INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION IN AUSTRALIA'S FRONTIER AND FOREIGN WARS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the evolving perception of Australian identity and its impact on the commemoration of Indigenous soldiers. Structured around three case studies, this thesis follows a chronological timeline of commemorative practices characteristically colonial in its presentation of Indigenous Australian communities.

The first chapter focuses on colonial constructions of national identity and its influences on the legacy of Captain Reginald Saunders, the first Aboriginal Australian to be commissioned as an officer in the Australian Army. Referencing his 1960s biography and textual memorial, *The Embarrassing Australian* by Harry Gordon, this thesis argues that it is only through the language of assimilation that Saunders was accepted as an “Australian” and appropriately commemorated for his military achievement. The second chapter highlights evolving perceptions of Australian history and national identity and the impact of Indigenous soldier commemoration within the Australian War Memorial. While the Memorial initially disregarded the Indigenous Australian contribution to the war effort, it has since evolved to acknowledge their role within its galleries. The final chapter looks at museums and their representation of
Indigenous soldiers during the Frontier Wars. The portrayal of Indigenous soldiers, either as savages or warriors, among the museum displays and storyboards reflect how the nation chooses to publicly commemorate them. The methods adopted by museums reveal their rejection or acceptance of the Indigenous story of European colonization.

By showing how forms of representation are tied to historical moments in regards to Indigenous soldiers and linking these commemorative trends with Australian national identity this research both adds to the body of literature on Australian commemoration and foreshadows an evolving trend where perceptions of “nation” are increasingly willing to embrace an Indigenous past into its definition.
This is to certify that the thesis comprises only my original work except where indicated in the preface. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used. The thesis is 20,500 words in length, inclusive of footnotes but exclusive of tables, maps, appendices, and bibliography.

Van Nguyen
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1. <em>The Embarrassing and Forgotten Australia</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2. <em>Seeing Black and White</em></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3. <em>Moving Forward</em></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover Image. Wangaratta, Victoria, 1940. Aboriginal soldiers stand at the entrance of the Wangaratta showground during the changing of the guard. Image accessed from the Australian War Memorial Online Collections Database.

Figure 1. A portrait of Private William Reginald Rawlings, uncle of Captain Reginald Saunders. Image accessed from the Australian War Memorial online Collections Database. (Page 18)

Figure 2. Seymour, Victoria, 1944. Reginald Saunders at his Officers’ Candidate Training graduation ceremony. Image accessed from the Australian War Memorial Online Collections Database. (Page 19)

Figure 3. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, 2004. A portrait of Captain Reginald Saunders hangs in the Australian War Memorial. Image provided by Van Nguyen. (Page 28)

Figure 4. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, 2004. The only permanent images of Aboriginal Australians in the Australian War Memorial are two head carvings in the forecourt. Displayed here is the male carving. Image provided by Van Nguyen. (Page 40)

Figure 5. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory. Red poppies are placed beside names along the Roll of Honor in the Commemorative area of the Australian War Memorial. Image accessed from the Virtual Tour, Australian War Memorial Website. (Page 42)

Figure 6. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory. Stained glass windows in the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial represent different qualities of Australian servicemen and women. Image accessed from the Virtual Tour, Australian War Memorial Website. (Page 43)
Figure 7. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, 2004. Gordon Bennett's painting, *Psychotopographical landscape (inversion)*, is currently on exhibition at the Australian War Memorial. Image provided by Van Nguyen. (Page 44)

Figure 8. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, 2004. A portrait of an Aboriginal serviceman hangs along the walkway linking the foyer to the galleries of the Australian War Memorial. Image provided by Van Nguyen. (Page 45)

Figure 9. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, 2004. The “Rural Australians at War” display in the Second World War Gallery in the Australian War Memorial. Image provided by Van Nguyen. (Page 46)

Figure 10. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, 2004. The Aboriginal Memorial Plaque sits in Remembrance Park at the base of Mount Ainsle. Image provided by Van Nguyen. (Page 52)

Figure 11. Melbourne, Victoria. A display of Baldwin Spencer alongside topographically arranged spears in Bunjilaka at the Melbourne Museum. Image accessed from the Melbourne Museum Website. (Page 65)

Figure 12. Melbourne Victoria. A black hearse adorned with the Aboriginal flag is displayed in "Belonging to Country," a segment of Bunjilaka in the Melbourne Museum. Image accessed from the Melbourne Museum Website. (Page 67)

Figure 13. Melbourne, Victoria. Visitors watch *Our Grief* in Bunjilaka, Melbourne Museum. Image accessed from the Melbourne Museum Website. (Page 69)

Figure 14. Halls Gap, Victoria. The Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Center. Image accessed from the Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Center Website. (Page 74)

Figure 15. Halls Gap, Victoria. “Journey through Time," an exhibition at the Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Center. Image accessed from the Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Center Website. (Page 76)
INTRODUCTION

What memories the day brings to all. The achievement of the landing at Gallipoli resounded through the world, when the Australians [sic] and New Zealand Army Corps proved their worth as soldiers of the Empire.¹

This is the morning when the rest of us put our intense lives second behind people who in the name of our country have seen and done things people should not have to see and do. This is the morning to pause, to remember the dead and pray that even with the mess we face in the world we never again see such war.²

With over eighty years separating the above Anzac Day newspaper excerpts, both effectively convey a deep respect for remembrance through differing tones – the first celebratory and the second reflective. Anzac Day ceremonies, held on every 25 April,

commemorate the landing of Anzac troops onto the Gallipoli peninsula in 1915. Unable to capture the Suez Canal and remove Turkey from the war, the campaign was abandoned five days before Christmas with over eight thousand fatal casualties. While the battle concluded in military defeat, Australians perceived the experience as the necessary baptism of a nation. Since 1915, Anzac Day has commemorated those who died in the Great War and eventually expanded to recognize other campaigns. However, many of the ceremonies and traditions remain unchanged including the exclusion of Indigenous Australians from commemorative occasions.

Two key issues arise from the absence of Indigenous representation in Anzac Day ceremonies and other forms of military commemoration. Firstly, it implies that Indigenous Australians were not active in Australia’s foreign war efforts and secondly, the conflict between Indigenous and European peoples during the white settlement of Australia did not constitute a legitimate war. These assumptions disregard the contributions of Indigenous Australians and help to perpetuate their marginality in constructions of national identity.

Colonialists in Australia viewed themselves as part of the British Empire, which "was seen in part as a larger projection of Australia, something which Australia itself might become." Concepts of a unique national identity did not become common until the mid-nineteenth century, emerging alongside a generation of white, native-born Australians. While the native-born sought to distinguish themselves from the Empire, they paradoxically relied on British colonial terms, which allocated Indigenous peoples

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to the periphery. It was only recently that understandings of national identity no longer relied on colonial legacies but allowed for more pluralistic constructions of nation.

Through the lens of a postcolonial framework, this thesis investigates the evolving perception of Australian identity and its impact on the commemoration of Indigenous soldiers. Postcolonial theory provides a structure to understand power differentials and cultural identities of the colonizer and colonized. Even with society’s attempt to forget is Indigenous past, postcolonial theory affirms that “the metropole has no meaning apart from the periphery.” An understanding of one is inexorably tied to the other. Within a postcolonial context, commemorative practices cannot be studied in racial isolation. This thesis, therefore, looks at traditionally white Australian commemorative sites and narratives to discover why Indigenous Australians have been excluded from practices of remembering.

The scholarly literature is currently divided into two main concentrations: a generalist study of commemoration in Australia and influence of memory and history on national identity. While some texts briefly address the changing nature of Indigenous commemoration, few focus specifically on Aboriginal soldiers. Moira Simpson’s study of museums in *Making Representations: Museums in a Post-Colonial Era* addresses how the presentation of Aboriginal culture has changed in the public sphere. However, these examinations focus on how museums unjustly represented Aboriginal culture while this thesis questions why Aboriginal soldiers were never even acknowledged. Ken Inglis’ *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian*

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Landscape stands as a pillar of scholarship placing the memorial at the center of a larger discussion of commemoration in both private and public spheres. While his study looks at memorials throughout Australia’s white history, it most importantly provides an understanding of how and why the Anzac cult is revered in Australian culture. The Anzac cult, furthermore, fails to acknowledge the contribution of Aboriginal soldiers in its memorials. Will the acceptance of Aboriginal dead as fallen soldiers, he asks, ever be placed on “memorials, cenotaphs, boards of honor, and even in the pantheon of national heroes?”

The intersection of history and memory is an increasingly popular area of study. Opinion has varied on the nature of this relationship, ranging from a nourishing one, as argued in Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia, to a dialectical companionship, as outlined by Raphael Samuel in Theatres of Memory. Chris Healy’s From the Ruins of Colonization: History as Social Memory provides an intriguing look at a range of commemorative practices, from museum displays to history books, and investigates how history and memory interrelate to create a social memory. Healy argues that social memory is a product of colonialism and Australia’s colonial social memories “constitute a world both in ruins and of ruins, a world of ruination and a historical dream which has been ruined.” This suggests that new postcolonial social memories can be created which embrace Indigenous culture and society. Viewing the relationship between history and memory as a tenuous one, Bain Attwood argues that
the plurality of memories and stories, characteristic in democratic societies, must be sustained as historians venture along a precarious path "between relativism and objectivism... in order to ensure that history, like the past, has a future." For too long Indigenous communities have been denied a place in history and identified with classifications that reflect the power differential between themselves and their colonizer.

This thesis investigates an issue in commemorative practice slow to embrace postcolonial perceptions of nation and identity – military commemoration and the representation of Indigenous soldiers. While public institutions such as museums are beginning to modify their depiction of Indigenous Australians, departing from object-based representation, most have failed to acknowledge the discrimination against and contributions of Indigenous soldiers. This research looks at how Indigenous soldiers are remembered and why they are forgotten from sites of memory. Issues of Australian national identity, as defined within an ever-changing public landscape, frame my inquiry of Indigenous representation. Structured around three case studies, this paper follows a chronological timeline of commemorative practices characteristically colonial in its presentation of Indigenous Australian communities. These case studies have been selected because they highlight key issues in understanding national identity with regards to Indigenous representation over time.

The first chapter focuses on colonial constructions of national identity and its influence on the legacy of Captain Reginald Saunders, the first Aboriginal Australian to be commissioned as an officer in the Australian Army. Regarded by many as a national

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15 See Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989) for further discussion on how Aboriginality is a colonial European construction.
hero, he was embraced by the white military community as a fellow Anzac and commemorated with a portrait hanging in the Australian War Memorial. However, what were the conditions for acceptance into this culture? Referencing his 1960s biography and textual memorial, *The Embarrassing Australian* by Harry Gordon, this chapter argues that it was only through the language of assimilation that Saunders was recognized as an “Australian” and appropriately remembered for his military achievement.

The second chapter highlights evolving perceptions of Australian history and national identity and its impact on Indigenous representation within the Australian War Memorial. As Robert Hall notes in *The Black Diggers*, “the galleries of the Australian War Memorial—the national shrine to the ‘digger myth’—reveal no hint of Aboriginal military service.” While this institution initially disregarded the Indigenous Australian military contribution, it has since evolved to acknowledge their role within its galleries.

The final chapter looks at museums and their representation of Indigenous soldiers during the frontier conflict. The museum battle is only a small segment of the History Wars, illustrating a desire for a unified and sanitized portrayal of the past versus a more pluralistic, complex, and challenging view of history. The characterization of Indigenous soldiers, either as savages or warriors, among the museum displays and storyboards reflect how the nation chooses to remember its frontier past. The methods adopted by museums reveal their rejection or acceptance of the Indigenous perspective of European colonization as a legitimate war.

By showing how forms of Indigenous representation are tied to historical moments and linking these commemorative trends with Australian national identity, this

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research adds to the body of literature on Australian commemoration, which currently lacks depth in the study of Indigenous soldiers. Furthermore, it foreshadows an evolving trend where perceptions of "nation" are increasingly willing to embrace an Indigenous past into its definition.
CHAPTER 1

The Embarrassing and Forgotten Australian: The Legacy of Captain Reginald Saunders

To the men who served under him, Reg Saunders was ‘the greatest officer in the world.’ To his mates, he was charismatic, magnetic, and had a fantastic sense of humor. To Australia, he was the first Aboriginal to gain a commission in the Australian Army. He was a legend.

Like other newspapers throughout Australia, the Western Australian obituary applauded Reginald Saunders for his service as an officer, as a human being, and as an amazing Aboriginal Australian. Saunders enlisted in the Australian Army when the political and social landscape rejected Aborigines as soldiers, citizens, and equals. His life of struggle and success was often described as an inspiration to the community and he was commonly regarded as an Aboriginal Australian who always walked proudly and never looked down. This characterization of Saunders is problematic, however, because while he was celebrated as an “amazing aboriginal,” it was only through his rejection of Aboriginal culture and assimilation into a white society that he could be considered

17 Tamara Hunter, “An officer and man of the highest rank,” The Western Australian, 6 March 1990, 9.
worthy of hero status. Today, Saunders is remembered textually in Harry Gordon's biography, *The Embarrassing Australian*, visually with a portrait hanging in the galleries of the Australian War Memorial, and symbolically through the Returned Service Leagues' scholarship for substance abuse studies. Taken collectively, these memorials present a paradoxical legacy simultaneously lauding Saunders' success as an Aboriginal Australian and his assimilation into white society. However, to fully understand the story of Reginald Saunders, one must first understand the broader story of Indigenous soldiers during the world wars.

During the First World War, at least three hundred Aborigines from Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria served in the First AIF. Despite suffering equally to their white comrades, Aboriginal veterans were blatantly excluded from the Anzac myth that immortalized white Australian soldiers. While a relationship between the Army and Aborigines began with the First World War, the Second World War witnessed substantial Aboriginal involvement both officially and unofficially. In spite of their essential role, racism and brutality persisted throughout the period.\(^{19}\)

Aborigines provided the military with a wide range of benefits. Unlike most white Australians, Aboriginal populations had an intimate and detailed knowledge of local areas for which there were no maps. In the harsh regions around northern Australia, the majority of Australians gravitated around townships such as Darwin, Katherine, and Burketown. Some Aborigines permanently settled in the most remote

areas. Although their expertise was invaluable to the military, the Services were reluctant to allow Aborigines to formally enlist.\(^{20}\)

The Defense Act and Australian Military Regulations and Orders outlined the criteria for enlistment into the Australian Army during the Second World War. While non-Europeans were exempt from compulsory duty under the Defense Act, they were allowed to volunteer. Seemingly contradicting but not legally invalidating the Defense Act, the Australian Military Regulations and Orders stated that only persons “substantially of European origin or descent” were allowed to voluntarily enlist.\(^{21}\) As the war progressed and the need for able-bodied men increased, the Australian Military Regulations were merely manipulated to meet the Army’s needs.\(^{22}\)

The reasons for excluding Aboriginal Australians appear to be unsubstantiated excuses at best. Senior officials argued that Aborigines were incapable of embracing white ideals and white troops would not tolerate serving with blacks.\(^{23}\) Additionally, the Army claimed it required literate soldiers and Aborigines could not adapt to the climate where Australian soldiers were serving. These assertions were unconvincing because many illiterate white Australians enlisted and Aborigines better suited the climate of countries where Australian forces were stationed, including Papua New Guinea and the East Indies.\(^{24}\) These policies not only needlessly excluded strong and healthy individuals from military service but also implied that Aborigines were inferior. In standing by racist regulations, the Army placed itself “increasingly at odds with wartime propaganda which called for national unity and decried the concept of a

\(^{20}\) Hall, *Black Diggers*, 85.
\(^{22}\) Ibid.
\(^{23}\) Ibid, 16.
\(^{24}\) Ibid, 12.
'master race'.” Regardless, some Aborigines were able to formally enlist into the Service, especially after Japan entered the war in December 1941.

Along with the topic of enlistment was the moral issue of citizenship. Mr. M. Sawtell, Chairman for the Committee for Aboriginal Citizenship, wrote to the Prime Minister:

As we are at war to uphold democracy we do consider that democracy should begin at home in Australia. We feel sure that good loyal Australian citizens do not wish to see their aboriginal people, and those young men who are to defend our shores, treated in such a poor manner.

The subject of Aboriginal citizenship and rights was not new. On the 150th anniversary of European occupation in 1938, a reenactment of Governor Phillip’s landing was staged in Sydney. Meanwhile, the Aboriginal community held a Day of Mourning in protest of the “Whiteman's seizure of our country and enslavement of our people.”

They called for a change in government policy to grant Aborigines equality and full citizenship status. In responding to these appeals, the government defined citizenship to mean success and assimilation into the white world.

The language of assimilation originally relied on the science of biology but through the influence of A. P. Elkin, professor of anthropology at the University of Sydney and chief advisor to the minister, it shifted towards the language of anthropology. In 1939, Elkin drafted a paper titled “New Deal for Aborigines” based on the principle that Aborigines deserved eventual citizenship. The aim of the policy

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25 Ibid., 16-17.
26 Hall, Black Diggers, 10.
27 Stuart Macintyre, A Concise History of Australia (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 185.
28 Ibid.
would be "the raising of [the Aborigines'] status so as to entitle them by right and by qualification to the ordinary rights of citizenship, and to enable them and help them to share with us the opportunities that are available in their native land." The plan to teach Aborigines how to live like non-Aboriginal Australians in order to gain civic rights was a far cry from the demands made by Aboriginal protestors in 1938. These assimilation policies were not an acknowledgment of equality – denying Aborigines the right to both preserve their heritage and hold legal citizenship – but another manifestation of racism.

Aboriginal Australians attempted to link military service with the rights of full citizenship but failed to gain much public attention for their cause. There was some visible improvement regarding citizenship with an amendment to Western Australia’s Commonwealth Electoral Act, granting Aboriginal ex-servicemen the vote in 1944. Unfortunately, this Act did not grant all servicemen citizenship but only certain individuals. The process required a Royal Commissioner to subjectively evaluate a person's suitability and resulted in awarding only two people citizenship. One of them, Samuel Isaacs, had to prove his complete assimilation by dissolving tribal and native associations. By 1949, the Army changed its policy of non-European exclusion. However, Aborigines were not allowed to enlist freely but were subject to an interview process reserved only for Aboriginal candidates.

Despite discriminatory practices, Aborigines who successfully enlisted into the military enjoyed an environment of equality nonexistent in civilian life.

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31 Hall, Black Diggers, 30.
32 Ibid, 193.
service created opportunities for “personal advancement, including the acquisition of new skills and work experiences and the opportunity to achieve positions of command and authority over white Australians.” Even more important than the travel, adventure, and acquisition of skills were the relationships Aboriginal servicemen forged with their white comrades. The military provided an environment where stereotypes disappeared and interpersonal relationships developed remarkably free from racism. The cohesiveness of working groups in a rifle section or gun crew surpassed any divisiveness of prejudice. The shared experience of work and danger created relationships based on equality and cooperation rather than the social distance prevalent in pre-war Australian society.

While the nature of the military was integral in creating an environment where mutual relationships could develop between Aborigines and non-Aborigines, what were the terms of acceptance? For K. R. Baker and many other servicemen, recognition was based on terms of whiteness. When writing about Martin Connolly, a “full-blood” from Normanton, Baker notes, “he was the ‘whitest’ black man I have ever met, had the privilege to train with and to enjoy his company [sic].” Aboriginal soldiers were accepted because they assimilated to the white constructions of nation and citizenship. The colonizer wrote the rules of acceptance where exclusion or inclusion was determined by one’s adherence or rejection of those guidelines. Many people saw this equality as a disappearance of color barriers between white and black soldiers when in actuality it was the black soldier conforming to a white culture.

34 Hall, Black Diggers, 62.
36 Hall, “Aborigines and the Army,” 40.
37 Quoted in Hall, Black Diggers, 69.
In addition to serving as enlisted soldiers in the armed forces Aboriginal Australians also worked as de facto soldiers within segregated units concentrated around northern Australia. In these secluded regions, Aborigines had an intimate knowledge of the local area. While crossing the eastern Arnhem land in October 1935, Donald Thomson, an anthropologist from Melbourne University, observed the “people of the Ritharrngu and other groups of the inland...are so much a part of the landscape; they fit in without a single note of discord.” Anywhere from two hundred to two hundred fifty Aborigines served as de facto soldiers “without formal enlistment, pay or acknowledgement.” By employing the Aborigines in this de facto capacity, the Army benefited from Aboriginal knowledge while denying them basic rewards of service.

One of the Aboriginal de facto units consisted of Arnhem Land Aborigines organized by Thomson to provide flank protection of Darwin. The cost of maintaining the unit was inconsequential, with Indigenous soldiers paid in tobacco, fishhooks, wire for fish spears, tomahawks, and pipes. Troops were expected to feed themselves and received rations only during intensive training or while on patrol. Their de facto status denied them reparation benefits while allowing the military to seemingly adhere to its policy of excluding non-Europeans. Given the massive contribution of these troops in “ensuring[ing] a very considerable degree of safety to Darwin,” few units in any army were raised and maintained at such little cost.

Since Bathurst and Melville Islands provided airstrips for a possible Japanese attack of Darwin by sea and air, Aboriginal de facto troops were formed for surveillance

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40 Quoted in Ibid, 89.
Jack Gribble, a former volunteer coast watcher, organized one of these units. Upon joining the Navy in September 1942, Gribble formed an unofficial patrol of thirty-six Aborigines on Melville Island. Gribble regarded his patrol members as servicemen, issuing them Navy uniforms, rations, and weapons. Some members were even given the rank of Petty Officer. Regardless of these tokenistic formalities, the Indigenous units were never formally recognized by the Navy and, despite Gribble’s repeated promises, were never paid. The Navy were aware of Gribble’s Indigenous unit, receiving requests for guns and rifles that far exceeded his personal needs, however they never objected to getting the service of thirty-seven able-bodied men at the cost of just one commissioned officer, Gribble.

Gribble’s unit provided significant surveillance of the island, patrolling over thirty-six hundred kilometers by boat and over a hundred kilometers by foot over a period of fifteen months. Given such a substantial contribution to the war effort, it is understandable why the soldiers became resentful when the Navy refused to officially recognize them. In 1961, Leo John, a member of Gribble’s patrol, testified before the House of Representatives Select Committee on Voting Rights for Aborigines that as an ex-serviceman he understood the responsibilities of citizenship and the injustice he experienced during the war: “I worked for five years patrolling [Melville] Island during the war...I carried on in wartime. I got nothing for it. Black people are working hard and getting nothing out of it.” Such blatant dismissal of Indigenous contribution during war disgracefully implies that the involvement of an entire nation and her people is not necessary in defending its land.

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41 Ibid, 99.
43 Ibid, 101-103.
By June 1944, about five percent of the Indigenous population played some direct role in the war effort. Given the misconception that Aborigines had "no military value for formal enlistment," their level of participation was remarkable. They regularly unloaded fuel, bombs, ammunition, rations, searched for and rescued downed airmen and lost seamen, salvaged aircraft, located sea mines, and were a source of general labor. While the majority of non-Aboriginal Australians were concentrated around cities, "Aborigines—men, women and children—were in the front line of the air war." 47

During and after the Second World War, policies regarding Aboriginal enlistment and citizenship remained unchanged, generating considerable skepticism and resentment in the Indigenous community. William Cooper of the Australian Aborigines' League accused the Western Australian government of "out Hitlering Hitler" in their treatment of Indigenous people. 48 Private J. S. Murray, an Aboriginal veteran, made a similar comment to the Melbourne Herald in reaction to a policy that barred Aborigines from serving in Japanese peacekeeping efforts: "Aboriginal soldiers are being made to feel like Jews in Hitler's Germany...Aboriginals died along the New Guinea fronts in the belief that they were fighting against racial prejudice and discrimination." 49 The invaluable contributions made by Indigenous soldiers were overlooked and just as in World War One, the Second World War veterans were being snubbed.

By the war's end, Aboriginal veterans "[found] that the fruits of victory were not to be divided equally" and State and Commonwealth governments were

46 Ibid, 189-190.
reestablishing pre-war conditions of racism and discrimination.\textsuperscript{50} The traditional benefits of subsidized housing, preferential employment, and others conferred to war veterans were all withheld from Indigenous veterans. The equality that Aboriginal soldiers experienced while in the Service was lost upon returning to civilian life.\textsuperscript{51} For years, the Australian War Memorial, the shrine to the digger, paid no acknowledgement to the Aboriginal soldier. There was only one sign of an Indigenous soldier, a portrait of Captain Reginald Saunders.

Reginald Saunders is the first Aboriginal Australian to reach commissioned rank in the Australian Army and is regarded as one of the most well known Aboriginal servicemen to serve during the Second World War. Ironically, however, while Saunders is noted for his success as an Aborigine, such acknowledgement is legitimated only through his assimilation into a society that discriminated against and rejected Indigenous Australians.

Saunders was a member of the Gunditjmara people, located outside of the Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve in the Western District of Victoria. Born on 7 August 1920, Saunders' family had a history of military involvement. His father, Chris Saunders, and uncle, William Reginald Rawlings, both served with the First AIF during the First World War. Named after his uncle who was awarded the Military Medal for "displaying rare bravery in the performance of his duty" and killed in action, Saunders admired both his father and uncle immensely.\textsuperscript{52} Like the families of other Aborigines who joined the Second AIF, Saunders' family was socio-economically depressed and

\textsuperscript{50} Ball, \textit{Aborigines in the Defense}, 21.
\textsuperscript{51} Hall, \textit{Black Diggers}, 191.
Figure 1. Portrait of Private William Reginald Rawlings, uncle of Reginald Saunders. Rawlings enlisted at Warrnambool on 14 March 1916 and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery during heavy fighting along the Mortlancourt Ridge in July 1918. Rawlings was killed in action on 9 August 1918 during the capture of Vauviller. Image accessed from the Australian War Memorial Online Collections Database.

detribalized. When his mother died in 1924, Saunders and his younger brother, Harry, moved to Lake Condah Mission with their father. He attended school until age fourteen and then left to work as a mill hand in a timber yard.53

When Chris Saunders and his friends reminisced about the war, “Reg listened with ‘ears as big as footballs, taking it all in’.”54 It was no surprise that at his first opportunity to enlist in the Second World War, Saunders and his mates “went in swarms” to sign up.55 In April 1940, Saunders enlisted in the AIF (2/7th Battalion of the Australian 6th Division). Demonstrating “outstanding leadership skills, personable character and sporting skills,” Saunders was promoted to the rank of lance corporal within six weeks and then sergeant three months later.56 He saw fighting in the North African and Greek campaigns and evaded capture for eleven months while stranded on Crete. While stationed in New Guinea in August 1942, Saunders was nominated for commissioned rank. It was also while in New Guinea that he received news that his younger brother, Harry, was killed in action on the Kokoda Trail.

53 Hall, Black Diggers, 65.
54 “Case Study,” 2.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
After deliberations concerning Saunders’ recommendation for commissioning, he was selected for officer candidate school and graduated near the top of his class in December 1944.\textsuperscript{57} As a lieutenant, he served out the rest of the war overseeing platoons of up to thirty men. Saunders served again during the Korean War, and was promoted to the rank of captain in charge of “C” Company of the third battalion. The battalion was awarded the United States Presidential Citation for their valor in the battle of Kapyong in 1951. In 1954, Saunders resigned from the Army and, upon returning to civilian life, found himself in a string of semi-skilled work lacking the responsibility of an Army officer.\textsuperscript{58}

Society’s rejection of Saunders motivated Harry Gordon, a war correspondent during the Korean War, to write \textit{The Embarrassing Australian: The Story of an Aboriginal Warrior}.\textsuperscript{59} Published in 1962, the book stands as a textual memorial to Saunders’ legacy as an amazing Aborigine. Gordon argues that Saunders was an “embarrassing

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, 3.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, 4.
Australian" in two respects. Firstly, society's inability to accept Saunders and apply his talents in a civilian context was an embarrassment to Australia. Secondly, Gordon asserts that Saunders himself was embarrassing, existing as a misfit not accepted by either the white or black community. While critical at times, the biography as a whole celebrates Saunders and his remarkable military achievements. This success, Gordon implies, was possible because Saunders assimilated into white culture by overcoming the inferiority of his people. In other words, Saunders is ironically commemorated as an exceptional Aboriginal because he rejected his Aboriginality to assimilate into white constructions of Australian identity.

Throughout the text, Gordon describes Aboriginal people as inferior to white Australians and arguably constituted "the most primitive race on earth."60 The source of Saunders' extraordinary character, Gordon insists, is his ability to rise above the capability of his ethnicity. To highlight this difference, Gordon cites a story from Saunders' youth. When Saunders sought work at a saw mill, the employer wanted to keep part of his wages "as a sort of defrayed pay; this is still a common practice, based on the sometimes correct belief that aboriginal workers aren't responsible enough to look after their own finances."61 Rather than subject himself to a patronizing payment system Saunders preferred to seek employment elsewhere. Saunders successfully convinced his future employer to forgo the defrayed payment plan. With this anecdote, Gordon expresses his agreement with such denigrating policies and explains how Saunders was considered a superior Aboriginal – he defied gross stereotypes about Indigenous people.

60 Gordon, Embarrassing Australian, 12.
Like many other Aborigines who formally enlisted into the Service, Saunders experienced social equality within the military. Lin Bear, who served with both Reginald and Harry Saunders, spoke fondly of his bond with Harry:

We lived with Harry Saunders as a brother....Our love for him was such that there could be no place for color barriers. That sort of relationship was the result of circumstances...we were forced together by events, and our comradeship was completely necessary.62

Harry and Reginald’s acceptance was the result of working conditions and their adoption of white Australian values and standards. *The Embarrassing Australian* outlines the degree of Saunders’ assimilation through his rejection of Aboriginal culture.

Saunders never felt comfortable around people of his own race. “His most important years were spent among white men who accepted him with respect and he came to regard himself as one of them,” Gordon states. “[Saunders] would have been considerably embarrassed if he had ever been thrown into real contact with large groups of people of his own race.”63 Saunders’ treatment of other Aborigines also reflected his assimilation. In letters addressed to his father, Saunders often referred to other native boys as *boongs*, a derogatory term.64 Not only did he embrace white culture but he also adopted their insensitivity towards his own people. This emphasis that Gordon places on Saunders’ rejection of Aboriginal lifestyle helped to elucidate that tension surrounding Saunders’ legacy – that he is remembered as an Aboriginal only because he rejected his Aboriginality.

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62 Ibid, 47.
63 Ibid, 13.
64 Ibid, 117.
Saunders’ story of acceptance into the Australian military reflected what the Commonwealth government aspired for all Aborigines—assimilation. In 1951, the Commonwealth minister defined the policy: “Assimilation means, in practical terms, that, in the course of time, it is expected that all persons of Aboriginal blood or mixed blood in Australia will live like White Australians do.” The policy left no room for Aboriginal culture or values to exist and strove to eventually eliminate the culture. Aboriginal activism, especially in the 1960s, noted the important differences between integration and assimilation.

The Freedom Riders, a group of young college students from the University of Sydney, traveled to rural towns across New South Wales to learn about and protest for Aboriginal integration in white society. They fought to have facilities such as swimming pools and hotels open to all blacks, regardless of their adoption or rejection of white standards. Inspired by the American civil rights movement, the students fought for a “separate and distinct segment of the Australian people.” The Freedom Riders were also moved by the poignant words of Dr. Martin Luther King, especially in his Letters from a Birmingham Jail: “We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with the destiny of America.” Although most Australians did not associate freedom as an essential goal of Australian democracy, “the sense of a contrast between conventional Australian notions of democracy, equality and fair play on the one hand and the continuing reality of racism on the other was sufficient for King’s oratory and ideas to have resonance in a country very different from his

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65 Macintyre, _Concise History_. 220.
Unfortunately, these events occurred well after Saunders’ retirement from military service and assimilation into Australian society.

In discussing his race, Saunders acknowledged that the situation was difficult. He witnessed the hardship in his own children but upon self-reflection, maintained that he personally never felt sorry:

I’ve certainly never consciously regretted the fact that I wasn’t born white. I look at it this way. If you’re white, you’re just one of the crowd. When I walk up the street, people take notice. They see me, and they always remember me. It makes things easier. No, mate...I wouldn’t be white for quids.”

It was true that people noticed Saunders because he was black however it was his adoption of white values that allowed for the majority to celebrate and admire his life.

When the color of his skin drew racist comments Saunders turned a cold shoulder to ignore it, despite that it ultimately affected him. Gordon characterizes this reaction to racism as dignified and respectful in its silence. A lesser person might react, he implies, but Saunders was “tolerant” of the “the jibes, the slights, the setback he suffered in civilian life have never hurt him.” This point seems misguided, however, because Saunders was later quoted to carry considerable resentment towards the ignorant individuals who taunted or jeered at him:

You could never completely understand the way I felt. No white person could...say you and I swapped skins. You’d be getting into trouble all the time, because you felt you’d been insulted. If you walked down the

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67 Ibid, 44.
69 Gordon, Embarrassing Australian, 18.
street and someone said, 'Hello, Darky,' you'd want to fight them.

You'd be much too sensitive.\textsuperscript{70}

His silence and tolerance were only adaptations to assimilate into white Australia but Saunders never harbored his pain or bitterness.

Resentment resurfaced when the military announced that non-Europeans were ineligible to volunteer for service in Japan. Forde, the Minister for the Army, issued a statement explaining that Aborigines were excluded because the standard for peacekeeping forces were higher than wartime standards. A high level of physically fitness and intelligence was required, he argued. Forde declared that although "Aboriginal members of the Australian Military Forces gave splendid service during the war, most of them cannot conform to the standard laid down for the Japan forces."\textsuperscript{71}

When Saunders was informed of the policy, Gordon notes that he criticized it as "ignorant and narrow-minded" but he was "not greatly embittered."\textsuperscript{72} A later statement containing overtones of bitterness and anger contradicted Gordon’s claim. Saunders commented that in addition to being an ignorant decision, the policy would not have the support of non-Aboriginal soldiers:

Australian soldiers I met in the army were not color-conscious towards the aboriginal, and I felt that they would never agree to this discrimination. Native troops from practically every colony in the Empire fought and died in the struggle against tyranny and oppression, and Australian aboriginals were no exception. Now that the danger is past I feel my race is entitled to equal opportunities with other Australians. We don’t want privileges, but opportunities for

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid, 135.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, 16-17.
J. S. Parker, general secretary of the Australian Natives’ Association, added: “The Japanese have been told that Australia despised all peoples of another color and refused to give them any rights. If the Japanese saw aboriginals in the Occupation Forces enjoying exactly the same rights as white soldiers, it would make a profound impression throughout the country.” The equality that the enlisted soldiers enjoyed during wartime merely could not survive in peacetime.

Some argued that Saunders exemplified the many opportunities open to Aborigines and their equality in Australia. Gordon notes that, “surely that’s democracy at its finest, you can argue, when two hundred white men take orders graciously and willingly from a black representative of a Stone Age race; surely that shows...that the average Australian doesn’t give a damn about the pigmentation of a man’s skin—and that there is an equality of opportunity for the aboriginal.” However, these openings existed only within the confines of war and as soon as Saunders and hundreds of other Aboriginal soldiers returned to civilian life, opportunity’s door closed. Additionally, such chances were blatantly denied to Aborigines who served for Australia as laborers or de facto soldiers who were never officially recognized for their time and sacrifices.

As a civilian, Saunders was unable to secure employment that utilized his skills and talents. He worked in a number of low-paying, semi-skilled jobs initially as a foundry worker then as a tram conductor and tally clerk. His status as a well-respected officer also diminished. In civilian life, pre-war racism and discrimination returned. When Saunders initially left the Army and began work as a tram conductor in Melbourne, he hoped to gain more responsibility over time. However, over the years,

73 Ibid, 136-137.
74 Ibid, 136.
“he became more realistic, and the ambitions faded.” Consequently, by the time *The Embarrassing Australian* was published, Saunders entered a complacent acceptance of his low-stress life. “I like it without responsibilities,” he laughed. “I have no worries and I’m fit. How many of these businessmen over forty do you see with physiques like mine?” Saunders also assumed a more nonchalant attitude about his identity, which he easily accepted and rejected according to each situation. Two anecdotes relating to a law passed in 1909, making it a legal offence to serve Aborigines alcohol, demonstrate this attitude. Exemptions were given to individuals who carried a certificate allowing them to drink but Saunders refused to carry such a piece of paper.

During a country trip while coaching football in the finals, Saunders entered a bar near the football fields. He sat down to enjoy a beer when a couple of “rather shabby” local Aborigines drifted into the bar. Upon their entrance, the barman barked, “Beat it! We’ll get pinched if the police see us serving you blokes.” “What about this bloke?” one of the men asked pointing to Saunders. “He’s an abo too.” “No,” replied the barman. “He only looks like an abo. He’s really whiter than I am.” Saunders embraced his whiteness and in some instances, even deliberately rejected his black identity.

One day in the 1960s Saunders walked into a wine saloon at Sydney’s Central Station and asked for a sherry. The barmaid looked a bit uneasy and then plainly replied: “You’re an aboriginal. I’m afraid I can’t serve you.” Gordon commented, “Lesser men might have lost their temper, even explained emphatically why they had a right to drink in any Australian bar they please. But not Saunders.” Saunders was above trying to prove himself. He simply lied. “I’m not an aboriginal, love. I’m an

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76 Ibid, 137.
77 Ibid.
Indonesian student.” The barmaid cheered up and started to happily pour a sherry.

“That’s different, ducks. Why didn’t you say that in the first place?”

It was almost hypocritical how Gordon admonishes society for not providing enough opportunities for Saunders while applauding Saunders’ inaction in changing that anti-Aboriginal mentality through his silence and tolerance.

Many decried that Saunders was wasted after the military. Lin Bear, who attended officer candidate school with Saunders and served with his brother, described how “amazed and disgusted” he was upon hearing the work Saunders was doing after the war. “It’s a horrible waste of a man...I always felt that he might have been used in some way to help the welfare of his own people. He was such an outstanding example of the heights they could rise to if given half a chance.” Such a claim, however, appears false because all Aborigines would not have risen up through Australian society unless they, like Saunders, were willing to assimilate and become “acceptable” within the eyes of white Australia. Only then would they be able to take advantage of opportunities otherwise denied to Aborigines. The Embarrassing Australian agreed that Saunders’ life was wasted outside of the Army. Furthermore, Saunders’ story was significant because it demonstrated that “the dream of Aboriginal assimilation” was unrealistic and far off. “Saunders is probably the most assimilated aboriginal in Australia—and his acceptance in white society is far from total,” Gordon points out. Regardless, Saunders’ assimilation was extreme enough to allow for his acceptance into the Anzac myth. His portrait stands in the halls of the Australian War Memorial in commemoration of his leadership among other military heroes.

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79 Ibid, 18.
80 Ibid, 126-127.
81 Ibid, 169.
Figure 3. A portrait of Captain Reginald Saunders hangs in the Post-1945 Conflict Gallery in the Australian War Memorial. It is nestled behind a wall, almost hidden from the remaining exhibit. Image provided by Van Nguyen.

Other memorials exist for Saunders such as the Captain Reginald Saunders and Aboriginal Ex-Service Men and Women Memorial Scholarship in Substance Abuse Studies, awarded by the RSL. The scholarship awards three thousand dollars per year to an Aboriginal student to study drug and alcohol abuse. Although Glenda Humes, Saunders' daughter, acknowledged that the RSL scholarship was a “fitting memorial to her father and all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen and women,” it stands in contrast to that message which the Australian War Memorial and The Embarrassing Australian convey. The RSL Scholarship honors Saunders as a role model for Aboriginal society and seeks to help the Indigenous community. The Memorial portrait and Gordon biography, however, celebrate Saunders for his rejection of Aboriginal identity and assimilation to white constructions of citizenship. While different, these legacies collectively create a mythical air around Saunders himself as a part of the legends and stories that define Anzac and Australia.

82 “RSL Scholarship,” 7.
CHAPTER 2

Seeing Black and White: Indigenous Representation in the Australia War Memorial

Every [New South Wales] school student should visit the Australian War Memorial in Canberra as part of their “patriotic duty”, NSW Premier, Mr. Carr, said yesterday as he indicated it would form part of the education curriculum.83

The Australian War Memorial stands as the nation’s pantheon of valor and bravery and regarded as integral in understanding the nation’s identity. Built in response to the tragedy of World War One, a turning point for many countries in how they would memorialize war and its human casualties, the Memorial sought to simultaneously commemorate the dead and educate the living, a dual mission unique among the world’s military monuments. With planning beginning as early as 1917, when Australia’s national identity was still defined by white terms, the Memorial paid no acknowledgement to its Indigenous soldiers. All the statues, paintings, and dioramas within its galleries honored white soldiers in a white Australia. As the notion of

83 Sydney Morning Herald, 14 April 1999 quoted in Fiona Nicoll, From Diggers to Drag Queens (London: King Street Press, 2001), 27.
diversity became more accepted, the Memorial began to integrate diverse images and faces. The evolution of Indigenous representation at the Memorial reflects how the intersection of social memory and history is not static but constantly evolving, thus allowing for Indigenous Australians to be acknowledged by a nation that once denied their existence. This chapter considers how Australia’s commemorative experience paralleled that of Europe after the Great War in the journey to establish the Australian War Memorial and how the Memorial’s external and internal representation of Indigenous soldiers has changed from a colonial to more inclusive era.

The surge of commemoration in Australia after World War One paralleled the experience of many European countries. A dramatic increase in memorial construction resulted from the intimate collaboration between citizens and local government. These monuments to the dead acknowledged the individuality of the war dead, often bearing either their names or faces, and frequently expressed the indebtedness of the nation to its citizens. Without the physical remains of fallen soldiers, publicly recorded names served as the principal sites of mourning. A roll of honor was buried underneath the town memorial of Oldham in a “sacred chamber.” The organization committee of Blayton’s town memorial, adorning a list of names, suggested ‘that since few could visit the graves of their loved ones abroad, ‘it will be of some slight consolation to them to come to the beautiful monument and lay their tributes of affection at its base’. Compared to pre-World War One soldiers who died in battle, World War One dead were treated with greater attention, evidenced by the immense

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85 Ibid, 323.
lengths Great Britain, France, and Germany took to mark, register, and preserve war graves. This concentration on bereavement over military triumph also supports Jay Winter’s argument that commemorative efforts “went beyond the conventional shibboleths of patriotism” to begin “the search for the ‘meaning’ of the unprecedented slaughter of the Great War” via traditional frames of reference.

Although deemed unconventional at the time, the practice of listing names is evidenced in ancient Greek war memorials. For example, a stone statue of Athena, currently in the Acropolis museum, bears the names of the city’s dead soldiers. The Greek Mound at Marathon documents the names of 192 Greek soldiers who died while fighting the Persians in 490 BC. This practice, however, did not become common until the nineteenth century when countries began the transition politically from autocracies to democracies. World War One memorials that listed names of unidentified bodies expressed the honesty and reality in “the loss of life in war, and [in] remembering those who served and especially those who died.” The Monument to the Missing Soldiers on the Somme in Thiepval, France lists more than seventy thousand men as missing because it was impossible to identify the dead.

Additionally, memorials served as a platform for individuals and communities to express views and opinions. Benedict Anderson in his study of modern Indonesia proposed that monuments were a form of speech. Others were amazed at the sheer power and evocativeness of memorials. Sir Henry Parkes “shared a conviction common

in his lifetime all over the European world that statues were teachers."92 During the unveiling of an effigy for John Dunmore Lang on 26 January 1891, Parkes recounted his experience traveling across the United States and Europe "where every spare space, every park, and every pleasure ground is adorned with statues of their public men...let the people turn where they will, these statues meet them, and with grave admonition counsel them...to go and do better.93 Statues along with other memorials were reminders of the past to inform the future. These stationary educators, however, were imbued with bias. John Gillis argues, "Commemorative activity is by definition social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some instances, annihilation."94 Additionally, the focus of this process of memory selection is not the past but concerns of the present such as social attitudes and seats of power.95 These issues inevitably played out in the construction of war memorials throughout Australia.

A reserved estimate places the number of war memorials in Australia at more than four thousand, many erected in the aftermath of World War One. While World War One profoundly impacted commemorative practices in Australia as it did throughout Europe, Australians lacked the ability to conduct traditional mourning ceremonies such as funerals and create cemeteries for their fallen soldiers. The distances were physically too vast to allow for visitation to battlefields and gravesites. Conversely, European

92 Inglis, Sacred Places, 29.
93 Quoted in Ibid, 29.
families could not only grieve by means of traditional mores but also gained a deeper understanding of war, having witnessed its horrors on the home front. The only nation to repatriate her war dead was the United States. In 1917, the United States government promised that no American boy would be buried in alien soil unless his family agreed. Thus families “not wanting to leave memories as hostages to the subsequent defense of Europe” asked to have their sons return home, with seventy percent of the American dead repatriated. 

Financially, repatriation of British Imperial dead was not viable with over a million casualties while the Americans suffered eighty thousand. “An Australian wife or mother, an Australian son or daughter, whatever their wishes might have been, would probably never see the grave in which their husband, daughter, son or father lay buried,” thus denying them traditional Western rituals of mourning and bereavement. Apologists for British policy often cited the words of Rupert Brooke, buried not far from Gallipoli after dying of illness before landing, to comfort mourning citizens:

If I should die, think only this of me:

That there’s some corner of a foreign field

That is for ever England. 

Because Australians were left with only words to console their deep-seated wounds, the need for physical sites of mourning or symbolic gravesites was pressing. A historical beginning for the Australian War Memorial, however, lies within the story of Gallipoli. Although the Australian deaths at Gallipoli numbered fewer than British deaths and, although fought valiantly, the campaign was not free from errors in command and execution, Gallipoli gave birth to the Anzac legend. War correspondents played a large

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96 Laqueur, “Memory and Naming,” 162.
97 Michael McKeman, Here is Their Spirit: A History of the Australian War Memorial 1917-1990 (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press in association with the Australian War Memorial, 1991), xi.
98 Ibid, 78.
role in encouraging this legend, relaying to readers lavish descriptions of military valor and individual bravery. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett reported:

Australians rose to the occasion. They did not wait for orders, or for the boats to reach the beach, but sprang into the sea, formed a sort of rough line, and rushed at the enemy’s trenches. Their magazines were not charged, so they just went in with the cold steel, and it was over in a minute for the Turks in the first trench had been either bayoneted or had run away, and the Maxim guns were captured.99

The term “Anzac” came to signify a citizen soldier who embodied certain admirable characteristics. Revered in prose and verse, “Anzac” became venerated in Australian culture and its use protected under the War Precautions Action.100 “Foundational moments” in the defining of national identity often take “mythic proportions” in both the eyes of current and succeeding generations.101 Gallipoli and Anzac seized these mythic proportions and within the Australian consciousness, history and legend became one.

An awareness of the war’s importance to Australia’s national identity partially encouraged the early collection of war souvenirs and planning for a national memorial. In comparison to the United States, which only recently dedicated its national World War Memorial, Australia demonstrated massive foresight in acknowledging the importance and impact of World War One. Charles Bean, Australia’s official World War One historian and later chairperson of the Australian War Memorial’s Board of Management, both conceived and pushed forward plans for a national memorial.

100 Ibid.
Because Australia was "spared the sights and smells of war that the Europeans saw first hand," Bean hoped the memorial would help citizens gain some sense of understanding. To articulate his aspirations in the memorial's purpose, Bean selected a passage from Pericles as he spoke over the bodies of Athenians killed in battle:

They gave their lives. For that public gift they received a praise which never ages and a tomb most glorious — not so much the tomb in which they lie, but that in which their fame survives, to be remembered for ever when occasion comes for word and deed.

Bean hoped that a national memorial would serve as a spiritual burial ground for all Australians laid to rest on foreign soil. Through their records and relics, sacred reminders of great deeds by Australians, Bean wanted to repatriate their Australian spirit, anticipating that Australian citizens, by reading their words and studying their mementos, would remember them. This focus on objects and relics highlights Pierre Nora's argument that modern memory is mainly archival, relying "entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image."

From this vision grew a truly unique plan for the Australian War Memorial; it would be an institution that would house both museum objects (relics), archival materials (records), and embody a great traditional memorial to the dead.

While this commemorative activity sought admirable outcomes, it was with social and political bias. By definition, memorial practices are political and are the result of intense debate and conflict. Additionally, sites of public memory, such as museums, are products of official culture reliant on what John Bodnar calls "dogmatic

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102 McKean, Their Spirit, xii.
103 Ibid.
104 Pierre Nora quoted in Gillis, Commemorations, 15.
105 McKean, Their Spirit, 42.
106 Gillis, Commemorations, 5. 

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formalism” and the translation of reality into ideal and simplistic terms.\textsuperscript{107} These issues affected all stages of the memorial making process in Australia.

An urgency to commemorate inspired a massive effort to collect war trophies. In May 1917, the Australian War Records Section began operation under the command of Lieutenant J. L. Treloar, future director of the Memorial. The unit was created to document national history and ensure that Australia would maintain control of her own historical record. The establishment of the unit marked the birth of the national memorial in many respects, acknowledged with a commemorative stone in the Memorial courtyard.\textsuperscript{108} Treloar also paid special attention to how items were collected and stored, once insisting that a uniform remain caked in mud from the trenches.\textsuperscript{109} In addition to the official collection of items, the War Records Office asked individuals to donate items to the government. Without individual contributions the War Records Office could not have acquired significant items from Gallipoli and other events occurring before 1917.\textsuperscript{110} In February 1918, the War Records Section organized a successful exhibition in London’s Australia House, generating considerable interest among its visitors.\textsuperscript{111} In many respects, the collection scheme was overly successful, accumulating too many war trophies for the museum. A number of artifacts were distributed throughout Australia. 3,497 towns participated in the distribution of war trophies receiving a total of 545 guns, 442 trench mortars, and 4,919 machine-guns.\textsuperscript{112}

Bean recommended that the national monument be located in Canberra serving as a memorial to the Australian Imperial Force and standing as the “finest monument

\textsuperscript{107} Bodnar, “Public Memory,” 75.
\textsuperscript{108} McKernan, \textit{Their Spirit}, 37
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, 48.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, 46.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, 49.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, 72.
ever raised to any army.” Comparing his vision to other memorials in Europe, Bean hoped the Australian memorial would be “far grander and more sacred... than the one raised to Napoleon... at the Invalides in Paris.” This new memorial was indeed different from traditional monuments dedicated to great emperors or generals. At its heart was the mission of spiritually repatriating the Australian war dead. Furthermore, the memorial strove to equally honor the sacrifice of those who fell during war, a theme to many other World War One memorials. The international uniqueness of the Memorial, however, existed in its multi-pronged approached of commemoration – “the twin aims of commemoration and understanding, or more accurately, commemoration through understanding.” Despite many delays, notably the outbreak of World War Two and the Great Depression, the Australian War Memorial officially opened on Remembrance Day, 11 November 1941.

Originally, the Memorial was to commemorate only those who died during World War One. Its scope eventually grew to include all conflicts where Australians died in battle. The Memorial Board of Directors was ready to commence with construction on the eve of World War Two and the decision to expand the Memorial’s focus was with disagreement and some controversy. Memorial organizers tried to push out of their minds the reality of another war, fearing that all their hard work would be made irrelevant by the events in Europe. Michael McKernan in Here is Their Spirit: A History of the Australian War Memorial 1917-1990 hypothesized:

Perhaps they feared that a new war might push their ‘Great War’ into history; that the carnage, the heroism and the sacrifice associated with once familiar names like Pozieres, Mouquet Farm or Mont St Quentin

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113 Ibid, 58.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid, xii.
might be forgotten or confused as the nation abandoned the past in order to concentrate on the present.\(^{116}\)

On 29 August 1939, six days before the outbreak of World War Two, Treloar composed a long letter to the Memorial’s Board of Management addressing the impending conflict. He suggested that the Board change the concept of the Memorial from one that solely commemorated World War One to a general war memorial. He warned that the “war to end all wars” might be foreshadowed by yet another terrible war.\(^{117}\) The Board agreed on 3 February 1941 to extend the Memorial’s scope to include World War Two yet continued to ignore the contributions of Indigenous Australians.\(^{118}\)

Indigenous communities throughout the world have played an important role in foreign conflict. The Native American community saw forty-four thousand of their men enlist into the United States Armed Services during World War Two.\(^{119}\) In New Zealand, Maoris volunteered to join the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force from the onset of World War Two. Additionally, in October 1939, the New Zealand government agreed to form an all-Maori infantry battalion organized on a tribal basis into four companies. Facing low enlistment among Maoris, the government endorsed the formation of a Maori War Effort Organization, actively recruiting Maoris into the armed forces.\(^{120}\) Despite active involvement of Indigenous communities in foreign wars, are these soldiers included in their nation’s public commemoration of war heroes? The knowledge of Native American involvement in America’s foreign wars is commonly

\(^{116}\) Ibid, 160.

\(^{117}\) Ibid.

\(^{118}\) Ibid, 167.


known in the public sphere and their contribution as code talkers during both world wars is legendary. They are additionally commemorated through memorials and monuments such as the National Native American Vietnam Veterans Memorial at The Highground. In New Zealand, however, Maori commemoration is more scarce, with a few bearing inscriptions in Maori.\textsuperscript{121} New Zealand commemorative practices are more similar to Australia, given their shared formative experiences in Gallipoli at Anzac Cove.

Identity and memory are inextricably linked when placed within a national context and reflected in sites of memory. National memory, as described by Gillis, “is shared by people who have never seen or heard of one another, yet who regard themselves as having a common history. They are bound together as much by forgetting as by remembering.”\textsuperscript{122} However, national memories, and therefore national identities, are not static. They are constructed and reconstructed over time and societies must be constantly engaged in their translation to understand their meanings.\textsuperscript{123} While memorials and monuments were initially erected with certain objectives, their role within the public landscape constantly evolves. It is within this framework that we investigate the presence of Indigenous Australians in the Australian War Memorial.

\textsuperscript{122} Gillis, Commemorations, 7.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid, 4.
Since Aborigines were not granted the right to vote until 1967, well after the end of both World Wars, it is not surprising that Aboriginal veterans were omitted from the initial commemorative activities of the Memorial. Culturally and legally, Aborigines were not accepted as a part of the Australian nation. They were effectively denied entry into the sacred Anzac cult and only those whom found a niche within the white constructions of nation were granted membership. Walking into the Memorial, one is greeted by a large quote from Charles Bean introducing visitors to the spirit of the memorial: "Over 102,000 Australian Servicemen and Women have died in war. Here is their Spirit. In the heart of the land they loved; and here we guard the record which they themselves made."

Bean clearly stated that the Memorial served to protect all who sacrificed their lives for Australia. Moving beyond the eloquent and evocative rhetoric, one must ask if the Memorial truly honors that pledge by not discriminating any who rightly deserve recognition, mainly the Indigenous soldier.

While some literature refers to the lack of Indigenous representation in the Memorial, many do so in a passing manner and address only the Memorial’s physical structure instead of its museum contents. In his discussion of Aboriginal presences and absences from Australia’s memorials, Inglis points out that apart from the Aboriginal

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names anonymously listed on the roll of honor, the only Aboriginal representation in the building are the carved heads of an Aboriginal man and woman in the forecourt, situated alongside koala, echidna, dingo, and other native fauna. Some scholars have interpreted this to signify that Memorial designers viewed Aborigines as “sub human beings” or, in a worst-case scenario, that the “sculpted human heads represent battle trophies, a statement of the settlers’ success at scalp hunting. Fiona Nicoll furthers this argument by referring to Bean’s use of “relic” and “trophy” interchangeably for military memorabilia: “The Aboriginal heads attached to the Wall of Memory suggest that, in contrast to the bones of Cook, which Bean regarded as ‘sacred relics’, the remains of the Indigenous victims of colonial conquest were seen as ‘battle trophies’. This interpretation implies that the Memorial acknowledges Australia’s frontier conflict as a legitimate war, disregarding the Great War as Australia’s first war, and therefore compromising Anzac mythology. In 1979, historian Geoffrey Blainey advised that the Memorial would have to include content about the warfare between Aborigines and Europeans within the next ten years. This recommendation was unfortunately denied over questions of definition. Once those were clarified, there could be room to represent Frontier Conflict in the Memorial, Inglis maintains.

125 Inglis, Sacred Places, 450.
127 Nicoll, From Diggers, 176.
128 The Memorial was founded for the “commemoration of Australians whose deaths are attributable to any war or war-like operation in which Australians forces have participated.” Regarding the Frontier Wars, who could be regarded as Australian forces, British troops, colonial police, or private citizens? “Until those questions are answered,” argues Inglis, “warfare between black and white would not be represented in the Australian War Memorial.” See Inglis, Sacred Places, 451.
129 Inglis, Sacred Places, 451.
Today, the Australian War Memorial is divided into three distinct sections: the Commemorative area, the galleries, and the research centre. The Commemorative area is comprised of the Roll of Honor, Pool of Reflection, Eternal Flame, Hall of Memory, and Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier. This area is centrally located in the Memorial and acts as the heart of the entire complex. The Roll of Honor, naming 102,000 men and women who served and died in battle on bronze panels, is covered in a sea of red poppies year round. Undoubtedly the names of Aborigines who served in the Australian Armed Services and died during war are among those listed. The advantage of using names as a form of commemoration is that they do not discriminate and remember everyone – men, women, white, black – equally. Representative of people, names "are like the army of the living, both democratic and individual in their singularity, mere numbers in their aggregate...[they] derive their meaning from their intrinsic lack of it and bear testimony to their own artifice." 130 This singularity and individuality, however, is lost when specific images are forced upon the names. All the images in the Commemorative area, from the statues to the stained glass windows in the Hall of Memory are of white Australians. Surrounding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, an anonymous figure that should remain "above the ties of race, religion, class,

130 Laqueur, "Memory and Naming," 164.
and region,” are representative images of white Australians. Therefore the Unknown Soldier serves to honor the memory of only white Australian soldiers and not the sacrifice of Aboriginal soldiers.

Where the Commemorative area fails in acknowledging Aboriginal contribution to Australia’s wars, the Memorial galleries and research center succeed. In the gallery lobby hangs a painting by Gordon Bennett entitled *Psychotopographical landscape* (inversion). Bennett offers a unique and new look at Aboriginal soldiers and their exclusion from the Anzac cult. The painting label reads:

The artist has selected the cover image from a 1958 school reader entitled *The Story of ANZAC* as the source of the subject matter and graphic style of his painting. He has, however, replaced the main figure’s face with a recognizably Aboriginal one. While many would be aware that men of various backgrounds fought as Australian soldiers in the First AIF, it is less known that an identifiable minority comprised

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131 Pichler, “War Dead,” 175.
Indigenous Australian soldiers who served on Gallipoli. Bennett further highlights the involvement of these men in the campaign by overlaying the image of the ANZAC with the colors of the Aboriginal flag. By including this politically charged painting, the Memorial begins to modify its meaning and commemorative practice to include Indigenous Australians who were initially denied national tribute. To enter the main gallery rooms, one must walk along a long and narrow pathway anchored on both sides by photographs of Australians including one image of an Aboriginal soldier smiling at the viewer in a sepia-colored print. The first main gallery is devoted to the events of World War One. Contemporary with the Commemoration area, the gallery pays no acknowledgement to Aborigines. All human images are of white Australians. Some elements of the gallery remained unchanged from its opening day such as the diorama of Lone Pine and a soldier uniform caked in mud. The soldier’s story of Gallipoli is well told and succeeds in helping visitors gain an understanding of the war experience. But there is no recognition of any

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32 "Psychotopographical landscape (inversion),” Foyer, Australian War Memorial.
Indigenous contribution or information on how the government legally prohibited Aborigines from enlisting into the armed forces. It is only within the modern galleries, especially the World War Two gallery, that there are clear and well-acknowledged attempts to understand the Indigenous contribution to the Australian war effort. Like the Bennett painting, these exhibits reflect the changing meaning of "sacrifice" and "Australian identity" to now include and celebrate Aborigines.

The contribution of Indigenous Australians not officially enlisted into the Services, as de facto soldiers or laborers, is mentioned in the World War Two gallery. A large display, placed near the entrance of the gallery, is dedicated to the role of rural Australians. The display's central informational medium is an interactive touch screen that "tells stories of the contribution made during the war by the people and communities of rural Australia," including Indigenous communities. The communities of Bathurst Island and Melville Island, Barrow Creek, and Adelaide River

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133 "Rural Australians at War," Second World War 1939-1945 Gallery, Australian War Memorial.
are specifically exhibited, demonstrating the range of roles Indigenous communities played during the war.

Although the individuals mentioned in the Bathurst and Melville Island section are not called de facto soldiers, their contribution in capturing Japanese prisoners of war and rescuing downed airmen is acknowledged. The touch screen display communicates the following information about their role in the war:

The Tiwi people from Bathurst Island were...involved in capturing Japanese. Louie Mankara and his brothers were walking through the mangroves one day when they heard Japanese voices. They blocked the track and pretending to be armed with pistols they recaptured five Japanese airmen. Louie also rescued a number of people in trouble in the surrounding waters. On one occasion he swam out to a burning ship and rescued several people, suffering burns himself.134

The portrayal of Louie Mankara and his brothers is overwhelmingly positive, describing their efforts as clever, heroic, and essential in the military’s search and rescue missions.

134 Ibid.
However, the narrative paints Mankara’s work as accidental, as if he *casually* walked through the mangroves and just *happened* to find a Japanese prisoner of war. In actuality, individuals like Mankara served in de facto units surveying the terrain in search of both Japanese prisoners and downed allies among other duties. By avoiding the topic of Indigenous de facto units, the display also avoids a discussion of the unjust denial of basic pay and benefits from these Indigenous soldiers.

The account of Barrow Creek’s Indigenous community concentrates on the role of Indigenous laborers and their interaction with white soldiers. This story is told through the perspective of Peter Horestailer, an Indigenous worker at a military camp in the early 1940s. His memories of that experience is shared on the interactive storyboard:

> Well, we did a bit of cleaning up around the camp for them, curing a bit of wood, cleaning up rubbish, you know, and digging holes for toilets and that sort of job. And we’d march and be lined up for meals. We’d have our meals at the table, you know, blacks and whites mixed together. We all lived there together. That’s what we did.\(^{135}\)

This supportive role in the military camps facilitated an exchange between black workers and white soldiers otherwise unlikely in a civilian context. While the bonds created were unlike those forged between Lin Bear and Harry Gordon, they brokered a ground for mutual understanding and respect.

Finally, the Adelaide River section describes the role of northern Australians in the war effort by teaching survival skills to special army troops in the event of a Japanese invasion and providing food.\(^{136}\) Not only did Indigenous Australians directly

\(^{135}\) Ibid.
\(^{136}\) Ibid.
apply their skills working as de facto soldiers and laborers but additionally taught white soldiers necessary survival skills. In articulating three different capacities Indigenous communities played during World War Two, “Rural Australians at War” effectively recognizes the contribution of Indigenous communities in the homeland security of Australia.

While these descriptions justly credit the important work of Indigenous communities during the war, they are hidden underneath a complicated labyrinthine of interactive computer screens. In some respects, the information would only be read to those who actively sought it out. New museology theory suggests that the application of interactive technologies such as the computer touch screen used in “Rural Australians at War” reflect changing perceptions of the visitor as “collaborators in knowledge production, rather than passive recipients of museums’ ideology.”137 However, in comparison with other exhibits, which do not integrate similar multimedia techniques, the hidden descriptions of Indigenous communities instead reflect reluctant recognition of Indigenous efforts. While the display is lacking in other aspects, as in the discussion of de facto troops, it represents positive steps to appreciating Indigenous contribution within the Memorial, which traditionally rejected their representation.

Turning the corner from glass cases outlining the Australian prisoner of war experience is an informational board describing how the first Japanese POW was captured in Australia. The capture of Japanese POW, Sergeant Toyoshima Hajime, by an Indigenous man is outlined on as follows:

[Sergeant Toyoshima Hajime] had flown in the first attack on Darwin, but had crashed his zero on Melville Island. Discovered by an

137 Wall, Changing Strategies, 20.
Aboriginal man, Matthias Ulungura, Toyoshima pretended that he was a pearl diver. Matthias was not fooled. He took him by canoe to Bathurst Island, where Toyoshima was taken into custody.138

Just as Louis Mankara was positively portrayed in “Rural Australians at War,” Ulungura is described as clever and heroic in his successful capture of Toyoshima. However, just as with the Mankara narrative, Ulungura’s discovery appears coincidental and the topic of de fact soldiers on Melville Island is ignored. At a point where open recognition of these soldiers is possible, the opportunity is overlooked.

“Indigenous People and the War” is a storyboard illustrating the effects of war in northern Australia, a region with a large Indigenous population. This display repeats themes found in the Barrow Creek portion of the “Rural Australians at War” exhibit – the active role of Indigenous Australians through employment in the military and the facilitation of constructive interracial exchanges between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. Most significantly, however, is the statement that Indigenous Australians were denied recognition and reparations for their role in the war as de facto soldiers or laborers: “Indigenous Australians used their knowledge of the bush to help observer units to rescue crashed airmen. Their service went mostly unnoticed. Some did not receive service medals for many years.”139 Although this concession succeeds in acknowledging the discriminatory treatment of de facto soldiers both during and after war, it is the only place in the gallery to do so.

The exhibit’s accompanying photographs reveal how the war affected entire Indigenous communities, including the children. This is told through the story of a little girl named Mary Lee, pictured holding a large doll. Mary Lee was only ten years old

when she was evacuated to Katherine in December 1941. Her father, who stayed behind, was killed in a Japanese raid. While in Katherine, the city was again bombed and Mary Lee was evacuated to Adelaide and eventually to a town called Balaklava. The gallery shares Mary’s first impressions away from home:

What a shock, there was so many, many white people. We could see masses and masses. We just withdrew and stood there...and the people that stared at us! We thought, ‘Why are they staring at us?’ I did not think that I was any different...did not realize that the color of my skin was so dark. Balaklava was freezing. I was very tired by this time and I was scared, scared stiff. This was a completely strange, different country. I was cold and homesick, wanting to go back.

Local authorities called these children the “black refugees” and were unprepared for their arrival. Families were placed at the local racecourse because there was no housing available. Mary and her eight siblings were to be displaced from their home until 1946. This emotional anecdote effectively conveys the effect of the war on the livelihood of a number of Indigenous communities. While the unofficial contribution of these communities are presented in isolated displays of Indigenous representation, the service of official Indigenous soldiers is portrayed more subtly amongst the images of white soldiers.

In the galleries’ storyboard for the Volunteer Defense Corps, the accompanying photograph shows Indigenous members of the Seventeenth Battalion Volunteer Defense Corps. Like the photograph in the gallery walkway, this representation of Indigenous soldiers integrates them into the broader understanding of digger and Anzac. Overall, the portrayals of Indigenous contribution to the war effort in the World War Two
gallery demonstrate a more inclusive understanding of the Anzac myth to embrace its Indigenous members. In the display entitled "Gallipoli Remembered," Gallipoli is described as a defining moment for all Australians. Its impact on Indigenous Australians is established with a photograph of an Aboriginal man playing the didgeridoo and the following text:

Robert Slockee, of the Walbunga people in Southern New South Wales, sits in the early morning mist at Anzac Cove prior to participating in an official ceremony. He is communicating with the spirits of the men who landed there 85 years before.

However, nowhere in the museum is it mentioned that Aborigines were barred from officially enlisting into the Australian military. The Koorie Heritage Trust, an Indigenous owned and operated cultural center in Melbourne, recognizes such unfairness in its permanent exhibition: "Only people 'substantially of European origin or descent' were eligible for armed service. But the rules were not rigidly enforced. Kooris fought in every conflict involving Australia, from the Somme to Vietnam."  

The display further highlights the unfavorable conditions Indigenous veterans saw upon returning home from war: "Disappointingly Koorie soldiers, some of them war heroes, returned to find conditions for their people unchanged. Their hopes for full citizenship rights for service to the nation were unfulfilled." Only through a similar acknowledgement in the Memorial of unjust policies during and after war can a path be paved for the inclusion and acceptance of Indigenous representation in Australia's sacred Anzac culture.

\[140\] "The Privilege of Defending the Nation," Permanent Collection, Koorie Heritage Trust (Melbourne, Victoria); visited 27 October 2004.

\[141\] Ibid.
These attempts to acknowledge the Aboriginal soldier are important steps towards bringing the Memorial into an era that accepts diversity and plurality in its understanding of national identity. Regardless, the sparse Aboriginal acknowledgement within the Memorial inspired the dedication of the Aboriginal Memorial Plaque in Canberra’s Remembrance Nature Park located behind the Australian War. Following a walking trail to the base of Mount Ainslie, one encounters a small sign directing the visitor off the main path and along a smaller trail to the Aboriginal Memorial Plaque. The plaque is a brass plate fitted onto the flat face of a large rock. The plaque reads: “Remembering the Aboriginal people who served in the Australian forces.” Nothing else is stated. No dates. No specific names. No images. The term “Australian forces” is also left ambiguous. This memorial, dedicated in 1994 during the United Nations Year of Indigenous People by a non-Aboriginal Australian, symbolizes the lack of Aboriginal acknowledgement in the Memorial. Additionally, it demonstrates how Aboriginal Australians are constantly pushed into the realms of nature while the “civilized” Australians are commemorated within built structures.
Aboriginal soldiers and civilians played an important role in Australia’s war effort. However, they have been given little acknowledgement and were initially rejected from being incorporated into any understanding of Australian national identity and thus forgotten within public sites of memory and commemoration. However, just as the meaning of identity in Australia is changing to include Indigenous peoples, the Memorial is also reflecting this change both in its galleries and in its meaning as a tribute to the Anzac.
Aboriginal people are giving voice to a wounded history but also reaching beyond anger, speaking again with pride about the land called Australia and their long, strong, enduring and once again, confident relationship to it.  

Australian history has been harsh to Indigenous Australians until recently, representing them as gross stereotypes or, even worse, forgetting them completely. When their existence was acknowledged on monuments honoring white explorers or pioneers, they were portrayed as either savage or servant. For example, explorer Edmund Kennedy is immortalized in Sydney’s St. James Church, depicted on a marble tablet dying in the hands of an Aboriginal man dressed in western clothing. Surrounding the two men are naked Aborigines bearing spears. Here, Kennedy is described as an innocent bystander senselessly murdered by black savages and comforted by his faithful black servant.

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142 Djon Mundine quoted in “Owning History,” Jumahna, Bunjilaka, Melbourne Museum (Melbourne, Victoria); visited 28 October 2004.
whose actions are “worthy of remembrance.” The portrayal of the white settler as a helpless victim to the Aborigines is a theme common in early monuments and throughout popular historical mythology. As Ann Curthoys argues, this emphasis on white victimization “works against substantial acknowledgement and understanding of a colonial past, and informs and inflames white racial discourse.” The idea of “settler innocence” is strong in Australia and refuses to acknowledge a violent past marked by war, racism, and arguably genocide. This chapter looks at Australia’s Frontier Wars, its role in the understanding of Australian national identity and, using museums as a forum of study, examines how these perceptions have changed in recent years.

It is estimated that approximately two thousand Europeans and more than twenty thousand Aborigines died violently throughout the course of Australia’s frontier wars, a loss comparable only to those during foreign wars. While controversy exists over the exact number of casualties, “at the heart of the frontier conflict debate...is the language and idea of ‘war’.” Although the language of warfare was utilized in describing the conflict, colonists were frustrated that it did not conform to their image of war. In 1975, poet Les Murray wrote, “Deep down, we scorn the Aborigines for not having provided us with the romantic vision of a remembered war.” The colonists yearned for a “real war” that would baptize the nation. A rejection of the frontier conflict as

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143 Inglis, Sacred Places, 24.
148 Ibid, 143.
such reflected that yearning. Thus the story of Aboriginal and European warfare was forgotten and the Aborigines were denied a place in history.

In the decades following World War Two, the power relationship between European nations and their former colonies began to drastically change. Former colonies in Africa and Asia demanded political and cultural autonomy while fighting for independence. These movements resonated in western nations where Indigenous people fought for equality and began to reexamine their understanding of history and identity. Australia's experience differed from most Asian and African colonies. As a settler colony, notes Patrick Wolfe, "Australia did not seek simply to dominate Indigenous society in order to extract surplus from it. They sought to replace Indigenous society." This blemished past came to the forefront of national debate in the 1990s, catalyzed by postcolonial theory and post 1960s research, in a battle coined the History Wars.

The History Wars began within the boundaries of academic journals as conservative think tanks attacked historians and their negative portrayal of Australian history. The battling sides were divided into two camps, each representing the perspectives of Melbourne historians Manning Clark and Geoffrey Blainey. In response to what seemed like "an excessive emphasis in recent historical writing on past wrongs," Blainey came forward and coined the term "black armband" epithet, arguing that historians were unfairly treating history by focusing too much on the negative. Clark represented the black armband historians, an apparent threat to Australian

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150 See pages 52-53 for further discussion on representing the frontier conflict in the Australian War Memorial.
151 Curthoys, "Constructing national histories," 192.
nationalism and identity. When John Howard was elected Prime Minister in 1996, he adopted Blainey’s rhetoric in denouncing this fear of history’s changing tide. Speaking before the Parliament in October 1996, Howard declared, “I do not take the black armband view of Australian history...I believe that the balance sheet of Australian history is overwhelmingly a positive one.”\textsuperscript{154} Howard warned that adopting dangerous conceptions of Australia’s past would doom future generations. This fear quickly spread as individuals sharing Howard’s positivist perspective were appointed into the governing bodies of the Australian Broadcasting Company, the National Museum of Australia, and other institutions charged with presenting history to the public. Others were influential in developing school curriculum and all enjoyed the sympathy and support of the press.\textsuperscript{155}

As Stuart Macintyre argues, it was the historian’s “competing vision of the Australian heritage and Australian culture [that] became the battleground of the History Wars.”\textsuperscript{156} Museum curators such as Dawn Casey, former director of the National Museum of Australia, were well aware of the History Wars’ impact on their exhibition halls. As Casey explained at a Museums Australia Queensland State Conference, “Not just the fact, even the language in which we are able to describe the past is problematic.”\textsuperscript{157} Massacre or dispersal, settlement or invasion, stolen or removed – selection of one over another became a political stance. From her experience as a national museum director, Casey argued that it is not the role of the museum to take sides on the issue. Instead, it is about telling a variety of stories. “We do what good

\textsuperscript{154} Quoted in Ibid, 3.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid, 5.
\textsuperscript{156} Sir Anthony Manson, Forward to\textit{ The History Wars}, by Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2003), vii.
museums have always done,” Casey asserted. “Simply present the evidence, based on sound scholarship...we do not tell our visitors what to think. They will make up their own minds.” However, public perception regards museums as “a custodian of history, and a national museum is expected to safeguard the legacy of the past.”

Benedict Anderson additionally argues that the museum is imperative in the process of nation building. As an institution with such influence in molding a nation’s identity and subsequently protecting it, the museum is an appropriate medium to study how the perception of frontier conflict has changed.

Museums are more than a collection of objects but instead convey a multitude of ideas through the combined use of objects, space, labels, lighting, and sound. A variety of people have debated what museums should show and how their exhibitions should be interpreted. The struggle, more often than not, is between historians and curators on one end and the government, museum boards, and stakeholders at the other. Museum curators and historians are criticized for being too “politically correct” while the critics are conversely accused of being patriotic reactionaries. More appropriately, however, it may be useful to consider museums within two opposing spheres.

In her Honors thesis, Museum’s Changing Strategies of Representation: Protracted Colonial Control of Postcolonial Empowerment, Sarah Wall identifies museums as one of two categories: colonial and postcolonial. These labels are used

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158 Ibid, 3.
159 Macintyre, History Wars, 202.
162 Ibid, 49.
163 See Wall, Changing Strategies.
to characterize differing museum practices that have emerged either in support of or in resistance to colonial practices and mentalities. Colonial museums are viewed as elitist institutions dedicated to collecting artifacts and preserving evidence of dying cultures. While colonial museums draw on the power inequality between colonizers and the colonized, postcolonial museums attempt to redress this disparity.

The representation of Indigenous peoples in museums have typically been colonial in nature, reflecting imperialistic narratives and stereotypical visual characterizations of Aborigines as "homogenous, primitive, and prior to European colonizers," and eventually adopted by Europeans "to justify their colonial exploitation of Indigenous Australians." Indigenous tools and artifacts were presented in taxonomic arrangements, reinforcing the view of Aborigines as a dying race to be scientifically studied and inherently inferior to Europeans. Items that were culturally inappropriate to display stood in glass cases as trophies to colonialism. Even more appalling, however, was that "Indigenous people themselves were not made to feel welcome as museum visitors." Acting as authorities on the representation of Indigenous culture, colonial museums perpetuated racist stereotypes and preserved the cultural schism between European and Indigenous communities. It is only recently, in light of the new museology movement, that museums are being challenged to reevaluate the relationship between museums and Indigenous peoples.

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168 A new museology movement emerged in the 1960s and 1970s from political and cultural dissent, understood as a "state of widespread dissatisfaction with the old museology, both within and outside the museum profession." See Peter Davis, *Ecomuseums: A sense of place* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1998), 11.
Indigenous communities are becoming equal partners and self-represented voices in the discussion of how to present and interpret Indigenous culture and history. With regard to the National Museum of Australia, Casey observes:

The days when museums could collect and display ethnographic material from the viewpoint of a dominant culture depicting an exotic minority culture are well and truly over... Indigenous communities have an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the value of their intellectual property, and may therefore have quite definite opinions about the kind of reproductive rights they will or will not allow.\textsuperscript{169}

With Aboriginal communities as active stakeholders with museums in the presentation of Indigenous culture, Aboriginal stories and histories reemerge into a landscape that once chose to forget it. If managed appropriately, "cooperative museum exhibitions and programs could assist all Australians to understand the past and to contribute to a sense of pride and belonging."\textsuperscript{170} Aboriginal communities are also empowered with the knowledge and means to preserve their sacred artifacts along culturally acceptable means. In articulating the important role museums could play within the Aboriginal community, Paddy Roe, an Aboriginal elder, listed the following:

To keep safe objects of great tribal significance; to show our young people that our cultural things are important to non-Aborigines – this in relation to things that can go on public display; for keeping tribal

\textsuperscript{169} Casey, "New Museum," 3.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid, 4.
discipline, which keeps our culture alive; to preserve objects to be used in cultural ceremonies such as initiations.171

The emergence of Aboriginal cooperation in museums symbolizes an important step towards integrating ideas of Aboriginality into constructions of Australian national identity and furthers the process of Reconciliation. There are some who fear the integration of Aboriginality into the nation’s heritage and identity. However, national identity is not a static concept but constantly evolves, especially in regards to the identity of politics of sex, race and ethnicity.172

As discussed earlier, Australians typically looked to their past with pride, viewing themselves as victims, not aggressors.173 To call the conflict between Europeans and Aborigines warfare would seriously threaten the sanitized historical mythology. In the 1980s, the new Labor government began to inquire into the silent past, revealing a history marked by racist violence, the separation of Aboriginal children from their parents, and Aboriginal deaths in custody. These findings encouraged a broad and “growing appreciation of Aboriginal tradition, art, literature and music [which] unsettled the conventional version of Australian history and disturbed cultural conservatives.”174 Feeling under siege, conservatives denounced demands to confront Australia’s bloody past as an “exercise in national denigration that impugned the nation’s honor.”175 Hugh Morgan, former president of the Mining Industry Council in 1984, refuted accusations of genocide against Aborigines as merely “white middle-class guilt.”176 At moments when democracies feel threatened, whether from terrorism or

171 Paddy Roe quoted in Simpson, Making Representations, 120.
172 Macintyre, History Wars, 201.
173 See page 55 for further discussion on settler innocence.
174 Macintyre, History Wars, 143.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
cultural fragmentation, a desire for national unity emerges, often materialized within museum exhibition halls.  

The National Museum of Australia, as a national institution seemingly responsible for placing the nation on show to locals and international visitors, is under constant scrutiny but consciously serves as a forum for public debate on controversial social issues. In the Pigott Report, the Museum’s mandate drafted by Geoffrey Blainey and John Mulvaney, the Museum is charged to “display controversial issues.” From their view, “too many museums concentrate on certainty and dogma, thereby forsaking the function of stimulating legitimate doubt and thoughtful discussion.” By delivering a pluralistic voice, the Museum creates and promotes a forum to debate questions of diversity and national identity.

The National Museum houses a seventeen hundred square meter gallery devoted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture while also integrating Indigenous stories and issues throughout other sections of the museum. The intention is to share a familiar interpretation of Australian identity while “stretch[ing] the edges a bit.” An example of this stretching is found in a large storyboard at the entrance of an exhibit on European settlement. Entitled Two Cultures Meet, the board presents opposing interpretations of British and Aboriginal contact extracted from British photographs and written documents. The text discloses that some records “reveal contacts between Europeans and Aboriginal people that were marked by curiosity on both sides and a desire to live peacefully together” while others showed “that

177 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
180 Casey, “New Museum,” 2.
181 Ibid.
relationships broke down in confusion, anger and open hostility."\textsuperscript{182} Displayed in a prominent location in the exhibition, the storyboard shares a traditional view of history and a more controversial one marked by "hostility" and violence. By not taking a stance one way or the other but presenting equal evidence for both, the Museum engages visitors in the debate on how to perceive Australia's past. Critics such as Keith Windschuttle have dismissed this approach. Windschuttle accused the National Museum of "promoting the frontier massacres" and even interpreted the building architecture as a lightning bolt "taken from the Jewish Museum in Berlin and signifying that the Aboriginal had also suffered a holocaust."\textsuperscript{183} Regardless, this method demonstrates the active role of a museum emerging from its colonial past in exploiting public interest and not cowering in the presence of controversy.

At a UNESCO Regional Seminar, \textit{Preserving Indigenous Cultures: A New Role for Museums} in 1978, it was recommended that "established museums and galleries...support the development of local cultural centers by provision of displaying items and recordings and, where requested, of sacred and ritual objects derived from that group or area."\textsuperscript{184} This mandate signaled the development of Indigenous-managed cultural centers that, in some situations, served as both museums, to educate the non-Aboriginal population, and community centers, targeted at the Indigenous community. In Victoria and New South Wales, where Aboriginal populations are centered in urban areas, the museum and cultural center primarily play an educational and economic role, exposing non-Aboriginal people to Aboriginal culture and generating jobs and income.

\textsuperscript{182} "Two Cultures Meet," \textit{Nation}, National Museum of Australia (Canberra, Australian Capital Territory); visited 15 August 2004.
\textsuperscript{183} Macintyre, \textit{History Wars}, 162.
\textsuperscript{184} Quoted in Simpson, \textit{Making Representations}, 120.
for Aboriginal employees and artists. These museums are notably important because they represent the voice of a once oppressed group. In analyzing three museums in Victoria – Bunjilaka at the Melbourne Museum, the Koorie Heritage Trust, and the Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Center – it is apparent that Aboriginal voices are gaining currency in the modern landscape. While the use of language in describing the Frontier Wars slightly varied between these three sites, they followed a similar template in sharing the Indigenous story of European and Aboriginal contact characterized by three main themes: Aboriginal ownership and reverence for the land thousands of years before European contact, violent and often fatal contact between Aboriginal people and Europeans, and resolve of the Indigenous community to overcome past injustices. Embracing these themes in similar chronological order, all three museums tell a shared story of pain and suffering.

An ideal example of a former colonial museum reorganizing its approach to presenting Indigenous stories is found in Bunjilaka, the Indigenous center of the Melbourne Museum. In conjunction with the Koorie community, Bunjilaka “encapsulates the best of Australian museums’ new exhibiting practices” by not only presenting a more inclusive human and idea-oriented perspective on Aboriginal culture but by also deconstructing its own colonial history and collection practices to reveal its colonial past of dehumanizing Indigenous communities. It embraces its role as a cooperative museum, dedicated to “empower[ing] Aboriginal people to interpret their cultural heritage for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.” This is clearly evidenced

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185 Ibid, 119.
186 Wall, Changing Strategies, 13.
in its presentation of European settler history, focusing not on white victimization but Indigenous suffering and sustained resolve. While the stories told in Bunjilaka reveal the unjustness of their treatment during European occupation, it most strongly shares a story of survival through strength and community.

The word *bunjilaka* is a mixture of Woiwurung and Boonwurung languages. *Bunjil* is the creator in south-eastern Aboriginal stories while *aka* means land or place. Together, *bunjilaka* verbally forms a creation space to tell the Aboriginal story. Bunjilaka houses one of the most significant Aboriginal collections in the world while respecting the traditions of the artifacts and sacred objects. The Melbourne Museum "recognizes the rights and perspectives of Aboriginal people and, through Bunjilaka, aims to further partnerships with Aboriginal communities, promote reconciliation to all visitors and actively supports Indigenous rights and perspectives through exhibitions, performances, and activities." The exhibition not only helps to project the Koorie voice but highlights the errors of colonial representation in past museum practices while engaging visitors into the museum debate. For example, Baldwin Spencer,

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188 Ibid.
189 Ibid.
anthropologist and museum director, is displayed behind glass alongside typologically arranged spears and is featured in an interactive video discussing the collection and repatriation of Aboriginal remains from the Museum. These segments reveal “the Museum’s political premises, making the audience question how objects and cultures are valued, perceived and interpreted, in the past and today, involving them in challenging the debate.” Simil...
In “Belonging to Country,” emphasis is placed on enduring Aboriginal ties to the land and the influences of this relationship on understanding identity and history. One display addressed the issue of repatriating Aboriginal remains and returning them to country. The concept of country, unlike in Western tradition, does not encapsulate the simple idea of a nation united in name by colonialism, as Australia is, but instead is defined by the land your soul is linked to. Accompanying the storyboard is a large black hearse adorned with the Aboriginal flag. This powerful image of western death linked with Indigenous pleas to return their dead encourages visitors to question the justice of past policies. Similar strategies are employed in the powerful and emotional displays of “Koorie Voices”.

“Koorie Voices” focuses on the Indigenous experience throughout two hundred years of European invasion. It opens simply with a quote by William Barak: “The Yarra is my father’s country.” Again, a generational ownership of the land is established subtly compared to the brevity of European presence. “For thousands of

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193 “You’re part of the country; that’s where your soul is and you have to link back up with that. I don’t think we have peace unless we can do that – unless we can take people home,” Fay Carter. Quoted in “Belonging to Country,” Jumbunna, Bunjilaka, Melbourne Museum.
194 “Koorie Voices Exhibition,” Jumbunna, Bunjilaka, Melbourne Museum.
years, what is now Victoria belonged to a number of Aboriginal nations,” the storyboard continues, emphasizing the ancient relationship between the land and Aboriginal people. However, “invading British settlers encountered Aboriginal people,” the board reads, casually introducing a disruption to continuous Aboriginal settlement. The board concludes on an optimistic note for the Indigenous people: “Today, the Port Phillip Bay region remains the country of Aboriginal communities in spirit if not by legal title.” The progression of thought on this single panel reflects the spirit of Bunjilaka – survival and hope.

Like many European erected memorials that commemorated Aboriginal people who assisted white explorers, Bunjilaka also acknowledges the important role of Aborigines to European exploration. The Melbourne Museum focuses on individuals such as Joseph Gellibrand and William Buckley who were saved by the aid and kindness of Aborigines. Only after observing the Aborigine’s knowledge and grasp of the wilderness were these white men able to respect Aboriginal people. Despite the compassion and respect some white men showed toward Aborigines, rarely were they fully free from blame. George Augustus Robinson, the exhibit remarks, condemned violence against the Indigenous population but he was still guilty of dispossession, taking goods from Aboriginal people without permission. Such a distinction is important because it notes that injustices committed against Aborigines occurred on different levels, from massacres to theft. The most powerful aspects of the exhibit, however, are those focusing on the violent nature of European and Aboriginal encounters.

195 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
197 Ibid.
198 Ibid.
“Scars in the Landscape” is a section stressing the senselessness of European violence against Aborigines as observed from European eyes notably Robinson, the Chief Protector of Aborigines. Through the combination of storyboards, images, multimedia, and complimentary objects, the exhibit effectively conveys the confusion and despair of Aboriginal victims. A movie, entitled Our Grief, is played in an intimate and dark corner of the exhibition hall. The movie is simply made, combining still photographs with period quotes, yet is extremely powerful in portraying the absurdity of violence perpetrated against Aborigines. The movie cites one squatter’s observation of how Aborigines were treated worse than animals: “The blacks are very quiet here now, poor wretches, no wild beast of the forest was ever hunted down with such unsparing perseverance as they are; men, women and children are shot where ever they can be met with.”199 Robinson emphasized the savagery again: “Saw a skull hanging up in the hut. Sutton said it was the skull of an old woman he found dead at her miam miam down the creek...he has a large pack of dogs and a number of firearms. I believe the dogs are kept as much to hunt natives as kangaroos.”200 Although it is unlikely that a casual museum visitor would sit through the entire movie, each quote is haunting enough to

199 “Our Grief,” Jumbunna, Bunjilaka, Melbourne Museum.
200 “Koorie Voices”. 

- 69 -
convey the grief suffered by the Aborigines. These stories allude to a history of Aboriginal resistance against European colonization however the term war is never applied. The Melbourne Museum has not been free from criticism for presenting a black armband perspective on history, denounced as a “giant soap box which pours ignorant hatred on [white Australia].”

Does this exclusion reflect a political concession due to Bunjilaka’s location within the Melbourne Museum or does it effectively reflect public memory of the events? The likely answer is neither. The language applied in Bunjilaka, while strong and emotive, is not confrontational and given the nature of a museum, where visitors are allowed to peruse at their own pace to digest information and leave if uncomfortable, allows for visitors to engage in the frontier debate. In looking at two wholly Indigenous-managed cultural centers, the Koorie Heritage Trust and Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Center, no reservation or caution is made in addressing the Frontier Wars as such.

Indigenous cultural centers serve various functions and roles, shifting with the community’s needs. There are keeping places, providing a safe space to negotiate the repatriation of sacred material and preserve these objects for the future. They are educational and tourist centers, teaching non-Aboriginal communities about the richness and vitality of Aboriginal culture while bringing in economic dollars for its members. They are museums that appropriately integrate Indigenous histories into the social history of Australia and sustain these voices in the public landscape, a role that colonial museums failed to play. These institutions empower Aboriginal voices to present their history and heritage in dynamic and exciting ways. Compared to traditional European-

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modeled museums, cultural community centers often provide a larger range of activities
to interpret their collection, inviting the participation of visitors and engaging the local
community in celebrating culture. These activities typically draw from the use of
performing and visual arts.203

The Koorie Heritage Trust, established in 1985, aims to “protect, preserve, and
promote the living culture of the Indigenous people of south-eastern Australia.”204
Additionally, the Trust is devoted to Reconciliation, ensuring that all activities and
projects “focus on reconciliation, healing, moving forward and honoring what has been
before.”205 Originally located within the Museum of Victoria, the Trust now owns its
own facility in Melbourne’s central business district. Housed within its building are a
permanent gallery tracing Koorie history and multiple spaces for traveling exhibitions.
Where Bunjilaka was careful in its language, drawing powerful terms mainly through
the use of direct quotations, the Trust applies language that is “simple and bold,
conveying a message which was forceful and unequivocal.”206 Bunjilaka and the Trust,
however, follow similar templates in sharing the Indigenous story.

The first section of the exhibit establishes Aboriginal ownership and reverence
for the land thousands of years before European arrival. The Koories had an intimate
knowledge of the earth that allowed them to manage and live from it, described here:

Victoria’s plains were rich in game for Koorie hunters. Prior to
European arrival, with a variety of grasses, herbs, shrubs and
trees...Kangaroo, emu, bush turkeys, possums, echidnas,
bandicoots were important...Each subtle change in the weather,

203 Ibid, 75.
204 “About the Trust,” Koorie Heritage Trust Website; available from
205 Ibid.
206 Simpson, Making Representations, 131.
landscape, and animals signaled, a part of an intricate pattern that
guided the harvesting of the resources and the movement of the
clans. These movements were governed by an understanding of
seasonal change that extended beyond the four we know today.207

While the display describes Koories as expert hunters, it also describes their farming
ability, a skill associated with civilized and advanced societies. The panel also implies
the respectful relationship Koories experienced with the environment, appreciating the
importance of all animals and plants.

The permanent exhibition, like Bunjilaka, devotes a large segment of its hall to post-European history. Many problems regarding European and Aboriginal contact revolved around legality issues. Were the Aborigines British subjects? Did Australian land belong to anyone? Did the frontier conflict constitute war? These questions are addressed in one panel titled, “Was it legal?” It emphasizes how Europeans established native title in other colonies but ignored the formality in Australia, instead adopting the concept of *terra nullius*. This policy was obviously false, given the clear existence of an Indigenous population. “Both in England and Australia, people argued against the injustice of the invasion,” the text reads. “Did the British Crown have the right to dispossess Aboriginal people of the land that supported their existence for thousands of years? If Aboriginal people had become British subjects, why didn’t the law, so concerned with property, protect their rights?”208 This hypocrisy implied that British colonialists sought legitimacy within the law only when it supported their actions, disregarding any legal rights of Aborigines. The theme of duplicity is repeated in other parts of the exhibition, emphasizing the reliance of Europeans on Aboriginal guides.

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contrasted with the massacre of Aboriginal people through both direct and indirect means.

In regards to the Frontier Wars, the Koorie Heritage Trust treats it as a legitimate war, differing from Bunjilaka’s presentation. In “Fighting for Collection,” Aboriginal people are described as soldiers justly defending their homeland and people: “Many Koorie warriors fought sustained battles with the Europeans to stop the invasion of their lands....Koories faced provocation everywhere. Europeans threatened them, refused to share their wealth, abducted Koorie women and children and would not return favors or acknowledge their kinship obligations.” The word choice is deliberate to describe war. The theme of deception reemerges in this display where accusations of Indigenous savagery are questioned. “Aboriginal guerilla tactics were described as cowardly and treacherous, typical of savage character,” the display notes. However, from an Indigenous perspective, one must ask, “Who are the real savages?” In reconsidering past perceptions, others recognize that “Aboriginal violence as legitimate defense and Koorie fighters as martyrs for their country.” The acknowledgement of Aborigines as soldiers fighting to defend their country contradicts visions of the innocent settler. Aboriginal violence was not “cowardly” but justified and equally honorable to foreign efforts in the aim to defend one’s love of country and nation. This deliberate acknowledgement of Aborigines as soldiers in the frontier conflict is absent from institutions such as the Australian War Memorial and Melbourne

210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
212 Ibid.
Museum. The Koorie Heritage Trust deviates from what Dawn Casey originally stated was the role of a traditional museum – to present all perspectives of history and allowing visitors to reach their own conclusions. There is little room for interpretation in the Trust’s exhibition.

The Brumbuk Aboriginal Cultural Center is arguably one of the most successful Aboriginal museums in terms of educational and commercial value. Located in Halls Gap at the gateway into the Gariwerd-Grampians National Park, Brumbuk is owned by a number of Aboriginal organizations under the umbrella of Brumbuk Incorporated. The planning of Brumbuk involved the cooperation of five Aboriginal communities historical tied to the Gariwerd-Grampians ranges and surrounding plains: the Kerrup-jmara, the Lake Condah people; the Gunditjmara (Dhauwrud Wurrung) from Warrambool; the Framlingham Aboriginal community; the Gooluim-Goolum from the Dimbula-Ebenezer-Horsham areas; and the Wergaia Jardwadjali. Brumbuk was conceived as a reaction to the tourist interests in Aboriginal culture while visiting the Grampians region. With funding from the Victorian

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213 Simpson, Making Representations, 216.
government, the involved Aboriginal communities insisted that they have total control of the project, from its design to function. Geoff Clark, Chairman of the Framlingham Aboriginal Land Trust, described what the Aboriginal community wished to develop through Brambuk:

We are familiar with the role of museums as they currently stood, and the way which they interpreted Aboriginal culture as a dead culture, an ancient culture, in fact as something which needs to be protected rather than be maintained. We believed that, through the design of the building and its actual functions, we could achieve something closer to a display of living culture rather than a stagnant one that needs to be preserved. We wanted to include the political aspirations of people as well, because too often the image of Aboriginal people overseas is one of the Noble Savage standing on one leg with his spear, and ‘you’ve got some nice dot paintings or some art work, and you can play your didgeridoo’. The image of what constitutes an Indigenous person in this country needs to be changed, so hopefully Brambuk attempts to do all that and create understanding of the true history.  

Recognizing this unique opportunity to alter people’s understanding of history, Brambuk set out to create a dynamic space that included a permanent exhibition space, a gift shop, the Brambuk café and Gungidjela restaurant, and a theatre. Collectively, the Center honors the past to encourage Reconciliation in the present while working for renewal in the future.

214 Quoted in Ibid, 126.
Like the Koorie Heritage Trust, Brambuk has a permanent exhibition describing Koorie history. Unlike Bunjilaka, the exhibition relies mainly on textual storyboards with few objects on display. Brambuk’s exhibition is also considerably smaller and less ornate than the one housed at the Koorie Heritage Trust, placed in a small room filled with long panels supplemented with storyboards displayed along the central walkway linking the main floor to the café and restaurant.

“A Journey Through Time” provides visitors with a chronological view of Aboriginal history, paralleling the presentation structure of other Indigenous-run museums. Displayed at the entrance to the exhibition is Brambuk’s mandate:

“Aboriginal society, economy and lifestyle have a long association with Gariwerd. Great changes have taken place in Gariwerd – Grampains in the last two hundred years. People are continually striving for recognition, respect, and reconciliation.”215 The issue of Reconciliation stands as a central goal in the mandates of both the Koorie Heritage Trust and Brambuk. Integral to Reconciliation is the recognition and acknowledgement of past guilt, which the exhibit at Brambuk strives to achieve. Aboriginal centers such as Brambuk attempt to reveal their perspectives of the past to both Koorie and non-Koorie groups with hopes that it can help in the healing process.

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The first segment of the exhibition establishes a connection between Aboriginal people with the land while rejecting misconceptions that Aborigines were primitive. “The Aboriginal people have lived in south-eastern Australia since time immemorial,” the panel reads. “Archeological evidence shows that they have continuously occupied this region for well over forty thousand years – more than eighteen hundred generations. In comparison, the five or six generations of European occupation make up only a tiny fraction of Australia’s history.”216 By comparing the presence of Indigenous communities to European colonizers, the exhibit suggests that Indigenous Australians held more right to the land and the act and means of European settlement were unjust. A discussion of the atrocities committed against Aboriginal people follows.

As with the other exhibitions, Brambuk describes a range of atrocities committed against Aborigines from epidemics to massacres. “Smallpox tore through the Aboriginal population in 1789 and again in 1829,” one label states. “In some communities every single person died – a horrific introduction to the battle for land and resources which was to come.”217 Unlike the panels at Bunjilaka, these descriptions hypothesized that the spread of European diseases was an act of biological warfare versus mere coincidence. Similar language is also found in the discussion of smallpox and Native Americans in the United States. The final display deliberately characterizes the conflict between Europeans and Aborigines as war by emphasizing the effect by both sides and the conviction of Indigenous warriors for their cause:

Contrary to the commonly held view that the European settlement of Victoria was relatively peaceful, people on both sides died violently. Aboriginal resistance to the taking of their land and resources was fierce

216 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
and prolonged. They fought until sickness and gunfire had so reduced their number that it was useless to continue. Although the British never admitted it, they were engaged in a war with the original occupiers of the land.218

The last line of the panel directly refutes the common perceptions that the frontier conflict was not a legitimate war. However, Brambuk argues that from an Aboriginal perspective, it was a war in which Aborigines bravely defended their country.

The exhibition has drawn criticism from many for its seemingly harsh and unequivocal voice. As Geoff Clarks explained, “It’s very difficult in this situation because we’re walking a fine line between exposing the real history of this country and trying to please the taste buds, I suppose, or the curiosities of tourists, which is very difficult when you are trying to tell a history for its brutality.”219 Clark, however, maintains that a balanced interpretation is necessary in the museum. The goal is not to impose feelings of guilt upon non-Aboriginal people but to have them “rethink in terms of their perspective on how the place was settled or colonized.”220 In their attempts to engage visitors in a debate on the colonial past of Australia, Brambuk also seeks to redefine Australian national identity which acknowledges its Aboriginality as a living and vibrant culture with a rich past.

Monuments to Aboriginal soldiers and individuals are still rare. The public landscape remains a predominately European one bound by European memories and history. The goal of Reconciliation is to change that landscape into a uniquely Australian one that embraces it Aboriginality and integrates its European past. While Indigenous-managed

218 Ibid.
219 Quoted in Simpson, Making Representations, 127.
220 Ibid.
museums such as Bunjilaka, the Koorie Heritage Trust, and the Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Center are only small attempts to change the perceptions of Australian identity, they are important contributions towards Reconciliation.
CONCLUSION

By creating an awareness and understanding of our lifestyle, we hope some of the negative attitudes and prejudices that exist can be overcome. Together we can improve the future. In this way, we can share in the resources of this great land – a land rich in many thousands of years of history and culture that is part of every Australian's heritage.²²¹

Using three case studies, this thesis examines Indigenous representation and issues of national identity in Australian sites and narratives of remembrance. Each study represents a different era of commemoration from a colonial to a more inclusive period, which invites the inclusion of Indigenous history and culture. These studies also demonstrate the inextricable relationship between constructions of national identity and commemorative practices. When definitions of nation denied Indigenous communities a place within history the built landscape reflected this rejection. As Australian society

²²¹ “A Journey Through Time.”
came to accept its diverse character, Indigenous voices slowly emerged into the public landscape, contributing to understandings of Australian identity.

In the first chapter, this thesis explores how national identity was initially framed by British colonial terms where Indigenous people were designated to the periphery or simply disregarded. Although a sense of "Australianness" eventually evolved, strongly driven by the Anzac tradition, it was still very much a white Anglo-Saxon construction. It was only within the past few years that perceptions of national identity were no longer heavily influenced by colonial legacies but accepted multiculturalism and diversity. This allowed for the acceptance of Indigenous Australians into definitions of nation and their soldiers into the Anzac legend.

The legacy of Captain Reginald Saunders is investigated through a written memorial, *The Embarrassing Australian*. Saunders presents an interesting case study because he was regarded by white society as an equal, despite the fact that citizenship was not granted to Indigenous people until 1967. What made Saunders unique from other Aboriginal soldiers to allow for this acceptance? Saunders conformed to a white construction of Australian citizenship and thus was commemorated for his military service while hundreds of others were forgotten.

The Australian War Memorial was founded on similar views of citizenship and commemoration. When the Memorial was completed in 1941, Indigenous Australians were still considered second-class citizens and Aboriginal soldiers were excluded from the Memorial's commemorative halls. The only Aboriginal images within the building were two stone faces depicting an Aboriginal man and woman in the Memorial's forecourt amongst images of native flora and fauna, implying that Indigenous people were viewed as native animals. As the Memorial entered a new era, its collections,
mainly the World War Two gallery, adapted to a modified construction of Australian identity that acknowledged the Indigenous soldier and his contributions.

The final chapter discusses the emergence of Aboriginal museums in the public landscape, greatly enriching understandings of national identity. Indigenous soldiers from both Australia's foreign and frontier wars are now given a voice to celebrate and commemorate their efforts. Institutions such as Bunjilaka, the Koorie Heritage Trust, and the Brambuck Aboriginal Cultural Center provide hope for a future of equal Aboriginal commemoration within Australian society. The presence of Indigenous voices once absent in colonial Australia encourages the acknowledgement of Aboriginal contribution and deletion of white constructions of identity.

Australia is in many ways still defining its past in British colonial terms. The conditions have changed and Australia now faces a task of acceptance and integration versus elimination. The power relationship between “the colonizer and colonized became apparent in Aboriginal demands for self-determination” and speaks louder through Aboriginal initiation of reconciliation efforts. 222 Just as critics argue that the process of Reconciliation depends on “non-Aboriginal Australians to acknowledge past wrongs that could never be undone,” the process of accepting the Aboriginal soldiers begins with commemorative civic and military institutions to acknowledge the role of Aboriginal soldiers in the war effort and apologize for past discrimination. 223 Museums are changing in our contemporary society from institutions that collect specimens and artifacts to ones that focus on people as active creators and users of those artifacts. No longer can white constructions of Anzac and Australia alone be celebrated on our monuments.

222 Macintyre, Concise History, 275.
223 Ibid, 276.
While this thesis discusses the evolving trends in military commemoration to embrace a more pluralistic definition of nation and understanding of history, it also highlights the broader relationship between constructions of Australian identity and Indigenous culture. With an Indigenous community healing from the scars of a colonial past, the colonizer must acknowledge its violence and racist history to achieve Reconciliation. A white Australia has no meaning without an Indigenous Australia and vise versa. Indigenous representation is thus not only important in war memorials but is the key to understanding the very fabric of Australian culture and heritage.
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