



**VICTORIA UNIVERSITY**  
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

*An Indigenous Conversation: Arful Ethnography: A Pre-Colonised Collaborative Research Method?*

This is the Accepted version of the following publication

McKenna, Tarquam and Woods, Davina (2012) An Indigenous Conversation: Arful Ethnography: A Pre-Colonised Collaborative Research Method? *Creative Approaches to Research*, 5 (3). pp. 75-88. ISSN 1835-9442

The publisher's official version can be found at  
<http://www.aqr.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Creative-Approaches-to-Research-Vol5-No3.pdf>

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## **An Indigenous Conversation - Artful Autoethnography - A Pre-colonized Collaborative Research Method?**

By

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### **Key words**

Artful Auto-ethnography  
Auto-ethnography  
Artful Inquiry  
Indigenous knowing  
Politicised knowing  
Artful Praxis

### **Author biographical notes**

Dr Tarquam McKenna is an Associate Professor at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia. He has been active as an Arts Psychotherapist for twenty years and edits the international Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art Therapy (ANZJAT). He is past president and an honorary life member of ANZATA - the Australian and New Zealand Art Therapy Association. He is keenly interested in research methods and especially its applicability to indigenous stories. Tarquam has created and performed playback theater, and has published widely in the area of gender and sexuality. He is a founding member of the Asia Critical Ensemble, which examines social justice and the legacies of Paulo Freire in particular, and how colonization has impacted on multiple lives around the world.

Davina B. Woods, an Indigenous Australian, is a lecturer and PhD candidate in the School of Education at Victoria University. The beginning of the 2011 academic year saw the first offering of a humanities unit written by Davina for the second year Bachelor of Education students at Victoria University. The unit, titled *Re-Thinking Australian Studies*, has as one of its main objects, to contribute to the paradigm shift regarding attitudinal and behavioural decolonization discussed in this paper.

## Abstract

In an earlier chapter McKenna addresses theater research—‘Layers of Meaning Research and Playback Theater—A Soulful Construct’ as an exploration into the valuing of what might have been called a ‘personal’ conversation into research, and especially into research using the Arts. In that chapter an examination of research as “transformative”, and most effective when it had achieved some level of knowing, was conducted. Of particular interest was the tacit permission given for researchers to see the stories of their co-participants as an inquiry both ‘in action’ and ‘through action’. This chapter contends that artful practice as research, must always attend to what has been called ‘interiority’; yet it moves beyond interiority and soulful research. Although soulful research is still needed to realize the value of the inner world and of the matters being researched, here, in the realm of the ‘outside’ world—that world where the artful practice occurs—must now become more known to the researcher. This chapter is a conversation and documents the benefits of “artful autoethnography”; it advances discussion of the uses of autoethnography using art in formulating, evaluating and synthesizing the field of research, especially to ‘decolonize’ indigenous peoples around the world. The authors consider the development of autoethnography, and conduct and report on artful autoethnography as an emerging research practice. They consider the critical issues of identity for indigenous peoples worldwide and ask the reader to enter into a conversation around how the subjective inner world of interiority and the objective outer world of ‘space, place and time’ intersect at points ripe for potential research. The authors emphasize that the model of artful research presented here always occupies a *politicized* space and place—across time—and must consequently work with an emphasis on its being *shared*; on a collective collaboration towards research as artful meaning making.

# Introduction

In this paper, which is a read ‘conversation’, the intention is to take the reader into the life worlds of its two author-researchers. An academic–Tarquam McKenna–and his colleague, an Australian Indigenous woman–Davina Woods–set about ‘yarning’<sup>1</sup> around art and its role as a vehicle for (re)searching their lives. Never far from their thoughts was the 26 May, 1997, release of the Human Rights Equal Opportunity Commission’s (HREOC) report, *Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, which included mandated recommendations to the colonising Australian people. One of these recommendations was that the Commonwealth and State Governments of Australia say ‘sorry’ for the centuries of shameful and traumatising violations of human rights to which the Indigenous peoples of Australia had been subjected.

It took changes in Commonwealth Government leadership and over a decade of vacillation before the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd stated on the 13 February, 2008, that:

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

And the sky did not fall down.

## The Conversation

### Tarquam:

In *Gathering Voices Essays on Playback Theater* (Fox, 1999) I wrote a short essay in which I somewhat naively set out to qualify the nature of dramatic action, and especially theater, as a vehicle for research. It was inspired by my work with Jonathan Fox, one of the founders of Playback Theater in USA and with a colleague from Australia, Professor John Carroll (Carroll, 1995). The key elements of ‘transformation’ that are at the centre of that 1990s article and its title, “Layers of Meaning Research and Playback Theater–A Soulful Construct”, still hold relevance and meaning for me as a researcher (Conti, Counter & Paul, 1991). I’d like to reflect here on working within a model of socially just inquiry that focuses on Indigenous communities. We are eager to ‘push the boundaries’ a little on the manner in which research can occur at the intersection of what are termed *artful practice*, *ethnography* and *auto-ethnography*. These three research modes are explored as a ‘model’ and have deliberately been written about as a ‘provocation’.

Whilst we attend to the notion of research as having a sense of interiority, something which I have noted occasionally elsewhere (McKenna, 1992, 1992a 1993, 1993a, 1993b 1993c, 1997), we wish to simultaneously draw particular attention to the work of the paratherapeutic arts, as they have become known. This work encompasses the notions that *all art forms energize*

*and, to be art that matters, are socially just in their capacity for transformation.* This conversation is built on our belief that the arts are now more often used in such a way that they are automatically aligned with ‘healing’ or ‘wholeness’ but that this need *not* always be delivered by an Arts Psychotherapist.

I am qualified and registered as an Arts Psychotherapist and my most recent work has been mainly focused on the use of the creative arts in a paratherapeutic sense to decolonise Indigenous peoples and validate their models of knowing. Davina Woods is a Kuku-Yalanji and Kuku-Djungan woman from the Atherton Tablelands, Queensland, Australia and I am, and my mother’s family are, from Tasmania.

The study of arts and creativity has been my lifelong passion and the work present here has developed over many years. It came about when I supervised women drama therapists and arts psychotherapists (Brooke, 2006) in training for their MA in Art Therapy or Drama Therapy - and when I worked with storytelling theater in Darwin Australia in 2001.

Since writing “Layers of Meaning Research and Playback Theater—A Soulful Construct” in 1999, I have continued to work with women who identify as Indigenous, and have had many moments of discussion or ‘yarning’ with them; strands of these conversations are woven through this chapter. This ‘yarning’ is a style of first-person reflection used by many Indigenous communities and is examined in part in this chapter. Davina and I also used the process as the basis of a paper we co-presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia Pacific Rim Counselling Conference in Hong Kong in June of 2011. That paper is published with a focus on psychotherapies, an alignment that will be alluded to but not fully examined here.

**Davina:**

What we hold to is the tenet that when we are ‘yarning’ we are engaged in a quality of encounter that sets out to explain, explore, and open up the quality and style of our engagement. Ideally, the metaphoric yarn weaves the fabric of researcher’s understanding, and the community he or she is in, as a collaborative heuristic-like experience (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985). The insights gained into the world and our life views by using yarning can be employed to attend to trivial or profound matters. But these matters are always imbued with the social, cultural, or historical legacy in which the yarn is taking place. Attention to the yarn is a form of social and self-dialogical encounter (Moir-Bussy, 2011) which I contend occur simultaneously. Yarning, for Tarquam and I was not concerned with the quality of ‘encounter’ espoused by Buber (1973) or Grotowski (1991), but it does have a clear goal of making known that which is meaningful alongside the *artful and spiritual realms*.

**Tarquam:**

When we ‘yarn’ and concurrently co-create artworks I believe we are engaged in a process that we, as researchers, should be calling *artful auto-ethnography*. I would like here to advance discussion of the uses of auto-ethnography employing the arts to formulate, evaluate and synthesize the field of inquiry. As a researcher, I am very eager to see both theater and the visual arts (especially in Australia where Indigenous people were decolonized) employed to redress the inequities put upon first nations by the white invaders.

**Davina:**

We can also use art making and this artful auto-ethnographic method to *celebrate* the Indigenous peoples of the world, of course, but here it is being espoused *as a method of inquiry to critique negative experiences encountered in Indigenous communities world wide*. The arts have always been a vehicle for communication of meaning and are known ‘naturally’ in many parts of the Indigenous world. Art is a meaning making that is implicit in the daily life of most Indigenous communities. Artful ethnography, then, is an emerging research practice that I think we should use here as a model of inquiry as we deliberate on creative arts praxis and the critical issues of identity lived out through the worlds of Indigenous peoples.

**Tarquam:**

Davina and I also presented at “Healing our Spirit Worldwide–HOSW” in Hawaii in 2010, using art making workshops to develop narratives and stories, and to celebrate the lifeworlds of the Indigenous women and men there. I would like here to present the relevance of this research method as it sits alongside other forms of formalized inquiry. The arts as we know them have always been seen as a natural way of inquiring and have been acknowledged as such by many Indigenous communities from time immemorial. So this is not new. But it is ‘new’ to the world of the contemporary researcher who must ask how we can use this *artful ethnography* or *artful auto-ethnography* to contribute particularly to the sense of psychosocial. A fundamental premise of our yarn, as Davina, stated from the outset: is that we as authors hold to the belief that Indigenous communities have always and everywhere used artful practice for ‘healing’; this was the work of the ‘shaman’. With the onslaughts from colonization and through the deliberate acts of pillage that accompanied colonization, the artworks, wellness, the Indigenous emotional capacity, mental health, and spiritual knowing of these communities were mutilated—this was an ‘ultimate act of larceny.’

In 1997, at Kassel University the first ‘academic’ forum for investigation into Playback Theater took place. Professor Hienrich Dauber and Jonathan Fox brought together many ‘academic’ practitioners of playback theater. I was one of those practitioners and I began to open what might be called a ‘personal’ conversation that was concerned with the level of ‘unknowing’ that can occur as we research and how theater—especially playback theater which is still one of my main life interests—is a vehicle for seeing stories in action and how these stories are ‘beyond’ research. This is a new mode for research, which “traditionally has been viewed as a search for data, something presented externally to be observed and experimented on, with an external locus of control” (McKenna, 1999). The latter, positivist point of view uses research, especially ‘experimental research’ to test ideas and to evaluate the efficacy of pre-test and post-test interventions or instruments. These interventions and the subsequent findings were, and are still, used in the quantitative research environment to observe what change is and how it happens.

I continue to contend that research has always needed to, and must still now attend to the artfulness in which the work of the researcher occurs. The societies and the people who live in the communities need to be seen and acknowledged *through their artworks* as artefacts or objects that are ‘evidence’. It was this need to realize the value of the inner world of the matters being researched—the soulfulness of research—that I contemplated at that time. Since then my thinking has moved on: those people being researched and their

artworks are more than vehicles for research—these artworks are of great importance.

**Davina:**

It is paramount that the art making of individuals and communities be seen as a way of *knowing* that is not alongside, or ‘other’ to, the ‘evidence’ gathered. It is essential that the ‘reading’ of a society continue to be through the lens of the art they create, so as to give aesthetic wakefulness to their daily rites. The anaesthetic sleepiness that some research evokes leads to unconsciousness and to behaviors that are lacking in soulfulness. It is the balance of the inner world of interiority and the outer world of ‘space, place, and time’ which intersect in this model of research that is made known through art works.

**Tarquam:**

The personal and social emphasis on space, place, and time working from principles of shared space; collaboration and meaning making need to drive a different model of research; one that we now need to move towards: a model that does not merely perceive the surface of the memoirs or place the researcher amidst the audience of artful practices in such spaces, places, and times as exhibitions, public showings, etc. Art must have depth and ‘soul’ (Cousineau, 1995), but we are entering times when, faced with life world challenges, and seeking to understand the meanings of foreign realities or fugitive knowledges (Vicars & McKenna, 2011) we are obliged to search inside the field and recognize the multiplicity of truths that co-exist with numerous meanings as the many art forms evolve.

Playback theater as an art form is based on dramatized storytelling and the work that we are describing here is what we could call in Australia ‘yarning’. We’ve written of this process elsewhere (2011) as a retracing or walking the journey of your Indigenous family heritage, Davina. With you as a colleague and a co-presenter of these ideas, the centrality of yarnning and the need to yarn are driving our work. But what is noteworthy is that Davina, you have no choice but to yarn your story. The yarnning that you, Davina and other Indigenous Australians are engaged in is a practice that has been on-going for more than 60,000 years. For the Indigenous Australian, life is research, but it is through yarnning that meaning is made. ‘Yarning’ is a term used by several of our Indigenous colleagues (Wyatt, Dwyer & Hineysett, 2011) and also forms the basis for framing research where questions are not planned, presented to panels of University ethics committees, or known before the work begins. The quality of the encounter rather than mere questioning is the goal of the yarn; the weaving and co-creation of fabrics of meaning emerges through the interweaving of the various yarns. Talking circles where art is concurrently made are so familiar to many Indigenous communities; and it is in the making of the art and the talking of the stories of existence that change occurs.

**Davina:**

The playback theater performance is an artful practice and, as story-telling theater it is a place where in action, the audiences’ stories *come* to the actors. These stories are not known prior to the performance and are performed with immediacy; are purposefully artful. They come after an invitation to a shared encounter and engagement. So this Playback method of inquiry proposed in 1999 and ‘yarning’ have a lot in common. I recall you saying then, Tarquam:

The experience for the teller of the enactment in playback is not only a retelling, but also an occasion of deeper and fuller knowing. It may be that there is a different consciousness 'raising' as a consequence of the art form. Playback theater is always a ritualistic occasion. In this theater form a human being attends to his or her self and at times to something greater than the self. In this respect I have written elsewhere of the 'journey' or 'quest'. (McKenna, 1999a)

Playback does not always attend to the complex societal issues and values lying beneath the life-worlds seen in the performance. Especially regarding the matter of how the decolonizing of a community might be implied or have actually occurred. Often the attention of the audience is turned only to the surface features of the performance such that time and the audience drive attention to the 'play' as much as does the teller's story.

### **Tarquam:**

We spoke in Hong Kong of how, according to the United Nations text *The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, over 370 million Indigenous peoples in ninety countries are documented as co-inhabiting the planet. We also spoke of how these same Indigenous peoples suffer disproportionately higher rates of youth suicide (Vinding, 2009; Tatz, 2005) and how in the 19th and 20th centuries many colonizing nation-states implemented procedures and practices that were ultimately intended to annihilate these Indigenous cultures (Brulle & Pellow, 2006; Cox, 2008).

### **Davina:**

The remaining Indigenous cultural structures and life worlds continually undergo alienation and disenfranchisement and this is compounded by the normalizing of contemporary manifestations of overt and covert discrimination. In *The Decolonization of Asia and Africa in the Twentieth Century* (2004) Dura posits that "decolonization refers to the process whereby colonial powers transferred institutional and legal control over territories and dependencies to indigenously [sic] based, formally sovereign nation-states." This makes it sound like a remnant of the past. This is far from accurate...

The pre-eminent scholar of settler colonialism in Australia Patrick Wolfe, Research Fellow in the History Program at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia, and Charles Warren, Fellow in United States History at Harvard University, have written that "to evoke the multifaceted fullness of imperialism...to trace its complex psychosocial operations...of race, class and, gender...sexualities and...the psychology of violence" (Wolfe, 2004, p. 115)." It is their work, Tarquam, that I see as inspiring you and I to examine the notion that it takes just one metaphorical 'scratch' below the surface of a British dominion's society to see what imperialism really is: the practice of tacit, overt, and covert violence and racism that begins with the dispossession of the Indigenous peoples from their land. Frontier wars included massacres, the removal and enslavement of children and women are ubiquitous. Australian Indigenous peoples had known their life-world for 60,000 years so the upheaval they experienced was commensurately great. To ensure complete dispossession the colonizers removed large numbers of Indigenous peoples and impounded them in compounds euphemistically called 'missions', reserves, or stations. Australian Indigenous peoples were completely disempowered and the shift imposed upon them—from people having an internal locus of control based on self-regulation, to an external locus of control based on regulatory behaviour



from outside—is an intergenerational trauma that many Indigenous families are still suffering from in contemporary times in Australia. The external locus of control perpetuates and is still causing dysfunctional familial encounters for Indigenous communities and individuals alike.

Dispossession of land is a major feature of colonization and is both a historic and contemporary cause of trauma for Indigenous peoples. However, attempts at genocide, assimilation, and culturally invalidating educational agendas, are additional events responsible for the momentous bereavement and psyche impairment, maiming, and mutilation. Ruined processes of dispute resolution over land claims and the dominant non-Indigenous groups' resistance to systematically implementing Indigenous requests such as “bilingual education are ongoing struggles for Indigenous communities” (Hill, Kim, & Williams, 2010, pp 105-122) and produce ongoing trauma for both Indigenous communities and individuals.

The experience of racism within the context of colonization has created similar damaging negative impacts across nations and continents. Among Indigenous communities racism is linked with critical toxic health consequences (Brulle & Pellow, 2006; Krieger, 2003). Racism and colonization compromise the psychological well-being of Indigenous peoples.

Researchers of depressive symptoms have found them to be strongly associated with perceived discrimination but that engagement in cultural practices buffered some of the negative effects of discrimination (Whitbeck et al., 2002). When one considers Western institutional initiatives and expectations for Indigenous persons to ‘Whiten’ themselves, or acculturate, and the level to which participating in cultural practices is directly or subtly discouraged, then the health landscape for Indigenous individuals and communities becomes even more grim. Indeed, distress caused by discrimination could make Indigenous individuals withdraw further from their own communities. Coping styles employed by Indigenous peoples in the face of racism, include acceptance of the racist comments and behaviours as simply a part of their lot, as well as withdrawal and avoidance of future contact. Indigenous peoples may also indulge in cognitive reinterpretation of the event or events. Social supports often come from within the Indigenous person’s family and community in the form of deprecating non-Indigenous people and cultural practices. Some Indigenous peoples attempt to prove their ‘worthiness’ and in that way hope to dissuade racist attacks. All Indigenous peoples attempt to make their “children stronger in response to the same fate” (Hill & Williams, 2010, 105-122).

### **Tarquam:**

Artful practice can and should be being used to address the sense of dispossession, institutional control, demonization, and racism that abound in Indigenous communities in Australia and elsewhere, and the ‘need’ for whiteness. You and I, Davina, recognise your art and the making of your art as research to address and ‘repair’ the experiences of racism and the demonization you have faced in your work and family life. We contend that artful auto-ethnography can be used to redress the damaging negative outcomes across nations, states, countries, and continents, as well as in a one-to-one context. Artful ethnographic research practice as can be used reparatively, as a way to respond to the toxic health consequences and psychological illnesses experienced by dispossessed Indigenous peoples.

# Ethnography

## **Tarquam:**

In the field of ethnography, and of artful auto-ethnography in particular, we, as researchers, are trying to reach an understanding of other people and their stories; stories which are embodied by, and made external in, the rituals of the performance, artwork, or artifacts. The purpose of this conversation is to wonder to what extent the observational research paradigms of ethnography have moved to a deeper place, when they now include art making and the artful auto-ethnographic form of self-healing in community. White privileged artists make art because it makes them feel good. Indigenous communities have always made art to hold the space, which is symbolic and usually sacred to them. Whilst there is a place for the analysis of biography the question arises as to what we do with artful ethnographies that are transcendent and evoke the sense of the numinous. The research method proposed here must construct a sense of depth, with attention to a purposeful engagement, yet without falling into an essentialist labyrinth or responding only to 'functional' aspects of the needs of the individual. There is a relationship between research, interiority, and artistry that I have previously referred to (McKenna, 1997) as a 'soul-making' tool

## **Davina:**

Ethnography is a form of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)—of inquiry—and any form of inquiry whether it be 'straight' ethnography of more artful auto-ethnography is by definition either group or 'self-focused.' The latter is nowadays more common as a qualitative methodology with legacies, especially, in the fields of self-study in the arenas of nursing and psychology. Artful auto-ethnography and autobiography are methodologies of belonging — both are journeys. The richness, though, of any 'art making' is that it is a form of conscious and unconscious reflexive knowing (Roman & Euell, 1971). Artful auto-ethnography as proposed here brings together the personalised psychosocial identity of the individual 'alongside' or beside the identities of the communities in which historical cultural and other contexts intersect. Artful auto-ethnography is a research model for acknowledging the life-world by affirming the subjectivity of reflexive practice.

## **Tarquam:**

Let's break away from the colonized notions of identity and examine the manner in which artful ethnographies and artful practices such as auto-ethnography engage with the life-world experiences of the art maker. It is in the products of art making and the processes of their creation that we may find many different ways of looking—and all art has an infinite number of ways of being seen. Like all good research, artful practice as ethnography sets out to extend the researcher's understanding of the multiplicity of facets to being human. When creating the story using art, the goal is to break the 'silences' and to come to know our individual and societal collective truths.

**Table 1: Artful auto-ethnography in relation to other ways of  
'researching' meaning**

<b>Research perspective</b>	<b>Experimental</b>	<b>Naturalistic</b>	<b>Transformative</b>	<b>Artful autoethnography</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Comprehension	Interpretation	Learning about self and others	Liberation through aesthetic experiences
<b>Vehicle</b>	Prediction	Description	Collaboration	Connectivity through ritual using arts practice
<b>Intent</b>	Add credence	Uncover theories of meaning	Interrogate assumptions & beliefs	Creating the story using art—to break the silences To know our individual and collective truths. To break away from colonized notions of identify
<b>Stance</b>	I priorities	I-You invisible	We vulnerable	Us Community and Artists working to build respectful knowing
<b>Stance on knowledge</b>	Fixed	Contextual	Relational	Emerging from unknown realms—unconscious material made 'conscious' in art products. Knowledge is process, co-creation and community-focused
<b>Procedure</b>	Test hypothesis	Multiple perspectives	Tensions & anomalies	Movement toward integration
<b>Methodological stance</b>	Innocent	Relative	Democratic	Social justice
<b>Path to understanding</b>	Simplicity	Complexity	Reflexivity	Inter-reflexivity (exhibited as products) Intra-reflexivity (interior focused—felt as artistic 'process')
<b>Role of research relative to schooling in our society</b>	Cultural literacy	Cultural diversity	Morality	Critical pedagogical focused gnosis—new emerging ever changing literacies
<b>How significance is determined</b>	Individual	Cooperative	Collaborative	Witnessing connectivity through arts works and the intimacy of making shared meaning
<b>Results</b>	Better or Cleaner Arguments	More complex explanations	Learning & new invitations to	Invitation to build community and

			inquiry	co-create new ways of respectful engagement
<b>Product</b>	Study	Thick description	Journey	Depth encounter with of 'otherness' as reparation of injustice.

Artful ethnography is not therapy; nor is it solely some form of psychological self-inquiry or practice; it is much more than this. Art brings to the art maker and the art viewer alike a sense of the ‘larger meaning’ of the life-world; of the sense of meaning we make in life. Artworks bring a special quality of meaningfulness to the individual and his or her community. Artful ethnographies are a form of aesthetic action that can be used to explore our physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing with the goal of fomenting a new speculation regarding what is happening in our life. As a primary vehicle, art brings with it an invitation to witness what is often in the unconscious realm of the researcher and researched alike; art accelerates management of the physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being as it brings into consciousness that which is not ‘known’. Artful ethnography is not always an expedient process and the products take real chronological time to make or create, and often need to encounter what has been termed *kairos* time (Carpenter & McKenna, 2011)—that opportune or synchronicitous moment that is ripe for the product’s emergence.

Artful auto-ethnography and artful practice as ethnography, are centered on the belief that the process of engaging creatively in drama, movement, or other art-making, within a therapeutic or para-therapeutic (McKenna, 2006) relationship. They support changes in the researcher’s inner world, and move her to develop a more integrated sense awareness. By bringing unconscious material into consciousness and simultaneously deepening that consciousness, the *creative processes*, and *creative product* itself, build their own discovery. It is the depth of encounter (see Table 1), of the social reparation of injustice, and knowing of ‘otherness’ that the artful practice we are espousing sees as its goal.

#### Davina:

As authors and researchers we contend that artful practice, when used to encourage personal and social growth leads to an increase in self-understanding and assists in emotional restoration. The creative process is life-enhancing and ultimately awakening for the researcher into alternative ways of knowing. Art as a form of self and societal literacy is so familiar to Indigenous traditions: over thousands of generations Indigenous cosmologies and belief systems were respectfully illustrated in paintings, carvings, and especially in dance.

#### Tarquam:

That we are obliged to consider that art works are beyond postmodern critiques of ‘documentary’ has been remarked elsewhere (McKenna, 1999); the corollary to this observation is that through artful practice, and the praxis of artful ethnography in particular, we can, by building on a quality of ‘relatedness’ move “beyond a mere development of a ‘sociology of life’ or the slice-of-life approach” towards a deeper place of expression.”

I’d like to close by stating the obvious: In all art forms, and so in the deliberate use of artful practice as research, we are yearning for depth of

meaning and that which is unique to our collective story. This manner of researching is not about recognizing truths or 'comprehending' existence, but is rather more holistic. It is a call to return to the space where artists-as-researchers and researchers-as-artists work together towards a wholeness of understanding; it is a space already mapped out to some extent by the life-world practices the very Indigenous peoples whom the positivist takes as objects of study.

Artful auto-ethnography and artful practice are more than mere propositional modes of knowing; they are ways of our being awakened to each other. The ethnographer who uses art and the artful auto-ethnography, together, are only now modeling the life-worlds of Indigenous communities and are discovering that for these people there has always been a soulful place; a space for that uses to respect and reflect reverence and transcendence of the mysteries of the research process.

# Notes

1. 'Yarn' is used here as a synonym for 'story', while 'yarning' is synonym for 'talking' and/or 'storytelling'. This is a euphemism particularly rich in allusion, capturing not only the sense in which the 'threads' of a story may be 'woven' together to create a 'fabric' of narrative, but also drawing forth associations with storytelling techniques stretching back to and beyond narrative artefacts such as the Bayeux Tapestry. Indeed, Theseus, in order to escape the clutches of the Minotaur used a skein of thread, or yarn, to guide him through the tortuous passages of King Minos' Labyrinth.

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