



**KAYA WANDJOO NGALA NOONGARPEDIA
– WELCOME TO OUR NOONGARPEDIA**

*Report on a research project.*¹

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**Chapter 3: *Noongar boordier gnulla katitjin* – The influence of
Noongar knowledge**

Introduction

Despite the history of settler colonisation and state control (Attwood, 1989), where Indigenous people and their knowledge has been ‘classified, excluded, objectified, individualised, disciplined, and normalised’ (Best and Kellner), it is important to recognise that this is not the complete story. Western science and knowledge systems have had a long history of interrelationship with Australian Indigenous cultural life and systems. As bell hooks (1992) put it when describing the influence of African-Americans on US culture (see also Todd Boyd, 1997), even in the worst circumstances of domination, blacks have an ability to manipulate, shape and open up exchanges with white knowledge systems.

Indeed, there is good evidence that rather than suffering from a loss of culture and knowledge systems, Noongar have had the capacity to influence the working and personal lives of others with distinctly Noongar cultural forms. Not only has this been the case in the past but in knowledge systems that are still in negotiation (Palmer, 1995).

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Noongar kaatdijin bidi – Noongar knowledge networks; or, Why is there no Noongar Wikipedia?

Hartley and McKee (2000) make the same argument about media representations. While prejudicial media coverage continues to occur, the media as such are racially neutral. A vigorous Indigenous media-production sector is accompanied by lively critique of media from blackfella leaders and activists, which in turn alters media production and consumption practices more widely. Noongar voices are prominent in this exchange, as demonstrated in a series of National Media Forums held in Perth in the 1990s (Hartley and McKee, 1996; 2000).

What follows is a discussion of some of the ways Noongar and Noongar knowledge has shaped the world of *wam* (outsiders). As is demonstrated by this review of the history of encounters between Noongar knowledge and other systems, since early Enlightenment-driven naturalists first visited Noongar sea country, there has been a complex interplay and co-reliance between knowledge systems.

***Baalup djanaga koorling* – Enlightened encounters**

Noongar knowledge has been important to others since the earliest experiences of contact. Indeed, those who were driven by the enlightened desire to further scientific knowledge in Europe saw the southwest of Western Australia as being rich in intellectual resources. In the late 1700s and early 1800s the region was seen as presenting tremendous opportunities to those motivated to fill remaining gaps in relation to science and the study of humankind. The southern and western coastal region was considered pristine. It was imagined that unlike Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia, it remained largely untainted and unspoiled by international commerce, trade, politics, and the evils of early modernity (Marchant, 1988).

For example, the instructions given to French commander Antoine D'Entrecasteaux were very clear. He was told to make comprehensive surveys of the land and sea, to make detailed study of the variety of natural resources, to make assessments on the potential for agriculture and other commercial use and, of particular significance, to make detailed study of the culture and life of the people who inhabited the region (Marchant, 1982: 81). The scientist under his command was botanist Claude Antoine Gaspard Riche. Riche was not very unsuccessful his study of south coast Noongar. He left the area having made no direct contact. However, we can see from his attempts that the study of Noongar was of considerable importance to him.

In the late eighteenth century, France was especially supportive of the Enlightenment project. Central to Napoleon Bonaparte's personal approval for Baudin's trip was his support for the study of lifestyles and customs of the Aboriginal people (Jacob and Vellios, 1987: 98). Baudin's instructions were to make an exhaustive study of the physical and 'moral conditions' of the Indigenous people. Not surprisingly, the records his voyage contain a wealth of information about Noongar physical features, life, material culture and diet. According to Marchant:

The comprehensive orders given to the naturalists in this regard represent a turning point in the study of man which occurred in France as a result of the revolution, and resulted in the foundation of scientific anthropology, which soon took a place alongside archaeology in the general effort being made to explain the origin and nature of the human race. (1982: 115-7)

The navigator Matthew Flinders was also strongly influenced by the newfound European desire for science and the discovery of knowledge. In 1801, Flinders stayed for a month in King George Sound (Albany), studying the landscape, observing and drawing plants and animals, making contact with and recording his observations about Noongar (Flinders, 2001: 46-55). His excitement for Noongar knowledge was shared by his naturalist, Brown. It is clear from his diary and from Flinders' own account that both were keen to make contact with Noongar to see what they could find out:

As soon as the boat landed us, I ran towards the interior in search of the natives with whom I had a strong desire to be acquainted. In vain I explored the forests, following the print of their footsteps ... all my endeavours were useless and after three hours fatiguing walk I returned to the sea shore where I found my companions waiting for me, and rather alarmed by my absence. (Brown, quoted in Marchant, 1982: 132).

Records of knowledge gained from Noongar were recorded and themselves became critical for later coastal explorations. Vancouver's intelligence was used by Flinders, who added more and in turn provided source material for later maritime explorations such as those of Baudin, King and Dumont d'Urville (Shellam, 2009). Many reports exist of the preparedness of Noongar to lead early European *wam* (strangers) and to pass on Noongar knowledge. For example, in February 1837, while travelling through the York region on an exploratory trip from King George Sound to Perth, Surveyor Hillman and his party were directed by eight unnamed Noongar to a spring when they were in desperate need of water (Bignell, cited in Markey, 1976: 8).

In 1829, only three years after the initial garrison had been established in King George Sound, Mokare, an Albany Noongar, guided a party under his leadership to inspect country sixty miles north of the small settlement. It transpires that his willingness to share Noongar knowledge on equal terms was not understood or reciprocated by the newcomers:

Mokare guided a party under Dr Wilson some sixty kilometres northward. They 'received a visit from a native who came up to us with much confidence, and partook of our repast'. He must have been a man of status, empowered to make a formal approach on behalf of his group. 'He invited us', said Wilson, 'to accompany him to the eastward, where the best lands lie, and where we would shortly meet "Will" with a number of his friends, who would be glad to see us'. This was not a casual invitation to drop in. A situation had been set

up, between the Aboriginal kin groups, whereby Europeans would gain access to the rich Kalgan valley; and the Kalgan people, like the Lennard's Brook people, would have expected to create reciprocal obligations. Wilson seemed quite unaware that he was turning down a serious diplomatic overture and slighting Mokare. 'To this request Mokare added his earnest solicitation, and was exceedingly chagrined to find his eloquence of no avail'. (Hallam, 1983: 138)

Wedjela barang gnulla boodjar katatijin – Taking on Noongar knowledge of country

In the early years of contact Noongar were of immense importance to those carrying out coastal land exploration in the south west. They helped identify key strategic points (where water, cover from the weather, and natural resources such as fish could be found) through their guidance. In Flinders' case, Noongar provided practical insight into how to go about trade, exchange and information-sharing. This was to become critical to mapping and exploration over the next two hundred years. Through rich oral traditions, Noongar helped add to the body of information we have about place names, resources, labour, economic enterprise, and use of space.

As soon as outsiders started exploring the interior of the southwest it became apparent that Noongar possessed very sophisticated and immensely valuable knowledge. Noongar occupation of an area became a sign of food, water, other valuable resources, and that knowledgeable men and women were close to hand (Markey, 1976: 9).

Signs of Noongar occupation acted as clues for the newcomers that here was a rich pool of knowledge about the new country. Hammond (1933: 18) records that Wedjela (whitefella) travellers, shepherds, merchants and explorers looked for well-marked Noongar tracks, 'like cattle-pads and just as plain'. There is evidence that a some of these tracks formed the basis of today's main roads. Explorers and settlers learned to use Noongar paths and realised that these connected the best patches of country. They came to realise that 'good land to the Aborigines was good land for them' (Hallam, 1991).

Armstrong (1978) argues that colonial agricultural enterprises were reliant on the work of Noongar fire knowledge and the work of those who could create a 'mosaic of plant communities'. John Bussell (1833: 191) noted how country, which had been cleared by Noongar to attract kangaroos, was ideal for sheep and cattle farming. On his early explorations, he looked for country that:

bore numerous impressions of the feet of natives and kangaroos and where the ground ... was vivid green ... sullied with burnt sticks and blackened grass trees ... grass was plentiful ... a thicket of trees and the soil was a white earth.

In 1836-37 H.W. Bunbury had this to say:

By these fires ... the country is kept comparatively free from underwood and other obstruction, having the character of an open forest through most parts of which one can ride freely; otherwise in all probability, it would soon become impenetrably thick, and ... the labour cost of clearing would be so greatly increased as to take away all the profit, and it would change the very nature of the country, depriving it of the grazing and pastoral advantages it now possesses ... It is true that we might ourselves burn the bush, but we could never do it with the same judgement and good effect of the Natives, who keep the fire within due bounds, only burning those parts they wish when the scrub becomes too thick or when they have any other object to gain by it. (cited in Markey, 1976, 11)

There are many other examples of Noongar acting to assist early colonial exploration parties. During an 1829 expedition up the Canning River, the explorer Wilson commented that a group of Noongar they had met ‘shewed us various roots which they used for food, and also the manner of digging for them...’ (*Perth Gazette*, 23 March 1833: 6).

In his diaries of early years in the Swan River Colony, George Fletcher Moore speaks of the extensive use of Noongar information to assist with exploration (Moore, 1884: 385). The Noongar hero Yagan, while in custody on Carnac Island, gave Robert Lyon the names of Noongar groups within contact of the Swan River settlement and made sketches which later helped to guide Moore through to the Avon district. Moore also refers to Noongars Weenat and Tomghin, who acted as guides through the eastern hills during the early 1930s. In 1835 Moore took on the services of Weeip, a Noongar whose country included the Upper Swan area, to head up a reconnaissance party some seventy kilometres north of the main settlement area on the Swan River (cited in Hallam, 1983: 137).

From the earliest contact, Noongar offered practical expertise and mastery to non-Aboriginal people trying to establish economic enterprises in the infant Swan River Colony. Almost immediately Noongar took up this challenge and became expert horsemen and women, skilled shepherds, and adept at using European agricultural technology and firearms. As well as acting as guides, Noongar took on work chopping wood, fetching water, clearing land, discovering and mining mineral deposits, undertaking domestic chores such as scrubbing floors, preparing food, and looking after children (Clark, 1994: 23).

Colonial expansionists such as George Fletcher Moore and Georgiana Molloy (Hasluck, 1955) regularly make reference to the unique way in which Noongar carried out this work, drawing on the knowledge and skill acquired through work undertaken in the Noongar economy. In 1833 the Mandurah settler Hall records that he employed

Noongar in his fishing industry precisely because of their experience and knowledge of local fisheries, seasons, species behaviour and technique. When whaling was established in Albany in 1836, Noongar were among those working on the boats (often on full pay). This pattern continued well into the 1840s with Noongar people employed in whaling activities on the beach, in the boats as crew and in the houses of whaling captains. Their take-up in this industry was not simply because they were available and willing to work. Rather it was because of their knowledge of whaling behaviour and their spatial skills that they were of so much value (Green, 1984: 143).

In 1839 the Resident Magistrate at Toodyay, Captain Whitfield, described the practice of taking young Noongar away from their families and placing them in non-Aboriginal households to be trained as lackeys or servants. Whitfield boasted that as workers Noongar were often far better than non-Aboriginal hired labourers, easily surpassing the value of those who often had little bushcraft skills and knowledge of the area (Ericson, 1969: 32).

One relatively unknown example of Noongar involvement during early colonial times involved the establishment of a Noongar fire brigade in the York area. Settlers in the Avon Valley, located east of Perth, quickly learnt about Noongar use of fire technology techniques and by 1838 were 'bribing Aborigines with gifts of wheat, rice, sugar and blankets in order to persuade them to burn-off after the harvest had been gathered' (Markey, 1976: 10) In July 1840, in a desperate attempt to deal with increased bush fires which threatened ailing farms, local farmer Harris suggested that the best way to prevent fires was to employ Noongar prisoners as fire constables to patrol the district, and 'discourage their brethren from lighting fires and to fight any that broke out...' (cited in Garden, 1979: 42-3). This suggestion was adopted and at the end of January 1851 orders were issued by Cowan (York Protector of Aborigines) for Harris to employ four Noongar as fire controllers (Green, 1984: 146).

Noongar contributed much to the delivery of various communications services. During the period before convicts were introduced into Western Australia the economy relied heavily on Noongar maintaining mail services between the major settlements. For several years, the southern mail routes from Perth to Bunbury and Vasse relied entirely on Noongar postal carriers (Pope, 1993: 57). Noongar acting as runners between places such as Perth and Bunbury received a small wage plus food, clothing and tobacco (Green, 1984: 146). Clearly Noongar were recruited for this kind of work because they were able to adapt already-developed skills in carrying message sticks. As Hammond (1933: 61) explains, message stick technology had much in common with communication networking:

The stick had to go along certain paths ... It would be carried in various stages by various natives. For instance, if a message had to go from Perth to Albany, one native might carry it to Pinjarra, another on to Harvey, another to Bunbury, and so on until it had gone right through the territory. Each native,

after handing over the stick, would return to the place where he had received it, and this acted as a sort of check to know that the stick was being sent around all right. Anyone who was capable of carrying a message had to do it when called on. He could not refuse.

The colonial record regularly makes mention of the involvement of Noongar in colonial governance. From the earliest times, fit and knowledgeable young Noongar men were recruited in an attempt to quell resistance and maintain law and order amongst other, troublesome groups (Biskup, 1973: 223). In August 1830, one Ensign Dale commented that:

Exploring parties minimised the risk of danger by including friendly natives among their members. These often acted as guides and on more than one occasion changed possible foes into eager acquaintances. (cited in Andrews, 1939: 61).

Bentley (1993: 33) claims that the early settlers found Noongar to be excellent guides and protectors owing to their knowledge of the country, skill in riding horses and ability to ward off hostile groups. It became routine to include at least two Noongar in any major police operation. By the 1860s there were '39 native assistants who made up a quarter of the police force in the colony at the time' (Coles, n.d.). During this time, 146 police had to cover an area of 60,000 square miles.

The following remark by Keeffe (cited in Palmer, 1997), serves as an example of how non-Aboriginal Police Constables felt about the skill of Noongar Police Assistants:

one cannot but admire the courage and resourcefulness of the Police Constables concerned, who with their drive and tenacity and the skill of the native trackers, brought in the culprits [of crimes] from a vast area of virgin bush.

It is with this topic – assistance to police – that we first hear about the contribution of the now famous Tommy Windich who, along with Jimmy Mungaro, Billy Noongale Kickett and Tommy Pierre, provided assistance to John and Alexander Forrest in their expeditions across the interior (Forrest, 1875). Windich was born in the Mt Stirling area not far from York in 1840, and was brought up and taught bush skills by his relations. By the time he was twenty-five, Windich was using these skills for the Western Australian police force (Coles, n.d.: 2).

Warniny weirniny, warbiny footy – Shaping sacred and secular religion

Noongar were also important in the establishment and development of various church missions. As well as being the reason for the existence of these institutions, they often built the churches and dormitories, carried out work duties, and often made possible

economic enterprises. Despite attempts to wipe out their use of Noongar language and the old culture, it was often this very knowledge, of how to use local resources and products, how to parent young people and how to carry out education, that was critical. For example, at New Norcia in Western Australia, Bishop Salvado (1977) admitted that the early mission would not have survived were it not for the work and efforts of many Noongar.

The contributions of Noongar in culture and the arts has also been important. Since the 1940s, Noongar imagery and the artistic work of those associated with the Carrolup artistic tradition have been used as a marker of Western Australian identity and have generated further output of visual art, film and television, essays and a range of creative exhibitions (Narkle et al., 2016). Aboriginal fine art is important to Australian exports. According to Fink and Perkins (1997), 'Aboriginal art is now [the 1990s] Sotheby's second highest growth market'. Similar trends occur within music-making (Johnson, 1997).

In a humorous and detailed documentary on Australian Rules Football carnivals, Warlpiri elders describe footy as the new 'Ceremony' (Campbell et al., 2007). This shows how, all over regional and remote Australia, football games are often tied to other cultural events and are organised, played and managed in distinctly Indigenous ways. In the process, more senior people can rally younger people around story, movement, language and skin alliance. In country leagues in South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, Indigenous players may make up a majority of footy players. In 2016 at the national AFL league level, 74 out of around 650 listed players were from Indigenous backgrounds. This represents about 11 percent of all players (although Indigenous people only make up just over 2.3 percent of the overall Australian population).

Tatz (1998) makes the point that 'today's (and tomorrow's) football is inconceivable without the presence of Aborigines.' Commentator Martin Flanagan has said that 'the more complex the game of Australian football becomes, the more precious and valuable ... are Aboriginal footballers (cited in Tatz: 26). This is particularly so with the growing convention of beginning various codes of football with a war dance, Māori haka, or pregame ritual of confrontation or welcome-to-country.

Noongar continue to be among the most influential groups in the AFL (Gorman, 2005). In 2016 there were 25 Noongar listed players in the AFL;² enough to make up their own side. Noongar such as Cable, Michaels, the Krakouers, Winmar, the Materas and Kicketts, and the great ruckman Graham 'Polly' Farmer, have reconfigured how the game is played. Together with his Noongar colleague Ted 'Square' Kilmurray, Farmer changed AFL from a 'slow grab and long-kick down the

² 'Noongar Warriors'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. <http://www.smh.com.au/interactive/2016/the-noongar-warriors/>.

middle' game of little tactics and limited nuance to a fast and furious one where possession, the use of multidimensional space and sharp skills rule (Hawke, 1994).

***Noongar katitjin moorditj yeye boorda* – Noongar maintaining knowledge**

Until 2016, with the Noongar (Koorah, Nitja, Boordahwan; Past, Present, Future) Recognition Act of the Western Australian Parliament, Noongar *recognition*, allowing for formal expression of language, law and culture, did not officially exist. Here's how Noongar have represented their recent history, through the website of the SW Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC):³

Through the 1800s and up to the mid-20th century, Noongar children weren't allowed to speak their language in schools and missions. While missions set out to break the chain of learning Noongar culture and language, grouping Noongar people together allowed parents and Elders to continue to pass language on to the younger generation. In this way, Noongar language has been kept alive.

In the 20th century, if a Noongar person wanted to become a citizen, he or she had to renounce their Noongar identity and were not permitted to speak their language or communicate with family or friends. This was orchestrated by the government of the day to abolish Noongar language and identity. Many people however, rejected citizenship because they were not prepared to give up their Noongar culture.⁴

Such a history is not unique to Australia. It characterises any 'settler' society, even including parts of Great Britain in relation to the Celtic 'home nations' and Celtic knowledge. However, the project of colonial conquest and knowledge subjugation was never totally realised so that today in places such as Wales – which some call 'England's first colony'⁵ – 20 percent of the population speak Welsh. This is in part due to a global movement, that included political struggles from the 1960s to 1980s to reinvigorate, value and practice the old language.

³ SWALSC is the Native Title Representative Body of the Noongar People, who are the traditional owners of the south west of Australia. SWALSC works with members to progress resolution of the Noongar native title claims, while also advancing and strengthening Noongar culture, language, heritage and society. See: <http://www.noongar.org.au/>.

⁴ Kaartdijin Noongar – Noongar Knowledge. <http://www.noongarculture.org.au/language/>.

⁵ See for instance the speech Adam Price, MP for Dinefwr and East Carmarthenshire, presented to the Institute of Welsh Politics (November 16, 2009): <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/wales-first-final-colony---2070487>; and this article in the *New Statesman* by Niall Griffiths: <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2007/04/welsh-language-wales-england>. Wales was conquered in 1284, and absorbed into the national entity of 'England and Wales' in 1536.

Of particular importance in this global movement to reaffirm language have been communicative practices, performative opportunities and cultural organisations designed to stand up for First Peoples' rights to culture, language and sovereignty. Not only has this involved traditional means (story, song, ceremony and trips back to country) but increasingly also by using the affordances of contemporary global media technologies. Again, Welsh is a model: successful campaigns have ensured a Welsh-language broadcasting service (S4C and BBC-Cymru), Welsh-medium schools, bilingual road-signs, bilingual commercial signage and official documentation (e.g. drivers' licenses), in addition to traditional language institutions such as family, chapel, the eisteddfod movement, music and the arts. Activists have moved on to ensure that the Welsh language features online, not least through a well-populated Welsh-language version of Wikipedia.

Like the Welsh, Noongar have adopted a range of means through which to do this. The WA Aboriginal Media Association was established in the 1980s as part of the growth of a national Indigenous broadcasting movement that started in the 1970s. Since then Noongar Radio was established to provide Noongar with a means to recognise, respect, and affirm 'our distinct identity and inherent rights and responsibilities in Australian society as Noongar people'.⁶ In 1986 Abmusic was formed to support Indigenous musicians in Western Australia. With its base in Noongar country it has nurtured many hundreds of Noongar musicians and artists who have in turn supported the performance of distinctly Noongar musical forms.⁷

Early attempts at recording Noongar word lists and drawing upon the technology of written text can be traced to explorers and colonists including Flinders (2001), King's 1821 Word List and Isaac Nind's list from Albany (Nind, 1831). In 1833, Robert Lyon published articles on Noongar customs manners and dialects collected by Noongar man Yagan (Lyon, 1833). In 1842, George Fletcher Moore published a description of language from his own and other sources, republished in his memoir (Moore, 1842; 1884). George Grey (1840; 1841) published a descriptive vocabulary of the 'dialects' of SW Australia (1840), and a description of 'many newly discovered, important, and fertile districts, with observations on the moral and physical condition of the Aboriginal Inhabitants &c. &c.' (1841). Bishop Salvado (1977) included the language of Noongar from the Yuat area.

In 1992 the first Noongar-produced Noongar Dictionary was compiled and published by Rose Whitehurst for the Noongar Language and Cultural Centre (Whitehurst, 1992). It followed a series of workshops over many years that had senior Noongar guide the publication and come to a consensus regarding a consistent spelling system. In 1986 the first Noongar Language and Culture Centre was established in Bunbury under the auspice of Bunbury Aboriginal Progress Association. After ten or so years

⁶ 100.9FM: Noongar Radion. <http://www.noongarradio.com/about-us/objectives/>.

⁷ Abmusic. <http://abmusic.com.au>.

of developing language resources and books in conjunction with Bachelor Press the Noongar Boodjar Language Cultural Aboriginal Corporation (NBLCAC) was established in 2014.⁸

Noongar have embraced the global reinvigoration in Indigenous language and culture. Now there is a range of language opportunities emerging for young Noongar so that significant numbers of primary school-aged young people are able to learn about Noongar culture, language, and spirituality in formal school settings. For example, by 2010, 37 schools across the South West had Noongar language lessons. Charmaine Bennell is one of two language teachers at Djidji Djidji Primary in Bunbury.

WA Schools offering Noongar language programme in 2006⁹

School	Year started	Year level	Type ¹⁰	Teacher ¹¹	Indig enrol	Non-Indig enrol
Albany SHS	2004	8-9	3.1	2	23	372
Avondale PS	1994	K-7	3.1	2	57+5	105+6
Balga SHS	2004	8-9	3.1	2	48	67
Balingup PS	1995	3-7	3.1	2	0	34
Brookman PS	2000	K-7	3.1	2	59	302
Brookton PS	2000	K-7	3.1	2	23	141
Caralee Com Sch	2000	K-7	3.1	2	54	183
Djidi Djidi School	1995	K-7	3.1	2	76	3
East Kenwick PS	2005	K-7	3.1	2	58	385
Geographe Bay ESC	2003	K-7	3.1	2	1	46
Gnowangerup DHS	2000	K-7	3.1	2	21	106
Katanning PS	2001	K-2	3.1	2	61	62
Medina PS	1996	K-7	5	2	70	115
Moorditj Aboriginal CC	2000	K-7	3.1	2	137	0
Mt Barker SHS	1999	8-9	3.1	2	18	152
Nannup DHS	2003	K-2	3.1	2	0	49

⁸ Noongar Boodjar Language Centre: <http://noongarboodjar.com.au/language/>.

⁹ Taken from Purdie et al., 2008: 85-7:

http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=indigenous_education

¹⁰ *Programme Type*: 1=First Language Maintenance; 2=Second Language Learning; 3=Language Revival; 3.1=Revitalisation; 3.2=Renewal; 3.3=Reclamation; 4=Language Awareness 5= LOTE trainees.

¹¹ *Teacher*: 1=General teaching staff (non-language specialist); 2=LOTE teacher; 3=Indigenous teaching assistant; 4=Volunteer community member; 5=Other.

Newton Moore SHS	1998	8-9	3.1	2	40	426
Northam SHS	1999	8-12	3.1	2	12	12
Queens Park PS	1999	K-7	3.1	2	50	59
Seaforth PS	2004	K-7	3.1	2	62	234
Swan View SHS	2004	8-9	3.1	2	53	284
Warnbro CHS	2003	8-10	3.1	2	8	4
Waroonah DHS	2002	K-2	3.1	2	5	108
West Northam PS	1999	K-7	3.1	2	72	71

An additional element in Indigenous reinvigoration of knowledge has been the movement to return to traditional lands and to spend time ‘on country’. Noongar young people are travelling with other generations to reacquaint themselves with *boodjar* (country), *moort* (family) (both living and dwelling in *boodjar* as spirits), and *katatjin* (stories/knowledge). Some of this access to *boodjar* has been made possible through the establishment of Indigenous organisations such as SWALSC, who have managed visits to country, the establishment of places such as Nowanup, ‘the bush university’, etc.¹² The increased demand for Indigenous cultural tourism experiences has supported the emergence of several Noongar tourism enterprises in places such as the Perth metropolitan area, the Margaret River region, Esperance and Kojanup.¹³

The early stages of formal Noongar management of land and sea country is also supporting the reinvigoration of Noongar knowledge, for example, South Coast Natural Resource Management and Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management have begun to back Noongar involvement in land management through ecotourism, land care, business development, bush tucker enterprise, cultural surveys, education and a youth cultural connection project.¹⁴ Perth NRM (Natural Resource Management) has Noongar projects including a primary school mentoring program, building a database of Noongar ecological knowledge and videos showcasing Noongar ecological

¹² Nowanup: The Bush University: <http://nowanup.com>; Noongar cultural heritage on Chereninup Creek Reserve, Bush Heritage WA: <http://www.bushheritage.org.au/newsletters/2007/spring/noongar-chereninup>; Noongar Pop Culture, Community Arts Network: <http://www.canwa.com.au/project/noongar-pop-culture/>; Leadership: Going Bush, Clontarf: <http://www.clontarf.org.au/going-bush/>.

¹³ See: Urban Indigenous <http://www.urbanindigenous.com.au>; Indigenous Tours Western Australia http://www.westernaustralia.com/en/Tour/Kings_Park_Indigenous_Heritage_Tour/56b26936aeceaf773cfbcf/56b26936aeceaf773cfbcf3; Koomal Dreaming <http://www.koomaldreaming.com.au>, Wardan Aboriginal Cultural Centre https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction_Review-g255367-d1647076-Reviews-Wardan_Aboriginal_Cultural_Centre-Margaret_River_Margaret_River_Region_Western_Au.html; Kepa Kurl Eco Discovery Tours <http://kepakurl.com.au/tours.html>; The Kodja Place, <http://kodjaplace.com.au>.

¹⁴ Project summary. http://southcoastnrm.com.au/images/user-images/documents/pdf-snapshots/Cultural_Connections/Cultural_Connections_Summary_of_Achievements_to_31_December_2015.pdf; Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management Knowledge Hub have produced various publications in conjunction with Noongar <http://www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au/our-information/knowledge-hub?keys=Noongar>.

knowledge.¹⁵ This kind of work will increase as part of the South West Native Title Settlement Package and the creation of the Noongar Boodja Trust. Six Noongar Regional Corporations and one Central Services Corporation are in the process of being established (2016), each with the responsibility and resources to look after their own land estate, to manage heritage and enter into economic, social, cultural activities and joint management arrangements of national parks.¹⁶

Conclusion

Too often it is assumed that colonisation has erased Noongar culture and knowledge systems. To accept this thesis, however, is to erase Noongar from the ecological, historical and epistemological landscape. It is clear that Noongar knowledge has continued to be a force. Noongar knowledge was critical when *wam* (outsiders) arrived. They became language teachers, regularly providing information on the availability of economic resources to supplement supplies. They offered protection from the elements and hostile locals, acted as domestic and farm workers, agricultural and environmental consultants, mappers, child carers and teachers.

For some newcomers this meant growing up or working with Noongar. Other settlers came to learn Noongar language and take on Noongar ideas. Some were even raised under the shelter of knowledge of Noongar parenting and childrearing. Today Noongar place names are left throughout towns, parks and places. One only need scan a map to see the extent to which Noongar language and knowledge directs us as we move throughout the southwest.

As Clark (1994: 15) says, it would be interesting to speculate what would have been the outcome had Noongar not contributed to the extent they did. Noongar knowledge is a significant inscription on the palimpsest of Western Australian landscape and history. The lives and economies of many of Western Australia's old and established colonial families were built on Noongar ontologies, technology and wisdom. Farming families were literally and symbolically suckled by Noongar and raised on Noongar knowledge.

Kura, yeye, boorda Noongar boordier baalup katatjin!

– Yesterday, today and in the future, Noongar bosses of their knowledge!

¹⁵ Living Landscapes. <http://www.perthnrm.com/resources/resources-traditional-ecological-knowledge>.

¹⁶ South West Native Title Settlement Package: <https://www.dpc.wa.gov.au/lantu/south-west-native-title-settlement/settlement-package/Pages/default.aspx>.

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