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Unpacking the Statement from the Heart

A Personal Perspective from a Wiradjuri Man

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Introduction

I acknowledge the continuing custodians of all the lands on which we gather, right across this country. I acknowledge their elders, who have been wonderful guides and support, and who lead us into many new insights. I acknowledge our elders who have cared for, who continue to care for, will always care for what is spiritual, physical, and valuable in the spaces we live in.

My task in this paper is to unpack and reflect upon the Statement from the Heart[1] (from here referred to as 'the Statement', or 'the Voice')

This statement, signed at Uluru in 2017, was written after 12 months of consultations across our country. Elders and others gathered in several countries[2] (see footnote for explanation) across the land we now call Australia to work through what would be a pathway to constitutional change leading to resolution of the original sin of this country - the genocide emanating from the invasion by, and coloniality of empire.

It was a mammoth task undertaken at the request of the government of the day to explore what First Peoples deemed necessary to address the failures of past policies. The process involved participants from a range of countries with vastly different views of what was required within their own circumstances, and required them to negotiate, often by relinquishing long held views and positions, to allow a consensus view to be arrived at. It was democracy at work on a large scale resulting in an invitation to the rest of Australia to join in a process of restorative justice hitherto unimaginable.[3]

It has, as a statement, been misunderstood and manipulated by politicians from the moment of its release. Within days, the Prime Minister of the day and his deputy dismissed it as unworkable, seeing it as setting up a "third chamber of Parliament".[4] This misinterpretation seems to have been purposefully embraced to disrupt the possibility of its success. It is an expression of disrespect to those who were charged by the government to provide a direction towards constitutional change.

The four-stage process adopted from the key ideas of the consultation is approached as we might do a pizza. Taking a pizza cutter, we cut the whole into separate pieces. In so doing we concentrate on that which we deem comfortable, easier, or fitting with our own ideology, thereby ignoring the other pieces and/or the Statement as whole. Thus, we witness people being 'for the Voice and not treaty', or 'treaty not Voice', and deeming the capacity to an individual element to resolve issues that can only be resolved by a commitment to the process in its entirety.

In what follows I will explore three matters: what the *Statement from the Heart* is, what it is not, and how it works. One of the interesting things about the creative dynamic of the *Statement from the Heart* is that it is a justice or heart-healing tool. It is restorative justice writ large. The elements that make up the process leading to a resolution of the past and a creative response to the future by enacting reconciliation in the present. While it attends to the sins of the past, it offers a creative opportunity to reimagine the future and the possibilities within for the whole of what is now understood as Australian society.

It is important to remember that it is not a political statement that will fix Australia. The Statement is not focussed only on history, and specifically, on the history of First People[5]. It is a creative healing process that, if followed as designed, is a legitimate process to continue to change our country, and us individually, by means of its unending circular search for wholeness.

1 For more information on the *Statement of the Heart* visit https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/
2 https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/welcome-country#:~:text=Country%20is%20the%20term%20often,material%20sustenance%2C%20family%20and%20identity
3 *Statement from the Heart* website.
4 https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/oct/26/indigenous-voice-proposal-not-desirable-says-turnbull
5 In this document I will use First Peoples as the primary term to denote our people, while interchanging it with other terms as appropriate.

It is not

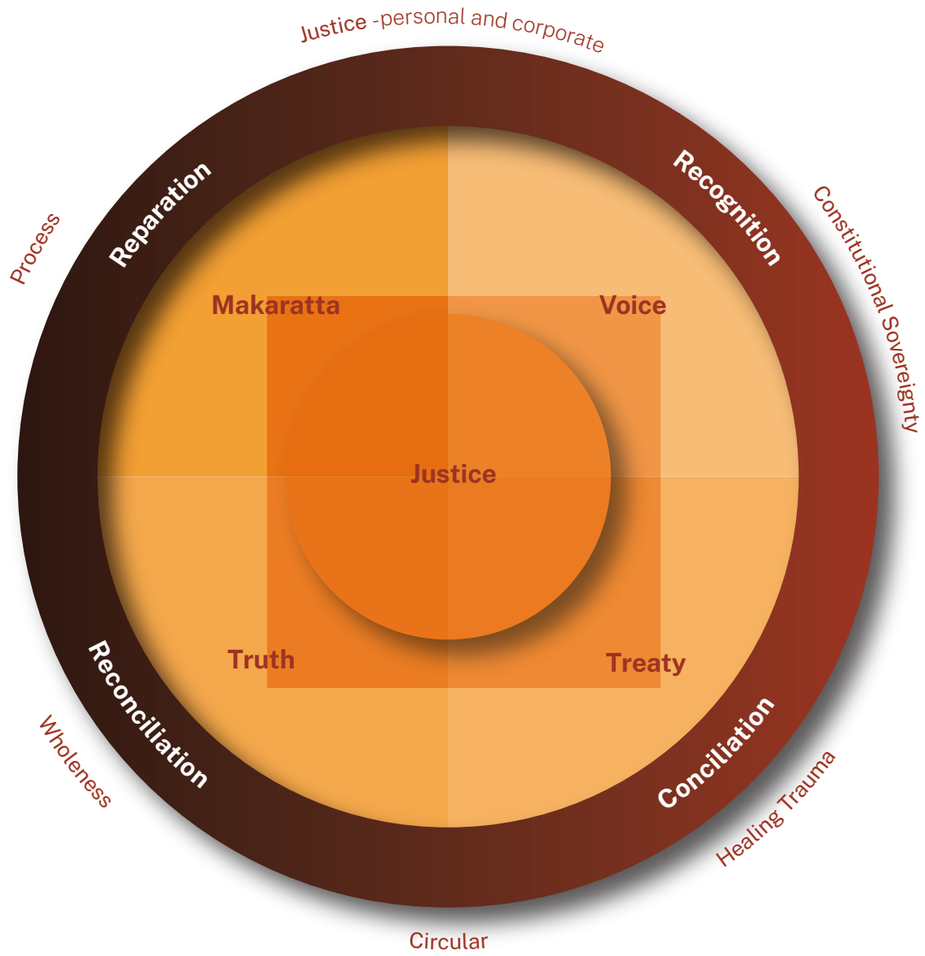
The Uluru Statement of the Heart

About Reconciliation

About Nation Building

About the oldest living culture

It is...



What the Statement from the Heart is

It is about justice

The Statement invites everyone living on this land to join with us to create a just country on a political, corporate, and personal level. We are asked to work together to unpack what has happened, why it happened, who did it, why they did it, and what we need to do to put right the wrong committed against the First Peoples of this land.

It is not a moving forward to bring everybody together as one, as politicians are keen to say, so that we will all feel better. We have heard this before on many occasions when apologies, policies and actions have been produced in our name. It is true. There have always been people who have been better off as a result. Rarely us.

It is not about making Australia better i.e., a 'nice' place, where we all have 'nice' relationships, and everybody is 'nice' to each other. It is not about building trust, or understanding, or hope, or any other wording from other slogans we hear for National Reconciliation Week or in the modern 'white' reiteration of NAIDOC Week.[6] It is not about Closing the Gap Targets or Reconciliation Action Plans designed to make non-First People feel good about themselves when the numbers look better.

The Statement is about putting right the wrongs committed in the past and which continue today, albeit in a far more sophisticated manner. Through this process, if engaged with fully, we are invited to face what happened and why, and how we can repair, or at least, begin to address the damage done.

Justice is the act of a mature people who, unsettled by the past, take the steps necessary to creatively resolve what can be resolved, and embark on a future without repeating the past's mistakes. Maturity in this sense comes from faithful engagement with the elements of the Statement and being prepared to see our story for what it is, not what we would like it to be.

In contemporary Australia the genocide continues for our people today. We, as a people, continue to face racism, destitution, incarceration, and being pushed aside and marginalised.[7] So, it is about resolving historical and contemporary injustice and laying the foundation for a shared future different to the past.

6 National Reconciliation Week provides an annual focus on the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people while NAIDOC Week is set aside for First Peoples to gather and celebrate culture and country.
7 https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/annual-data-report/2021/report/snapshot#downloads

It is about personal justice

We are invited as First People's people to spend time on this process for ourselves so we can stand and remain. Somebody once suggested to me that we need to keep fighting. My response was no, I don't fight. I remain. I am here. Get used to it. I/we are not going anywhere else.

This is a process of understanding who we are, how we think and respond to what has influenced and continues to influence our remaining, and the trauma accompanying that. We are invited via this process to de-link[8] from the colonial overlays telling us we are less than, and to re-exist the ancient wisdom within our country, within our bodies, to become more than enough for the situation we find ourselves in.

Non-indigenous people, or the settler population, are not ignored. This process is theirs to participate in if they accept the invitation. By undertaking this process as individuals and communities they will begin to understand how the trauma that haunt them across the generations were seen as appropriate actions for people within their own ancestral lines. By doing so they will begin to unpack the story of occupation and privilege they continue to enjoy. As they struggle within themselves for the meaning of, and reconciliation with, their own inherited past, they will begin to understand how, why, and what they think about their place in this land, and their relationship with those who were here before.

This process, if used within what are often thought of as opposing communities and by individuals within those communities, will allow us to develop a personal wholeness to negotiate the foreign space we now inhabit – that of voice, treaty, truth, and makarrata. The process, as I will outline later, allows us to hear the various voices resident in our thinking. By entering a treaty with ourselves to resolve the conflicts these various voices bring to us, we can engage in an honest process of telling the truth about what we tell ourselves or allow others to impose upon us. It is here we reset our identity by making the changes necessary to thrive in this place together.

It is about constitutional sovereignty [9]

The purpose of the Voice is to insert into the Constitution the sovereignty of First People's people. By doing so we bring together for the first time in the history of the country a recognition that we have a voice, and we remain sovereign. It affirms that we have the right to speak about our interests and about the things that affect our mother, this country.

As we've always done, we're happy to share sovereignty, but we need to have it affirmed in the space that gives the dynamic framework for our country's life - the Constitution. The affirmation needs to be there, and it needs to be there forever. We don't want to put it anywhere that a politician can change their mind and then walk away from it.

Sovereignty in a First People's sense is more about autonomy over internal matters. It is inward facing, not external or outward facing. It is directly related to country and is both a legal and spiritual concept. It remains despite the overlay of colonial claims of sovereignty, although the right to practise our law under this sovereignty is denied, as is our right to live on country as its sovereign people. Having this recognised inside the colonial constitution will restore our right to remain.[10]

Sovereignty is about place. It is defined by the relationship one has with country, 'our mother'. It is in that country that we discover our lore/law, language, and Aboriginality (spirituality).[11] Sovereignty is not what we decide we hold over place, and the others we share it with (our kin), it is what that place offers as compelling evidence that we belong to each other. Out of this we exercise our custodial ethic of responsibility, reciprocity, and respect, through our care for all we share country with, including those who sought/seek to take it from us.

Sovereignty in this sense can never be ceded. We cannot give it away or have it taken from us. It was, is, and always will be. Yet it can be shared, and often was. While there were markers defining country, they were not exclusive, allowing for sharing of space and sovereignty without conflict.

It is this sharing of sovereignty that a Voice in the Constitution will enact. Not the doing away with the English constitution and concept of sovereignty but working out a shared process based on sovereignty as found in European law and First People's understanding resident within the place, the country(-ies) we now share.

8 https://docs.ufpr.br/~clarissa/pdfs/DeLinking_Mignolo2007.pdf
9 https://www.abc.net.au/religion/mark-brett-uluru-statement-and-two-concepts-sovereignty/14073860
10 https://www.griffithreview.com/articles/the-heart-of-seeding-first-nations-sovereignty/
11 Loughrey, G. (2020) On being blackfella's young fella. Melbourne: Coventry Press. P49ff

It is about healing trauma

Here is a pathway to healing the trauma our people live with. This trauma leads to the kind of social issues prominent in the news media and which we always try to deal with using processes that work in non-First People's spaces. Dispossession has psychological and physical impacts. Walter Mignolo[12] talks about it very strongly. If we use the circular pattern of the *Statement of the Heart*, we will find this practice healing our trauma.

Dispossession is, first and above all, dehumanising and psychologically degrading. People disposed are both physically and psychologically wounded. The colonial wound is more than physical, or it is both physical and psychological. Healing colonial wounds therefore requires not only legal justice but the self-gnoseological[13] and aesthetic reconstitution[14] of the wounded people. *Colonial healing cannot be enacted by the state*.[15]

Healing occurs at each step of the way in the process as we commit ourselves to working creatively by delinking from the slavery of coloniality and beginning to re-exist what was here before it became an unwanted part of our lives. The Statement is a creative process that points to a healing/healed future beginning in the now, not necessarily by fixing the past, but by confronting it in ways which empower faith, hope and perseverance. This confrontation is not antagonistic but resolute, committed to remaining and flourishing despite the pain that is present in the intersection of the past, present, and future – the everywhen of the Dreaming.

Healing is fulfilled when, in the enacting of the Makarrata, a line is drawn under the hurt, and again, shame and guilt remain in both bodies engaged in this process. At this point we encounter the truth that healing in this context is a breaking of the spears which are laid down, allowing both to move with freedom and safety into a new relationship.

This process heals by extinguishing anger, fear, and guilt, not instantaneously but gradually as each walks away from the broken spears, performing a new beginning. Healing allows a reconnection to country, our other and our body, such that we begin to live and be without the constriction of unresolved violence. As Toni Morrison writes: "All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was."[16] Our bodies also have a perfect memory. They always pine for and want to return to the freedom of their country, and it is then, and only then that trauma is healed.

It is about people

Lost in the constitutional and legal arguments about the Statement are those who designed it and for whom it was designed – the people of this land. It is also important to recognise that the Statement was not just designed for the First Peoples of this land but for those who came second, and for those who continue to come. First Peoples of Australia consist of two distinct cultural groups of people – Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. They are similar but not the same. In many ways their cultures are very different, as is their experience of the coming of the white people. Inside these two distinct groups there is also a range of languages, cultures and world views which are not homogenous. Each group has suffered the trauma of dispossession, including shame and deficit because of being unable to honour the sovereignty and traditions of their home spaces.

Similar factors apply to those who are not First Peoples. Some are directly connected to the dispossession, others have come later and benefited from it, and some come from the experience of dispossession in their own native lands. Each of these groups' experiences guilt, uncertainty in terms of their responsibilities, and fear of what will happen if justice is part of the implementation of the *Statement of the Heart* and Voice in the Constitution.

The Statement is about a process to include and allow all to work together in such a way that they can live alongside custodially (with respect, responsibility, and reciprocity) and agree to work towards wholeness, healing, and justice for all. It is about people first, nation building, and celebration of culture that will, and should only, follow, not lead.

12 Walter D. Mignolo, Catherine E. Walsh, 'On Decoloniality', Duke University Press, June 2018
13 Self-knowledge
14 Entitled Decolonial Aesthesis, this collective project has been based on collaboration between academics, artists, curators, and intellectuals, who developed a framework and space within which diverse creative forms and practices would help affirm the existence of multiple and transnational identities in contestation of global imperial tendencies to homogenise and to erase differences. Decoloniality, decolonial aesthetics and the liberation of sensing and sensibilities promote the re-creation of identities that were denied and silenced by the discourse of modernity and postmodernity and celebrate inhabiting the margins as a position of aesthetic, political, and epistemological criticism.
15 Walter D. Mignolo, 'The Politics of Decoloniality Investigations', p. 174, Duke University Press, 2021
16 Toni Morrison, https://www.cmstory.org/exhibits/african-american-album-volume-2/1996-toni-morrison-speaks-library

What the Statement is not

It is not the Uluru Statement from the Heart

It's a statement from the heart of First Peoples signed at Uluru. It emanated from the hearts of individuals and communities right across Australia, arising from conversations, dialogues, and talks, heart to heart, by people around the country. It rose out of country and out of its significance for First People, their culture, language, and law/lore. Documents of deep truth cannot be manufactured in isolation from the place, space, language, and spirituality which gives them authority and ultimately, their voice.

People went armed with what they thought were the most significant issues to raise, and in dialogue and discussion were able to listen to others and let go of some of what was important to them, to arrive at these four key ideas:

> Voice
> Treaty
> Truth
> Makarrata

One of the reasons I refer to it as the *Statement from the Heart* signed at Uluru[17] is because of personal experience with people who feel they weren't given the opportunity to agree to the name Uluru being used in this way. I have watched first-hand the pain some of these people carry and continue to carry because they believe the name was used without permission.

I understand from those involved that permission was sought in the appropriate ways, but anybody who works with people in similar arenas knows that it can be complicated. It is complex. So, for me, I respectfully refer to it as the *Statement from the Heart* (signed at Uluru).

It is not about reconciliation

The Statement has nothing to do with the style of reconciliation we have adopted in this country since 1991, and the formation of the Reconciliation Council by the Howard government at the time[18]. Reconciliation in its Australian guise is the process of assimilating First People's people into Australian culture, rather than the provision of justice.[19] It could be argued that justice does not figure in the mandate of the original nor the present Reconciliation Council.[20]

Modern Australian reconciliation allows non-Indigenous people to take up more space through their Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs)[21] and the goals they set for themselves, which are more about them than about the original sin committed against the First Peoples. It could be argued that these plans, and the targets they set, continue the disempowerment instead of addressing it in favour of First Peoples.

The *Statement of the Heart* is a process that leads to reconciliation as truth telling following on from voice (recognition) and treaty (conciliation). This will and must lead to reparation (makarrata) and not to the reassuring feeling that First People's people have benefited from the good will of a government-driven process as offered by Reconciliation Australia. Whatever we do within this model of reconciliation as assimilation is superficial. The recruiting of First People into the dominant society which sees us acting, performing, and achieving within mainstream parameters, is not reconciliation but the second assimilation project of this country.[22]

17 A place and space are significant to First People's ways of thinking, statements and declarations are often known by the place where they were signed.
18 http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/orgs/car/council/spl98_20/council.htm#:~:text=The%20Council%20for%20FirstPeople's%20Reconciliation%20was%20established%20by%20the%20Commonwealth,Islander%20and%20wider%20Australian%20communities.
19 "Australian 'First People's' Reconciliation: The Latest Phase in the Colonial Project 1" by Damien Short
20 Australian 'First People's' Reconciliation: The Latest Phase in the Colonial Project 1" by Damien Short
21 https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation-action-plans/
22 http://www.workingwithindigenousaustralians.info/content/Self_Study_B1_Australia.html

It is not about nation building

One of the clever things that John Howard and others did after the effective appropriation of Anzac Day and Gallipoli as a nation building project, was to recognise that the concept of reconciliation with the First Peoples offered a similar opportunity.

They perceived that Australia needs First People's culture to be whole. First People's culture, not people, is the missing link to nationhood. If this is included in the Australian identity, we become a respectful, responsible, and mature nation in the eyes of others. The development of cultural processes such as Acknowledgements of and Welcomes to Country, along with the designating of certain art forms as archetypical First People's culture and spirituality, has promoted a sense of inclusion that is not reflected by the hard statistics of First People's deficit.

While we as a country applaud First People's culture and those First People's people deemed as eminent representatives of that culture, we constantly point to the deficit concepts evident in First People's quality of life and their lack of agency over their lives. People are still seen as requiring the protection of the colonial culture, even though our people have and were living comfortably in this space for some 65,000 years.

It is about assimilating us into a nation building process so that governments, corporations, and institutions can say; "We're doing really well on this because we have a First People's person running our reconciliation process or we have eleven First People's people in parliament." That is about nation building, or black cladding[23], or whatever we wish to call it.

It is not about the oldest living culture

We hear this statement or a variation of it from politicians and community leaders on a regular basis. They assert that we must celebrate "the oldest living culture". As noted above, it is not about culture. While Elders will teach us on many occasions some of the intricacies and unravel the importance of culture in forming us as First People's people, this is not what the *Statement from the Heart* is about. It's about people, and it's about the continuing contemporary people who remain here today.

First People's people are both from and are formed by culture. Culture does not remain static. It changes and transforms itself and those who live by it. First People's people are not powerless slaves to this process but are active players in the transformation of country and traditions.

It is not about the "oldest living culture" but about the contemporary creating people who remain. First People have always been contemporary people. We live in relationship with all in the present moment encompassing the past, present, and future all wrapped up in what some name the "every' when"[24]. Living in such a space means we are responding to what is coming towards us, readjusting how we live, what traditions we practise and where we practise them.

As 82%[25] of First People's people live in suburban and urban or regional environments, this means that we are making adaptations of traditions and practices on a daily basis. It also means we are developing new forms of such traditions and practices in a myriad of creative and life-giving ways – new art practices in all forms of the arts, new business adaptations of traditional life practices, new ways of engaging in and delivering education and more.

Culture is a dynamic everchanging entity and it is this that is life-giving for our people and potentially life-giving for all Australians.

23 Black cladding means that an organisation or business or person has hired or is partnering with a First Nations person, but that person has no influence and is usually left out of conversations. Source: Glossary of First Nations terms - Creative Spirits, retrieved from https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/language/glossary-of-aboriginal-australian-terms
24 H., S.W.E. and Manne, R. (2011) *The Dreaming & Other Essays*. Collingwood, Vic.: Black Inc.
25 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/profile-of-indigenous-australians

The Statement of the Heart is not linear

The Statement doesn't have a definable beginning and an end. It continues as a flow of energy and healing. We are to avoid the linear idea that you can complete each piece as a stand-alone element, and when all have been completed, the process itself is completed. No, it's not. Depicted in a circle, it is process that needs each element to remain in the circle and to be available for the ongoing deepening and widening of the heart healing and justice it refers to. One does not ever achieve completion of the Statement. It is and will remain ongoing while ever we remain in this temporal space.

One runs into the other, and it's an ongoing process. It never stops. You cannot have a truth-telling situation and think when you're finished, that it's over. It's not, because people will unpack in themselves more and more of the truth hidden within as they revisit this process in their lives, and in the situations they find themselves in.

How the Statement works

The elements of the process

At the centre of this process is the action word – justice – heart healing. If we fail to understand that this is the product of the process which encircles it, we will not achieve justice. We may well think, as many do now, that if we do voice or treaty or truth it is going to solve all our problems. As we're a federated country, various governments think they can go ahead and do each of these individually and in isolation.

Ultimately, this process needs to be driven from the centre, from the federal position. This needs to happen for a couple reasons:

> If we undertake treaty and truth in the different states, we will end up with a range of very different ways of handling this. People in some states will be better off than others, continuing the process of divide and rule we are too well acquainted with.

> Accountability and stability: state processes are legislated and can be changed by future governments as they desire. Having the process of the Statement of the Heart within the constitutional document at the heart of our country means that there is a process of accountability, and with the secure knowledge that this will remain regardless of who is in power.

It is about justice. It's about putting back the things that were taken away. It's about exploring how we justly, respectfully, and responsibly resolve the pain, trauma and the loss of our autonomy and capacity to make decisions. First People's people remain in this contract and are waiting to be recognised and recompensed for what has occurred. I remain who I am, and seek justice for who I am.

Voice?

If you're not heard, you're not seen. The squeaky wheel gets the most attention. If you're not seen, you don't exist. You don't exist in the eyes of others, and you begin not to exist in the eyes of yourself. You begin to gather up shame. I am wrong, and I shouldn't be here.

Voice is about us speaking so that we are heard. By enshrining the Voice in the constitution fellow Australians, especially those in power, are required to hear us. They cannot choose who to listen to who not to listen to. They must listen to the Voice.

Others make the decisions about who is heard and who has the right to be heard, and those decisions are made by non-Indigenous people. Non-Indigenous people make the decision about who gets heard, or whose voice needs to be heard, or whose voice is the most applicable to be heard.

Embedding the Voice of First People in the Constitution takes away the right of non-indigenous people to only listen to voices they choose. The Voice will be representative of all our people and therefore each of us will have a voice and will be heard.

Enshrining the Voice in the Constitution is constitutional recognition of the sovereign voice of First People on matters pertaining to them. We're generous. We'll allow you to do the things that are necessary to govern the country, but we will want a voice on those things that directly affect us.[26]

Treaty

Treaty is often seen as the stand-alone element that promises to resolve all issues. People point to the importance of treaties in other First Peoples' experiences and assert that all we need is a treaty and all will be well. It could be argued, however, that while treaties have been helpful, they have not resolved all issues and may have contributed to other issues that were not evident at the time of signing.

The *Statement of the Heart* is a progressive process where what comes later builds and expands on what came before. Treaty is the next step in the restorative justice process. Without an agreement (treaty) to engage respectfully and honestly with each other the process stops.

Once you recognise that somebody else is here in the space you saw as your own, you have a choice. You can choose to annihilate them and get them out of that space, so you have it all to yourselves, or you can choose to come together with them and agree that, given that you both are here, you will work out how to move this project forward. That's basically a treaty.

A treaty is an agreement that we both exist in the same space. In this space we agree that there are things very important to each of us. As we work through a treaty, we begin a process of looking for how together to make this project called Australia work.

Treaty is conciliation. There has never been a time in Australian history when we have been together as one. We've jumped right from the invasion, through extermination and assimilation to reconciliation, and we have never come together as one. Treaty is that point of conciliation, that point of coming together and saying, 'we are both here'. We are not compelled to like each other, but we are compelled to find the way to move forward from there. That's important.

26 https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/the-future-of-our-cities-is-indigenous

Truth telling

If you don't have a place of conciliation, a place of agreement that you're here together, it's very difficult to tell truth. The situation here is unlike what happened in South Africa. Truth telling occurred in the direct shadow of what occurred. In Australia we are some 250 years from the invasion and the subsequent genocide. As a result, we have limited the truth and truth-telling to First People's voices speaking about the bad things that have happened to us as individuals and corporately. Truth telling in this scenario is historical and requires us to get up and take our clothes off in public to show the scars.

I would suggest this is only one part of the story that needs to be told, face-to-face. The truth telling must include the other in this story standing up and telling the truth about their forebear's motivations, about how they thought and how that continues to influence their behaviour in the 21st century.

At a recent event for several schools, an 11-year-old boy asked the following question: 'how is it possible that one group of people could think another group of people weren't human, and therefore they had the right to kill them?' That is the key question to be explored in any truth telling.

The truth must be told from both perspectives, and not just the impact it has on us. The First People's community is to move from the delegated role of victim in this reconciliation process to be able to stand up and say, hang on, you're a victim, too. You need to explore your dodgy thinking that allowed this to occur, and to continue to occur, and allow us to see it for what it was and is. You were wrong, and you need to tell the truth about being wrong. We must hear both sides of the trauma.

The most horrific stories I hear come from non-Indigenous people in their 70s and 80s, etc., who tell the stories about what their grandfather or great grandfather did, massacring people in the river at the bottom of the house paddock, and more. We need those stories told to allow us to witness the impact of these inherited stories for non-indigenous people who are continuing to carry trauma in a similar way as us. Only then will reconciliation occur.

Makarrata[27]

This process that leads us to makarrata is the creative justice occurring customarily in our communities. If somebody had misbehaved badly or impacted another or the community they would work through the elements of voice, treaty, and truth, arriving at the point of settlement and reparation.

This is makarrata. People speak of makarrata in this statement from the heart dialogue with a sense of unreality. Yes, it is about getting along after a major dispute. It is not about a Hollywood movie ending where we all ride off into the sunset and live happily ever after. Makarrata is not that.

Makarrata is about justice: what are the appropriate consequences for the things that have happened before this, and what will need to be done to put right the thing you did wrong? Makarrata is about reparation. It's about paying for the privilege of being the dominant society in Australia. It's about how we repair, repay, relink, re-exist our continuing ancient and modern culture, and return autonomy to our people whose ideas and philosophies are contemporary and future focussed.

There is an Old Testament Biblical story that fits here, and it's the story of Jacob at Peniel[28] who's being pursued by those he has taken advantage of. He sends his family and all the servants on ahead of him, and he stays on the banks of the river. That night, he wrestles with a young man, who is an image for God. When he wakes up in the morning, he walks with a limp. His hip is dislocated.

Makarrata is walking with a limp, because one of the ways that we would do reparation in traditional communities would've involved a spearing, usually in the thigh. It was rarely a superficial wound. People walked differently because of that injury. You might not have been able to catch as many kangaroos on the fly as you used to because you have had a spear in your thigh.

It's about walking with a limp, remembering what you did, remembering what needs to happen to make it better, remembering that there are consequences. It was not just for the individual involved as a reminder for the rest of the community to see that if you misbehave, there is an outcome.

27 https://www.ilc.unsw.edu.au/sites/ilc.unsw.edu.au/files/USFH%20What%20is%20Makarrata%20Information.pdf
28 Jacob at Peniel: Genesis 32,24-32

In conclusion

The *Statement from the Heart* is a justice process, a pathway, or a Songline[29]. It is a heart healing process that will heal both the heart of this country, and if used personally, everyone's heart. Arriving at makarrata doesn't mean we stop there, as if we have done all we need to do.

To maintain justice, we must stay in this circular process of wholeness. Through this process we will begin to understand that there are other things we need to do because justice isn't a one-stop shop.

We must remain vigilant and avoid talking about voice as if somehow it is going to resolve all the issues to do with the original sin of Australia and the trauma it has caused on First People's people. 1967 didn't do it. The apology to the Stolen Generations hasn't done it. The Statement won't do it unless we are faithful to the process, and we are serious about learning to walk with a limp.

29 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Songline

Questions for further thought and discussion

Question 1: In this paper I have placed 'justice' at the centre as to me it seems to be a useful word. What word or outcome would you put in the centre? What is the outcome desired by this process? What is this process significantly about, for you, and for those you work with?[30]

Question 2: Is the idea expressed in this paper about walking with a limp the only way to read this process, or is there another and perhaps complementary way? What if the privilege and entitlement of the dominant culture is the limp that prevents them from engaging fully with the Statement from the Heart process?[31]

This paper is based on a presentation given to Initiatives of Change Australia and my work as the Institute for Water Futures (ANU) Cultural Resident in 2022

30 With thanks to Reverend Dr. Geoffrey Broughton in conversation. https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/en/persons/gbroughtcsueduau
31 See Luke 18:18-30

Glenn Loughrey

Glenn Loughrey is a Wiradjuri man, artist, writer, and Anglican priest. He is presently the Vicar at St Oswald's Anglican Church, Glen Iris where he has renewed the space with the Wominjeka Reconciliation Garden, Murnong Aboriginal Art Gallery, a mobile Woi-wurrung language lab for schools and services based on First People's philosophy.

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