

Indigenous Stories Told Collectively
by Anita Heiss



Written for *The BlackWords Essays*.

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Users are advised that AustLit contains information that may be culturally sensitive, including images of deceased persons.

Author's Note - 2019

Anthologies continue to play an important role in bringing together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices across genres and on a range of topics and themes. Since this essay was published in 2015, there have been almost 40 anthologies indexed in BlackWords. Such titles include: *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia* (non-fiction), *Stories of Belonging* (drama), *Meet Me at the Intersection* (short fiction, memoir, poetry), *Deadly Sisters of Worawa* (poetry, autobiography) and the *Goanna Was Hungry and Other Stories* (children's, short story).

To see the full list of anthologies in BlackWords, [click here!](#)

Introduction

This paper addresses the important role of anthologies in the creation of communities of writers and in acknowledging, consolidating and launching writing careers. It is structured so that different clusters of anthologised writing are recognised:

- *general anthologies containing writing from a number of genres;*
- *place-specific anthologies; and,*
- *genre-specific anthologies - poetry, novel, short-story, oral history, gender, youth and themed.*

In this paper, for the most part, the opportunity to compare works and discuss common approaches to subject matter overrides any chronology of publication. There is, however, an ordering principle of sorts at work. Certain important general anthologies tended to appear before their genre-specific counterparts and they are discussed first. Thereafter, each subcategory adds perspective and publication detail to a growing store of themes and issues dealt with in the increasingly broad field of Aboriginal Literature – and therefore demonstrates that growth. The paper also recognises that Aboriginal Literature has, over time, acquired other names: Indigenous Literature and Black Writing, for example. These terms have somewhat different and sometimes contested meanings but they are also now used interchangeably. The paper gives a brief explanation of the terms, their similarities and differences. The newer terms – Indigenous and Black – accommodate literature written beyond mainland or island Australia and enable a greater understanding of ways in which writing both defines and defies boundaries.

Readers should understand that ‘Aborigines’ were created when the colonisers used a Latin term meaning ‘original inhabitants’ to describe the peoples whose country they were invading. More commonly used today is the term ‘Indigenous’, another Latin term meaning ‘native to’. ‘Indigenous’ in an Australian context also incorporates both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their term ‘indigenous’ can also relate to the international community of First Peoples. It is a term that is used to standardise ways of discussing Australia’s First Peoples. In recent years, the term ‘Black’ has been used as an empowering definition, reclaiming a once negative term for non-Indigenous Australians. Where possible in these essays, the cultural affiliation is provided for the authors discussed in order to highlight the diversity of backgrounds from which Black Australian writers come.

At Adelaide Writers Week in 2007 I was interested to hear Nicholas Spice, Publisher at the London Review of Books, talk about the competitive nature of authors and their individual concerns about where and how their works fit into anthologies.

'How many pages have I got, compared to so and so? Why is so and so in that anthology when I'm not? I don't want to be in an anthology with so and so'.

The competitive nature of such literary mainstream productions in some ways reflects the western values of competition over cooperation, and the individual over the community. Such values are diametrically opposed to Aboriginal value systems, which highlight cooperation and community benefit. These two values are demonstrated in the production of Indigenous literature and all-Indigenous anthologies – where authors are joined together (most of them gratefully) to share stories and visions for the benefit of all.

For most writers – regardless of heritage – being published in an anthology is a professional achievement and often a personal thrill. But with Indigenous anthologies, there is nearly always a specific cultural, social or political reason for the anthologies beyond their literary worth.

Anthologies

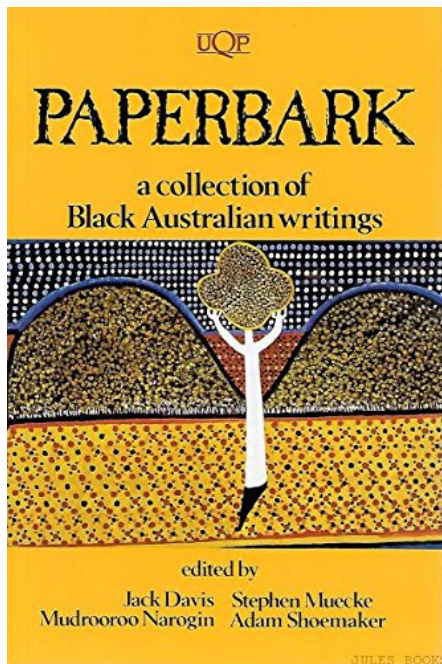
Anthologies that are designed to showcase Indigenous writers often do so with the aim of providing a voice to the voiceless, to demonstrate the diversity of Aboriginal Australia as an attempt to move away from the concept of pan-Aboriginality, and to allow for self representation in Australian literature. Anthologies also act as one of the few political platforms remaining for Aboriginal people in Australia today, where a 'community of voices' can come together in one place to speak to the mainstream. Anthologies based specifically on gender, geographical locations, identified themes and genres, as well as collections that focus on national and international Indigenous voices, are about providing platforms and showcasing a wealth of Indigenous knowledge, experience, creativity and literary skill. It can't be denied that the greatest benefit of anthologies generally is to showcase writers, both established and emerging. But it is perhaps the emerging writer who benefits most, using the opportunity to build a publications list and, sometimes, gain some public exposure for the first time.

As tools for learning about Aboriginal Australia – our histories, our current societies, our cultures and our identities – anthologies are excellent resources for use in the classroom. Pick up a single anthology and a student will be provided with a diverse range of voices, creative ideas and styles, and a range of personal experiences, across generations.

General Anthologies 1990-2012

The first anthology to showcase a diverse range of Indigenous Australian voices was *Paperbark : A Collection of Black Australian Writings* (UQP, 1990). This anthology included 36 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors, ranging from pioneers of Aboriginal literature like [David Unaipon](#) (Ngarrindjeri), [Oodgeroo Noonuccal](#) (Noonuccal), [Jack Davis](#) (Noongar) and [Gerry Bostock](#) (Bundjalung), to more recent writers like [Ruby Langford Ginibi](#) (Bundjalung), [Robert Bropho](#) (Noongar), [Jim Everett](#) (Plangermairreenner) and [Hyllus Maris](#) (Yorta Yorta/ Wurundjeri/ Woiwurung). Activists

such as [William Ferguson](#), [Gary Foley](#) (Gumbainggir) and [Tiga Bayles](#) (Birri Gubba / Wakka Wakka / Wonarua / Bundjalung) also found a new literary audience through the publication of *Paperbark*. Many more voices are represented through non-literary community writings, such as petitions and letters. With contributions from each of the States and Territories of Australia, *Paperbark* ranges widely across space, time and genre, from the 1840s to the 1980s, from transcriptions of oral literature to rock opera. Prose, poetry, song, drama and polemic are accompanied by the selected artworks of [Jimmy Pike](#) (Walmajarri) and the distinctive cover art by [Trevor Nickolls](#) (Ngarrindjeri).



Courtesy of UQ Press

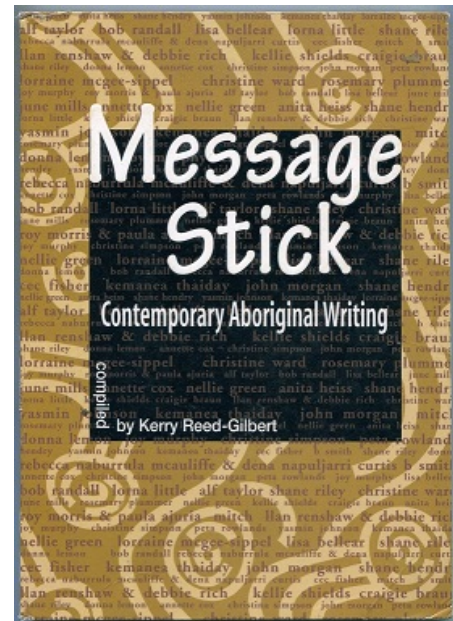
[Greg Lehman](#), a Tasmanian writer and academic descended from the Trawlwuy people, believes “*Paperbark* introduced Australians to “what” Indigenous writing could be.” For its time *Paperbark* was beyond a bestseller: ‘It sold well with a second print run in November of that year and had a total of four reprints of 26,000 copies’ (Jordan 169).

It was nearly 20 years though before another, even more comprehensive anthology would appear with the release of the *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Aboriginal Literature* (Allen & Unwin, 2007). Edited by [Anita Heiss](#) (Wiradjuri) and [Peter Minter](#), with a foreword by Professor [Michael Dodson](#) (Yawuru), this anthology represented the first single volume containing a wide range of Aboriginal writing in English from late eighteenth century to 2006. It begins with a 1796 letter by Bennelong (Wangal), and ends with an extract from [Tara June Winch](#)’s (Wiradjuri) *Swallow the Air* (UQP, 2006).

The anthology pushed the boundaries of what might normally be defined as ‘literature’ because the editors wanted to use a range of works to show the historical story of Indigenous Australians’ use of written English from the earliest encounters. It includes letters, petitions, political manifestos and texts from the early colonial period, poetry, fiction, biography, excerpts from plays, songs, and literature for children and young readers. With a total of 81 authors included, the *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Aboriginal Literature* was designed to fill a gap in the field of teaching texts while providing a reference tool for academics, teachers and librarians internationally. As it was designed for the educational market, an on-line teaching guide contains resources to support the teaching and study of the works in the Anthology including an extract from the autobiography of [Eddie Mabo](#), which does not appear in the Anthology.

In between *Paperbark* and the *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Aboriginal Literature*, there were other publications that continued to demonstrate the communal evolution of Aboriginal literature.

Message Stick : Contemporary Aboriginal Writing, compiled by Wiradjuri poet Kerry Reed-Gilbert, was the first publication by Jukurrpa Books (an imprint of IAD Press), and was launched at the Festival of the Dreaming in 1997. *Message Stick* is a collection of poems and short stories that draw on contemporary, traditional and urban life experiences of established and emerging writers, such as Lisa Bellear, Alf Taylor (Noongar) and Bob Randall. The publisher's blurb says that '*Message Stick* is an Aboriginal view of black culture past present and future. It is not manufactured dialogue by those "who think they know", it is the many and varied voices of Aboriginal Australia.'



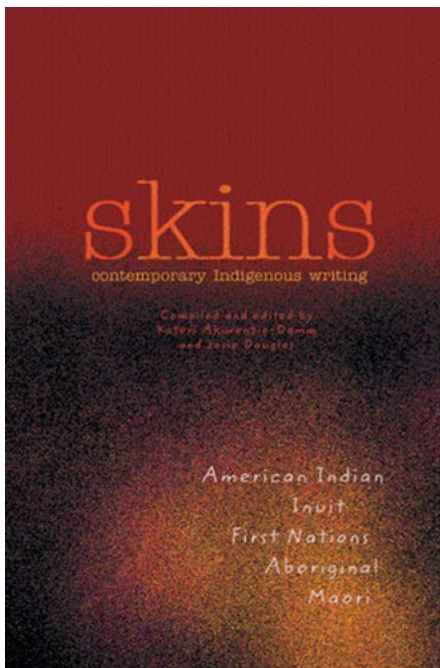
On compiling *Message Stick*, Reed-Gilbert wrote:

The collection of writings contained within these pages are more than words, these writings are a lifetime of a people, they are a history of a civilisation, they are the lifeline of this country...' (x)

Similar in its purpose of showcasing Indigenous voices, *Skins : Contemporary Indigenous Writing* (Jukurrpa Books, 2000) was ground-breaking when released not because it was the first international joint venture between Indigenous publishers, in this case Jukurrpa Books (Alice Springs) and Kegedonce Press (Ontario, Canada). Nor is it because it brought together award-winning and internationally acclaimed American Indian (Sherman Alexie, Louise Erdrich), Inuit and First Nations (Maria Campbell, Thomas King), Aboriginal (Melissa Lucashenko, Sally Morgan) and Maori (Patricia Grace, Witi Ihimaera) authors. Neither is it significant because it is a collection of short stories that removes Indigenous characters from being simply statistics, or stereotyped as welfare dependent, unemployed (or indeed unemployable), radical activists or victims. Rather, the brilliance of this book is that while it achieved these things, it was also a strong, representative literary collection of writings, multi-dimensional with a variety of styles, incorporating a number of linguistic and cultural traditions unique to each Indigenous Nation.

Witi Ihimaera, often regarded as one of the most prominent and prolific Maori writers, stated in the Preface:

Most of us believe our creative work has a function well beyond self-expression. It expresses the values and aesthetics of our people and connects us to them and to our ancestors and future generations. It is a form of activism that both maintains and affirms who we are and protests against colonisation and assimilation. It is a form of sharing, giving back, of reaffirming kinship, of connection with the sacredness of creation. (vi)



While co-editor and publisher [Josie Douglas](#) (Wardaman), from Jukurrpa Books, wrote:

The writing in Skins represents a freedom and diversity of voice, storyline, style and character - a freedom that is not often reflected in the social, economic or political realities of our urban and remote communities. (ix)



In 1998, the *Indigenous Australian Voices : A Reader* was published by Rutgers University in the United States, and includes writers from the offshore islands, the Northern Territory, and all six states of Australia. Edited by [Jennifer Sabbioni](#) (Nyungar), [Kay Schaffer](#) and [Sidonie Smith](#), the collection includes the artwork, prose and poetry of thirty-six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers and artists from the offshore islands, the Northern Territory, and all six states of Australia. On the back-cover blurb, the publisher says of the anthology:

Many explore a new sense of multiple identities while still remaining faithful to traditional values, ideas, customs, and beliefs, including the Dreaming (the Aboriginal creation story). Some incorporate oral narratives passed down by community elders while others rethink the relationship between their traditional culture and contemporary life.

From national voices to local stories in Canberra, *Writing Us Mob : New Indigenous Voices* (Aberrant Genotype Press, 2000) aimed to showcase the talent in the Indigenous literary and visual arts community in the nation's Capital. The anthology is a "vision", writes editor and local poet [Jennifer A. Martiniello](#) (Arrernte):

of a few for the many, for the generations of the past, the generations of now and of the future. It is a vision motivated by the most immediate, fundamental, and perhaps the most futuristic of our needs - to go on shattering the silence. (6)

This collection of poetry, autobiographical pieces, songs and short stories is the result of writing workshops held in the Yurauna Centre at the Canberra Institute of Technology in 1999 and 2000, with facilitators (affectionately referred to as “accomplices”) that included the now late musician [Jimmy Little](#) (Yorta Yorta), novelist [Melissa Lucashenko](#) (Bundjalung/Yugambah), poet [Kerry Reed-Gilbert](#), film-maker and singer [Frances Peters-Little](#) (Kamilaroi/Uralarai), with ‘accomplices’ Lizz Murphy and Craig Cormick.

The five sections of the anthology cross the themes of Places, Spaces, Dreamings, Stories and Songs, and those who contributed to the sections come from various Aboriginal nations, including [Beth Craddy](#) (Wiradjuri), [John Heath](#) (Dunghutti / Birripai), and [Danielle Thomas](#) (Gamilaroi).

The cultural role of such books is highlighted through an entry by John Heath, who also provides cultural information, including a simple explanation of the Creation spirit Biame, and significant Dreaming sites in the Hunter Region of NSW, where he is a custodian. Heath’s ability to articulate the significance of the sites through the re-telling of beliefs from the Creation era is a skill that is common to Aboriginal people, but unfortunately is rarely written down.

In her introduction, Martiniello highlights one of the most important roles of anthologising Indigenous voices in books like *Writing Us Mob*:

Perhaps its [the anthology’s] most striking quality is its diversity. It spans generations, experiences, lives, countries, socio-cultural placements and boundaries, and genders. It defies preconceived categorizations and societal pressures of how a dominant culture thinks Aboriginal people ought to write, and displays in its diversity the courage to extract, as Uncle Jimmy Little put it, the invisible from people, events, situations, feelings, stories and use the pen to paint the picture like the brush on the canvas. (7)

Black Lives, Rainbow Visions : Indigenous Sitings in the Creative Arts (Aberrant Genotype Press/Blak Ink 1999), also coordinated by Martiniello, was developed out of workshops and includes a range of literary and artistic forms within its covers. Martiniello states:

*Collectively we represent all those voices that have never been silenced, despite having gone unheard and unwritten... The magnificent array of work in *Black Lives, Rainbow Visions* represents the multiple voices of our living languages, our living cultures, heritages, identities, ancestral and family traditions, histories and stories. (2)*

In a different geographic space but with a similar method and purpose, the *Write Around Our Country : An Anthology of Writing by Batchelor Institute Creative Writing Students 2007-2008* by Batchelor Institute Creative Writing Students (Batchelor Press, 2008) is another example of emerging writers publishing as the result of creative writing education and workshops. It includes the work of seventeen students from around Australia with play excerpts, poetry, and short stories. The title of *Write Around our Country* is explained in the Foreword:

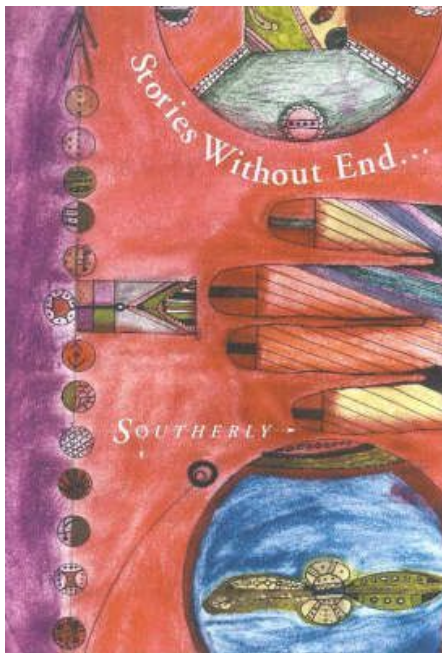
Our student voices echo between Perth and Fingal, Darwin and Melbourne, and many places in between. (6)



Academic Journal Anthologies
2002-2012

There has always been concern that academic and literary journals solely devoted to Indigenous writers may lower expectations and run the risk of ghettoising writing.

On the contrary, what academic journals and literary anthologies can do is deliver the work of award-winning authors alongside established writers while also being able to showcase new and emerging writers. Today, as literary values become less narrow and Euro-centric, we see Indigenous writers holding their own in mainstream literary domains, and reshaping the national canon by winning major literary awards. Because of the success of award-winning authors such as [Kim Scott](#), [Tara June Winch](#), [Larissa Behrendt](#), [Alexis Wright](#), [Samuel Wagan Watson](#) (Birri-Gubba Juru/ Munaldjali / Bundjalung) and [Tony Birch](#) there is increasingly less risk of the ghettoisation of Black writing.



One example of a literary journal that has devoted a special edition solely to Indigenous voices is *Stories Without End* (*Southerly*, 62: 2 2002), co-edited by Penny Van Toorn and Anita Heiss. It has stories that blend the local and the international, including Wesley Enoch's (Noonuccal Nuugi) 'Black Medea', a poetic adaptation of Euripides' tragedy Medea, which fuses Greek mythology with Indigenous storytelling. Other examples of writing in this journal edition are Wayne King's account of his life at his United Nations post in Bangladesh, and Alf Taylor's tale about a trip to India.

The wide-ranging issues canvassed by authors in *Stories Without End* are not always specifically Indigenous, but sometimes encompass common or universal human themes. Rosie Smith (Palawa), for example, writes about the challenges of parenting, while Ernie Blackmore's (Kamilaroi) play 'Positive Expectations' speaks of HIV/AIDS, euthanasia and complex relationships. Vivienne Cleven (Kamilaroi) and Jared Thomas (Nukunu/ Ngadjuri) ask questions about gender and sexuality. So, while anthologies allow Indigenous writers to speak of our own diversity amongst ourselves, they also allow us to explore our similarities with all humankind and to reach a wider audience.

In 2012, *Southerly* released its second all-Indigenous anthology edition with *A Handful of Sand: Words to the Frontline* (*Southerly*, 71.2, 2012), edited by Ali Cobby Eckermann (Yankunytjatjara / Kokatha) and Lionel Fogarty (Yoogum / Kudjela). Represented in the volume are twenty-five language groups, and emerging and established writers across a range of ages. In her review 'A Literature That Refuses to Go Missing', Jennifer Mills wrote:

Most of the work is realist, and much of it deeply moving. There are also moments of humour and delight.

The other respectful literary journal *Meanjin* (vol. 65 no. 1, 2006) gave space to Indigenous writers with a volume guest edited by the poet and academic Peter Minter. *Meanjin's Blak Times* showcases some of Australia's leading Indigenous authors, laying to rest the fear of anthologies ghettoising such work, with award-winning authors Melissa Lucashenko and Jennifer Martiniello standing beside emerging novelists Terri Janke (Wuthathi/Yadaighana / Meriam) and Jared Thomas. Curator Keith Munro's essay on documentary photographer Ricky Maynard and his images of Tasmanian Aboriginal society complements Alexis Wright's essay demanding self-governance for Aboriginal communities to ensure the survival of people and culture. These pieces assert Indigenous presence, not only in the literary scene, but also in the national psyche - or what Larissa Behrendt aptly names Australia's 'psychological terra nullius' (6). Showcasing Indigenous voices through literature, film, visual arts, and hip-hop music, Minter introduces the collection with the observation that "the resurgence of Indigenous culture and thought continues" (1).

More recent was the release of an Indigenous-specific edition of *JASAL*: vol. 14 no. 3 2014. Titled "*Country*" the periodical

features papers presented at the 'The BlackWords Symposium', held in October 2012. An event programmed to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the establishment of BlackWords, this *JASAL* collection of writing showcases the current state of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creative writing and storytelling across all forms and genres, and includes work by Dr Jared Thomas and Natalie Harkin.



Anthologies of Place
1995-2010

Geographically defined Indigenous anthologies are also not uncommon, with Western Australia home to one of the largest groups of Indigenous writers and with Fremantle Arts Centre Press's remit to only publish work out of Western Australia. It is therefore not surprising to find comprehensive anthologies, such as *Those Who Remain Will Always Remember : An Anthology of Aboriginal Writing*, (FACP, 2000) being published and becoming popular.

Those Who Remain Will Always Remember allows the 48 contributors from around WA to retain their original, distinct and individual voices, while presenting a work that is accessible to the broader community. This book is another example of

how well the anthology format can be used to showcase emerging and established writers, in this case, including [Alf Taylor](#), [Pat Torres](#) (Yawuru), [Doris Pilkington Garimara](#) (Mardu), [Rosemary van den Berg](#) (Noongar) and [Kim Scott](#) while demonstrating the diversity of Aboriginal experience and voice.

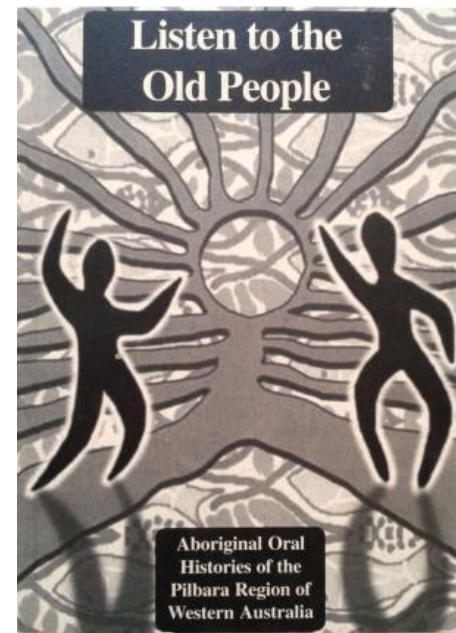
Also emanating from the West is *From Our Hearts : An Anthology of New Aboriginal Writing from Southwest Western Australia*, (Kadadjiny Mia Walyalup Writers, 2000), which sold two print runs.

The history of this anthology shows the nurturing and structurally supportive development of the book, and of the skills of the writers included. In 1998, as part of her PhD project at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University, writer Jan Teagle Kapetas sent out flyers to Aboriginal organisations around Perth offering a series of free Creative Writing workshops called 'Telling Our Stories: Making a Difference'. She facilitated three workshops a week over two years and thirty local Aboriginal people who had never tried writing stories, poems, memoirs and children's stories before; soon found that they were, indeed, writers.

The writers formed the Kadadjiny Mia Walyalup Writers' Group, and after receiving a seeding grant from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board in 2000 to continue developing their skills, the Group successfully applied to the WA Office of Women's and Children's Affairs for assistance to publish their anthology.

From Our Hearts was the result, a collection of the work of 19 authors and four contributing artists that bring together personal histories, poetry, biographies, autobiographies and social commentary, all written from the heart. Words about love, family, pain, memories and hope, with a common thread of family hardship but also survival grounded in strong family ties.

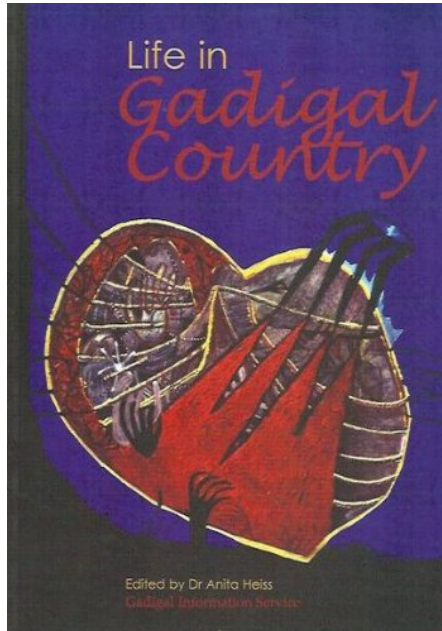
Many of the works in this anthology are tributes to family members - mothers, fathers, grandparents, children, brothers and sisters - talking about the lessons they taught and their life experiences. The poems 'Now Don't Tell Anyone We've Been Here' and 'Jessie', by [Celine Thomson](#), are about her grandmother, while [Vernon Thorne](#) (Noongar) writes about his father in 'My Memories of My Dad, Steve Thorne', and [Marlene Ryder](#)'s (Noongar) subject is also her father in 'My Father's Hands'. The land and country also provides a common theme for these new writers with [Kay Walley](#)'s 'The Rock' and 'The Gorge', [Ivy Dodd](#)'s 'My Country' and 'Mother, My Country', [Sam Isaacs](#)' 'Bushland Becomes a Poem' and [Noel Morrison](#)'s 'Coral Bay'.



Another anthology from the West is *Listen to the Old People : Oral Histories of the Pilbara Region of Western Australia*, which was born out of a Local Symbols of Reconciliation Project that documents the memories of local elders. The aim of the project was to use oral histories of elderly Aboriginal people of the region to tell the Indigenous stories of Port Hedland and the Pilbara. These elders spoke on a range of important issues including: Understanding Country (the importance of land and sea); Improving Relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians; Valuing Cultures (cultural identity and diversity); Sharing History; Addressing Disadvantage; Custody Levels; Destiny (self-determination and control); and a Formal Document of Reconciliation.

Voices from the Heart : Contemporary Aboriginal Poetry from Central Australia (IAD Press, 1995), collected and edited by Roger Bennett (Arrernte), is an anthology of poems from around Alice Springs and from the Barkly Region of Tennant Creek, Northern Territory. It was the first collection of poetry published by IAD Press. IAD Press also published *This Country Anytime Anywhere : An Anthology of New Indigenous Writing from the Northern Territory* (2010). This contemporary collection features works by emerging writers as well as many winners of Northern Territory literary awards, like Marie Munkara (Rembarrnga), whose *Every Secret Thing* was judged the 2010 Northern Territory Book of the Year, and also won the 2008 David Unaipon Award. Ranging in age from teenagers to elders, the writers come from diverse rural, urban and remote backgrounds. Often raw, always powerful, this collection (as the publisher's blurb notes) shares the cultural, artistic, personal and political interests of these writers and their communities in the twenty-first century.

Because most of Australia's Indigenous peoples are urban dwellers, with one-fifth of the national Indigenous population living in greater Sydney alone, most also live on country that is not their own. But they do so in the knowledge that it is our job to act as managers rather than landowners, and to always respect those on whose land we reside. One way to pay respects in a tangible form was to produce *Life in Gadigal Country* (Gadigal Information Services: 2002), an anthology of writing by diverse Indigenous people, all of whom may have lived, worked, socialised or participated in political events in Gadigal country, but who have different voices, experiences, perceptions, and distinct ways of communicating their messages to heterogeneous audiences.



Life in Gadigal Country presents the poetry of Gordon Hookey (Waanyi), Kerry Reed-Gilbert, Kate Gilbert, Steven Ross (Wamba Wamba), Lorraine McGee-Sippel (Yorta Yorta), Melissa Lucashenko and Brenda Palma (Wiradjuri), writings which challenge the reader's own sense of place, responsibility and identity. The essays of Ruby Langford Ginibi, Jonathan Jones, Brenda Palma (Wiradjuri), Brenda Croft (Gurindji) and John Richard Lennis offer insights into the history and contemporary realities of Gadigal country, and the ways in which heritage is preserved around the Harbour foreshore and the Botanical Gardens.

In her review of *Life in Gadigal Country*, Farnaz Fanaian describes the success of such works in educating the non-Indigenous community:

With its colloquial format and upfront blunt attitude, as a Non-Indigenous person I found [Life in Gadigal Country] educational and easy to understand given my limited background in Indigenous affairs. Through my whole life I have frequently visited Sydney, but never knew what was going on deep inside the hustle and bustle of these city streets. Ignorant that Sydney has the highest concentration of Indigenous peoples in Australia, that they have been fighting to preserve the many artefacts and historic sites that are one by one being plundered by property development corporations.

By publishing books like *Life in Gadigal Country*, Gadigal Information Services aimed to provide the marginalised, often ignored voice with a platform to raise issues ranging from definitions of contemporary Aboriginal art to remembering the beginning of the civil rights movement in Sydney.

Looking Back, Moving Forward : Stories from the Shellharbour Aboriginal Community (Shellharbour City Council, 2007) demonstrated and affirmed the unique value of oral histories. The role of oral history can still be a matter of academic contention, with some historians, for example, arguing about the validity of oral testimony in historical research. What *Looking Back, Moving Forward* puts beyond dispute, however, is the richness of the individual voices that oral histories offer us, the nuances of the spoken word that are responded to differently by different audiences, and the undervalued yet legitimate role of memory in historical documentation, all of which are often omitted from the history books we are supposed to read.

Throughout our history, most aspects of Aboriginal society, culture, religion, and history were passed on to family and community through an oral tradition that included approximately 250 distinct Aboriginal language families, containing 600 dialects, spoken by 600 Aboriginal nations. Storytelling was an important method of passing on information over

generations, and this practice endures today. Storytelling was the oral literature, the artform likened to dance, performance and visual arts, which also pass on information. It is this storytelling, or ‘oral’ technique, that has been embraced within this anthology, to give the Aboriginal people of Shellharbour their place in the recorded history of their chosen or born-into hometown.



Oral History Anthologies

Oral histories like *Looking Back and Moving Forward* provide an opportunity for those with memory recall to delve into their own personal historical vaults of the mind, bringing to life not only their past relationships with other Aboriginal people, but with the broader community as well. As Aboriginal people we are not separated from the daily events, politics, tragedies or inspirations of other Australian citizens. And although we might not be involved in the public debates around how history is recorded – and although our historical perspectives may not be recorded at all – our insights and opinions are no less important. We have ideas about how the past has impacted on the present and how it will frame the future for all of us, black and white, and this anthology demonstrates the importance of these ideas.

Looking Back and Moving Forward presents a series of individual voices that collectively define a diverse yet cohesive community of positive characters. The volume provides the people of Shellharbour and beyond with previously unpublished and very specific social, cultural and historical information on the Aboriginal people of the district - from Warilla to

Wollongong, Hill 60 to Huskisson, from Berry to Bomaderry. This anthology, like other community oral histories from around the country – such as *Under the Mango Tree : Oral Histories with Indigenous People from the Top End* (NT Writers' Centre, 2001) and *Goodbye Riverbank : The Barwon - Namoi People Tell Their Story* (Magabala Books, 2000) – exists as a tribute to the traditional owners of the country where many blackfellas have chosen to live, for work, education, lifestyle, personal relationships and a sense of community. Sometimes they have arrived there through forced removal as well. This collection of stories is a message of respect to the Dharawal people, the custodians of country, by the many Aboriginal visitors who now call Shellharbour home.

Oral histories give us what archival and desktop analysis of published materials cannot, like opportunities to experience the proud voices of the Shellharbour Men's Group. The group provides a model of what is possible—as one member, Jason, says, “They should be in every town” (‘Men's Group’ 27)—and its agenda includes networking with and supporting other men's groups across the state.

Not to be outdone though, is the Shellharbour Women's Group, whose support mechanisms benefit women and also graduating Year 12 students, and whose activities, like boot-scooting and line-dancing, are part of their charter of promoting health and social connectedness.

Alongside these groups, the Shellharbour Aboriginal Community Youth Association, discussed in the anthology by Iriaka Ross, proudly demonstrates the activities and the potential of our young people today. Such potential is no better showcased than by teenager Kyarna Cruse, an aspiring opera singer who writes poetry and has her sights set on the Tamworth Music Festival. These boundless goals and the passion that young people display are what allow us as a people to move forward, despite our consciousness of the dark history of our nation. And it is also the inclusion of such young voices that sets this collection apart from other oral histories, which traditionally focus solely on the voices of our elders.

Readers of *Looking Back and Moving Forward* will find a wide range of views of Shellharbour, like [Dossie Tingai's](#) account of the changes in the physical environment and landscape over time (‘[Valerie Webb](#)’ 48-49). Or the sporty, healthy lifestyles that local blackfellas get involved in like fishing and going to the beach, which is highlighted by Richard Davis and his daughter Melissa (‘Richard Davis’ 40-47). The Davis family also emphasise that education is of utmost importance for Kooris, and Jo Davis comments that while she suffered racism unknowingly before going to school, once there she was assumed to be Spanish and consequently spared further racial taunts (‘Jo Davis’ 36-39).

The history of the human impacts of the Aboriginal Protection Act and Board are evident in the story of [Roy "Dootch" Kennedy](#), who recalls his life on the reserve at Kemlawarra at Coomaditchie, and who strongly believes that Aboriginal Studies should be mandatory in every school (‘Roy “Dootch” Kennedy’ 21-24).

Perhaps the most engaging aspect of oral histories like this one is the personal element. Only through the oral history form found in this anthology could we gain the intimate insight into Craig Cruse's inspiration and process for creating artwork. Similarly, reading the dialogue between Pearl and Gerald Brown is like watching an old married couple sitting on a sofa with a cuppa just reminiscing about the old days. The dynamic between them is charming as they bounce off each other's words with respect and knowing, recognising each other's commitments to the community for over 25 years.



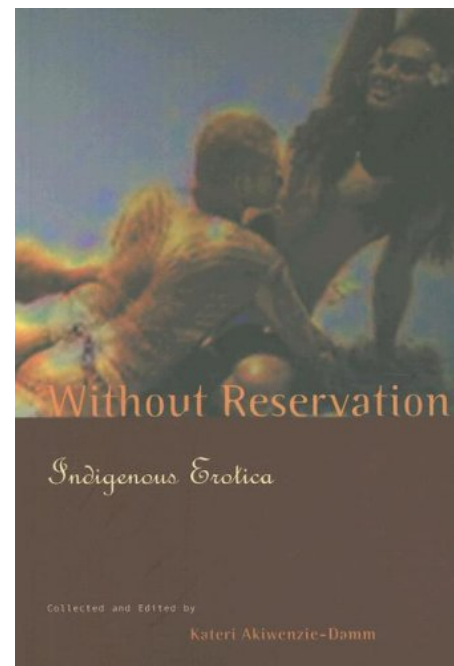
Themed Anthologies

Themed anthologies for Indigenous writers also serve the purpose of proving that we can write on commission, for example, or demonstrate that our lives span a variety of experiences, and can comment on important public issues. They also give us an opportunity to assert our humanity in a world that has often denied it - that even though often highly politicised, and often invisible on the national identity radar, that we too love, hate, bleed, sing, cry, laugh and so on. We are humans, who also have sex, as seen, quite explicitly in *Without Reservation : Indigenous Erotica* (Kegedonce Press, 2003).

Without Reservation is a collection of prose and poetry by some of the world's top Indigenous writers including Sherman Alexie and Joy Harjo (US), Maria Campbell (Canada), Hone Tuwhare, Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimera (NZ) and Haunani-Kay Trask (Hawaii), who write richly and at times rawly about love, lust, longing, feelings, desire, passion, ecstasy, intimacy and 'self-love'.

The usual characteristics of erotic writing are there: moonlight and darkness, flesh, thighs, breasts, tongues, curves, fingers, mouths, and other essential sensual organs, as are soft, gentle, long, wet, thick and deep kisses. There is luscious, spontaneous, orderly, dutiful, clumsy and thankful lovemaking, in conference hotel rooms, at powwows and with old friends.

The Australian contributions are all prose and come from acclaimed novelist [Melissa Lucashenko](#) who writes of unspoken, yet tempting and should this be forbidden love, even that which only lives in the mind in "Let Me Tell You What I Want". [K. C. Laughton](#) (Arrernte) author of the novel *Not Quite Men, No Longer Boys*, (Jukurrpa Books, 1999) tells of a young boy's discovery of self-gratification in "Master Bates", and Wiradjuri writer [Velvet Black](#) writes of satisfied passion under the moonlight behind the back shed.



At the more serious end of the spectrum is *Life, Love and Pain : An Anthology of Poems Written by Stolen Generations Link Up* (NSW), (Stolen Generations Link Up Aboriginal Corporation, 2007) edited by [Janaka Wiradjuri](#) and launched by Wadi Wadi elder and poet [Barbara Nicholson](#) as part of the annual Indigenous Writers night. This anthology is not exclusively poetry, but includes prose and life writing by members of the Stolen Generations affiliated with Link Up NSW.

Contributors include [Elyssa Allard](#), [Adam Gerrard](#), [Megan Gerrard](#), [Nancy Hill-Wood](#), [Diane Jarrett](#), [Charles Leon](#), [Troy Maltby](#), the late [Pauline E. McLeod](#), [Lorraine McGee-Sippel](#), [Marie Melito-Russell](#), [Barbara Nicholson](#), [Ryan Sadlier](#) (Wiradjuri), and the late [Janaka Wiradjuri](#), also known as Joy Williams whose name was changed from Eileen to Joy when she was taken to Bomaderry as a child. Janaka also contributed poems, illustrations and the foreword to the collection. Works in this anthology express the suffering caused by betrayal, the impacts of not knowing true cultural identity because of removal, the torment of separation from family, and the pains of being stolen.

The stories shared in *Life, Love and Pain* help the reader understand the extreme sense of loss and rejection experienced by people removed under policies of protection in NSW and taken to places like Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home and Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Home. But the words are also full of love and a sense of survival, with some moving tributes to Joy Williams and, more generally, to mothers and grandmothers, honouring how our matriarchs represent the seeds of life.

Gender-specific Anthologies - Women Speaking 1999-2007

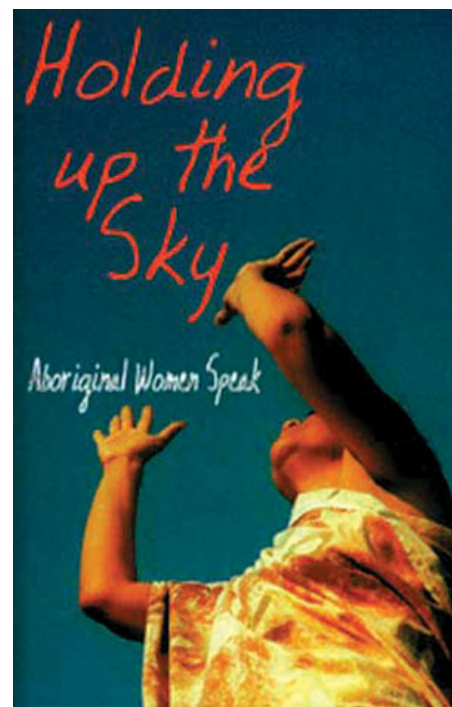
Gender specific anthologies are also common, but more so for women than men. In the anthology *Holding up the Sky : Aboriginal Women Speak* (Magabala Books, 1999), nine women relive significant moments in their lives, all focusing in some way on growing up black in Australia.

The writers in this book include [Della Walker](#) (Gumbayngirr), who was born on Ulgandahi Island in 1932. Her story ‘[Early Days](#)’ includes memories of the Aboriginal reserve school and she engages the reader with how to cook a carpet snake.

[Betty Lockyer](#), author of ‘[War Baby](#)’ was born in 1942 in Beagle Bay, the cultural and traditional land of her Nyul Nyul grandmother, and her story touches on the Stolen Generations. She writes:

The kids I grew up with at the mission, and later on at the orphanage in Broome, were like lost souls, plucked out from loved ones' arms, herded like cattle into holding yards and then dumped with strangers in a frightening environment. (25)

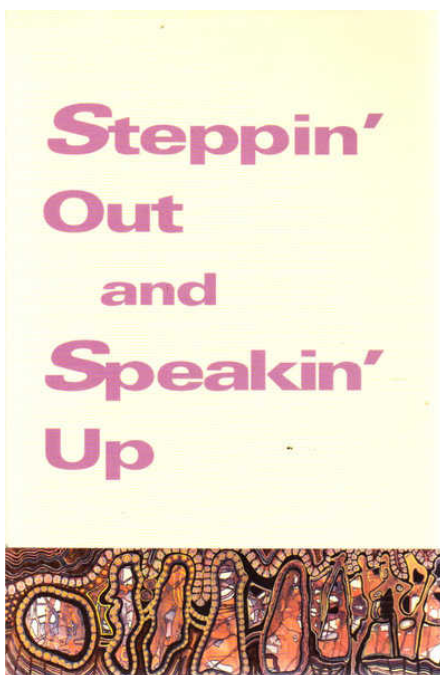
Author of ‘[Those Days](#)’, [Olive Morrison](#), was born in Katanning, Western Australia in 1919, and recalls among other things “The Greatest Show On Earth”, the Worth Brothers Circus, and how Nyoongars had to get a permit from the police to go to the circus, but weren't allowed in the tent after six o'clock. Broome based [Tazuko Kaino](#)'s story ‘[A Very Special Family](#)’ tells of her Japanese father Etsuzo Kaino and her mum Mabel Mary Slater of the Djugun people. She writes: “We cannot forget what our mothers have taught us about how to live and respect our land. And my generation will keep on teaching [and] passing on what we know to our children” (91). And Taz's story, along with all those within this collection, are doing just that! Maggie Ybasco, born in Broome in June 1927 writes [as [Magdalene Van Prehn](#)] in ‘[Young At Heart](#)’ that it was her strict Catholic upbringing by the nuns that was the foundation of her survival in later years. Maggie's husband was Dutch-Indonesian and her story takes the reader to Indonesia and Holland, a refreshing but brief digression from the strong Broome-based location of the stories in the anthology.



Cecily Wellington takes her opportunity, in 'My Time Has Come to Speak', to demonstrate her personal strength in surviving sexual assault. She writes up front though that Koori women should not let their lives be shattered by such terrible things and observes, "It does take time to recover and there will be odium, but us women, we have a life too. We have our children, our grandchildren to look forward to" (132). This NSW-based story is in stark contrast to those of WA, dealing with a personal, yet social problem affecting our communities nationally. Lorna Cox's 'One Step Ahead' is a poem about the married life of the author, and how she and her husband were 'pushed' into getting married by the family. Her story considers the 'good times' but also 'jealousy' and the final 'bust up'. 'Nobody's Child' is the title of Kathy Richards's life story, the story of a child taken from her family at the age of four. Kathy says that one reason for writing her story is to tell people that "despite all that has happened, I have survived" (215). Kathy's life and her story adds fuel to the fire that the damage of past policies still impacts on people's lives today.

The only Queensland contribution in the anthology comes from Althea Illin (Kalkadoon) with her story 'Time for A Change', which begins with her family tree and where it all began in Yarrabah, about forty miles from Cairns. Althea's story goes on to relive the loves and indeed lost loves of her life, and many women – regardless of heritage - will share her passion (if not her practical moves).

With the government announcement of the dismantling of ATSIC in June 2004, and the introduction of the NT Intervention in June 2007, the relentless disempowerment of Indigenous people continued. Reading anthologies then, such as *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up* (Older Women's Network, 2003), provides an important reminder of the inner strength of Indigenous women in their roles as aunts, mothers, grandmothers, sisters and friends, and their commitment to those roles in the development of our communities, regardless of government policy.



In her introduction to *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up*, proudly produced by the Older Women's Network of NSW, Betty Little (Yorta Yorta) writes:

Early in the 21st century, we bring heaps of knowledge from our heritage and many experiences we've had to face in our own country since 1788. It is with this wealth that we contribute to the great diversity of our Nation'. (7)

That wealth of experience and knowledge is shared through stories of controlled lives on missions, stories of loss and separation, domestic violence, poverty and discrimination. The stories are also of struggling and searching for identity. In Lorraine McGee-Sippel's poem 'Belonging Where?' she writes:

Too black to be white. Too white to be black. Caught in the middle Belonging no where. (123)

These are also stories of survival, of strength and dignity, and of the

sheer will to maintain a place in this country, a place largely denied through ongoing government policies of cultural genocide. They are memoirs of women who continue to be advocates for justice and equity in their communities, locally and nationally.

Wiradjuri Elder, the now late Sylvia Scott writes, 'Our people have always been great yarners. They would sit under a gum tree and talk and I think we inherited that. Our stories are our survival' (137). This anthology demonstrates the truth of her claim.

The women in this book are from the Wiradjuri, Kamilaroi, Yorta Yorta, Bundjalung and other nations. Together they highlight the diversity of Aboriginal nations but also the shared experiences of being born black in Australia.

Wiradjuri woman Maisie Cavanaugh writes, 'People will speak up, and speak out, if they know they are being listened to and Aboriginal people have had 200 years of not being listened to' (142). It is because of anthologies like *Steppin Up*' and *Speakin' Out* that people are listening now, and why such collections remain relevant.

This anthology of fifteen women (thirteen Indigenous and two honorary gubba-rigines) is testament to the strength of Indigenous women in Australia, and each personal story is told honestly, with humour and dignity, passion and detail, and at times reliving pain and trauma in order to explain the significance of family and individual strength in identity.

Tell Me My Mother: Stories of Campbelltown's Aboriginal Women (Campbelltown Arts Centre, 2007) can be summed up as stories of resilience and inspiration. It is a collection of oral histories with fifteen local Aboriginal women residing in the Campbelltown District (NSW). They are stories that resolve issues for each of these women, and help the younger generations understand the lives we are fortunate to have today.

Many stories revolve around the history of the local areas these women have come from across the State and even Victoria, and life under the Protection Act, including mission life, as well the negative effects of alcohol and domestic violence on the family. Most stories end with life today in Campbelltown and the roles the women play in community activities.

Most of the stories in *Tell Me My Mother* are about reconciling the past for these women. Marnie Williamson says, 'Reconciliation must begin within ourselves. As elders, we must strive to reconcile our own past, somehow make sense of it, or we'll always live in this void shadows in our own land' (45). In trying to reconcile such stories of hardship, the women also recall the funnier side of life and growing up, such as the first time Verna Barker saw a plane and how she screamed thinking it was aliens coming to get her. Some stories provide local history such as Glenda Chalker writing about living at Pheasant's Nest, so named because it's the first place lyrebirds were recorded. The Lyrebird is also Glenda's totem, so she feels especially at home at Pheasant's Nest.

Each short autobiographical narrative in the anthology is complimented by a black and white photographic portrait taken by Mervyn Bishop (best known for his iconic photo of then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam pouring red earth through the hands of Vincent Lingiari marking the return of Gurindji land in 1974).

This small volume was published by the Campbelltown Arts Centre, which coordinates the Campbelltown Intergenerational Aboriginal Project, through which this book was completed.

Other anthologies of women's writing published in Australia include *The Strength of Us as Women : Black Women Speak* (Ginninderra Press, 2000), edited by Kerry Reed-Gilbert; *Mangal-Bungal : Clever With Hands : Baskets and Stories Woven by Some of the Women of Hopevale, Cape York Peninsula* (Hopevale Community Learning Centre Aboriginal Corporation, ca.2006); and the well-known *Black Chicks Talking*, an anthology of nine interviews conducted by Leah Purcell (Wakka Wakka) with Aboriginal women from around the country (Hodder Headline, 2002).



*Genre-focused Anthologies - Poetry, Novels, Short Stories and Plays
1998-2008*

Anthologies

Genre focused anthologies are also popular. Perhaps one of the most well-known anthologies of poetry is *Inside Black Australia : An Anthology of Aboriginal Poetry*, edited by Kevin Gilbert and published by Penguin in the Bicentennial Year of 1988. Winner of a Human Rights Award (Poetry) in the same year, the volume included works by Jack Davis, Eva Johnson (Malak Malak), Charmaine Papertalk-Green (Wajarri/Bardimaya) and Oodgeroo Noonuccal, to name just a few of the contributors.

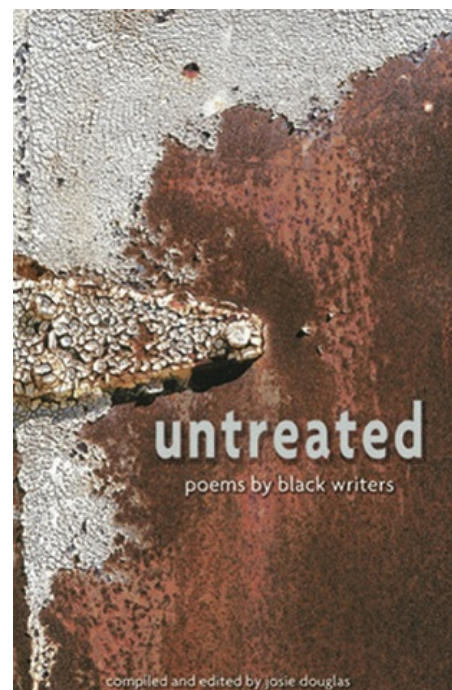
Other anthologies include the titles *Spirit Song : A Collection of Aboriginal Poetry*, compiled by Thungutti / Bundjalung author Lorraine Mafi-Williams (Omnibus Books, 1993) and *Tagarena a Tear : A Collection of Poems by Aboriginal People* (Education Department Tasmania, 1988).

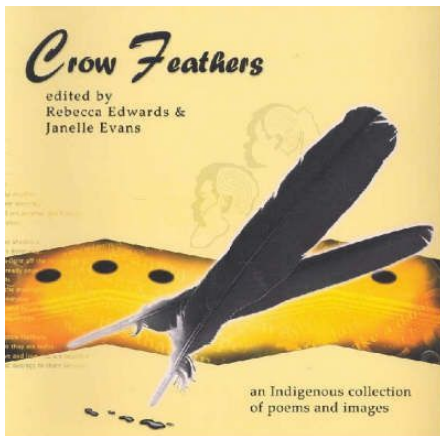
Rimfire : Poetry from Aboriginal Australia (Magabala Books, 2000) brought the work of three poets together: Romaine Moreton (Goernpil), Alf Taylor and Michael J. Smith (Kija). Moreton's collection *The Callused Stick of Wanting* (1995) was self-published and she has since had another collection of poetry published, *Post Me to the Prime Minister* (IAD Press, 2005). The selection of Taylor's work in *Rimfire* appears under the title of Singer Songwriter, and had also previously been published under that title. The selection of Smith's poetry in *Rimfire* was previously unpublished and appears in the collection under the title of *Calling Thought*. The packaging of these three authors by one publishing house and in one volume brought some of the works back into print and brought each author a wider audience.

In 2001, *Untreated : Poems by Black Writers*, compiled by Josie Douglas, was published by Jukurrpa Books in Alice Springs. In the Foreword, Kim Scott wrote:

Reading this collection I was reminded that although many of us are not accepted for 'what we are', it's also true that what we might be is yet to be realised. Many of these poems help consolidate our pasts, and step toward a future in diverse ways, together. (vii)

Untreated presents an impressive line up of poets, including work by Lisa Bellear, John Muk Muk Burke (Wiradjuri), Graeme Dixon (Noongar), Anita Heiss, Ruby Langford Ginibi, K. C. Laughton, Melissa Lucashenko, Romaine Moreton, Bruce Pascoe (Boonwurrung), Boori Pryor (Kungganji / Birrigubba), Kerry Reed-Gilbert, Alf Taylor, Pat Torres and Samuel Wagan Watson.





In 2003, *Black Ink*, the Indigenous writing, illustrating and publishing project based in Townsville, released *Crow Feathers : An Indigenous Collection of Poems and Images* featuring twenty-eight emerging writers and artists.

The collection looks at the consequences of invasion and colonisation - the loss and the fear, the loathing and inequality, the displacement of Aboriginal people and the ongoing struggle for place – exemplified in the poem by *John Lewis Clark* (Gunditjmara) that honours his grandparents and what they fought for “in the country that belongs to them”. A tribute to family members and ancestors was a common theme throughout the collection, as in *Kathleen Davies*’ (Wiradjuri) “The Storyteller” and *Lena Adams*’s (Thanikutti Yapangathi) dedication of her poem ‘The Aboriginal Artist’ to her husband.

The sad realities of Aboriginal life also resonate throughout *Crow Feathers* and include references to life in jail, with *Kevin Brown*’s ‘My Incarceration’ and *Colin J Daisy*’s ‘Behind a Smile’. *John W. Paiwan* questions reality in ‘Point of View’ as he writes:

*I thought all men were equal
Is that the dream of the poor and the few?
In this person eat person society
Where money says, ‘I’m better than you. (27)*

As with much Indigenous writing, regardless of genre, identity and all that it entails comes through strongly in this collection with *Lindsay Ohl*’s poem ‘Lost’:

*Who is our tribe?
What are our customs?
Do I have a totem?
What’s our bloodline or skin group? (12)*

Similarly, *Janelle Evans* writes about loss of identity in her poem ‘Pain’:

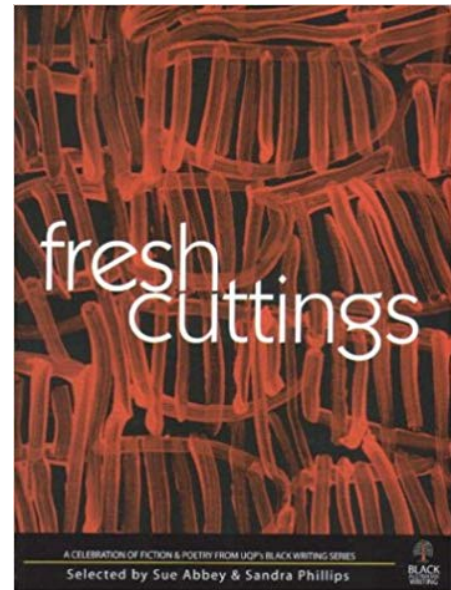
*Have you ever felt the pain
of not knowing who you are
of not knowing who to tell? (32)*

Country, land and landscape also feature heavily in *Crow Feathers* with, for example, *Marian J Go Sam*’s ‘This Great South Land’ and *Aaron Elliot*’s ‘Listen and Learn’ urging the reader to be wise enough to be aware of the power of the land. Accompanying the poetry are black and white images by ten visual artists, including *Bindi Waugh* (Bundjalung) who uses her artwork to explore the Indigenous way of living within our environment and the importance of it to all people.

As a publisher, Black Ink recognises the importance of Indigenous community languages and aims to support individuals and groups in their diverse publishing projects including books and audio/visual and digital media. Copyright on stories and artwork published by Black Ink belongs to the artists who create them, and families or communities will be considered too if appropriate when fees or royalties are paid.

With the release of *Fresh Cuttings : A Celebration of Fiction and Poetry From UQP's Black Writing Series*, (2003) the publisher strategically took the most popular form for Indigenous writers (poetry), and joined it with the more emerging form (the novel), and combined the best of both into one dynamic collection of writing. All contributors in this collection are winners or highly commended authors of the David Unaipon Award, established in 1988 in recognition of Australia's first Indigenous author to publish a book, Unaipon's *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines* (1930). The collection is a strong example of the wealth of literary and creative talent in the Indigenous writing community and how it has evolved over time and the past decades in particular.

The authors include Lisa M Bellear, Vivienne Cleven, Doris Pilkington Garimara, Herb Wharton (Kooma), Alexis Wright, Melissa Lucashenko, John Muk Muk Burke, Elizabeth Hodgson (Wiradjuri) and Samuel Wagan Watson.



Vivienne Cleven's *Bitin' Back* (UQP, 2001) winner of the David Unaipon Award in 2000, is a hilarious look at life and the issue of homophobia in a country town called Mandamooka. The humour grabs at the reader through the voice of the narrator, bingo-playing matriarch Mavis Dooley. A taste of this book in *Fresh Cuttings* will have readers reaching for the novel immediately. Cleven's other contribution from *Her Sister's Eye* (UQP, 2002) demonstrates the ability of the author to move from humour to drama as she writes of the shame of another small rural community and its ongoing and hidden assault on children.

Dreaming in Urban Areas by Lisa M Bellear and the poem "Mother-in-Law" included in the *Fresh Cuttings* anthology is a disturbing reminder of the level of domestic violence prevalent in our communities and the role women must play in protecting each other, themselves and their children. The most telling lines in that poem are:

... Larry knows the score
There's a train, or there's a police van
It's up to him (206)

From his collection *Land Window*, John Graham's 'Living Land' provides a reminder to the conscience of the average Aussie of the realities and needs of the social, cultural and living environment and our role in protecting them all. Graham

says:

*It's understandable to build a future
Strong and stable
But not at the expense
Of the living children and living land
For life starts with them. (184)*

Short Stories

In terms of complete anthologies devoted solely to the 'short story' there are few. Most short stories are published in multi-genre anthologies. Having said that, these collections published are strong in voice and name and include: *Skins : Contemporary Indigenous Writing* (Jukurrpa Books, 2000) which included stories by Sally Morgan (no doubt the biggest name and seller of Indigenous literature) and Alexis Wright who won the Miles Franklin Award for *Carpentaria* in 2007.

Across Country : Stories from Aboriginal Australia (ABC Books, 1998) included thirty-one short stories from writers across Australia including Bruce Pascoe, Alf Taylor, Alexis Wright, Bill Rosser (Wadjalang author who won the Kate Challis RAKA Award for Creative Prose in 1991 for the title *Up Rode the Troopers : The Black Police in Queensland* (UQP, 1990), and Rosemary van den Berg.

Plays

Currency Press as the main publisher of Australian plays has also produced collections of Aboriginal plays in their titles: *Plays From Black Australia : Introduction* (1989); *Blak Inside : 6 Indigenous Plays from Victoria* (2002); and more recently *Contemporary Indigenous Plays* (2007) which includes the scripts for *Bitin' Back* (based on the novel by Vivienne Cleven); *Black Medea* (by Wesley Enoch); *King Hit* (Palku playwright David Milroy and Noongar writer Geoffrey Narkle); *Windmill Baby* (David Milroy and Walmajarri writer and actor Josie Ningali Lawford); and *Rainbow's End* by Jane Harrison (Muruwari).

In 2002, Playlab also published *Only Gammon: Three Plays From Kooemba Jdarra* which included Yarnin' Up (Anthony Newcastle and Mike Dickinson), Binni's Backyard (Therese Collie and Nadine McDonald) and Goin' to the Island (Therese Collie).

Conclusion

When considering the role of and place for anthologies, the question that needs to be asked is who benefits most: the writers or the readers? And what benefits have been gained in terms of the Indigenous literary canon itself?

Kim Scott in *Untreated* said:

Our audience is also diverse. Some of the voices in this anthology address those on 'the fringes'. But after such an audience has respectfully listened, to what extent do they remain on the fringe? Doesn't this act of communication mean the 'fringe', the boundary, has begun to move outward?' (vii)

Josie Douglas as co-editor of *Skins* adds a further perspective:

... Kateri and I hope to introduce Aboriginal writers to the writing of others outside their own nations as well as bringing them to the attention of a more general readership... They [the writers] challenge mainstream perceptions of Aboriginal literature, but also challenge our own communities and cultures by holding up a mirror to the spoken and unspoken realities of our own lives. ('Mirrored Images', x)

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