

# NATIONAL WINNER ACT YOUNG HISTORIAN



## INEKA VOIGT HAWKER COLLEGE

A TRAUMA EVER-PRESENT  
REVISITING THE HISTORY OF THE  
STOLEN GENERATION

# *A Trauma Ever-present*

## *Revisiting the History of the Stolen Generations*

This essay pays “tribute to the strength and struggles of many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by forcible removal. We acknowledge the hardships they endured and the sacrifices they made. We remember and lament all the children who will never come home”.<sup>1</sup>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent the oldest continuing culture in the world.<sup>2</sup> The arrival of British colonists on January 26, 1788 signifies the beginning complex history between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The government policy that saw Indigenous children removed from their families, communities and culture over one hundred and twenty years - creating the Stolen Generations – is, arguably, an unresolved tragedy in Australia’s history. Indigenous Australians continue to fight for a better world. The trauma inflicted by forcible removal has not and will not heal over time; on the contrary, it remains ever-present in contemporary Australian society. Firstly, the dominant Western-linear concept of history is compared and contrasted with the ‘temporal wave’ model of Indigenous secular time. Key explanations of the separation policy and oral testimonies show that associated traumas remain ever-present. Applying the lens of Indigenous secular time and the concept temporal wave, the history of the Stolen Generations is revealed as an ongoing tragedy with the inability to heal over time. Reunion, recognition and reconciliation are necessary in the attempt for national healing and ultimately, the making of a better world.

The Western impression of history, popularly illustrated as a linear timeline, does not adequately reflect the ongoing traumas resulting from the child removal policy. Archaeologist Rob Paton in his unpublished anthropological work *The Gift*,<sup>3</sup> illustrates the differences between linear, Western perceptions of time when compared with Aboriginal perceptions of time and space. Paton identifies, there is a “misunderstanding between our way of seeing the world and history as being the way [Indigenous Australians] should see it too, and of course

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<sup>1</sup> “Bringing Them Home Report”, Australian Human Rights Commission, accessed 12 October, 2016: [https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/pdf/social\\_justice/bringing\\_them\\_home\\_report.pdf](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/pdf/social_justice/bringing_them_home_report.pdf). 1.

<sup>2</sup> “First Australians”, SBS, accessed 25 August, 2016: <http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/>.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Paton, *The Gift*, (in prep., Canberra: ANU Press)

they don't. They simply don't".<sup>4</sup> Informed by colleague Nugget Collins Japarta, Paton challenges the Western, linear model of history, identifying that Indigenous secular time "operates in a predominantly non-linear way and the gravity of certain historic events are actively formed by using objects".<sup>5</sup> Time is illustrated as a temporal wave<sup>6</sup>: "there is no temporal distance between events and people. Hurtful things in particular can remain ever-present" and unlike the Western cliché, "time does not heal".<sup>7</sup> In *The Gift*, Paton applies this concept to the study of objects in the deep past. Building on Paton's concept of the temporal wave model, there is an equally "compelling case"<sup>8</sup> to apply the lens of Indigenous secular time to the study of Indigenous histories, specifically, the Stolen Generations. The nature of the temporal wave model suggests the trauma of forcible removal cannot heal with time.

Removal legislation spanned a century of Australia's history and the policy's impact has varied over time. As early as 1868, the Victorian *Aboriginal Protection Board* was established to manage the interests of Indigenous people, including the removal and assimilation of children into institutionalised care. Into the 1900's, similar legislative bodies among the states and territories were introduced to "solve the Aboriginal problem"<sup>9</sup> and child assimilation was adopted as a national policy in 1937. In the later years of the policy, 'half-cast' children were specifically targeted in an attempt to "bleach out"<sup>10</sup> the Indigenous colour. Between 1969 and 1971, all states abolished legislation permitting the removal of children under Aboriginal protection policies. The number of children affected by government child removal policies is equivocal.<sup>11</sup> However, the Royal Commission's *Bringing Them Home* report estimates "not one Indigenous family has escaped the effects of forcible removal ... Most families have been affected, in one or more generations, by the forcible removal, of one or more children".<sup>12</sup> The timeframe and scale of the policy alone recommends the Stolen

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Paton, interview with Ineka Voigt, personal interview, Canberra, 5 August 2016

<sup>5</sup> Paton, (in prep.) *The Gift*

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B for more information

<sup>7</sup> Paton, interview with Ineka Voigt, 5 August 2016

<sup>8</sup> Paton, (in prep.) *The Gift*

<sup>9</sup> Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The removal of Aboriginal children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), accessed 19 August, 2016:

[http://dmsweb.daa.asn.au/files/Recognition\\_of\\_Overseas/Reading%207\\_StolenGenerations.pdf](http://dmsweb.daa.asn.au/files/Recognition_of_Overseas/Reading%207_StolenGenerations.pdf), 3

<sup>10</sup> Peter Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, personal interview, Canberra, 19 August 2016.

See Appendix C for more information.

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix D for more information.

<sup>12</sup> "Bringing Them Home Report", *ibid.* 31

Generations as a national tragedy; “in retrospect, it seems obvious that a cruel saga in Australia’s history was evolving”.<sup>13</sup>

The confronting truth of the Stolen Generations is best witnessed in the poignant oral testimonies of survivors. Among Indigenous cultures practically, oral storytelling is the living link between the past and the present. Through the lens of the temporal wave, Paton recognises the unique nature of storytelling in our country, “where Indigenous people still actively participate in their own past”.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, oral sources provide an invaluable insight into a complex “piece of public history, that’s so incredibly intimate”.<sup>15</sup> The leading publication *Many Voices - Reflections on experiences of Indigenous child separation*, describes the way a collection of accounts “reflect a kaleidoscope of human emotions, experiences and points of view from this shared past”.<sup>16</sup> Common themes emerge among a “community of voices”<sup>17</sup> to establish a collective history or truth. Indigenous consultation is critical in the creation of a balanced history and authentic retelling of the Stolen Generations narrative.<sup>18</sup>

Intergenerational trauma is a key feature of the Stolen Generations, haunting multiple generations of Indigenous peoples and their descendants. As early as 1981, Historian Peter Read (credited with coining the phrase ‘Stolen Generations’) foresaw the ongoing consequences of the removal policy, acknowledging in his paper: “the impact of these policies has never dulled and people are continuing to negotiate the devastating consequences each day”.<sup>19</sup> Read continued: “twenty five years later, thousands of Aboriginal adults have spoken out against the hurts they endured, and are still enduring”.<sup>20</sup> Indigenous academic David Johnston when asked about Paton’s research into the temporal wave model, reflected: “I think it’s absolutely true, that’s why we don’t talk about events as being forty thousand years old. Yesterday, today, tomorrow, it’s all the same. And I feel that. I have a sense of that ... It’s so present”.<sup>21</sup> It is self-evident the trauma remains ‘ever-present’, ‘ongoing’ and

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<sup>13</sup> Doreen Mellor and Anna Haebich, eds., *Many Voices* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2002), ix.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Paton, interview with Ineka Voigt, 5 August 2016

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>17</sup> Mellor and Haebich, eds., *Many Voices*, 22

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix E for more information.

<sup>19</sup> Read, *The Stolen Generations*, 1

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>21</sup> Johnston, interview with Ineka Voigt, 30 August 2016

‘enduring’. Family dysfunction, drug abuse, alcoholism, violence, mental health issues, loss of culture and the struggle for identity are acknowledged as “ongoing symptoms or results of this trauma”.<sup>22</sup> An example provided by Read describes the breakdown of the family unit. Children raised in a mission away from the traditional family structure are not taught how to become parents, discontinuing the “simple formula of how to raise your children in a loving, constructive way, irrespective of if you live in a humpy or a big house”.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to family dysfunction, Stolen Generation survivors face a legacy of psychological effects into adulthood. Former Prime Minister Paul Keating in his 1992 Redfern Address acknowledged the “fractured identity of so many Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders”<sup>24</sup> as a result of removal policy. The struggle for identity is a reoccurring theme among those interviewed. When asked about his personal struggle for identity, Johnston described in an interview: “I had no identity whatsoever. No land’s man. Coconut - black on the outside, white on the inside. Finding yourself is a psychological thing we all have to bare today; everyday”.<sup>25</sup> In *Many Voices*, Quairading woman Millie Yarran Bruce, born 1954, describes the effects on her and her siblings who were taken from their mother on numerous occasions; Yarran Bruce recounts: “they (the government) don’t realise what they do to us kids, they break us up inside and we’re a jigsaw, but we don’t fit together”.<sup>26</sup> Having been taken from her sole custodian father at age 4, Faye Lymam in *Many Voices* is cited to have sobbed: “you don’t belong in either world. I can’t explain it. It hurts so much”.<sup>27</sup> As Keating foreshadowed, the concept of a ‘fractured identity’ sits at the heart of the Stolen Generations’ experience, demonstrating the fact time has not healed the consequences of the removal policy.

A frequently silenced narrative in the history of the Stolen Generations is the experience of the mothers, fathers and families whose children were removed. Crippled by the tragedy of losing a child, many parents were left “broken-hearted, died, dead”<sup>28</sup> and as a result, there are

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<sup>22</sup> Johnston, interview with Ineka Voigt, 30 August 2016

<sup>23</sup> Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, 19 August 2016

<sup>24</sup> “Paul Keating Speech Transcript”, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, PDF, accessed 24 August, 2016: [https://antar.org.au/sites/default/files/paul\\_keating\\_speech\\_transcript.pdf](https://antar.org.au/sites/default/files/paul_keating_speech_transcript.pdf), 3

<sup>25</sup> Johnston, interview with Ineka Voigt, 30 August 2016

<sup>26</sup> Mellor and Haebich, eds., *Many Voices*, 22

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 135

<sup>28</sup> Johnston, interview with Ineka Voigt, 30 August 2016

few if any oral testimonies from the custodians of the Stolen Generations. A sentiment among interviewees is the desire to share their parents' forgotten stories, often their mothers<sup>29</sup> "whose voices had been silenced by time and circumstance".<sup>30</sup> Debra Chandler was separated with her siblings during childhood from their mother Mrs. Jean Cooper in 1961. As an adult she discovered letters from her parents, her mother in 1962 and father in 1963, addressed to the Welfare Department of Tasmania pleading for their children's return: "If I can't have them all now, could I at least have one ... it would help me to carry on a bit longer till I have them all. Please Sir, I do beg you with all my heart to hear my plea, and, Sir, I tell you from the bottom of my heart that you will never regret it for one moment."<sup>31</sup> Reading her mother's letter aloud during the interview, Chandler described she could "almost feel her" presence, somehow making her words "more real".<sup>32</sup> She expressed: "I want people to understand that parents like mine didn't have a voice ... I must keep on and be her voice for as long as I can".<sup>33</sup>

The separation of mother and child is the primary tragedy of the Stolen Generations.<sup>34</sup> The grief of losing of child is not unique to Indigenous Australia and the Stolen Generations narrative; it is a "universal feeling, transcending social, political, cultural and racial barriers".<sup>35</sup> The nature of parental and maternal loss is a universal trauma that mirrors the model of the temporal wave, both in which hurtful events remain ever-present and incurable; further evidenced by Jackie Huggins' preface to *Many Voices*.<sup>36</sup> The intrinsic relationship between parental suffering, the temporal wave and the Stolen Generations form a leading argument for the notion Australia's history will not heal with time and time alone.

The tragedy of the Stolen Generations has not healed over time. Therefore what can be done to resolve the traumas imbedded in Australia's collective past? Paton identifies "a misunderstanding of how people actually perceive time but also perceive events and time.

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<sup>29</sup> An observation of the *Many Voices* project was that interviewed discussing their families made specific reference to their mothers. Evidently, the Stolen Generations is primarily a story of between mother and child.

<sup>30</sup> Mellor and Haebich, eds., *Many Voices*, 22

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 98

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 21

<sup>33</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix F for more information.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., xi

<sup>36</sup> Loc. cit.

The gravity of events never goes away on the temporal wave unless you manage it”.<sup>37</sup> In an attempt to ‘manage’ the traumatic history, the Australian government launched the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (1995-1997) which facilitated the collection and documentation of survivors’ experiences. However, for many non-Indigenous Australians former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s 2008 Apology signified the first and last step toward reconciliation, the end of a dark chapter in Australia’s history. However, it is apparent that ‘Sorry’ is not enough.

Reunion, recognition and reconciliation are critical for any future healing or the making a better world.<sup>38</sup> In an interview, Read recited a quote which symbolises the importance of historical recognition: “it is only the truth which will set us all free”.<sup>39</sup> For the Stolen Generations survivors involved in the *Many Voices* oral history project, many found it therapeutic to share their personal experiences. Jaye Clair, interviewed with Sister Clair Anderson - removed from the custody of their mother and aunty in the 1930s, felt that sharing their story was “a process of healing”.<sup>40</sup> Johnston believes reconciliation is about finding a common understanding of the history “without cutting out the trauma, the murders, the intergenerational trauma that are still affecting the fabric of Australian society”.<sup>41</sup> Johnston continues, non-Indigenous Australia must “suffer in the knowledge of what [we] have done”.<sup>42</sup> Only by acknowledging the truth might we atone for our collective mistakes. In the words of Keating: “there is nothing to fear or to lose in the recognition of historical truth. There is everything to gain”.<sup>43</sup>

Johnston recommends that the uniting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous experience is the key to national healing. Looking beyond the tragedy, Johnston identifies an inherent story of survival, knowledge which he believes has the ability to “galvanise a nation”.<sup>44</sup> He calls upon the restoration of Australia’s pride “by having a foundational root in Indigenous heritage of 70 000 years; a tree root that's stronger and can grow this nation. We owe it to ourselves and

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<sup>37</sup> Paton, interview with Ineka Voigt, 5 August 2016

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix G for more information.

<sup>39</sup> Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, 19 August 2016

<sup>40</sup> Mellor and Haebich, eds., *Many Voices*, 22

<sup>41</sup> Johnston, interview with Ineka Voigt, 30 August 2016

<sup>42</sup> Read, *The Stolen Generations*, 28

<sup>43</sup> “Paul Keating Speech Transcript”, *Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation*, 4

<sup>44</sup> Johnston, interview with Ineka Voigt, 30 August 2016

our kids. Let's be ethical leaders. It's concerned with the human condition, more than just being Indigenous".<sup>45</sup> It is time for Australia to lead by example, and demonstrate how the reuniting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous histories could ultimately lead to a better world.

Undeniably, the traumas suffered by the Stolen Generations mark an enduring national tragedy, which time has not and cannot heal. In reconsidering the complex history through the temporal wave model of Indigenous secular time, it is clear the intergenerational traumas of the removal policy are ongoing, and might only be resolved through reunion, recognition and reconciliation. Acknowledging a trauma ever-present is the first step in the making of a better world. The repercussions of Indigenous child removal policy linger in the collective memories, hearts, minds and lives of countless Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Read is in complete agreement: "yes absolutely, no doubt about it. It is still with us".<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, 19 August 2016



## *Appendices*

### **Appendix A – Biographies**

Honouring a deep history of Indigenous oral tradition, the author collected original oral testimonies cited in the body of this essay. Below are the biographies of those interviewed by the author.

#### **Peter Read**

Peter Read is an adjunct Professor at the Department of History, ANU, ARC Professorial Fellow Department of History University of Sydney; specialising in Aboriginal History of New South Wales and the Northern Territory. In 1975, “before the concept of us having removed [Indigenous children] for improper purposes had been around”,<sup>47</sup> Read was also one of few historians collecting Aboriginal oral histories (at a time where oral testimonies were only formally recorded by the National Library of Australia) and actively consulting Indigenous communities. Holding a PhD on the history of Wiradjuri people of Central NSW, Read reflected: “wherever I went, I ran into people who had either lost their children, or grandchildren, grandmothers who had lost their children, asking me ‘what can you do about’”.<sup>48</sup> Read recounts, the history of child separation revealed itself whilst working through the NSW state archives where he was “confronted by 22000 files kept by the *Aboriginal Protection Board* of whom many thousands files related to children who had been removed”.<sup>49</sup> Read is credited with coining the phrase ‘Stolen Generations’ in a in the pamphlet of the same name, published by the NSW government in 1981. Read openly accredits the phrase ‘stolen’ was the suggestion of wife and collaborator, Ray Read. Read originally titled the article *The Lost Generations*, to which Ray Read corrected: “these kids aren’t lost, they’re stolen”.<sup>50</sup> Read co-founded the organisation *Link-Up* in 1980, assisting Aboriginal people directly affected by past government policies of child separation, supporting the healing journey of those removed to reconnect with family, country and culture. Dedicating 40 years of his professional career to the recording of Indigenous oral histories, Read is a reliable source that consolidates oral and academic research, confirming:

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<sup>47</sup> Peter Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, personal interview, Canberra, 19 August 2016

<sup>48</sup> Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, 19 August 2016

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

"the reason I can say this, is because I have spoken to people all my life".<sup>51</sup> Read kindly granted the author's permission to use all material collected in the oral history.

### **Rob Paton**

Rob Paton is an archaeologist and academic at the Department of History, ANU. Paton navigates Indigenous knowledge space in his unpublished book, *The Gift*<sup>52</sup>, informed by colleague and friend Nugget Collins Japarta, and 40 years of Indigenous consultation and recording of oral histories. Paton identifies an alarming lack of Indigenous consultation in the disciplines of archaeology, anthropology and history, stating: "this dawning realisation has caused me to ask in this research, not so much if we can have histories that include Aboriginal knowledge, but if we can afford to have histories that exclude such knowledge".<sup>53</sup> In chapter 2 of *The Gift*, Paton recounts the journey which led him to the realisation that Indigenous perceptions of time and space, which he describes as 'Indigenous secular time', work differently to a Western-linear concept of history.

I began to understand that this was a history that had only a small linear component ... It was essentially 'flat time' where all things sat alongside each other in an ordered pattern. For somebody who is raised to think in terms of linear time (with times' arrow traveling from the past to the future, having events dotted along it) this was hard for me to conceptualise ... It occurred to me that what Nuggett was describing, and what had been told to me in the 'history', was in some senses like a medieval painting. Many of these artworks are typified by their lack of three dimensional perspective. Instead things are placed alongside each other on a flat plain. To show their relationship to one another objects are placed in a pattern, and characters hierarchically sized according to their spiritual or thematic importance. An added complexity with the Aboriginal version of history, that was shared with me, was that it is not static like a painting. All elements certainly exist alongside each other on a flat temporal plain in a hierarchy. But this flat plain moves forward like a temporal wave, capturing all history as it progresses. As new events become progressively caught up in the wave of time, things like 'Toyota Dreaming' and 'Captain Cook Dreaming' become part of history alongside other events that in linear time would be much older.<sup>54</sup>

In response to Paton's research, this paper applies the temporal wave model to the history of the Stolen Generations, proving that time cannot heal the associated traumas. Paton kindly granted the author's permission to use all material collected in the oral history.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Paton, *The Gift*, (in prep., Canberra: ANU Press)

<sup>53</sup> Paton, *The Gift*

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

## David Johnston

David Johnston is an archaeologist and anthropologist of 27 years, currently working at the Department of History, ANU. Johnston is credited as the first practising Indigenous archaeologist in Australia. Although directly affected by the child removal policy, Johnston does not consider himself a part of the Stolen Generations: “I regard myself, not as a stolen child, because there were definitely stolen children whose mother suffered trauma by the theft”.<sup>55</sup> As a child of mixed descent, Johnston found himself in the “system”,<sup>56</sup> grouped with other ‘third category’ children (of mixed descent and from parents with a ‘mental problem’). At three months old, 1969, Johnston was adopted into “a beautiful family and a beautiful life”<sup>57</sup> by adopted mother Kath Johnston, a woman he describes to have “more skin-names than any Aboriginal I know”.<sup>58</sup> However, like many Stolen Generations children, Johnston struggled with alcoholism, his aboriginality and identity into adulthood. In saying this, Johnston clearly states he does not want to be perceived as a victim or for his personal history to define him. Respecting Johnston’s request, this paper does not cite him as a Stolen Generations man. Johnston kindly granted the author’s permission to use all material collected in the oral history.

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<sup>55</sup> David Johnston, Interview with Ineka Voigt, Personal interview, Canberra, 30 August 2016

<sup>56</sup> Johnston, interview with Ineka Voigt, 30 August 2016

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

## Appendix B – The Temporal Wave Illustration

### The Temporal Wave

Author Ineka Voigt's artwork illustrating the temporal wave, commissioned by Rob Paton for his unpublished book *The Gift*.



Artist's statement: Inspired by Hokusai's *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (1830-33), the artwork is a literal reimagining of Indigenous Australian's perception of time and space, described as the temporal wave. In the foreground, representative of contemporary Aboriginal Australia, Nugget Collins Japarta carves a boomerang and imparts his knowledge of winnuna and "history". Behind him, the traumas of his past and his people are caught in a great wave; blood red and ever-present. On the horizon and under the crest of the temporal wave, silhouettes of the world's oldest continuing culture congregate, hoping that one day we will understand and that the pain will pass.

"Do you see history now?" - Nugget Collins Jakarta

## Appendix C – The Debate of Attempted Genocide

The intentions of the government's removal policy have been widely debated among historians and have navigated the agendas of politicians and the Australian public. Read, coining the phrase 'Stolen Generations', has met the conclusion that the removal policy was conducted with the malicious intention of assimilation rather than in the interests of child welfare. Recollecting a file belonging to a young Aboriginal woman from the Cootamundra Girls Home, Read describes a letter from her mother requesting her daughter's return; in the margin the administrator had inscribed; "no, we should not answer this letter, don't want the family to find her".<sup>59</sup> Upon reading the file and abundant alike, "it was clear the intention [of child removal] wasn't as benevolent as it had been claimed to be".<sup>60</sup> The question of genocide is considered by Read in his pamphlet, *The Stolen Generations*:

It is the story of the attempt to 'breed out' the Aboriginal race. It is the story of attempted genocide. Genocide does not simply mean the extermination of people by violence but may include any means at all. At the height of the policy of separating Aboriginal people from their parents the Aborigines Welfare Board meant to do just that.<sup>61</sup>

Read clearly states the aim of the removal policy, identifying: "the most important factor in the view of the Board was that Aboriginal children had to be separated from the rest of their race".<sup>62</sup> This process was executed through physical, cultural and biological assimilation. Indigenous people were displaced from country, institutionalised and isolated in an attempt to "bleach out the Aboriginal colour and assimilate out the Aboriginal culture".<sup>63</sup>

The accusation of genocide is strongly defended by right-wing historian Keith Windschuttle.

While the case against genocide for the Stolen Generations has already produced several effective critics... a full defence of the charge has yet to be mounted... That could only be accomplished properly by a complete re-examination of the foundation on which the case was originally made: its claim to be historically true.<sup>64</sup>

Among many criticisms, Windschuttle argues that the title of 'Stolen Generations' and the stipulation of attempted genocide are unjustified, that few children were forcibly removed,

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<sup>59</sup> Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, 19 August 2016

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The removal of Aboriginal children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), accessed 19 August, 2016: [http://dmsweb.daa.asn.au/files/Recognition\\_of\\_Overseas/Reading%207\\_StolenGenerations.pdf](http://dmsweb.daa.asn.au/files/Recognition_of_Overseas/Reading%207_StolenGenerations.pdf), 3

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 12

<sup>63</sup> Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, 19 August 2016

<sup>64</sup> Dean Ashenden, "Windschuttle, Again", *Inside Story*, 15 March 2010, accessed 11 October, 2016: <http://insidestory.org.au/windschuttle-again>.

and that the intentions of the policy were primarily to protect children's welfare.<sup>65</sup> Former Prime Minister, John Howard embraces many of Windschuttle's arguments, maintaining the opinion that the child removal policy was conducted in the best interests of Indigenous children. In vocal opposition of both Windschuttle and Howard, Johnston describes their views on the removal policy as "morally corrupt",<sup>66</sup> and labelling Howard as the "greatest master of western-anglo domination of the country's agenda".<sup>67</sup> Read also disagrees with Howard and Windschuttle's opinion of a benevolent history of Australia, commenting: "maybe they believe that, but it doesn't make a difference, it was still just as wrong".<sup>68</sup>

This essay does not confirm or deny Indigenous child removal policies as evidence for an attempted genocide, however it is self-evident the policy was racially driven and targeted Aboriginal Australians.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Johnston, interview with Ineka Voigt, 30 August 2016

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, 19 August 2016

## **Appendix D – Number of Children Forcibly Removed**

The *Bringing Them Home* report argues it is impossible to state the number of children forcibly removed as records may have been destroyed, lost or not kept and others failing to document children's Aboriginality. Historian Peter Read (credited with coining the phrase 'Stolen Generations') estimates the number of children displaced as a result of the policies in New South Wales alone, numbers 6225.<sup>69</sup> On this basis, Read recommends "there is not an Aboriginal person in New South Wales who does not know, or is not related to, one or more of his/her countrymen who were institutionalised by the whites".<sup>70</sup>

When debating the number of children removed, the popular figure is estimated at 50,000. In his third volume of *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, critic Keith Windschuttle claims the real figure rests at 8250 total.<sup>71</sup> In comparison to both Read and the *Many Voices* publication's estimates, it is evident Windschuttle's claims are grossly misguided.

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<sup>69</sup> Read, *The Stolen Generations*, 11

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 26

<sup>71</sup> "Windschuttle, Again", Dean Ashenden

## Appendix E – The Value of Oral Sources

An empathetic approach is essential to understanding the long-term consequences of the removal policy. Oral sources provide an important link to the past through the lens of human experience.

Highlighting Indigenous voices is essential to the creation of a balanced historical record of the Stolen Generations. An example can be made of two adjacent memorials erected in Reconciliation Place, Canberra, the latter with Indigenous consultation. The first was commissioned in 2001 resembling a timeline. An image of children playing in a waterhole was followed by a photograph of children in a mission, “as if it were a natural progression”.<sup>72</sup> The second memorial erected after the Apology is a truer representation of the history: a bronze wall adorned with quotes from Stolen Generations survivors which relay a variety of perspectives and experiences. The two memorials typify linear and secular perspectives of the same history, the second a testament to the importance of Indigenous consultation and the power of oral testimony.

In opposition, some historians of the Western scholarly tradition consider oral histories to be unreliable sources, hinged on memories coloured by personal bias.<sup>73</sup> Historian Keith Windschuttle is notoriously sceptical of oral sources.<sup>74</sup> Known for his thesis on *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, Windschuttle is described to compose his historical arguments more like a barrister than a historian.<sup>75</sup> Indigenous academic David Johnston, along with Paton and Read recognise the value of oral testimony and have “dismissed”<sup>76</sup> Windschuttle’s histories on the grounds of historical methodology and authenticity. Read explains: “if he had collected oral histories like I have, he could hardly hold the opinions that he does”.<sup>77</sup> On the question of the reliability of oral sources, Read confirms individual’s testimonies are typically supported by the archival record, together forming strong corroborative evidence.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, 19 August 2016

<sup>73</sup> Mellor and Haebich, eds., *Many Voices*, 22

<sup>74</sup> “Windschuttle, Again”, Dean Ashenden

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> David Johnston, interview with Ineka Voigt, personal interview, Canberra, 30 August 2016

<sup>77</sup> Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, 19 August 2016

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.



## Appendix F – Separation of Mother and Child

The separation of mother and child is a universal loss. The Stolen Generations is no exception. However, what makes this history disturbingly unique is the way in which government policy targeted Indigenous Australians through systematic removal and assimilation, racially driven on a scale unlike any other in Australia's history. An excerpt from Doris Pilkington/Nugi Garimara novel, *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* illustrates the trauma of forcible removal and grief of the family left behind.

The old man nodded to show that he understood what Riggs was saying ... a high pitched wail broke out. The cries of agonised mothers and the women, and the deep sobs of grandfathers, uncles and cousins filled the air. Molly and Gracie looked back just once before they disappeared through the river gums. Behind them, those remaining in the camp found strong sharp objects and gashed themselves and inflicted wounds to their heads and bodies as an expression of their sorrow.<sup>79</sup>

The scene is powerfully recreated in the 2002 movie adaptation *Rabbit Proof Fence*; Johnston gravely comments: “multiply that by tens of thousands” and you have the Stolen Generations.<sup>80</sup> *Many Voices* cited that “parents often dealt with their loss by trying to forget or by burying memories deep in their hearts or, in traditional cultural environments, by imposing a ‘sorry’ silence usually reserved for the dead”.<sup>81</sup> Whether the temporal wave model better illustrates the ongoing grief of parents rather than the children removed could be further explored.

### Stolen Dreamtime

Author Ineka Voigt's winning illustration for the Doodle 4 Google competition adorned the Google homepage on Australia Day/Survival Day, 2016. Reflecting on the history of the Stolen Generations and the separation of mother and child, the artwork was a symbol of reconciliation on a day of mixed meaning and emotions.

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<sup>79</sup> Doris Pilkington, *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence*, (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1996), 44-45

<sup>80</sup> Johnston, interview with Ineka Voigt, 30 August 2016

<sup>81</sup> Mellor and Haebich, eds., *Many Voices*, 22



Artist's statement: If I could travel back in time I would reunite mother and child. A weeping mother sits in an ochre desert, dreaming of her children and a life that never was... all that remains is red sand, tears and the whispers of her stolen dreamtime.

## Appendix G – Reunion, Recognition and Reconciliation

Any future healing process must consider the importance of reunion, recognition and reconciliation.

Reunion represents “new and painful journeys, as much as providing comfort or closure”.<sup>82</sup> Unequivocally, reunion is a step on the road to individual healing; however it can be hindered by multiple factors including the fear of rejection, the question of Aboriginality, missing records and untimely death.

The first formal act of recognition of the Stolen Generations was by Australian politician, Paul Keating in his Redfern Address on December 10, 1992 to mark the launch Australia’s celebration of the 1993 United Nations International Year of the World’s Indigenous People. In the words of Keating: “it begins, I think, with that act of recognition”.<sup>83</sup>

On February 13, 2008 former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd gave a national Apology to the families of the Stolen Generations in what Read describes as “incredibly important to Indigenous Australians” and “a magic day for Australia”.<sup>84</sup> Stolen Generations survivor Rita Wright recalls going to the “Big Reconciliation” to “hear that word what my mum and all our families wanted to hear... sorry. I was on the phone to my mum and I said ‘mum, this one’s for you. This is your day mum’. She was crying, but it won’t take the pain away, you know. That was a sad day, that day”.<sup>85</sup> Although necessary to achieving reconciliation, Johnston suggests more needs to be done than a gesture of sorry: “an Apology is words, nothing more. Where’s change?”<sup>86</sup> Moreover, Paton questions the cultural appropriateness of the Apology, determining it was a “very Western thing to do”; “we try and do things in an entirely Western way, and although a lot of it is well meaning, it sometimes ends up causing more hurt, and it feeds the angry white male, apologies and things”.<sup>87</sup> Although the Apology has arguably

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<sup>82</sup> Mellor and Haebich, eds., *Many Voices*, 22

<sup>83</sup> “Paul Keating Speech Transcript”, *Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation*, 2

<sup>84</sup> Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, 19 August 2016

<sup>85</sup> “Rita Wright”, *The Stolen Generations Testimonies*, accessed 5 August, 2016:  
<http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com/index.php/testimonies/994.html>.

<sup>86</sup> Johnston, interview with Ineka Voigt, 30 August 2016

<sup>87</sup> Paton, interview with Ineka Voigt, 5 August 2016

turned a “new page in Australia’s history”<sup>88</sup> from a linear perspective, when applying the temporal wave model the Apology does not signify an end to the trauma’s endured for all Indigenous Australians.

In contrast, Former Prime Minister John Howard, infamous in his refusal to make an Apology in 1988, asserts he “could not see that an apology to the Stolen Generations was a prerequisite for reconciliation”.<sup>89</sup> In an informal interview with Howard, he insisted “everyone who believes in reconciliation is guilty” and that we should not “dwell on the past” and as a proud nation we should “look toward the future”.<sup>90</sup> In consideration of the *temporal* wave model, it is clear Howard has previously misjudged the significance of a trauma which “haunts the Aboriginal community today”.<sup>91</sup> In the words of Midnight Oil, “how do we sleep while our beds are burning?”<sup>92</sup>

At the threshold of national healing is reconciliation. The Australian Government one-dimensionally defines reconciliation to be about “unity and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-indigenous Australians”.<sup>93</sup> Reconciliation Australia’s vision of reconciliation is comprised of five, inter-related principles: “race relations, equality and equity, unity, institutional integrity and historical acceptance. These five dimensions do not exist in isolation; they are inter-related and Australia can only achieve full reconciliation if we progress in all five dimensions, weaving them together to become a whole”.<sup>94</sup> The fifth dimension, historical acceptance, is of particular interest and is directly linked to writing of history.

If these three measures are implemented in the future they may offer some prospect of the making of a better world.

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<sup>88</sup> “Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples”, Australian Government, accessed 16 August, 2016: <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people/apology-to-australias-indigenous-peoples>.

<sup>89</sup> Peter Read, *A Rape of the Soul so Profound*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), ix

<sup>90</sup> John Howard, interview with Ineka Voigt, informal interview, Canberra, 3 March 2016

<sup>91</sup> Read, interview with Ineka Voigt, 19 August 2016

<sup>92</sup> Midnight Oil, *Beds are Burning*, CD, Diesel and Dust, (Sydney: Columbia, 1987)

<sup>93</sup> Australian Government, “Reconciliation”, accessed 10 October, 2016: <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/reconciliation>.

<sup>94</sup> “Reconciliation Australia”, Reconciliation Australia, accessed 26 August, 2016: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/about/>.

## *Annotated Bibliography*

Ashenden, Dean. "Windschuttle, Again." *Inside Story*, 15 March, 2010. Accessed 11 October, 2016: <http://insidestory.org.au/windschuttle-again>.

In this article, Dean summarises the historical arguments of Keith Windschuttle in his third volume on the 'Fabrication of Aboriginal history', describing his thesis as a "polemic of a high order". The author highlights Windschuttle's condemnation of the use of the term 'Stolen Generations' and the claim of attempted genocide, mentioning his particular opposition to historian Peter Read. The article provided an easily assessable summary of Windschuttle's arguments and an unpersuasive counterargument to the widely accepted history of forcible removal. The article was a useful supplementary source that only served to strengthen the conclusions drawn in the essay body.

Australian Government. "Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples." Accessed 16 August, 2016: <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people/apology-to-australias-indigenous-peoples>.

This government page provided reliable access to the full transcript of Kevin Rudd's 2008 Apology: a crucial primary source to the Stolen Generations narrative and Australia's history.

Australian Government. "Reconciliation." Accessed 10 October, 2016: <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/reconciliation>.

This website was cited for the purpose of criticising the Australian Government's one-dimensional and incomplete definition of reconciliation.

Australian Human Rights Commission. "Bringing Them Home Report." PDF. Accessed 20 August, 2016: [https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/pdf/social\\_justice/bringing\\_them\\_home\\_report.pdf](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/pdf/social_justice/bringing_them_home_report.pdf).

*The Bringing Them Home* report is an official summary of the findings made by the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (1995-1997). The publication is a highly creditable source and an official history of Indigenous child separation. The report was a valuable authority on the history of the removal policy that sited supporting quantitative evidence. This source considerably shaped my background understanding of this subject.

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation. "Paul Keating Speech Transcript." PDF. Accessed 24 August, 2016: [https://antar.org.au/sites/default/files/paul\\_keating\\_speech\\_transcript.pdf](https://antar.org.au/sites/default/files/paul_keating_speech_transcript.pdf).

This website provided the full transcript of Paul Keating's monumental Redfern Address which is quoted with great impact in the body of the essay. Due to word limitations, a wider investigation of Keating's speech and its impact were omitted.

Johnston, David. Interview with Ineka Voigt. Personal interview. Canberra, 30 August 2016.

This primary source is one of three original oral histories collected by the author for the purpose of this essay. During the interview, the author asked Johnston about his experiences

as an academic and Aboriginal of mixed descent whose personal history is closely linked to that of the Stolen Generations. Johnston openly discussed his early life and family, the impact of being a foster child, his struggle for identity during his adolescence and later life and his perspectives on the Stolen Generations. When asked about the enduring nature of trauma and Indigenous secular time, Johnston confirmed the author's thesis - the trauma of the Stolen Generations cannot heal with time alone and remains ever-present in his heart and wider Indigenous Australia. Further, Johnston highlighted the importance of respecting Indigenous knowledge spaces and his hope for the integration of more Indigenous voices in Australia's collective history. Johnston's interview is a unique and invaluable primary source that links one man's personal experiences to the broader history of Indigenous Australia. Johnston's support for and conformation of my thesis was reassuring. Johnston's interview was instrumental to completion of this essay and forms the basis of my research.

Howard, John. Interview with Ineka Voigt. Informal interview. Canberra, 3 March 2016.

The author sites an informal meeting with former Prime Minister John Howard at a Reception of Honour at the United States Embassy, in commemoration of 9/11 tragedy. Voigt approached Howard following the official ceremony, introducing herself as a former National Young Historian and artists behind 'Stolen Dreamtime' – a symbol of reconciliation on Australia Day 2016. Howard proceeded to enter into a several minute debate with the author, memorably stating he stands by his refusal to Apologise. The source is not entirely reliable because the author had no way of recording the meeting and instead recounted the events later in the form of a diary entry. However, three quotes cited do effectively convey the tone of the conversation and Howard's attitude toward Indigenous history – which he has reiterated in countless public interviews. The source is not an essential resource, but instead strengthens the authors understanding of the controversy surrounding the Stolen Generations.

Olsen, Christine. *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. DVD. Directed by Phillip Noyce. California: Miramax, 2002.

Olsen's *Rabbit-Proof Fence* is an empathetic adaption of Doris Pilkington's *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* which explores the experiences of a Stolen Generations family. Although not all historically accurate, for many non-Indigenous Australians the film was their first point of contact to the history of child separation. The source is not quoted in my essay, but earlier sparked my interest to research this subject further.

Midnight Oil. *Beds are Burning*. CD. Diesel and Dust. Sydney: Columbia, 1987.

Midnight Oil is theatrically quoted in my appendix to openly criticise figures such as Windschuttle and Howard for their short sightedness to enduring impact of forcible removal policy.

Mellor, Doreen, and Anna Haebich, eds. *Many Voices: Reflections on experiences of Indigenous child separation*. Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2002.

In this publication, Doreen and Haebich compile "testimonies from all sides of the history of Indigenous child separation in Australia". *Many Voices* is the product of the *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project* conducted by the Australian Government and National Library of Australia, and represents the largest oral history project in Australia to date. *Many Voices* is a highly creditable and exceptionally crafted source that collates, synthesises and identifies common experiences among a "community of voices". I was deeply engaged with the

testimonies of Stolen Generations survivors; a selected few oral histories were quoted as case studies with great emotional impact. *Many Voices* was an invaluable secondary oral source which formed the basis of my research.

Read, Peter. *A Rape of the Soul so Profound*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999.

Read's book is quoted to highlight Howard's refusal to make an Apology and present the argument that an Apology is a "prerequisite for reconciliation". This book provided supplementary evidence, which functioned as a reliable source of background information.

Read, Peter. Interview with Ineka Voigt. Personal interview. Canberra, 19 August 2016.

This primary source is one of three original oral histories collected by the author for the purpose of this essay. During the interview, the author asked Read about uncovering the reality of government removal policies, coining the phrase 'Stolen Generations' and forty years of research into Indigenous and oral histories. Read is a highly regarded academic whose research into the Stolen Generations has brought about crucial historical awareness in Australian scholarly and public spheres. It was an incredible opportunity to pitch my thesis to an acclaimed Australian historian, his support for and conformation of my thesis was profoundly reassuring. Read adamantly agreed that the trauma of forcible removal cannot and will not heal with time; it is ever-present in Australian society today. Read's interview was instrumental to completion of this essay and forms the core of my research and understanding.

Paton, Robert. *The Gift*. In prep., Canberra: ANU Press, 2016.

Paton was very generous to give the author access to the first three chapters of his unpublished anthological work, *The Gift*. *The Gift* is Paton's first introduction to the theories of the temporal wave, Indigenous secular time and the relationship between time and trauma. Paton's research is supported by reliable Indigenous consultation, practically with his colleague Nugget Collins Japarta. In this study, Paton applies the temporal wave model to the study of Indigenous objects in the deep past. It was my original concept to apply the same theories to the history of the Stolen Generations. Paton's book provoked my reconsideration of the Stolen Generation using the lens of Indigenous secular time. This source forms the primary theoretical framework of my essay and thesis.

Paton, Robert. Interview with Ineka Voigt. Personal interview. Canberra, 5 August 2016.

This primary source is one of three original oral histories collected by the author for the purpose of this essay. The interview was informally conducted in the car where the author asked Paton about the temporal wave's potential application to the Stolen Generations trauma. Paton was both intrigued and excited by the concept. My professional relationship with Paton set in motion my interviews with Johnston and Read. Paton's support was instrumental to completion of this essay and his insights have deepened my essay's thesis.

Pilkington, Doris. *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence*. Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1996.

Based on a true story, Pilkington's *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* is a personal account of an Indigenous family's separation as a result of child removal policies. The author as included an exert that illustrates the impact of separation on family members, partially mothers left behind. Although not all historically accurate, the source cannot be faulted for its emotional

honesty and empathetic approach to a complex history. This book provided useful supplementary evidence for my research into the impact of the separation of mother and child.

Read, Peter. *The Stolen Generations: The removal of Aboriginal children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Canberra: ANU Press, 2006. Accessed 19 August, 2016: [http://dmsweb.daa.asn.au/files/Recognition\\_of\\_Overseas/Reading%207\\_StolenGenerations.pdf](http://dmsweb.daa.asn.au/files/Recognition_of_Overseas/Reading%207_StolenGenerations.pdf).

A fourth edition pamphlet on *The Stolen Generations*, first published by the NSW government in 1981: In this pamphlet, Read coins the phrase ‘Stolen Generations’ and outlines essential information regarding the separation policy, an estimation of the number of children removed and the long term impact on Indigenous Australia. This is reliable and updated source that provided useful background information for this essay.

SBS. “First Australians.” Accessed 25 August, 2016: <http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/>.

This SBS documentary is briefly quoted in the essay’s introduction to set-up the premise that the First Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the oldest continuing culture in the world. Although a reliable secondary source, SBS’s broader exploration of Indigenous history was outside the scope of my essay.

The Stolen Generations Testimonies. “Rita Wright.” Accessed 5 August, 2016: <http://stolengenerationstestimonies.com/index.php/testimonies/994.html>.

In this video interview, Stolen Generations survivor Wright shares her experiences: particularly Wright’s recount of her separation, institutionalisation, Wright’s reunion with her mother and her feelings toward the Apology. Wright’s oral testimony provided a compelling case study into one women’s experience of what she describes as the “Big Reconciliation”. Oral testimonies, such as Wright’s, are the heart and soul of my essay. Unfortunately due to word limitations, an in-depth summary of Wright’s story was omitted.

Reconciliation Australia. “Reconciliation Australia.” Accessed 5 August, 2016: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/about/>.

Reconciliation Australia’s website provided an insightful, holistic definition of reconciliation, comprised of five, inter-related principles: “race relations, equality and equity, unity, institutional integrity and historical acceptance”. The organisation’s vision of reconciliation is embraced in this essay.