

UNESCO Observatory  
Multi-Disciplinary eJournal in  
the Arts

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# ***CREATING UTOPIA***

Imagining and Making Futures  
Art, Architecture and Sustainability

Lorne Sculpture Biennale Inaugural Conference 2018

Editor | Lindy Joubert

# UNESCO Observatory

## Multi-Disciplinary eJournal in the Arts

Volume 6 | Issue 1 | 2020

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### ABOUT THE E-JOURNAL

The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal that promotes multidisciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence. Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.

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### COVER IMAGE

Leon Walker

Photography at

The Lorne Sculpture

Biennale 2018

## EDITOR'S LETTER

The sixth Lorne Sculpture Biennale, March 2018, was a vibrant festival celebrating the best of Australian and international sculpture. The stunning Lorne foreshore became a picturesque pedestal for a curated landscape of sculptures, presented alongside an exciting program of events devoted to pressing global issues of nature and endangerment, under the distinguished curation and visionary direction of Lara Nicholls, curator at the NGA Canberra. The inaugural conference, *Creating Utopia Imagining and Making Futures: Art, Architecture and Sustainability* was held at Qdos Gallery, Lorne, as part of the Biennale's curatorial theme of 'Landfall, Nature + Humanity + Art'. Keynote and invited speakers – conservationists, visual artists, architects and academics – reflected on issues and processes of social and environmental degradation, transformation and regeneration. The presentations came from a diverse and thought-provoking range of viewpoints offering innovative, and well researched future directions to the world's mounting problems.

*Creating Utopia* examined the green revolution – greater than the industrial revolution and happening faster than the digital revolution. The speakers were introduced by the inimitable Design Professor, Chris Ryan, whose elegant and thoughtful comments to each presenter added a distinctive contribution. Mona Doctor-Pingel, an architect from Auroville, India delivered her keynote address, 'Journeying to Oneness through architecture in Auroville, South India', discussing the natural and built landscapes found in the unique, social utopia that is Auroville, with an emphasis on experimental building techniques using local materials and craft principles, inspired by biology. I would like to thank all the presenters for their valuable contributions and this issue, volume 6, issue 1 of the 'UNESCO journal, multi-disciplinary research in the arts' [www.unescoejournal.com](http://www.unescoejournal.com) is testament to their important research and life's work.

The conference was considered by all who attended to be a wonderful success. Inspired by the beautiful setting amidst the gum trees and singing birds surrounding the Qdos Gallery. Sincere thanks to all who attended, the excellent list of speakers, the team - Graeme Wilkie OAM for his overall, tireless support; Lara Nicholls the LSB curator for her helpful ideas and professionalism; Gillian Oliver for the superb food; Laurel Guymer, the behind the scenes angel of 'La Perouse' at Lorne who managed the bookings and accommodation and our diligent rapporteur, Jeremy Laing. The excellent Deakin intern student managed all computer glitches, problems and presentation hurdles. A very sincere thankyou to Evelyn Firstenberg who generously and professionally edited all the conference papers and most importantly, a very special thankyou to Seraphina Nicholls who has tirelessly and superbly designed and managed the collation and publication of this special issue. These people and others, the LSB committee and particularly Deakin University who gave generously for the LSB Education Program, enabled the 'Creating Utopia' conference to make a significant contribution to issues relating to climate change, environmental and global futures and the role of the arts and sustainable planning.

### Lindy Joubert

Immediate-Past President Lorne Sculpture Biennale  
[www.lornesculpture.com](http://www.lornesculpture.com)  
Founding Director, UNESCO Observatory Multi-Disciplinary Research in the Arts  
Editor-in-Chief UNESCO Observatory ejournal - <http://www.unescoejournal.com>  
Vice President, World Craft Council Asia Pacific Region, South Pacific  
Senior Fellow, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning  
The University of Melbourne  
Email: [lindyaj@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:lindyaj@unimelb.edu.au)  
Mobile: +61 (0)425 788 581



# Unnamed as Yet: Putting *Wadawurrung* meaning into the north gardens landscape of Ballarat

Kate Gerritsen  
Public Art Coordinator  
Ballarat City

Dr. David Jones  
Foundation Professor  
Deakin University

Mandy Nicholson  
Deakin University

Isobel Paton  
Director  
Basalt: art, landscape, sculpture

Gareth Powell  
Director  
Legals Lawyers & Baristers

Glenn Romanis  
Director  
Romanis Trinham Collaborations

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## ABSTRACT

As part of their strategic commitment to the recently approved Lake Wendouree Master Plan, the City of Ballarat has commissioned the formulation of a new Landscape Master Plan for the North Gardens precinct of the Lake. The City of Ballarat brief seeks to formulate a Wadawurrung cultural narrative and spatial arrangement for the Gardens that reflects and directly engages with one or more of their cultural stories, songlines and moiety animals, and lends a respectful visual and cultural relationship to the surrounding ancestral features of Mount Buninyong, Mount Warrenheip, Mullawallah Wetland, Lake Wendouree and Lake Burrumbeet. Importantly the brief is to formulate the canvas upon which future Indigenous-conceived sculptures will be ideated and situated, thus creating the first Indigenous-inspired sculpture landscape in Australia. This paper, prepared by the Indigenous-rich consultant team in conjunction with the Wadawurrung (Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation) and City of Ballarat, reviews the aspirations of the project together with these narratives and relationships in etching a design and master plan on the canvas. The paper considers the operational frame of the City of Ballarat and its aims, the position of nature through a Wadawurrung cultural lens in the ideation process and the cultural desires of the Wadawurrung community to the future of the North Gardens. It profiles the narratives being considered, as well as taking the audience through the community engagement process being explored with the Wadawurrung to realise a culturally respectful master plan. The paper title is deliberate because it reflects a yet to be named

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## KEYWORDS

Wadawurrung | Ingigeneity | Higher education | Support | Academic success | University | Cultural capital

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the many members of the Wadawurrung community in Ballarat and Geelong whom assisted in this project, together with staff from the City of Ballarat and the Ballarat Botanic Gardens, as well as Donna Thomas, Mark Richardson and staff at: the Wadawurrung (Wathaurong Aboriginal Corporation), the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, the Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-operative, the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, Deakin University, and Federation University Australia, all of whom are not named herein due to human ethics protocols, but their wise and thoughtful advice, yarns, wanderings and insights are gratefully appreciated.

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## BIOGRAPHIES

Kate Gerritsen is Public Art Co-Ordinator at the City of Ballarat, on Wadawurrung Country.

David S Jones is Foundation Professor of Planning & Landscape Architecture at Deakin University, in Geelong, on Wadawurrung Country.

Mandy Nicholson is a Wurundjeri woman, an artist, linguist and dancer, a PhD student at Deakin University, and a Director of Tharangalk Art, on Wurundjeri Country.

Isobel Paton is an artist and landscape architect, and a Director of Basalt: art, landscape, sculpture, in Wauron Ponds, on Wadawurrung Country.

Gareth Powell is a Wadawurrung man, a former Director of the Wadawurrung (Wathaurong Aboriginal Corporation), and Director of LLB (Legals Lawyers Barristers) Pty Ltd based in Canberra on Ngunnawal Country. Glenn

Glenn Romanis is an artist, and a Director of Romanis Trinham Collaborations, in Jan Juc, on Wadawurrung Country.

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## AWARDS

The North Gardens Landscape Master Plan project on the shores of Lake Wendouree in Ballarat has just received an 'Award of Excellence' (trans=top award) in the Cultural Heritage category of the 2020 Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Victoria State Awards. See: [https://youtu.be/GzJEgP9R0\\_A](https://youtu.be/GzJEgP9R0_A)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We wish to acknowledge and pay respect to the Elders, families and forebears of the Wadawurrung peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters that is the venue for this research and discussion, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the Australian continent, islands and adjacent seas, who remain the spiritual and cultural custodians of their lands and waters and who continue to practise their values, languages, beliefs and customs.

## Introduction

North Gardens represents a small 'jig-saw' piece of the larger Wadawurrung Country jig-saw puzzle. It is a 'puzzle' to recent colonists but to the Wadawurrung the landscape around Ballarat is their Country, their place that holds a mosaic of stories, narratives, songs, meanings, environmental and cultural knowledge (Powell 2018; Powell et al 2018; Powell & Jones 2018). Importantly, it is their Country, 'ownership' of which lies in their Creation Beings and not our Western sensibilities. Thus, Mullawallah's (Newton 2014) statement in 1884:

**"King Billy [Mullawallah] ... was in Ballarat the other day, and ... delivered a short lecture on the land question from his point of view. He said that the ground he then stood on was rightfully his property, of which he had been robbed by the white man, and it was the duty of the invaders, therefore, to pay him rent as long as he and his fellow blackfellows lived, at any rate."**

**Mullawallah in Anon 1884: 4.**

Mullawallah (c.1820-1896) is a recognised past Elder of the Wadawurrung Keyeet balug clan whose lands comprise the larger Ballarat region today (Newton 2014). It is apt that he was quoted in this context, expressing in English tongue whilst dressed in English costume with tie, his cultural association with these lands and waters that comprise Ballarat, Lake Wendouree and the project site.

This project involves the Wadawurrung people ('the red soil people'), Wadawurrung Country, Wadawurrung Indigenous knowledge systems and environmental knowledge, and accordingly, their consultation (Powell 2015a). This article is written through a Wadawurrung lens and should not be interpreted as being generic for all Aboriginal communities and Country's.

Wadawurrung Country consists of the lands and waters stretching from the settlements Beaufort to Ballarat ('resting place' or 'bended elbow' at Ballarat) to Djilang (Geelong) to Werribee ('spine' on the Iramoo plains) to Kuaka-dorla (Anglesea) and includes the Bellarine Peninsula (Powell 2015c; Powell 2015d; Powell et al 2018; Withers 1887: 13-14), as depicted in Figure 1. The City of Ballarat municipality is accordingly within this Country (and part of the neighbouring Dja Dja Wurrung Country).

Figure 1:  
Wadawurrung Country  
Source: City of Greater  
Geelong (2016)  
The lands of the  
Wadawurrungo, adapted from  
Clark (1990),  
accessed 1 March 2018.



The project has been initiated in response to the 2017 City of Ballarat tender submissions for the North Gardens Indigenous Sculpture Park (City of Ballarat 2017b). The aim of the tender was to formulate a Landscape Design Master Plan for the North Gardens precinct of Lake Wendouree “to guide the future development of a sculpture park featuring the work of Aboriginal artists” in a manner respectful to Wadawurrung culture and their Country (City of Ballarat 2017b: 3).

This paper surveys the engagement process and design thinking that occurred with this project. The latter is very much Wadawurrung inspired but has regard to operational issues like public art formulation and installation, urban habitat management strategies, the regeneration of the existing landscape, human interpretation and engagement strategies and opportunities, and avenues for which the new Gardens may serve as an important statement, gathering and renewal place, in the spirit of mutual cultural co-operation with the Ballarat and Wadawurrung communities.

The North Gardens Indigenous Sculpture Park (City of Ballarat 2017) proposal arose from the recommendations of the broader Lake Wendouree Master Plan (City of Ballarat with Urban Initiatives 2017), that was adopted by the City of Ballarat in late 2017. The Master Plan concluded that “Lake Wendouree is recognised by the Ballarat community as the cultural heart of Ballarat. Both its indigenous and European histories should be appropriately protected, enhanced, acknowledged and celebrated” (City of Ballarat with Urban Initiatives 2017: 37). It recommended the implementation of a ‘Resting Place Sculpture Trail’ concept in the North Gardens wetlands area as a strategy of celebrating the significance of the Lake to the Wadawurrung peoples and local Indigenous (enveloping all non-Wadawurrung) residents in the region and as visitors, as well as the significance to the broader community of the region and visitors. This concept was widely supported by community participants, local residents and the expert panel involved in the Master Plan consultation process (City of Ballarat with Urban Initiatives 2017: 10-13, 15, 38, 49-51, 66, 72). Such a strategy also aligns to the municipality’s Reconciliation Action Plan (City of Ballarat 2014).



Integral in the Sculpture Park was a conscious requirement “to celebrate, recognise and adequately consult in the development of an Indigenous Sculpture Park ... [to] ensure ... [that the] Plan ... incorporates local Aboriginal stories and aspirations” and to “Identify features and community values that have historical, cultural, environmental, and landscape significance, with particular regard to Aboriginal heritage” (City of Ballarat with Urban Initiatives 2017: 3).

These objectives were equal to, if not more important than, traditional municipal concerns requiring attention to community engagement, staging, maintenance, urban habitat management issues, and the plan integral within the overall Master Plan (City of Ballarat with Urban Initiatives 2017).

At the same time, the Ballarat Botanic Gardens has also been reviewing its living collections and examining master plan options for their future development and growth (John Patrick Pty Ltd in association with Allom Lovell & Associates Pty Ltd 1993; Positive Space 1995; Richardson 2014; Mark Richardson pers.comm. 2018; Donna Thomas pers.comm. 2018), of which some draft recommendations broach into North Gardens. Such recommendations include revegetation, interpretation and education, Wadawurrung nomenclature, and strategic species re-establishment including the Basalt Peppercress (*Lepidium hyssopifolium* (Tumino 2010). Additionally, the entire Lake edge is host to the rare Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) (Atkinson et al 2008; Loos 2000; McNally 1960; Petersen 1965; Seebeck 2000; Smith 2017; Trocini et al 2015; Williams & Serena 2017).



Figure 2:  
The existing North  
Gardens Wetlands.  
Source: authors.

In 1999, the City of Ballarat took action to transform this long-forgotten segment of the Lake Wendouree Park Lands that was susceptible to infrequent ponding and had witnessed mixed Gardenesque beautification measures, into a wetland liked to a biofilter and stormwater management system. The Wetlands (depicted in Figure 2) were constructed in 1999-2000 by the Catchment Management Authority with the City of Ballarat, to service and treat stormwater originating from the increasing Wendouree suburbia to the north of the project site, before such waters were artificially released by drains into Lake Wendouree. This enabled a regulated flushing of the waters, biofiltration of the water, and an opportunity to ensure water security levels for the Lake, given past contemporary drying-out periods.

The works included: the creation of a network of water bodies with suitable aquatic reeds and grasses to improve water quality entering the lake; planting of indigenous trees, shrubs and grasses to increase the wetland's biodiversity; establishment of a network of granitic sand paths and timber boardwalks to access the wetlands area; installation of interpretive signs including integration of a local foods trail; construction of a gross pollutant trap to capture litter entering the wetlands system; improvement in movement linkages with the adjacent Fairyland through raising of roadside asphalt; and the provision of a bird habitat through plantings, including ensuring selective openings to avail public viewing of bird life.

The majority of these 1999-proposed works were implemented, resulting in improvements in water quality and pollutant mediation. However, the landscape is now witnessing senescent, a lack of succession of indigenous vegetation plantings; an unclear 'local foods trail'; concentrated bird damage of select areas and vegetation species; Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*) commuting routes between the Wetlands and Fairylands directly across the heavily-trafficked Wendouree Parade, with resultant bird deaths or injuries; as well as hosting a set of poles authored by Aboriginal man Tom Clark relocated to the site from a past Ballarat Begonia Festival activity.

## Singing Narratives

To sing a narrative in Wadawurrung culture is to respectfully engage with Wadawurrung Country, their Country, and their Wadawurrung identity.

Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose has written that "Country, to use the philosopher's term, is a 'nourishing terrain'. Country is a place that gives and receives life. Not just imagined or represented, it is lived in and lived with:

*"Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place, such as one might indicate with terms like 'spending a day in the country' or 'going up the country'. Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart's ease"*

(Rose 1996: 7).

Thus *Country* is a place + identity + Indigenous knowledge + responsibility/obligation.

Indigenous Knowledge is located in the being that is Country. But one needs to understand that the concept of Country cannot be comprehensively translated as an 'environment'. Therefore, while Country may be an area of land that is overseen and managed by an Aboriginal group, like the Wadawurrung people, with Country-specific Creation Being divested culture and language, the relationship between Wadawurrung people and their Country extends beyond our Western sense of time. In this lens, time is sung, is the singing, is the stories embodied in, and specific to, Country that is the spiritual source of knowledge essential to Wadawurrung past, present, future generations. In this sense, Country is alive and intelligent, and provides everything that Wadawurrung people need. So while Country exists physically 'outside' as a living place that the Wadawurrung (and animals and Creation Beings) inhabit, it is also a venue and place through which one learns culture and respects being human in a proper and respectful way. Country provides everything the Wadawurrung need for their life, to curate their lands and waters, to feed humans and animals alike, offers language and nomenclature, and provides the 'operational' structure to their society today and into the future in anticipation of the return of their Creation Beings. It is all a 'design', as a 'masterplan' (Powell & Jones 2018).

'Design' is not simply the 'products', conventional Western brief deliverables, but equally about each individual person(s) / animal(s) who 'designs', as well as about the locus of that 'design'. Thus, Wadawurrung culture exists in patterns of relationship with their Country, and any North Gardens Wetlands Landscape Master Plan (Nicholson et al 2018) resides upon an existing 'design' whose future needs to be informed, mediated and guided into the future by this 'design' "to ensure that any works undertaken at the North Gardens connect deeply with local Aboriginal cultural heritage" respectfully (City of Ballarat 2017: 4).

## Designing Narratives

Narratives are landscapes. For the Wadawurrung, they possess sites, accretions of history, possess patterns and sequences, and engage with and respond to attributes / qualities and the processes of landscape formation and change (Powell 2018; Powell et al 2018; Powell & Jones 2018). In this sense, stories, narratives, explanations, text, song, story, voice and meaning 'narrate', whether in an oral or non-oral mode(s) or via voice or non-voice, that is computed to Western language and text.

Landscape narratives (Potteiger & Purinton 1998) embody a responsive relationship and engagement between place + human + animal + time. Landscape designs, or master plans, textual histories, etc., are all dependent upon a 'reading' of place and its resources, its contextualisation. In this way, as humans, whether Western or Wadawurrung, we 'write' narratives (whether fiction or non-fiction), stories, songs and myths, and we use these to locate ourselves in time, place, community and meaning.

To explain, Table 1 summarises Western Story and Narrative Distinctions and Relationships, and Table 2 summarises Western and Aboriginal Tangible and Intangible Story and Narrative Distinctions and Relationships.

Strategy		Form	Shape	Types
Narrative		Story	Content	Events, characters, settings
		Telling	Expression	Verbal, dance, landscape, film, manifestation

Table 1: Western Story and Narrative Distinctions and Relationships. Source: Potteiger & Purinton 1998: 11, who adapted it from Chatman 1978, 26).

Strategy	Structure	Form	Shape	Types
	Human Tangible	Story	Content	Events, characters, settings
		Telling	Expression	Voice, dance, landscape, film, manifestation
Narrative	Non-Human Tangible	Story	Content	Events, characters, settings
		Telling	Expression	Voice, dance, landscape, manifestation
	Intangible	Story	Content	Poetics, sounds, events, characters, settings
		Telling	Expression	Voices, patterns, landscape, manifestations,

Table 2: Western and Aboriginal Tangible and Intangible Story and Narrative Distinctions and Relationships. Source: Authors, adapted from Potteiger & Purinton 1998: 11, who adapted it from Chatman 1978, 26).

Potteiger and Purinton (1998) established a set of landscape narrative typologies determining that “The narratives of the world are numberless”. They can be “carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. cultural back grounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself” (Barthes 1997: 79).

Table 3 summarises Potteiger and Purinton’s (1998: 11) translation of Western Landscape Narrative Typology.

Landscape Narrative Type	Typology Explanation
<b>Narrative Experiences</b>	Routines, rituals, or events that represent or follow narrative structures, e.g., festivals, processions, reenactments, pilgrimage, daily journeys, crossing the threshold.
<b>Associations and Experiences</b>	Elements in the landscape that become connected with experience, event, history, religious allegory, or other forms of narrative.
<b>Memory Landscapes</b>	Places that serve as the tangible locus of memory, both public and personal. This may develop through implicit association or by intentional acts of remembering (and forgetting); e.g., monuments, museums, preserved buildings, districts and regions.
<b>Narrative Setting and Topos</b>	A setting is the spatial and temporal circumstances of a narrative. It can recede to the background or figure prominently. A narrative topos is a highly conventionalized setting linked with particular events, which is evoked repeatedly in a culture’s narratives. In Western culture epiphanies occur on mountaintops, and chance meetings take place on the road.
<b>Genres of Landscape Narratives</b>	Places shaped by culturally defined narrative forms or ‘genres’, e.g., legend, epic, biography, myth.
<b>Processes</b>	Actions or events that are caused by some agency (wind, water, economics) and occur in succession or proceed in stages toward some end (progress; entropy). Erosion, growth, succession, restoration, demolition and weathering are visible records of change that inscribe time into landscape form.
<b>Interpretive Landscapes</b>	Elements and programs that tell what happened in a place. The intent is to make existing or ongoing narratives intelligible.
<b>Narrative as Form Generation</b>	Using stories as a means of giving order (selecting, sequencing, etc.) or developing images in the design process. It is not necessary that the story be explicitly legible in the final design form.
<b>Storytelling Landscapes</b>	Places designed to tell specific stories with explicit references to plot, scenes, events, character, etc. The stories may be either existing literary or cultural narratives or produced by the designer.

Table 3: Western Landscape Narrative Typology. Source: Potteiger & Purinton 1998: 11.

If we position such a typology in Aboriginal thought, then contemporary Australian architecture, landscape design and landscape architecture practice is witnessing Aboriginal culture, or Country-specific culture, being 'designed' or 're-designed' through one of more of the following themes:

- Stories (Histories / Events / Incidents)
- Creation Being Myths (Stories / Characters)
- Animals (Tangible / Intangible)
- Symbols (Art / Iconography)
- Geographical Features
- Place (Ceremonial)
- Place (Non-Ceremonial)
- Night landscape / Stars
- Names / Nomenclature
- Seasons
- Life Culture
- Land Custodianship & Healing

of which Stories, Creation Being Myths, Animals, Symbols, Geographical Features, and Place are the primary design narrative inspirations; Night landscape / Stars, Names / Nomenclature, and Seasons are the secondary design narration inspirations; and Life Culture and Land Custodianship / Healing are the tertiary or use applied/explored design narration inspirations. Evidence of this can be sighted in Pieris et al (2014).

Historically, approaches to design by Australian architecture, landscape design and landscape architecture practitioners for Aboriginal clients have predominantly focused upon unravelling and expressing a primary Aboriginal design narrative. Such a narrative has drawn inspiration(s) from a client culture and what that client orally (tells) [and graphically] articulates (story) to the consultant(s), or what inspiration emerges from the preliminary (and successive) listening and discussion processes. Such a design inspiration strategy has had a tendency to draw reference or inspiration from a single 'actor', from one or several story-telling voices, and / or from a graphic reference or image. The 'actor' can be location specific, can be variable in location or dynamic in journey mode, but can also be plural in 'actors', recalling the intersections of 'actors' and locations.

The secondary design inspiration strategy has tended to be derived from a process of living in a culture. It tells of the process of living, or a segment or segments of that process, or the art of living that process.

Rare is the tertiary design inspiration strategy that considers the culture as a system, within its own 'scientific' lens.

The elements of these primary inspiration(s) strategies are designs that draw reference from:



The elements of these primary inspiration(s) strategies are designs that draw reference from:

- A story, or a segment of that story
- A myth, or a segment of that myth, that can also be a songline or a segment of that songline
- An animal, being a moiety character or an actor in a story or myth
- A star, or a set of stars that envelop a story or a myth;
- A place, being a point of reference in a story or a myth, that does not necessarily have to be a geographical feature nor have a defined scale; and/or
- A geographical feature, being a point in the location that hosts a feature like a hill, rock, cave, billabong, stream watercourse, water fall or coastal cliff.

The secondary are:

- A seasonal calendar
- A thematic approach linked to food harvesting and / or the artefact construction/ fabrication to enable food harvesting; and / or
- A celebratory place, being both the place as well as the event, as well as the act of 'singing' the land and the event.

A subtle characteristic, little discussed, is the temporality of the design inspiration strategy. The assumption taken in many Aboriginal-responsive designs, and the way they are presented to the visitor audience, is that the primary and secondary strategies are specific in time, content, and environment (vegetation, micro-climate, etc.) and thus static as distinct from dynamic. This is ironic because Aboriginal culture is dynamic, positioned in past present future, and has no defined end point.

Thus, contemporary architecture, landscape design and landscape architecture 'designs' need to embrace primary or secondary themes to be dynamic, they are not just now, as in 2018, or post-European invasion or pre-European invasion. Instead, they should be dynamic, adaptive, resilient, as well as being pliable. They should be respectful of a long historical time (now back to 40,000 or 60,000 years), short in historical time (the last 200 years), and or sketch an historical time into the future.

An additional facet little comprehended by Australian architecture, landscape design and landscape architecture practitioners is the listening and discussing process needed in both the design theme(s) encapturisation process, and in the design exposition phase; and how the design narrative is translated and conveyed to an audience, in that this one design is more often a segment within a theme, a page in a story. Accordingly, what is ideated and expressed may be a page in time, space, story or culture – singular rather than plural – and one that is simple Western abstraction of an Aboriginal Country and / or specific Aboriginal client / community.

The complexity of the foregoing critique lies in the notion of Country. Country is a Western term appropriated by Aboriginal communities to express their interpretation of place.

A 'healthy' or 'good' Country is one where all the tangible and intangible elements do their activities respectfully and in harmony. Harmony equals the 'nourishment'. Rose (1996: 10) observes that,

*"... because there is no site, no position, from which the interest of one can be disengaged from the interests of others in the long term. Self-interest and the interest of all of the other living components of country (the self-interest of kangaroos, barramundi, eels and so on), cannot exist independently of each other in the long term. The interdependence of all life within country constitutes a hard but essential lesson."*

Rose (1996: 10)

Change one variable in the interdependence, such as removing a natural predator, or constructing a roadway, or planting an incorrect plant species, then one changes the interdependence and 'nourishment' process and its continuum.

~

'Destroy' one component of Country and you ultimately destroy yourself and Country.

## Listening to *Country*

For the North Gardens Wetlands, the consultant team has sought to listen. Listen to both the Wadawurrung community and to the place, the Country. The former has involved listening to the art of storytelling, the nature of stories and the nature of narrating, listening about the moral protocols quietly embedded in these stories and narratives, and watching for the non-expressed and expressed stress points and subtle points embedded in the stories and narratives. The latter has involved a set of interpretative and experiential on-site wanderings to quietly navigate through the place to appreciate its intangible narratives, modes, visual connections, and opportunities.

A clear thread in the listening process has been to not latch onto, and be philosophically structured by, conventional or identifiable Wadawurrung / Aboriginal design themes (stories, myths, characters, animals, etc.). In addition, it should be structured and elevate 'formal' Wadawurrung cultural practices, like the activity of women's food harvesting.

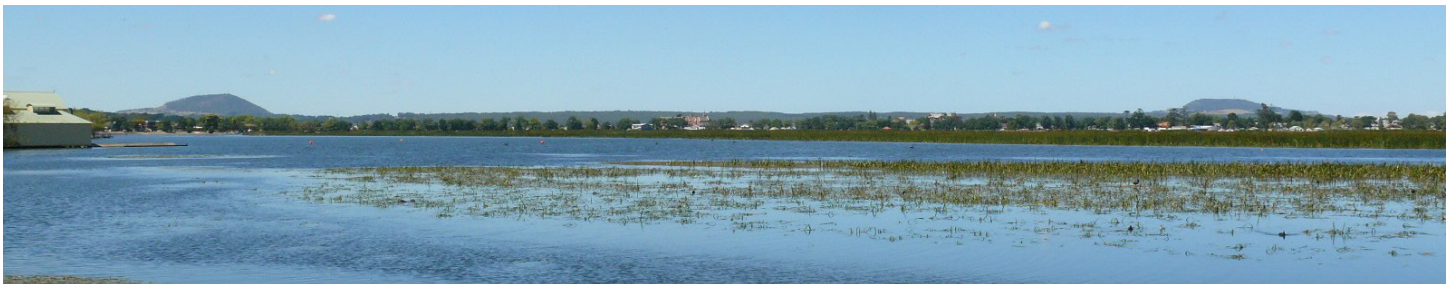


Figure 3:  
Warrenyeep (Mount Warrenheip) [left] and Bonan Youang (Buninyong) [right] from the Fairlands of Lake Wendouree, a vista that can be sighted from the North Gardens Wetlands.  
Source: the authors.

Instead, a clear theme that cascaded from the listening process with the Wadawurrung was to comprehend the geo-biological context of North Gardens as a sequence of a 'series of food-ponds' in a 'Living Station'; to articulate their traditional seasonal movement systems and their spatial sequences; and particularly to heal the place to bring it back to the 'living supermarket' it once was. This is encapsulated in Figure 4 that explains the seasonal movements of the Wadawurrung in their Ballaraat region being linked to potable water + available plant and animal food resource harvesting capabilities.

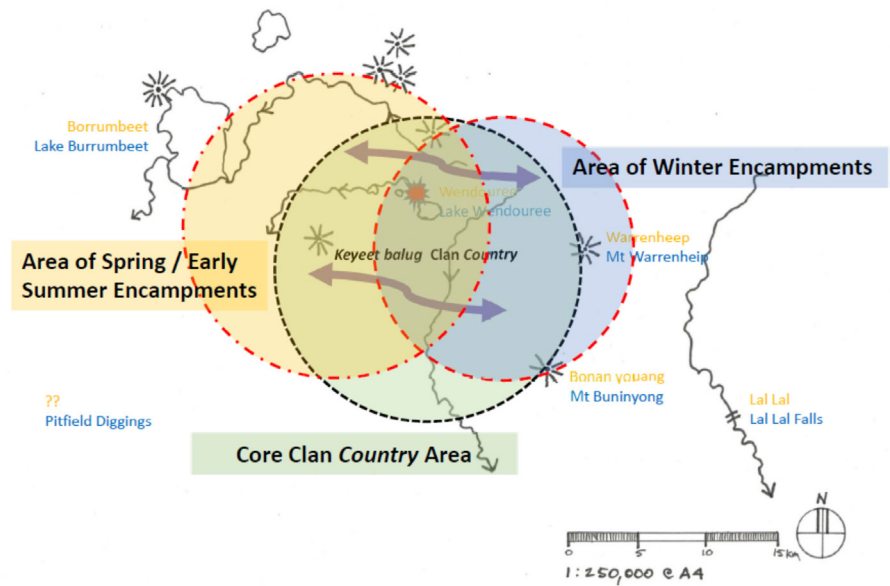


Figure 4:  
Keelup baluk clan Country  
seasonal movement  
patterns.  
Source: authors.

This experiential listening of the place identified the need to heal (biologically and human well-being), and to enable quality successional Indigenous plant growth to enhance and diversify the biodiversity of the place. The philosophical context of this conclusion is that many of the native plants (as distinct from Indigenous plants), planted in the 1999-2001 period at the Gardens lack a consistent Indigenous volcanic plains species ecological community profile, and have as yet not been managed or fired to enable quality vegetation regeneration and succession. Therefore, a landscape with limited biodiversity accommodation possibilities has been 'created' or 'designed'. This is affecting the limited fish profile, the over-populations of Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*) and Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*), the absence of Indigenous grasses and bulbous herbs like the Murnong (*Microseris walteri* syn. *lanceolata* or *Microseris scapigera*) (Gott 1983; Walsh 2016) or Vanilla Lily (*Arthropodium milleflorum*), the restricted opportunities for species like the Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) (Atkinson et al 2008; McNally 1960; Petersen 1965; Seebeck 2000; Trocini et al 2015; Williams & Serena 2017) or the Basalt Peppergrass (*Lepidium hyssopifolium*) (Tumino 2010) to gain / re-gain a population foothold.

Therefore, the unfolding North Gardens Wetlands design narrative is primarily one of a cultural responsibility of healing. Accordingly, urban habitat renewal is essential, but the renewal and design strategy needs to link to the 'series of food-ponds'.

Secondary is the modifications of the place to accommodate Wadawurrung and Aboriginal events and cultural activities; to host sculpture (permanent, temporary, and ephemeral); to scaffold species, plant use and gathering, visual connectivities; potable water access; and an opportunity to partake in traditional agricultural and ceremonial practices and activities. Tertiary is any formal 'celebration' of Wadawurrung culture and environmental knowledge and practice through tangible, tactile, physical means including signage.

The consultation process, from December 2017 to April 2018, for this project has involved a series of discussions on-site and in-office with representatives of the Wadawurrung community. The former included on-site wanderings and listenings, and discussions with multiple representatives including Elders, as well as a Smoking Ceremony to cleanse the site of any negative spirits or incidents. The latter has involved in-office listenings and discussions with representatives of the Wadawurrung in the Wadawurrung (Wathaurong Aboriginal Corporation) offices. Some on-site wanderings and listenings also involved several Aboriginal representatives from the wider Ballarat community.

The threads in those listenings revealed and cast aside different thematic responses to the place, and identified a design strategy with the theme of 'Caring for Country' or healing, notionally characterised by a 'series of food-ponds' narrative.

It is helpful to explain how this specific narrative was realised, and where it sits within Wadawurrung culture (Powell 2018; Powell et al 2018; Powell & Jones 2018).

While stories about Borombeet (Lake Burrumbeet) are common, they are not locationally relevant to the North Gardens site (Massola 1968a; Powell 2015e). Similarly, it was clear that myths about the role of Bonan Youang (Buninyong) in creating several of Ballarat's physical landscape features, and his present apparition in Mount Buninyong, were evident (Stanbridge 1861: 300; Massola 1962: 110; Alberts in Massola 1962: 110; Massola 1968b: 28; Wright 2014: 59-61; Powell 2015b). However, the emergence of Bunjil at Kareet Bareet (Black Hill) near Gordon (Massola 1968d; Powell 2015a, 2015f), his rest at Lal Lal Falls (Massola 1968c; Powell 2015a, 2015f), and the journey passage of Lo'an from Wotjobaluk Country across Wadawurrung Country to GunaiKurnai Country (Massola 1968e) were not pertinent. It was also clear that existing place names or their incarnations [like the place names of Warrenyeep (Mount Warrenheip) being a 'place of feathers' referring to the Bracken Fern (*Pteridium esculentum*) on the mount (Powell 2015g; Withers 1887: 13-14); Lal Lal Falls being the "dashing of waters" (Powell 2015a); Bonan Youang (Buninyong and Mount Buninyong) being linked to two Creation Beings (Stanbridge 1861: 300; Massola 1962: 110; Alberts in Massola 1962: 110; Massola 1968b: 28; Wright 2014: 59-61; Powell 2015b); Ballaraat (Ballarat) that means 'resting place' or 'bended elbow' (Powell 2015c), Wendouree that means 'go away' (Powell pers.comm. 2018)], to Wadawurrung graphic icons (diamonds, waves, of cross-hatches) (Gilsen 2018), or Mullawallah (Anon 1884; Newton 2014).

Mullawallah, or 'King Billy', is a colonial-period Wadawurrung Elder now recognised in the epithet of 'Mullawallah Wetlands' replacing the colonial epithet of 'Winter's Swamp' (Anon 1884; Newton 2014). It was also evident that tension existed within the Wadawurrung community about a recent Aboriginal-inspired Playspace installation on the side of Lake Wendouree as not 'sitting' harmoniously within their aspirations (Spencer 2016).

Consequently, the design inspirations of place name, myth, story, animal, etc., that are normally identified as priorities by the Western design professions (as embodied in several prominent AIA and AILA architecture and / or landscape architecture profession-awarded projects), were identified as secondary attributes arising from the larger vision.

While it is evident that 'bush tukka' philosophically informed the original 1999-2001 landscape design and plantings around the North Gardens Wetlands, it is equally evident that the species selection was general to the Ballarat landscape region, dependent upon native plant species tubestock availability in the Council's nursery that resulted in a native plant profile as distinct from an Indigenous plant profile. With these characteristics in mind, the design inspirations of Wadawurrung seasons with the bringing forward of food plant harvesting and artefact fabrication and construction as high priorities were not identified as priorities (typical of several prominent AILA landscape architecture profession-awarded projects), and were also identified as secondary attributes arising from the larger vision.

This is the conclusion despite the mounts of Bonan Youang (Buninyong) and Warrenyeep (Warrenheip) being visually in the sightline of North Gardens, through the Fairylands, across Lake Wendouree, as depicted in Figure 3.

During the course of the listenings and wanderings, terrestrial and aquatic animals and bird species, including the Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*), Brolga / Native Companion (*Antigone rubicunda*), Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*), Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*), Common Ring-tailed Possum (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*), domestic Cat (*Felis silvestris catus*), Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Aquila audax*), Australian Crow (*Corvus coronoides*), Mudlark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*), Dragonfly, Fingerling and Short-finned Eel (*Angullia australis*). There are also terrestrial animals with no references to their Wadawurrung totemic or astronomical presence or their continuing roles, less the oversight role of Bunjil (as embodied in the Wedge tailed Eagle; *Aquila audax*), including Waa (Australian Crow; *Corvus coronoides*) (Massola 1968e; Gilson 2018; Powell 2015f, 2018; Powell et al 2018; Powell & Jones 2018; Powell pers.comm., 2018). Animals including the Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*), Swamp Wallabies (*Wallabia bicolor*), Eastern Grey Kangaroos (*Macropus giganteus*) or Short-finned Eel (*Angullia australis*), which would also have been present in this pre-European colonised landscape, were not mentioned.

Of these, the antics of the playful Mudlark, the North Gardens–Fairyland commuting of the Black Swan and their infrequent Lake Wendouree Parade road deaths, and the overzealous territoriality of the Sacred Ibis, were also narrated by the Wadawurrung in the context of their physical presence, in addition to the need to manage their habitats and populations.



In terms of habitat management, there was a desire expressed to enrich the habitat diversity; to reconsider the plant profile; to enhance biodiversity opportunities; to provide havens for the Rakali; to mediate the Black Swan death rate and population; to mediate the Sacred Ibis' population and habitat over-grazing damage; and to undertake strategic plant species renewal of the North Gardens Wetlands towards a more relevant Indigenous profile so as to enhance the biodiversity of the place.

The naming of Lake Wendouree, for example, was expressed as a point of Wadawurrung communication to 'whitefellas' rather than a name holding meaning and value (Powell pers.comm., 2018).

There was also no reference to the place holding a specific cultural ceremonial role (Anon 1857, 1861), although recognition was made to the hosting of corroborees around the western edge of Lake Wendouree that involved both Wadawurrung and non-Wadawurrung representatives (presumably of the Kulin Nation) in the 1800s. Additionally, there was the desire expressed to re-commence these events near to North Gardens in the Lake Wendouree Park Lands, similar to the re-establishment of Tanderrum at Federation Square in Melbourne (Anon 2017; Lindsay 2017; Melbourne Festival 2015), perhaps as an annual Kulin Nation gathering.

'Fairylands', a post-European creation by virtue of an embankment at the Lake's watercourse natural exit, now subsumed by Willows (*Salix babylonica*), and echoing an enchanted European child's play venue, was little mentioned. When it was, it was in the negative context of the European-colonised vegetation, and its poor transition between the North Gardens Wetlands and the former 'Wendouree wetlands' (of the Lake itself).

Through this process, the traditional design themes of story, myth, animals, season name, visual connectivity, etc., that architects, planners, and / or landscape architects 'latch onto'; as their design inspiration(s), were all progressively directly or indirectly canvassed in the listenings and wanderings. It was a theme about the contextual position of the place of the North Gardens Wetlands, and its relationships to Lake Learmonth, Lake Burrumbeet, Mullawallah Wetlands, Flaxman's Swamp, Reedy Creek Waterholes, Lake Wendouree (in its pre-embankment days) and Yarrowee River as a 'series of food-ponds' that instead resonated. This was a narrative of interconnected places to being the quality potable permanent water that hosted a rich habitat and food supermarket to both humans and animals alike. Instead, it was the 'heart' or djarra of this 'series of food-chains', both as a place interconnected as well as a place in its own right, of the Keelup baluk clan Country, and their living relationship to this place, that continuously threaded the quiet tone of the listenings, wanderings and discussions.

These ideas are expressed in Figures 5 and 6, that conceptualise the design strategy for the North Gardens radiating from its djarra at A outwards to a post-colonisation landscape at C. Figure 6 expresses the djarra to post-colonisation A to C in terms of time, volcanic plain formation, vegetation and habitat re-establishment and re-planting, water quality treatment and language.

Figure 5:  
Proposed North  
Gardens theoretical  
landscape design and  
sculpture relationship  
strategy.  
Source: authors.

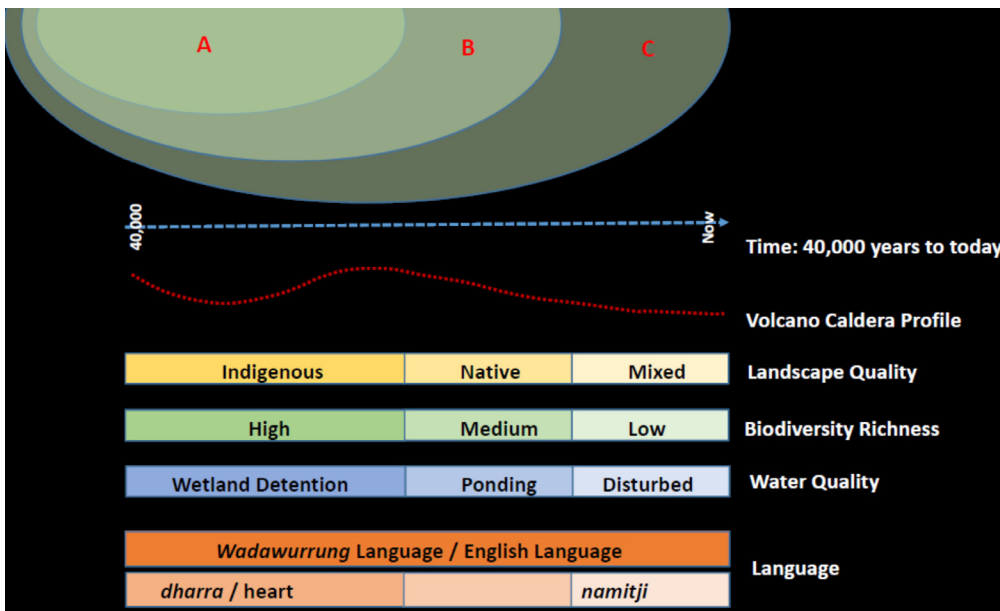


Figure 6:  
Detailed translation of  
the proposed North  
Gardens theoretical  
landscape design and  
sculpture  
relationship strategy.  
Source: authors.

## Drafting a Narrative

This article demonstrates a need to listen, to listen, to listen, and to listen, to people and lands and waters when ‘working’ with Aboriginal, and in this instance Wadawurrung, ‘clients’. To not suppose and presume, to knowingly cast aside Indigenous design nuances and norms is to not consider both the tangible and the intangible, and to not appreciate and appraise both the story(ies) and act of telling as well as their narrated and non-narrated substances.

This article demonstrates a need to listen, to listen, to listen, and to listen, to people and lands and waters when ‘working’ with Aboriginal, and in this instance Wadawurrung, ‘clients’. To not suppose and presume, to knowingly cast aside Indigenous design nuances and norms is to not consider both the tangible and the intangible, and to not appreciate and appraise both the story(ies) and act of telling as well as their narrated and non-narrated substances.

A key conclusion is that there has been a propensity of contemporary built environment Australian design to historically, over the last 30 years, to seek inspiration in the tangible, in the iconography, in the public domain stories of place and Country, like 'cathedrals' of how to celebrate heritage. Instead, the core philosophical role and purpose of Aboriginal custodianship, epitomised in the now misused 'Caring for Country' metaphor, is little understood and encapsulated into a design response. This results in the living heritage of the place, or the vernacular of a cultural landscape (which is increasingly being termed in anthropological literature a 'Living Station'), being overlooked.

We are conscious, also, that at North Gardens, we are the co-authors of a new canvas in consultation, and not the sole authors. North Gardens is a canvas that needs to sympathetically accommodate past, present and future, respecting Wadawurrung culture specifically (and Aboriginal culture generically) and their aspirationse, whilst also responding to the aims of the City of Ballarat's brief as the funding client (City of Ballarat 2017).

To date, the inquiry and listening is a 'work in progress', still in need of cultural endorsement and client approval, and still 'Unnamed as Yet'. Wwe are all increasingly acknowledging a desire to heal the djarra of this place, and to renew the larger djarra blood circuitry environmental system as part of renourishing a core part of the Keyeet balug clan Country specifically, and the Wadawurrung Country generally, to the betterment of the Ballaarat landscape and its community.

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## PROTOCOLS

This research has been subject to an approved human research ethics application through the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee coded 2018-013 dated 6 March 2018.