It is a strange feeling, we have only been away from civilization for 7 1/2 days now, and we already are repulsed by the sight of large groups of people. The feeling was mutual throughout the whole group...

After reflecting back on this later, I realize it was not the sight of a large group that was dismaying, but such a large group in this setting, on this land, with their foreign tents, instruments, and other camping supplies. (as I have already mentioned, we slept under the stars every night) This land feels truly alive, and they look as if they are violating it somehow, by not respecting its traditional ways and customs.

One can only imagine how the Aborigines must feel. All their land being taken over and raped by Europeans when they have been there for 100,000’s of centuries.

We climbed to the top of a dune and made our camp above the masses, trying desperately to regain the peace and solitude we had known for the past week. It partially worked, looking out from the top of the dune over the cliff towards the ocean we witnessed one of the most beautiful moon rises I’ve ever seen. It was about an 1/8 full, and was a glowing red-orange. After about an hour of watching this phenomena it only seemed to be level with us. In its peacefulness it seemed to be defying the chaos below.

There are many important implications within this journal entry. To start out with, the shift in my attitude and perceptions, as well as the whole groups, becomes painfully clear after meeting up with others from the culture which we left one week earlier. This experience allowed us a chance to view our own culture from an outside perspective, and we didn’t like what we saw. I was not only dismayed by their
behavior, but I was also ashamed to associate myself with them. I allude to remarks such as not being able to understand how they could be so inconsiderate and desecrate this sacred site the way they do (i.e. making excess noise, setting up tents everywhere, etc.).

Although I call their tents ‘foreign’, I did not mean foreign to myself, but foreign to this environment. After seeing the land as an Aboriginal might, it was difficult for me to see it as I would have seven days ago. In other words, it was hard to see the land as a retreat from civilization, yet with certain conditions. The conditions being that it will manipulated or molded to fit Western societies needs. The disgust I was feeling leads me to believe that I was starting to think as an Aboriginal might, that people should change sufficiently to fit the environment’s need. This feeling is supported by the following entry: “This land feels truly alive, and they look as if they are violating it somehow, by not respecting its traditional ways and customs.” Once again I refer to the country as a living entity.

Seeing the environment within this new perspective allowed me to greatly sympathize with the Aboriginal plight. As the last paragraph in the preceding quote hints to, I did something that was very foreign to myself, I escaped the reality of my own culture. I took comfort in nature by climbing a sand dune and watching the moon rise. “It was about an 1/8 full, and was a glowing red-orange. After about an hour of watching this phenomena it only seemed to be level with us. In its peacefulness it seemed to be defying the chaos below.” A very profound statement for a suburban dweller from New Jersey.

A final remark about this entry can be seen in the statement made by the Aboriginal named Joe. “Minarri is going to be mad.” Not only is Joe referring to the campsite as one would refer to a person, but he is giving it, what we (Western society) would call a human trait, an emotion. It is interesting that i did not think this was odd, but perfectly normal. Furthermore, the result of what Joe’s statement was implying can be seen as a profound revelation. What I once would have passed off as superstition, was again becoming frighteningly real. As I mention in the journal entry, we had not seen a cloud in the sky for the whole week we were on the walk. Although this may be coincidence, when the other group started to disrupt the natural order of the environment, the first clouds started to appear. What I fail to note within
this journal, however, is that the clouds continue to appear for several days, and when we return to the
town of Broome a few days later, the whole sky is overcast and it eventually starts to rain. Belief in an
experience like this is impossible to explain using Western reasoning, unless one is to assume that I am
crazy.

Day eight, presents a winding down of events from the walk.

Much to our relief, we woke up today to find out that our little group would be
moving on to a new campsite far away from this mass of people... It is great to get away
from that large group of people, but there is still a sullen mood amongst our group. The
illusion that we belong to this land has been shattered, and everybody has
too strong a reminder now that its back to civilization in a few days.
We no longer feel like travelers within the land we belong to so much as an
escapees from the civilization we are a part of.

Although dramatic, there are some important elements to extract from this entry. To start, the
transformation that took place within myself is seemingly not unique, but can be witnessed in every
member of the group.

Furthermore, the most important element can again be seen in my choice of words, which
enhances my own change in attitude and perceptions towards this environment. Twice I mention the
depressing reality that we no longer belong to this land. This concept, which I would not have been able to
grasp a week ago, is being used by me as if its been a part of my vocabulary all my life. To further clarify,
I am seen using distinctly Aboriginal terminology, ‘belonging to the land’, as opposed to typical Western
thinking of the ‘land belonging to us’.

In the last entry from day eight, this change in my attitude and perceptions can again be seen
while listening to the tribal elder, Paddy Roe.

After lunch, Paddy came again. I spent many hours just sitting around and
listening to him talk and tell stories.
Coming from a society which is always on the move, it is hard to sit in one place too long. In the scenario noted above, the feeling should be enhanced because I am sitting in a camp near a beautiful beach on the second to last day before the walk is over. Normally, I would feel as if I should be enjoying every last moment I had in these surroundings, as one would feel on a vacation in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, I am found sitting for hours with an old man listening to him tell stories, and being completely content to do so. Not only is this another distinctly Aboriginal custom, but it shows a newfound respect for this man and the information he has to convey about his culture.

Having shown a sufficient amount of journal entries which convey my own shift in attitudes and perceptions, I will end the discussion of the journal with a comparison of the very first words of the journal on day one, and the very last words on day nine.

Day one:
Yesterday I started our walkabout along the Luijarri Dreaming trail. I must admit I had my doubts...

Day nine:
Leaving had to be one of the hardest things I ever have had to do...

**SUMMARY**

As shown above, I have made several comments about my shift in attitude and perceptions towards this environment. In attempting to understand this change, I turn to the research on the Aborigines perspective of their relationship to the environment. It should be noted that unlike the examples given from the perspectives of the archaeologist and the anthropologist, this data cannot be easily defined. Hard factual evidence is exchanged for feeling and intuition. Therefore, I ask that one proceed with an open mind.

In regards to my own change in attitude and perceptions towards this environment, Aborigines might say that I started to listen to the earth, or as Bill Niedje would say, I started to listen with my
‘feeling’. Therefore, I allowed myself to be open the reality of the Dreamtime as it began to be revealed to me. This is all speculation, but as presented below, evidence to support this statement is found within both the journal entries and the Aboriginal perspective.

In an early part of the walk I subconsciously began to associate environmental features with living beings. “We walked over a line of gray rocks that looked like the spine of some colossal dinosaur.” This statement was made while I was still unfamiliar with the concept of the Dreamtime Ancestors, but this landscape feature did turn out to have a story attached to it. Aborigines may explain this encounter as follows:

You might dream. I don’t know but you might find something. You might do that because is longside with you. Or e can feel it your hair... because e (Dreamtime Ancestor) might be standing behind your back or longside, sitting. While you listen this story, e might be longside with you and your feeling. E tell you... ‘Listen! Listen that story’! No matter who is. E can feel it way I feel it in my feeling. You’ll be same too. You listen my story and you will feel in because spirit e’ll be with you. You cannot see but e’ll be with you. You cannot see but e’ll be with you and e’ll be with me. Is story just listen careful. (Niedje, Story 110-111)

Another example which might help explain my change in attitude and perceptions is one that can be backed up with factual evidence. However, the ‘factual evidence’ that I refer to would probably be thrown out of most scientific circles within Western society. This example entails one of my comments made along the walk about how things considered fiction a few days earlier were quickly becoming reality.

Our group was greatly dismayed at seeing so many people, making so much noise, and such a mess. Joe... however, just smiled and kept repeating that Minarri (the name given to the campsite) is going to be mad. We didn’t quite know what to think of this till later on in the night... up till now there has not been a single cloud in the sky, but tonight we started to see a few...

I go on to say the clouds continued to accumulate till it eventually rains. Below, I give an account of how this event may have been explained by an Aboriginal.

We sitting on top that Djang (sacred site). You sitting on this earth but something under, under this ground here. We don’t know. You don’t know yourself. Because that Djang we sitting under, e watching, that Djang, what you want to do. We fright. Might be something there. You might get hurt or you might spoil something there. If you touch, you
might get cyclone, heavy rain, or flood. Not just here, you might kill someone in another
place. Might be kill him in another country. You cannot touch him... (Niedje, Story 78-81)

A similar explanation to the occurrences within this event are seen in the story, told by Paddy Roe, about
the two mining companies (see section two of the Aboriginal perspective).
The research performed on each of the various perspectives has allowed me to gain insightful information regarding the Aboriginal relationship to his environment. However, a much greater understanding can be attained by viewing the research in a more holistic manner.

This chapter has been divided up into three sections. In order to give an accurate assessment of the comparisons of the various perspectives researched, it is necessary to start out by reinstating the importance, as well as the weakness, of each perspective; this is section one. The next two sections include the journal findings (section two), and the perspective comparisons (section three).

section one:

The archaeologist, through excavation of campgrounds, sacred sites, and other highly frequented areas allows us to glimpse into the distant past of the Australian Aboriginal. The information gained from the archaeologist allows us to fill in ‘the gaps’ about the past relationship of the Aboriginal to his environment that may have been forgotten or lost since the disruption of their cultural continuity by European colonization. This information also provides a means to validate the myths and other stories of the Dreamtime. This is critical, because, being from a non-story telling society, we would be skeptical of what the Aboriginal has to say about the environment if not for this validation. The only way for stories to hold validity for one of Western society is to provide proof of their accuracy.

The archaeologist uses various categories such as myth and ritual, rock art, and origins of the early Aborigines as a ‘window to the past’ to begin to discover the numerous interrelationships between Aborigines and their surroundings throughout different time periods. He sees the Aboriginal’s use of the environment guided by several changing factors, the most important being the rising of the seas, increased use of fire, and the harvesting/managing of specialized foods. Therefore, it can be said that the Aborigines’ relationship to the environment has changed as the society has advanced through time. These discoveries
can be used as a marker to measure the correlation between the advancement of the Aboriginal society and the change in their relationship towards the environment in which they lived.

Since the job of the archaeologist is to dig into the past to find clues to the behavior of contemporary Aborigines and their ancestors, an examination of this data is useful for discovering their relationship with the environment. Thus, a framework is set up that will aid in telling a more complete story of the Australian Aborigines.

The archaeologist's main weakness is that their science is based on stone remains, and the Australian Aboriginal society is a wood-based culture. Therefore, the few stone remains left by the Aborigines are not good indicators of what Aboriginal life was like.

The perspective of the anthropologist also has a unique significance. Through first hand experience anthropologists have gained valuable information on the complex nature of the Aboriginal's relationship to his environment, most of which is not accessible to archaeologists. Much information that is pertinent to an archaeologist, such as where to look for sacred sites, comes from contemporary Aborigines, as translated by the anthropologist.

Furthermore, the anthropologist can also be seen as a middleman for the transference of information between Aboriginal and Western societies. For example, although Aborigines have much information to convey about their relationship to the environment, the cultural differences between the two societies are so great that the language used is difficult to comprehend. The role of translator is witnessed in the various categories chosen, which all provide a brief look at one of the several manifestations of the multi-leveled relationship between Aborigines and their environment.

The anthropologist's strength is also his weakness. The translation of information from one culture to another inevitably includes the anthropologist's own interpretation, as well as his biases. Therefore, the accuracy of the information being conveyed depends on the accuracy of the anthropologist's translations.
The next perspective, that of the Australian Aboriginal himself, also conveys important information about the relationship of an Aboriginal to his land, but provides access to an insider's point of view. Therefore, the reader is taken to another level of understanding.

This is seen in Bill Niedje's discussion of 'feeling'. 'Feeling' is used to discuss the vast interconnectedness between all living things. "Listen carefully, careful and this spirit be come in your feeling and you will feel it... I feel it, my body same as you..." (Niedje, Story 19). The archaeologist and anthropologist can speculate as to how complex the Aboriginal/environmental relationship really is, but analysis of artifacts and contemporary Aborigines alone will not allow a full comprehension of this historical relationship. Therefore, we begin to witness the limitations of the scientific method. Aborigines contend that in order to gain an understanding of their intimate relationship to the environment, one must experience it first hand, one must 'feel' it. (Although anthropologists do experience living with Aborigines, their weakness lies is the translation of the data)

The weakness of the Aboriginal perspective can be seen in the problem of context transference. Although several enlightening accounts of their relationship to the land are given, it is very difficult for someone who is used to a Western thought process to understand what is being conveyed. In reflecting on my own experience, it took a combined analysis of the three perspectives before a more complete understanding was reached. Unfortunately, I feel that when viewed alone, Aboriginal efforts to convey their intricate relationship to the land are doomed to fail.

The final perspective is a review of the journal I kept of the Songline Walk that I participated in. Here I present some of my thoughts and feelings and analyze how my view of what I had written had changed, stayed the same, or been influenced since researching the perspectives of the archaeologist, anthropologist and the Australian Aboriginal. It is important because it shows the necessity of experiential learning when coming to an understanding of the Aboriginal/environment relationship.

The weakness of this category lies in trying to specifically categorize the data with examples, while its strength lies in using it in a more holistic manner to assess probable scenarios.
section two:

To initiate the comparisons of the perspectives, I will discuss the journal findings. There were several things to learn, after researching the perspectives, from this detailed study of my journal. First, it has helped me distinguish between the perspectives researched. I have realized that there are two types of perspectives; one which conveys a distinctly Western thought process, in which analysis is achieved through hard factual evidence (such as that of the archaeologist and the anthropologist), and the other which conveys a distinctly Aboriginal thought process, in which hard factual evidence is replaced by feeling and intuition. The journal can be viewed as a combination of both thought processes because, as witnessed in my attitude and perception change throughout the entries, I present a shift back and forth between the two thinking processes.

The relationship between the two different types of perspectives and the journal is a reciprocal one. The two different types of perspectives gave me the means to analyze the two types of findings, which I have labeled type I and type II, that are discovered throughout the journal entries. This is attributed to the journal entries presenting a combination of both Western and Aboriginal thought processes. Furthermore, understanding that Aborigines think differently than Westerners allowed me to go back and gain a better understanding of the material being conveyed in perspective three, the view of the Aboriginal. Finally, coming to an understanding of the Aboriginal material made me realize how limited the perspectives of the archaeologist and the anthropologist are when viewed alone. Through this more holistic approach, a fuller comprehension of the Aboriginal/environmental relationship was achieved.

The journals strength lies in the acquisition of knowledge through experiential learning. The Aboriginal would say that this is an essential ingredient in the comprehension of their relationship to the environment. My findings support this statement.
Within the journal, one witnesses a transformation of attitudes and perceptions within myself as I walked along the Songline. This change reaches its climax when I am confronted with people of my own culture.

It is a strange feeling, we have only been away from civilization for 7 1/2 days now, and we already were repulsed by the sight of large groups of people. The feeling was mutual throughout the whole group...

The importance of this example is two-fold. First, I am able to assess the extent of the change in my attitude and perceptions by gauging it against another culture, which happens to be my own. I had been given the unique opportunity to view my culture from an outsiders perspective, and thus assess it accordingly. Second, my apparent disgust at the actions of 'the others' (members of my own culture) in regards to the desecration of this environment, shows a shift in my thinking process. What a Western thinker would categorize as seeing through the perspective of another, an Aboriginal would categorize as 'feeling the land'. I had begun to think like an Aboriginal, and in doing so, gained a more comprehensive understanding of their relationship to the environment.

A word of warning about this type analysis is necessary. It is realized that the analysis of the journal may not always be as clear cut as it appears to be. For example, did the two types of findings fit neatly into the assigned categories, type I and type II, because I put them there, or are they interchangeable between the categories. It is my opinion that the answer to this question is both yes and no, depending on which findings are being examined. An example of this is illustrated below while looking at one of the journal entries labeled type I.

The Aborigines numbers seem to fluctuate, by that I mean sometimes they’re there, and sometimes they’re not- I can’t explain it.

In response to this statement I speculated that a profound knowledge of their environment may allow them to travel undetected with little supplies. In the perspective of the anthropologist I found a plausible explanation to back up my speculation. “Where I have always worried and planned ahead for
lack of food, Yarrawin people have simple gone, confident that the country will take care of them. To my knowledge they have always been right” (Rose 109-110).

However, as seen in the research done on the Aboriginal’s perspective, another conclusion may be drawn.

If people, if you go in the cave, you must yell out. Give signal because if you got new man with you, new man might be stranger... you go to yell out. Each place, no-matter here, all over... they doing that because otherwise you get sick. You know, Aboriginal, that’s all. You might get sick or very bad sick because wrong spot, wrong place. Signal, must signal, sing out first because they used to tell us... So that stranger man they can’t hurt im’. Because that’s the dream... (Niedje, Speaking 78-79)

In other words, the Aborigines may have actually been leaving camp to prepare the country for our arrival.

Though it is impossible to discern a specific individual’s actions, especially if they are of a culture foreign to you (for all I know the disappearing Aboriginal’s may have gone off to play poker), viewing the journal entries in a more holistic manner has allowed me to gain further insight into possible behavior that might be considered characteristic of the Aborigines.

Thus, in the case of the journal entries that can be understood through both types of perspectives, an even more well rounded viewpoint is discovered. Therefore, another strength of this method of research is seen in its flexibility.

To conclude, reviewing the journal in consideration of the knowledge gained from the other perspectives has allowed a fuller understanding of the journal entries. This relationship was reciprocal; not only was I able to come to a broader understanding of the Songline Walk, but I also gained a fuller understanding of the other three perspectives. Acknowledging the differences between the two types of perspectives allowed me to create a model to aid in their comparison.

section three:

The findings from the journal analysis can now be expanded upon to revisit and compare the perspectives on a much broader level. This is accomplished through examples of my own research
experience. Four comparisons are presented below which show how my understanding of the data 'as a whole' has been enhanced. The first comparison is all inclusive, showing how all four of the perspectives have been used to enhance my understanding on a general level. The second two, which are illustrated in a discussion of the Dreamtime, show firstly, how data within the Aboriginal's perspective is used to enhance the knowledge gained from the anthropologist's, and secondly, how data within the anthropologist's perspective is used to enhance the knowledge gained from the Aboriginal's perspective. The fourth comparison presented, which is seen in a discussion of fire usage, shows how data within the archaeologist's perspective is used to clarify information conveyed by the Aboriginal. These examples point out the importance of this holistic method of analysis.

* * *

After researching the perspectives of the archaeologist and anthropologist, I felt that I had gained a sufficiently well rounded view of how the Aboriginal relates to his environment. These two perspectives not only seldomly contradict each other, but they actually complement one another. The perspective of the archaeologist gives us a window to peep into the lives of some of the earliest Aborigines while speculating about how they used their resources and related to the environment. Furthermore, since life for the Aborigines has changed so little in the tens of thousands of years that they have inhabited the continent, the perspective of the anthropologist, through contact with contemporary Aborigines, seems to support and elaborate on many of the archaeologist's theories. An example of this can be seen in the excavation of a sacred site. An archaeologist may be able to assess the physical function and usage of a site through excavations, but the actual importance of the site, the religious and ceremonial significance, may be impossible to figure out unless aided by the anthropologist.

In addition, much of the information gathered on the Aboriginal's perspective of their relationship to the environment at times may also compliment the findings of the first two perspectives. For example, it
has been widely acclaimed how accurate the stories of the Dreamtime are, especially when referring to the creation of natural land features. The accuracy of the Aboriginal’s knowledge, which has been conveyed by the anthropologist, could only be proven through the capabilities of the archaeologist.

However, upon completion of both the research on the Aboriginal’s viewpoint and the revisitation of my journal, I began to realize how limiting the perspectives of the archaeologist and anthropologist could be. In a sense, I had gained an understanding that would be acceptable to a number of ‘professionals’ within Western society, but to an Aboriginal, this understanding would have seemed ludicrous. What Aborigines may have felt that I was missing could be classified as the ‘soul’ of the Aboriginal/environmental relationship. I feel that this relationship can be summed up with the title of one of Bill Niedje’s books, *A Story About Feeling*.

The final three applications of this holistic method of analysis are seen on a more specific level. Anthropologists give a fair description of the Aboriginal’s relationship to the environment, however, their explanations are limited by the use of Western terminology. In other words, the anthropologist has either not fully grasped, or more probable, does not convey what it means to perceive the environment as an Aboriginal does. This notion is reinforced when looking at a concept such as the Dreamtime. There are no fully complete anthropological accounts of what the Dreamtime actually is.

To understand Aboriginal culture, you have to experience it first hand. Nevertheless, anthropologists have this luxury, so why is the conveyance of their understanding of the Dreamtime limiting? First, the anthropologist has been taught to learn, assess, and process information a specific way, and is quite capable of recording information that is revealed to him. However, he is an outsider with an outside perspective, and therefore it may be difficult for him to make the conceptual leap to view the world as the Aboriginal does. As Bill Niedje might say, he doesn’t allow himself to ‘feel’ the reality of the Dreamtime. The second explanation is that the anthropologist can experience the world as an Aboriginal does, but in order for his explanations to have validity within Western society he must record factual
evidence, not speculation about what he might have experienced. Therefore, all that gets translated is the facts.

Since the Dreamtime plays a role in every aspect of life for Aborigines, it is a notion that has been reflected upon for some time. It is true that the Dreamtime has laid down rules, the Law, for the Aboriginal way of life, but it is more complicated than that.

The Dreamtime is not where you go in your dreams, it is not a dream world or fantasy place, and it is not that Law comes from dreams. The Dreamtime, consequently, has nothing to do with time; Aborigines cannot even grasp the concept of time, in a Western sense, so the name is misleading. Furthermore, Aborigines do not associate the Dreamtime with events that took place in the past, they are living between two realities which are split between what Westerners would consider reality, and the Dreamtime. As Aboriginal elder Bill Niedje states, “These creatures, these great creatures are just as alive today as they were in the beginning. They are everlasting and will never die. They are always part of the land and nature as we are. Our connection to all things natural is spiritual” (Niedje, Kakadu 11).

Although the Aboriginal information is pertinent to give a fuller picture of the anthropologist’s understanding of the Dreamtime, the reciprocal relationship between the two perspectives is just as important. The Aboriginal perspective provides an excellent assessment of their relationship to the environment, however, it is often difficult to understand. At times, translation by the anthropologist aids in the materials comprehension. In the above paragraph I state that Aborigines are living in a world split between reality and the Dreamtime. The Dreamtime reality of Aborigines is directly associated with ‘place’, and through the perspective of the anthropologist, I have learned that Aborigines are bound physically and spiritually to ‘place’ (see anthropologist section- description of ones ‘own country’).

Without this knowledge, it would have been impossible for me to comprehend the statement made by Bill Niedje pertaining to why the Aboriginal can not be separated from their environment; “Man can’t split himself” (Niedje, Kakadu 38). Living in two realities, if the Aboriginal’s land was destroyed or he was
relocated, he would lose half his self. In this case, clarification of the Aboriginal’s statement comes out of the perspective of the anthropologist.

A final application of this holistic method of analysis is found in a comparison of an archaeologist’s and an Aboriginal’s discussions about fire usage. In one part of the Aboriginal perspective, the tribal elder Bill Niedje comments on the importance of fire. “Fire is nothing, just clean up” (Niedje, Kakadu 36). In this case, the information in the Aboriginal perspective was found to be confusing and difficult to understand. However, viewing it in association with the knowledge gained from the perspective of the archaeologist, I found a mechanism to make sense out of what was being conveyed; it is stated in a way that is more comprehensible to one used to a Western thought process. “Without such regular burning, forest litter accumulates at a fast rate, this litter accumulation leads to disastrous wild fires” (Flood 214).

Examples of this type of ‘perspective piggybacking’ are used throughout the research, and as is seen in the journal analysis section, being able to comprehend the Aboriginal’s perspective is vital for a Westerner to understand the Aboriginal’s relationship to the environment.

SUMMARY

To conclude this section, a review of the findings is necessary. The last perspective researched, the revisititation of the journal, allowed me to distinguish between the two different types of thought processes found within Western and the Aboriginal society. This enlightenment allowed me the means to assess the two different types of findings of the journal. These directly correlate to the shift in attitude thinking that I experienced while walking the Songline (Western thought process vs. Aboriginal thought process). This analysis attests to the strength of experiential learning.

Furthermore, distinguishing between the different thought processes of the Westerner and the Aboriginal allowed me to go back, reassess the perspectives, and come to some interesting conclusions. Through all of the perspectives I was able to extract important information about the Aborigines relationship to the environment, however, each has its limitations. Acknowledging the difference in the
two ‘types’ of perspectives has allowed me the means to view them in a more holistic manner and understand the results. When viewed in this holistic manner, a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of the Aboriginal/environmental relationship is achieved.
THESIS CONCLUSIONS...

There are many interesting findings made during this research. In particular, a much broader and deeper understanding of the relationship of the Australian Aboriginal to his environment has been achieved.

This chapter has been divided into two parts, the findings of the study, Part I, and the implications of the study, Part II.

* * *

PART I: STUDY FINDINGS

Part I is divided into two sections, findings that come directly out of the research, Section One, and findings that come out of my enhanced understanding on a personal level, Section Two.

Section One: Findings That Come Directly Out Of The Research.

Within this section, I discuss how my understanding of the Aborigines relationship to the environment has been developed through this research. When discussing these findings, a comparison of the differences between Aboriginal and Western environmental relationships has, at times, proved useful.

The first finding to be discussed is the Aboriginal notion that land is Law. As seen in the Aboriginal perspective, stories are verbal maps, and an Aboriginal verbal map 'tells' the environment through the deeds of the Dreamtime Ancestors. As stated by Eliade:

The mythological era... is regarded as setting precedent for all human behavior from that time on. It was a period when patterns of living were established, and laws laid down for human beings to follow. Everything which fully exists - a mountain, a water place, an
institution, a custom, is acknowledged as real, valid, and meaningful; because it came into being in the beginning. (Eliade 43)

The point here is that Law comes from an external source, rather than from within the individual, such as is the case within Western culture. This is further validated by Fred Meyer’s statement:

What the Pintupi, an Aboriginal tribe of the Central Desert region, mean by ‘Law’ is clearly expressed by them as an external rule or pattern to which they must conform. That is, ‘it is not our idea, it is a big Law’. Law is experienced as external, as not coming from within the self; it is not arbitrary or motivated by self interests. (548)

Therefore, the Law sets up the framework for a society which is completely selfless. As seen through an archaeologist’s perspective, the Aboriginal’s surroundings provide all the necessities of life (food, water, supplies to make tools, etc.), and as stated above, the land is not property but Law, there is no need or desire to horde material things or acquire more land. On the contrary, an Aboriginal might say that they are busy enough taking care of ‘ones own country’. (See discussion of ‘ones own country’ within anthropologist perspective.) Dirkhemn once wrote about Aboriginal culture: “society is primary, the individual secondary.” I feel this statement is only partially correct, it is more accurate to say the responsibility to uphold the Law is primary, society and the individual is secondary. The Aborigines view of their place in the universe continues this idea.

Within Western society, man views himself as having sovereignty over the earth. “In a human centered cosmos non-human life is thought to serve, or to be susceptible of being made to serve, human interests” (Rose 219). The Aboriginal’s view of himself is quite the opposite. Deborah Rose states, “We are not different from other species by having an intelligence or culture which they lack; we are different in that our culture, like our shape, is different from theirs” (Rose 45). Aborigines may view their ‘own country’ as a center, but they are conscious of the fact that it is not the center of the universe, it is just one of many. All living things have a role to play in maintaining the natural order or balance of the world, no role is greater or lesser than another. All living beings have their own center and world view. That one’s own view may be most important to one’s own life does not mean that the world is focused on humans as a
species or on one country and Dreaming Ancestor over and above all others. An essential part of human culture is to know that other parts, or living beings, have their own views. Once one understands this concept, one can learn from any point of view. The trick is to know what one is encountering (Rose 221). Autonomous countries were set up in the Dreaming, and that is how they remain when all is well.

This leads into the next finding, the importance of maintaining the natural balance and order in the world. To an Aboriginal, all things of the earth and on the earth are joined together in a web of interconnectedness, and when all of life performs their role as established in the Dreamtime, all is in balance. Scientific thinking within Western culture, on the other hand, has allowed the world to be divided down into individual atoms.

The sacred has been made the profane-commercially trivialized, industries exploited, and scientifically atomized, reduced to matter, energy, and absurdity in the name of necessary progress and profit. Devoid of any mystery and numinosity, the Earth is no longer seen as the sacred mother of us all... Man changes the direction of evolution by changing the ecological inherence of diverse plant and animal species, by raising only those which have immediate use and profitable potential, and killing off the rest. (Lawlor 8)

To an Aboriginal, this way of life goes against the very essence of the Dreamtime.

“What we hear in the Dreaming stories is not so much about good and bad as it is about balance and order. Dreamings make mistakes but others right the balance so that mistakes do not accumulate to the point of being destructive” (Rose 103). It can not be stressed enough that the Aboriginal feels that all living things have a responsibility in adhering to the Law, which thus connects them all. Furthermore, it should be stressed that failure to adhere to the Law will cause the annihilation of the earth. “To disregard the Law would be to disregard the source of life and thus to allow the cosmos to fall apart” (Rose 57).

Although a radical concept, an Aboriginal would feel this explains the change that has taken place within Australia since the arrival of the first Europeans.

... a drastic loss of life support systems has been occurring at a vastly increasing pace... the topsoil is being eroded, river banks are badly degraded, the rivers are silting up. Many springs and billabongs have dried out; the plants that once grew there are gone, animals that depended on them have had to seek water elsewhere, putting more pressure on surviving species. (Rose 102)
With findings such as this one wonders why the philosophy of the Aborigines toward their environment is still seen as absurd to many within our own society.

Acceptance of the Aboriginal philosophy by Western society would also mean taking responsibility for environmental damage, thus, ignorance is innocence. However, I turn to the research for another possible explanation. After exploring the various perspectives, one notion makes itself seemingly clear, and that is how little Aboriginal society has changed, by Western standards of change, in the forty to seventy thousand years that they have inhabited the continent. Aboriginal society, however, is not a stagnant culture, many examples have been cited which show how much Aborigines have changed and progressed. Nevertheless, being from a culture whose rate of change is incomprehensible to Aborigines, and by comparison, is still in its infancy, they are perceived as a slowly progressing society.

Another finding that has come out of the data which has completely changed my perception of the Aborigines relationship to the land is that they were not as symbiotic as originally thought. The Aboriginal changed, and in some cases, drastically manipulated the environment. This is specifically seen in their use of fire and harvesting techniques, as shown in the archaeologist perspective. I was fascinated by this data because not only did I believe the Aboriginal to be in a harmonious balance with nature, but I could not see how the Dreamtime law and the idea of balance and order would allow such environmental manipulation.

In order to approach this question, one’s perception of harmony must be closely scrutinized. According to Webster’s Dictionary, harmony implies a balanced interrelationship between all parts. The Australian Aboriginal considers himself to be in a harmonious or balanced relationship with nature, therefore, the definition seems to fit. Returning to the question, how did the Aboriginal maintain this harmonious relationship when they caused such environmental alteration? After completing the research, several things became apparent.

The Law, as laid out during the Dreamtime, describes the role that all living things must perform in order to maintain the balance of the cosmos. To illustrate, fire will be used as an example. “When you
burn, new grass coming up. Burn him off... new grass coming up, new life all over... Grass can burn when e’s dry; well e’s no good. We got to burn because that King Brown (Dreamtime Ancestor), e made that fire’ (Niedje, Kakadu 35). The act of burning large tracts of land is performed because it is deemed necessary by the Law, the interpretation of the Dreamtime. What I believed to be destruction, Aborigines consider custodianship, and as explained in the quote above, what may look like short term destruction is actually long term preservation. Therefore, instead of being in opposition to the Law, the actions of Aborigines are in direct compliance with it. Hence, it may be more accurate to state that Aborigines are in a harmonious relationship with nature and all living things because they comply with the Law of the Dreamtime. The Aboriginal believes this system works because, when the land was truly healthy, pre-European contact, all of their actions are counteracted by another being’s actions. Again, this is true as long as the action is an adherence of the Law, such as in the firing of the country. "Human actions, too, are being interpreted and made meaningful by other parts of the cosmos. Just as other beings actions elicit a response from human beings, so also human actions elicit responses from other beings. People say this most explicitly: ‘country and other species are watching us, and responding’” (Rose 228). Thus, all is in balance.

Section Two: Findings That Come Out Of My Own Personal Enlightenment.

The most significant finding after researching the various perspectives, was recognizing and understanding the change in attitudes and perceptions that took place within myself as I walked along the Songline. Subsequently, this allowed a more comprehensive understanding of the other perspectives, particularly the Aboriginal perspective. I started the walk with a very stereotypical Western mind frame, and ended it beginning to view the land as an Aboriginal might. I learned to see from a different perspective. A fundamental part of the philosophy of Aboriginal culture is being able to see from another’s perspective. “Our particular human angle defines our world because it is we who are looking. Perception distorts, but wisdom lies in knowing that distortion is not understanding” (Rose 222). This goes beyond
humans, it is imperative to be able to see from the perspective of any being, and in doing so one may realize how all are connected.

Hence, what I learned to do along the walk is to open myself up to the possibilities of other realities. To give an example, I will review a journal entry. “We came to the white cliffs today, which are the body of the meta-physical snake.” As is apparent by my writing style, by the time I entered this statement I had stepped viewing a particular land form as just a land form, and began to also see it as an Aboriginal might, as the meta-physical manifestation of the dominant Dreaming ancestor of this particular region. I can only speculate why I began to make this transformation so for an explanation I turn to the Australian Aboriginal.

For the Aboriginal, the earth is as alive as any other being in the cosmos. It is alive with the spirits of one’s deceased ancestors as well as with the ancestors of the Dreamtime. To an Aboriginal, when one truly begins to experience a particular environment, there can be no doubt of this. Bill Niedje gives an explanation for this in the following statement,

No matter what it is, an animal, a rock, a star, etc., you can feel it with your feeling, and you know that it is somehow connected to you. Listen carefully, careful and this spirit he come in your feeling and you will feel it... I feel it... my body same as you. I telling you this because the land for us, never change round, never change. Places for us, earth for us, star, moon, tree, animal... all that animal same like us. Our friend that... This story e can listen careful and how you want to feel on your feeling. This story e coming though your body, e go right down foot and head, fingernail and blood... through the heart. And you can feel it because e’ll come right through you. (Niedje, Story 19)

Thus, I began to feel the land.

SUMMARY

To conclude, the difference between Western and Aboriginal culture’s relationship to the environment runs infinitely deep. To an Aboriginal; “The Earth is considered to be alive and constantly giving life, the mother of us all. The fact of one mother makes us all kin of a sort” (Rose 220). They are unconditionally connected to it. This connection can be seen on many different levels ranging from
physical and spiritual ties, to living and deceased relatives, and to the Dreamtime. Perhaps this can be seen most effectively in the anthropologist’s perspective under the section labeled ‘Own Country’, where the Aboriginal expresses sentimentality toward the land. With few exceptions, Western culture: “... denies a spiritual understanding of the workings of the earth. We have killed nature, replacing a female and organic conceptualization with one that is mechanical and dead” (Rose 187). Where the Aboriginal has chosen to cohere and coevolve with the Earth in a creative and harmonious way, the reality of the Dreamtime, Western man has not. As illustrated by Deborah Rose, social analyst, Gregory Bateson looks towards the prevailing world view of many religions for a possible explanation for this outlook.

If you put God outside and set him vis-à-vis his creation, and if you have the idea that you are created in his image, you logically and naturally see yourself outside and against the things around you. And as you arrogate all mind to yourself, you will see the world around you as mindless and therefore not entitled to moral and ethical consideration. The environment will be yours to exploit... (Rose 97)

For an Aboriginal, it is imperative that the balance within nature is maintained because the earth is their home before birth, during life, and after death. Thus, Aborigines people are ‘bounded’ to the earth. Many Western religions, on the other hand, assert that this world is not our true home. Upon death we enter heaven, another realm which is associated with Western people’s spiritual home and the creator of all being. Therefore, to destroy the ‘country’ of an Aboriginal would be comparable to destroying heaven for a Christian.
PART II: STUDY IMPLICATIONS

By now it is apparent that the Aboriginal cultural philosophy and relationship towards the environment is almost in direct contrast to Western philosophy. Therefore, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to directly incorporate a learned value or concept from their society to ours. However, it is not impossible to speculate on the meaning of these differences, and in doing so, acquire new insight or perspective into our own culture.

Part II of these conclusions are divided into two sections. Section One presents the major differences between Western and Aboriginal relationships toward their environments, and Section Two presents the importance and implications of these differences.

Section One: Major Differences Between Western and Aboriginal Relationships Toward Their Environments.

It seems that the Aboriginal has a much broader and deeper connection to his environment than we within Western culture may ever be able to achieve, but it is not out of the question to think that the relationship demonstrated in this thesis can be comprehended by one within our culture. In order to show what we may learn about our own relationship toward the environment, it is important to set up the necessary framework by stating some of the reasons why we can never view the environment as an Aboriginal does.

As mentioned in Part I, Section One of the conclusions, Aborigines view the Law as coming from an external source, the land; whereas we within Western society, view the Law as coming from within ourselves. Thus the Aboriginal sees the Law as a much more permanent entity which is not subject to change at the whim of the country’s next ruler. Under the Aboriginal system, there is no permanent ruler. “Their custom is to arrive at important decisions after long deliberation among themselves” (Massola 7). Although one may come forward to take the role of a leader in times of crisis, class
distinction primarily comes out of how well you know the stories of the Dreamtime Ancestors of your ‘own country’. The knowledge of country and environment adds to a person’s personal prestige as well as his social network” (Massola 58). Because of these facts, corruption of the system by one individual or group of individuals is not possible. Thus, Aborigines have been able maintain a much more consistent and stable social, economic, and environmental relationship within their society for tens of thousands of years. In America, we yet to achieve this type of relationship.

A second distinction between our two cultures is our differing notions of cultural continuity. The Aboriginal has successfully maintained cultural continuity and connection with their environment for forty to seventy thousand years. An example of this can be seen in the stories of the Dreamtime Ancestors that are associated with the land. As demonstrated by the archaeologist, these stories about the creation of environments and the time period associated with them are incredibly accurate. This leads one to believe that in order for these stories to be orally transferred from generation to generation, so precisely, a cultural continuity must have been maintained. As seen in the discussion of the ‘Ancient Environment’ within the journal perspective, part of the reason for this is the fact that the environment has changed so little in the past couple thousand millennia. Within areas dominated by Western culture, our environment has been so completely changed and altered by human intervention since the start of the industrial revolution that most of the environment would not be recognizable to an individual of one and fifty to two hundred years ago.

This idea of cultural continuity is continued when viewing our societies’ contrasting notions of permanence. Western society tries to find permanence in structures of their own creation, such as roads, buildings, or bridges. The Aboriginal, however, has found permanence in the natural surroundings of their environment, which were created during the Dreamtime.

In a country where every major topographic feature was endowed with mythological significance, it was not part of Aboriginal culture to build monuments such as megalithic tombs or pyramids... The places where Aboriginal people gather for great ceremonies are not marked by formal structures, the land is their cathedral. (Flood 240)
Their attitude towards manmade objects is further enforced by the following statement.

Most Aboriginal ceremonies left no material traces... the structures built for the ceremonies were... allowed to rot away naturally... The investment that had gone into making these structures had been made into the intellectual and not the material sphere of life. (Flood 243)

Another example to illustrate this cultural continuity is found in rock paintings, or more specifically, rock carvings. “Against the backdrop of what we would consider climactic duress, ....this culture left the most impressive artistic site known from the prehistoric era... The rock engravings are recognized as the oldest and most outstanding achievement of any hunter-gatherer society” (Lawlor 84-85). Thus, the cultural continuity of this society has allowed the Aboriginal to pass on generations of knowledge and experience about the workings of the natural systems within their environment that we could not begin to duplicate within our society.

A third reason why we within Western culture would not be able to achieve a similar relationship to the natural environment is seen in our differing perceptions of what happens to the soul upon death of the physical body. We of Western society view death as transcendence to another realm, which I will refer to as heaven. To an Aboriginal, death is also viewed as a transformation into another realm, but with a profound difference. This difference can be clarified with a brief review of the Dreamtime.

The Aboriginal views himself as living within two realities, one being the reality we of Western society are familiar with, the other being the Dreamtime. Both realities are places and both run parallel to one another. Thus, when Aborigines speak of their ‘country’, they are associating both realities with the same place. Upon death, an Aboriginal enters this other reality and remains within his country. Throughout the research I have cited examples in which Aborigines associate ‘country’ with deceased ancestors. Where we within Western culture do not view the Earth as our eternal home, the Aboriginal does. Therefore, if an Aboriginal’s ‘country’ is destroyed- what happens to his soul? Hence, it could be said that, for an Aboriginal, much more is at stake then merely their mortal lives in regard to the Earth’s preservation.
For a final reason why it is felt that we within Western society would not be able to achieve the same type of relationship as an Aboriginal regarding our relationship to the environment, I return to the journal discussion about the necessity of ‘experience in order to gain an understanding’. As mentioned in Part I, Section Two of the thesis conclusions, a change in my attitudes and perceptions began as I walked along the Aboriginal Songline. I began to perceive and experience the environment as an Aboriginal might, I began to listen to the story the Earth has to tell through ‘my feeling’. "No matter who is. E can feel it way I feel it in my feeling. You'll be same too... you will feel im because spirit e'll be with you" (Niedje, Story 115). Although I feel this type of attitude change within someone from Western society testifies to the strengths and beliefs of the Aborigines and their Law, I believe this experience could only have happened with the right conditions and circumstances, such as the Songline Walk. In any other place, with any other people, I might have passed it off as ‘my imagination’. Although I was privileged enough to have had this walk experience, it is not practical to think everyone within Western culture will be as fortunate.

Although Bill Niedje and other Aborigines give accurate accounts of this type of experience through their narratives, it is very difficult for someone used to a Western thought process to understand the meanings being conveyed. The reason can be found in the differentiation between the thought processes of each culture. A lot of what is conveyed in Bill Niedje’s discussion is that many of their thoughts are about feeling, whereas we, within Western culture, separate our thoughts and feelings. Not only does each culture relate to their environment differently, but each culture’s very thought processes are different. Thus, when viewed without the support of the other perspectives, I feel that the Aborigines' efforts to convey their intricate relationship to the environment are doomed to fail.

To further illustrate this concept, I turn back to the Songline Walk. It would have been interesting to assess how the journal would have progressed if I was on the walk for a month or more. For instance, realizing that the Aborigines view the environment from a completely different perspective than I was used to allowed me to develop some sense of how to interpret their view. I began to ‘feel’ the environment.
Would this phenomena, combining thoughts and feelings, or more accurately, perceiving the Aborigines’ environment as they do, have become so commonplace that I wouldn’t have deemed it necessary to record it in the journal? For example, would I have stopped making comments such as; “At one time stories such as this would have seemed like fiction to me, but after a couple of days in this country, that is no longer the case, there are too many coincidences.” Another possibility is that after a while the ‘magic’ would have dissipated. In other words, I would have regressed back to thinking about the environment the way I have been taught within Western culture and rationalizing that I must be imagining the change within myself, or one may say, within the environment.

Section Two: Implications of the Differences Discovered Between Western and Aboriginal Relationships Towards Their Environments.

Aboriginal cultural philosophies and relationships toward the environment are almost in direct contrast to Western society. Therefore, when these two societies attempt to coexist within the same geographic area there is an obvious land use clash as disparate values and philosophies converge.

This thesis provides a new way to look at the collision of disparate values and philosophies. As seen within the thesis conclusions Part I, Section One, coming to an understanding of the relationship that Aboriginal society has with their environment allows the opportunity to identify their values and land use philosophies. And, as seen in the thesis conclusions Part II, Section One, identification of these land use philosophies allows comparison to our own culture’s philosophies. Thus, before any decisions about land use are made, the assessment of a particular land use’s pros and cons, in consideration of both cultures, can be gained. Seeing from another perspective is also a very Aboriginal mentality.

It would be very difficult to make decisions regarding land use that would satisfactorily comply with the philosophies of the Aboriginal short of leaving the land in its natural state. Furthermore, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to come up with solutions to a problem such as this. Therefore, I have concentrated on possible alternatives and solutions to land use issues within Western society.
This section has been divided into two subsections. **Subsection One** will discuss the implications for Western society, and **Subsection Two** will discuss some specific implications for a landscape architect.

**Subsection One: Implications for Western Society.**

By analyzing the differences noted between Western and Aboriginal culture, we can sensitize and expose ourselves to the profound difficulties within land use issues we would not normally be aware of. This is witnessed when looking at the notion of cultural continuity between the two societies through our contrasting views of permanence. The Aboriginal has found permanence in the natural surroundings of his environment, and since his culture is bound up in these landscape features, which are seen as unchanging, he has been able to maintain a cultural continuity for over forty thousand years. Western man has found permanence in objects of his own creation, such as buildings and bridges, and similarly, his culture is bound up in such objects.

In reviewing these contrasting notions, we see a dilemma in our value system. Since our culture is bound up in man made creations, and we live in a society where these creations change at an ever increasing pace, it could be said that our cultural values are rapidly changing. If the rate of change within our society continues to increase, then the point may be reached when we no longer have cultural continuity. Without the familiarity of landmarks and traditions to bind people together, society begins to fall apart. Although the notion of an accelerated technology causing rapid changes in a society is a relatively recent phenomena, the idea of the lack of familiar landmarks and traditions to hold a society together is not. This can been seen in examples ranging from the downfall of the Roman Empire to the recently disbanded USSR. Both of these empires were originally a collection of disparate groups rather than single cultural entities. Since Western Society seems to be heading in the direction of becoming a collection of disparate groups, these examples are still applicable.

I am not suggesting that we immediately try to associate permanent landscape features with our own culture. It is being suggested, however, that we reassess the rapid development techniques of our
local environments. Although we may not be able to achieve the same type of cultural continuity that the Aboriginal has maintained for thousands of years, we may be able to salvage some of the rapidly disappearing objects or places that define our culture on a state and local level through connection to our past. Examples of these types of disappearing objects range from large expanses of natural areas within our nation to the small town general store. Another example that has come out of the study of Aboriginal culture helps describe how this task may begin to be achieved.

For an Aboriginal, the term ‘own country’ refers to the land that you belong to, not that belongs to you. However, more than one individual can belong to a country, and furthermore, this is encouraged. “The idea is that many people have rights to a place, and they are concerned that it is treated properly, and that they may be suspicious of what others do” (Meyers 411-412). Many problems within our society have been caused by individual ownership of property, and people being able to ‘do with the land as they please’. Much time and money is constantly being spent in the courts over this issue. It is not being suggested that all land should become communal and turned over to the public domain, as seen in Aboriginal society, their are strong individual ties to a particular place, ties that others could not possible have. On the contrary, I feel that if a particular environment is opened up to ‘just anyone’, such as a person who has no particular interest in maintaining it, the effects could be disastrous. A possible alternative might be that groups of individuals who have an invested interest in maintaining a particular environment could be allowed to do so. Not only would they learn to ‘think before they act’, but their actions would be constantly evaluated by the rest of the group. Therefore, land use decisions of a particular area could be turned over completely to the local inhabitants, such as the case within Aboriginal culture. An interesting observation of our own situation is that countries are allowed to go into other countries and exploit the resources for their own benefit with little or no compensation to the people who live there.

A final example of using Aboriginal culture to expose myself to an issue that I would not normally be aware of is found through direct experience in the Songline Walk. When an Aboriginal talks about a specific place, their ‘own country’, they do not distinguish between the physical and spiritual
landscape. Although two distinct realities, or places, they are inextricably intertwined. For one who does not have access to this knowledge, the significance of Aboriginal statements regarding the importance of their environment not only lose half their meaning, but are virtually incomprehensible. Through direct experience, even though I did not immediately comprehend its significance, this relationship was revealed to me. I had begun to understand the Aboriginal/environment relationship on an emotional level. After researching the various perspectives, an even greater understanding of this experience was gained. For example, I realized that an Aboriginal’s deceased ancestors reside in ‘country’. Upon death an Aboriginal’s soul resides in his ‘country’, they are bound to the Earth.

Reflecting back on my own culture’s view of the environment after this experience has made me aware of several things. For one, we view the Earth as “mechanical and dead... we deny a spiritual understanding of the workings of the Earth” (Rose 187). This allows us to exploit the earth’s resources without a conscience. This attitude is again seen when reflecting on the transcendence of the soul upon death. Because we do not view the Earth as our eternal home, its preservation is not viewed as integral to life as it is to the Aboriginal.

This awareness allows the possibility of re-evaluating our attitudes. I am not suggesting that all religions of the world begin to view the Earth as an eternal home, but being conscious of the spiritual potential within nature, something that all indigenous cultures of the world do, may help us reconnect with the natural environment.

Subsection Two: Specific implications for a landscape architect.

The most specific implications of this analysis can be seen when applied to the field of landscape architecture. These are seen in the form of land use and design decisions.

I have broken Subsection Three into two parts. Part One discusses implications that come directly out of the methodology, and Part Two discusses implications that come directly out of the analysis.
of the research material. Within Part Two I discuss the value of unbuilt land, the notion of many town centers, private ownership versus communal land usage, and several environmental issues.

**Part One: Implications for a landscape architect that come out of the methodology.**

Learning to see from the perspective of a culture so drastically different than our own allows us the opportunity to apply the findings, in the form of scenarios or case studies, to other cultures where the differences aren't so great.

For example, by the end of day four on the hike along the Aboriginal Songline I had learned to respect the Aboriginal cultural values without gaining a complete comprehension of them. This shift in thinking can be seen through the hesitancy in which I approach a sand dune which contained artifacts of their ancestors, and how I did not even consider removing any off the site. I had learned that what may not be important to me may be extremely important to members of this other culture.

As a landscape architect, it is conceivable that I could be part of a team making land use decisions for a town, city or region. After this study I would be very hesitant to go into a local community and tear down the 'Mom and Pop' general store for a more efficient strip mall. Although it may be argued that the general store is inefficient and 'out of the way', it may have a significance to the local residents that is invisible to the outsider. For example, it may be seen as a place where local gatherings occur, where people meet to converse. It may be familiar and comfortable, a part of their lifestyle. Tearing a cultural marker down such as this and constructing a building that has no symbolic connection to the people inevitably causes its cultural failure. This is often witnessed in vandalism and other crimes in our society. 'More efficient' does not always imply 'better', cultural values must become a major factor in the land use decision making process.

The question may next be raised: how does an outsider learn what values, landmarks, or gathering places are important to a specific culture? Instead of using just one avenue of research, such as questionnaires, many can be used. These could include researching the towns historical or ecological
significance and community board meetings. Although questionnaires may have been a popular method of information gathering in the past, they are limiting. Questionnaires only represent the portion of the population that you choose to send them to and who choose to answer. Furthermore, by choosing the questions to ask you are already asserting your influence on the outcome of the design. The idea of questionnaires should not be completely abandoned, but taken in conjunction with several other methods of information gathering, a much deeper understanding of the complexity of any individual community is better understood. For an example of this rational, I turn to a case study close to my hometown of Brielle, New Jersey.

Like many other coastal towns, Manasquan, New Jersey, has for years been collapsing under the pressure of development. Today the town is constantly battling problems such as pollution of the seas, overcrowding and beach erosion.

'The Cove', a stretch of virgin wetland which for years escaped this modernization process, had recently come under the threat of development by an outside company. Buying the land from private ownership, the American Timber Company had plans to turn this four hundred acre stretch of wetland into condominiums. What they failed to realize, or ignored, was that this tract of land held a strong sentimental attachment by the town residents. What followed was a six year war to stop development and leave the Cove in its natural state.

The Cove was originally seen by its residents as an oasis from the rapid changes taking place within their community. However, six years of research and education to find an angle to protect this spot uncovered many interesting facts that many locals who had lived their all their lives did not realize. Scientists had discovered that the Cove was a stopover for a rare migratory bird. If this wetland was destroyed or altered, this endangered bird would be in great peril. Also, the Cove was known by oceanographers at the Sandy Hook marine laboratory to be invaluable for taking up excess runoff from heavy storms as well as unusual high tides. If the American Timber Company had been successful in their development plans, the town of Manasquan’s already problematic flooding situation would have increased
teafold. Furthermore, the county’s local historic society identified the Cove as being the landing spot for the first Dutch settlers to the area in the late 1600’s. They further portrayed it as a place shrouded in mystery, being a regular stopover and hiding place for pirating ventures at an even earlier date. As with many pirating legends, there is said to be long forgotten buried treasures deep within the recesses of the Cove.

The renewed interest in the Cove brought all of this information to the public’s attention. This holistic approach added a new level of depth into the townsfolk’s sentimental attachment that went past aesthetics. An even stronger bond or sense of place was forged.

By failing to thoroughly research the town’s attitude toward this place before planning to alter it, the American Timber Company hindered their own plans. And by fighting to preserve this tract of land the townspeople gained a stronger attachment to this place, as well as a more complex and richer understanding of its environmental (or ecological) value.

The above example not only adds further validity to this holistic method of analysis, but also provides a bridging mechanism to compare both Western and Aboriginal culture’s sentimental attachments to their environments. Both show that the deeper understanding an individual has of their environment, the stronger their attachment, and the greater the desire for its preservation. This deeper understanding comes from observation and education from others within the community. The experience of the townspeople of Manasquan could be used as an example for other towns to approach such environmental issues.

**Part Two: Implications for a landscape architect that come directly out of the analysis of the research material.**

Researching the Australian Aboriginal’s relationship to his environment has sensitized me to many issues, one of the most influential being the value of allowing the environment to remain in an unbuilt state. A key insight to note is that unbuilt does not mean left alone. Aborigines often alter their
environment when used for hunting, gathering or ceremonial purposes, but they must first receive the proper education so their actions do not go unchecked.

The most influential thought within Western culture today is that to alter a natural environment for human use is to develop the land for a profit making venture. It is true that the growing populations of Western society demand greater land areas, but the land is not being used wisely or efficiently. Western culture has been generally educated to think in terms of numbers and profit, but there is another side to human nature that has been woefully neglected. This is the side of human nature that thrives on spirituality, recreation and play. Modern town planning commissions and design teams need to take this into account when coming up with land alteration decisions.

In traditional Aboriginal society, one’s local environments is seen not as the center, but as one of many centers. This is important to note, what may be very important or meaningful to them, may not have any meaning to another, and vice versa. The conditions are set up for Aborigines to have more tolerance for that which they don’t understand.

As a landscape architect, taking this notion into account in design decisions can be seen as useful on many levels. Many towns have been designed or planned over the years which have a traditional town center. In the past, this town center may have been adequate to meet the community’s needs, but today many are failing. Increasing numbers of people within diverse age groups and with different cultural backgrounds occupying a common area are rendering the singular town center obsolete. Landscape architects and other design professionals have attempted to solve this problem by creating town centers that will accommodate all. These types of centers often prove to be overwhelming and confusing and end up satisfying none. What designers might consider is a community with several town centers which accommodate distinct user groups. By separating centers for different user and cultural groups, competition to occupy the same area is reduced and tension as well as vandalism may be diminished.

To further illustrate this idea I will turn to St. Kilda, Australia, a suburb outside the city of Melbourne. Although small, the town of St. Kilda successfully accommodates a diversity of people
including the elderly, young children, the physically active, and the avid partier. To understand how this is accomplished, a brief description of the town is necessary.

St. Kilda borders Port Melbourne, one of the largest and most important ports in Australia. The land directly along the port’s coast belongs to the town, and is now maintained as a strip of greenspace or park land much like the lakeside of Chicago. Facing the port, and running perpendicular and parallel, is the business community. This consists of clubs, restaurants, bookstores, a few second story apartments, and shops which sell a variety of merchandise. Behind the business community is the largest percentage of residences.

What makes this town unique is that each of these areas acts as a separate center, accommodating different portions of the population. For example, the residences behind the town are where the well established members of the community live. A particular feature of this neighborhood is a large plot of land directly in its center which is reserved for young children and pre-teens. This area is known as the ‘Adventure Playground’. This area includes tree houses, non-working cars, basketball courts, mud hills, and a children’s garden. Here the children are free to play and create as they wish. The area is always supervised by volunteers of the community, and everyone with a child takes a turn.

The business center is also unique, for it accommodates several distinct user groups, but at different times. During the day and early evening it is filled with shoppers and diners, while at night a different crowd assumes control. These young adults and other avid partiers, most of whom who live in apartments above the stores, enjoy a healthy night life. An interesting observation is that although the night life in this town seems to thrive seven days a week, there never seems to be conflict between the different user groups.

The greenstrip along the port is connected by a walkway that continues into other suburbs. This space is used by individuals out for a stroll as well as bikers and rollerbladers. Furthermore, the greenstrip is subdivided by a combination of trees and other vegetation to accommodate different user groups. For example, there is an area that is more heavily shaded and contains an unusual amount of benches and
tables, some with checkerboards painted on the top, where many older people are frequently seen. There is an area of beach front where sun worshippers bathe. Another for teens to hang out and play more controlled sports such as soccer, Australian rules football, and cricket. And finally, being an area with many kiting enthusiasts, several acres of widely open land is reserved on the weekends for just that. It is quite a site to be strolling along the walk on a Saturday afternoon and see hundreds of multi-colored kites filling the skies.

Finally, the road between the greenstrip and the business center is closed to automobiles on Sundays and is used as a flea market. This weekly event seems to attract both young and old people and supplies a diversity of merchandise. All of these different sections of St. Kilda can be viewed as different town centers, accommodating the needs of different sub-cultures within the community.

This notion can be taken one step further when viewing the homeless population of St. Kilda. The first thing I noticed upon arriving in town was the large number of Aborigines sitting around in one particular plot of land directly across from the business center. I could not understand what they were doing hanging out there all day long. I came to learn that this spot was considered a sacred site and they refused to leave and relocate elsewhere. After weeks of observation I realized that the Aborigines actually left at times and others took their places. There was also much laughing, fooling around, talking and drinking going on at this spot. It started to look less like a slum where the rogues of society hung out and more like a gathering place or center for another distinct cultural group. The townspeople accept this center as the Aborigines' and leave them alone.

There are several interesting things to note that come out of this study of St. Kilda. For one, besides the business center, none of the other centers promise or display any degree of permanence in their design. In other words, if the needs of the community should change over the years, these town centers could also be altered accordingly. Furthermore, many of these centers accommodate a variety of user groups throughout different times of the day or week. Finally, by each user group having their own center, the need to takeover or disrupt another's center has been diminished. As in Aboriginal culture, a tolerance
for another’s needs has been established. This situation is exemplified by the tolerance the locals have for the ‘homeless’ Aborigines.

This case study is a good example of many different user groups successfully occupying a small area. Although the user groups would not be the same in every community or town, the concept can still be applied. Many town centers which accommodate a larger range of people are inevitably more successful than a singular one.

For the Aboriginal, a site or sacred site is a place of great importance. It is where one can go to be closer to the deceased or to the Dreaming Ancestors. It is a spot to be preserved for the good of mankind. Therefore, although cared for by select members who know the rituals of a specific place, the preservation of a site is considered a communal concern. Furthermore, sites of specific tribes overlap and are shared.

Within Western society, the definition of a site has come to stand for a privately owned tract of land. The land is owned by individuals for the good of the individuals, not the local inhabitants. This case has even been taken to extreme cases of absurdity. For example, many land owners will not allow others to walk across their property, or even look at it, constructing elaborate walls or fencing systems to keep potential trespassers at bay. As a landscape architect, I feel it should be a goal of the profession to educate the public, through design, about communal concerns when making land use decisions.

One method to accomplish this is through increased incorporation of communal areas within towns or cities. Communal areas can encompass anything from community activity centers to ideas such as the adventure playground in St. Kilda. However, there are many more subtle examples of communal space that can be incorporated into communities. Perhaps the most obvious can be found in the case of the private property owner. I once again turn to the shore of New Jersey.

Close to my hometown of Brielle are the sister towns of Sea Girt and Spring Lake, both are well known for their beautiful neighborhoods and streets. Locals, as well as tourists, often spend hours wandering the tree-lined streets and observing the interesting landscape features. What makes these towns unique is that their designs cater to the needs of the public. For example, many of the streets are divided
roads with a median strip that has been given over to the public by a protected walk down its center. From here, many enjoy a stroll down these lazy streets and take in some of the unique views of the neighborhood houses. There are also benches and other gathering places within the town where people congregate to meet and converse.

Although well-to-do towns, the privately owned properties are not enclosed or fortress like, but are open and inviting. The townspeople are proud of their residences and their heritage, and are more than willing to share it in this manner with others. Privately owned property has become public on the level of sight. Furthermore, the sightseers and others using the public domain give these neighborhoods a livelihood they otherwise would not have.

Another example of communal sharing of privately own space can be found at the local florist in the business center of the town of Brielle, New Jersey. Outside the store, there is a little garden for people to wander through or relax in when taking a break from shopping at this otherwise boring little strip mall. This garden, which has been given over to the public domain, increases the popularity and value of this mall. For this reason, it has recently been expanded and all of the shop owners take a part in caring for it. Even more amazing, there are free flowers and plants for people to take daily. When inquiring about this, the floral owner told me that the merchandise was either old or not selling quality and would be thrown out anyway. Instead of hurting business, she feels it has actually helped by being a form of free advertising. Efforts such as this, which help overlap the public and private domain, can enhance the quality of life for all involved.

Recently I was driving through a small farming neighborhood and noticed a peculiar sight. People seemed to be trespassing on a farmers land and taking pumpkins. Upon further investigation I discovered that the owner, a retired farmer, had received a tax break on his land to let the local community pitch in and grow a specific crop and use them at their will. The residents put in as much time as they could in caring for this property, and all got a share of the goods. A sense of worth had been gained by everybody in the community, and a local pride was achieved through their endeavors. Furthermore the
farmer, who was too old to care for the land on his own and had been struggling to keep it out of the hands of developers, had found a way to contribute to the community as well as preserve that which was important to him. Public domain has successfully overlapped into the private realm for the benefit of all concerned.

Studies like the ones above can be used as examples for landscape architects and other town planners. Good design should not only include spaces to work and play in, but they should also include communal areas that the residents can take pride in preserving.

Another implication that can have value for the ecologically minded landscape architect has to do with our two cultures' different definitions of the word boundary. To an Aboriginal, the few boundaries that they acknowledge were set up by natural laws, such as a stream or mountain. To one of Western society, boundaries are set up by roads, fences, and divisions between public and private domain. These man made boundaries disregard the natural environment, which not only disconnects us with nature, but in many cases are the cause of our own demise. “Of all the design professions, landscape architecture has the greatest ability to fit human constructions into the natural environment” (Havlick 37). Following the example of the Australian Aboriginal, a strong argument can be made why human constructions should start fitting more harmoniously into the natural environment. This is demonstrated below.

In recent years a large number of natural disasters have occurred within human communities. These include earthquake damage from building on fault lines, water damage from building in flood zones and other ephemeral landscapes, and mudslides from building in areas of unstable soil. People are not attuned to the natural environment and the damage it can cause if its warning is not heeded, so they continue to build in these areas. For example: “In the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo, ninety percent of the homes destroyed were rebuilt in exactly the same spot. It is not the frequency of such events that has increased, but the sprawl of urbanization into such hazard prone areas. The loss of lives and property will continue to increase unless landscape architects intervene” (Havlick 37). The best solution to problems such as these is obvious, not to build in such hazard prone areas, and to relocate already built communities.
to safer ground. Areas such as flood zones and fault lines should be considered off limits to development, places where nature is allowed to run its course. These areas do not have to become places of disuse, for they can be reserved for wildlife habitats and recreational areas. The long-term cost savings of keeping development off flood plains and away from active faults and avalanche chutes is well documented. Where this is not an option, creative design solutions can be employed.

In Boulder, Colorado, the regional flood-control district has waved property owners who employ landscape design ingenuity to retain runoff, such as berms, contouring and cisterns, from paying an annual flood assessment (Havlick 38). The theory being, if you do not contribute to the regional runoff or flood discharge, you should not have to pay the cost for the measures that have to be taken to protect others downstream. This is a very progressive and exciting idea that can be applied to other natural disaster areas. If you practice conservation measures on a local level, a difference can be made at larger level; another very Aboriginal mentality. Furthermore, immediate results are realized by people being rewarded for their efforts.

A different type of advantage that comes out of the utilization of natural boundaries is found when looking at the state of Florida.

Florida is a state that has turned its policies on environmental management around and is now considered a national leader in environmental legislation. Its progressive water-management strategy is a good example of this. “The state’s five water management districts are organized around hydrological basins and are charged with managing water resources with hydrological rather than political boundaries. In other words, natural systems are used to delineate water management districts” (Cavanaugh 48). Here, a conscious recognition of the importance of a natural boundary and the role it plays for the people of the state of Florida is witnessed. Furthermore, by using hydrological basins rather than political reasons to choose water management districts, a stronger connection between the people and this important resource has been forged. Becoming closer to the natural environment in a manner such as this makes the people more aware of what is happening with their resources, which makes them more apt to protect them.
SUMMARY

The above studies are connections noticed between the research on the Aboriginal’s relationship to his environment and happenings taking place within local environments in Western society. These have or could be adopted within modern landscape architectural practices. These implications are just a start, for the culture of the Australian Anoriginal, like many indigenous societies, has much to offer to those who are willing to listen and learn.
LITERATURE CITED


VITA

Scott C. Wainwright was born in Neptune, New Jersey on July 27, 1969. He received his Bachelor of Arts in History from Muhlenberg College. He is currently pursuing his masters degree in Landscape Architecture at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.