

Recent Rituals of Indigenous Recognition in Australia: Welcome to Country

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ABSTRACT In this article, I examine the recent emergence in Australia of two small, and now regularly enacted, rituals: "Acknowledgments" and "Welcomes to Country." These are expressions of recognition, or response to perceived neglect and injustice. Recognition has become a global theme, part of a broader politics of reparation focused on indigenous and other colonized and subordinated peoples, and includes practices of apology and reconciliation. In Australia, recognition implies expansion of the relationship between categories of people who have been on unequal, distant, and (at some levels) negligible terms as settlers and natives, colonizers and colonized. Practices of recognition are therefore ambiguous: What is to be recognized, and how is recognition to proceed? Here I consider these rituals and their putative origins, structure, content, variations, and affect of participants and audiences. Both rituals cast recognition in ways that continue recent decades of national emphasis on indigenous emplacement, judgments concerning originariness, and authenticity; "Welcomes" also recast relations in terms of a host-guest framework. The emergence of these rituals fosters new kinds of indigenous public expression and receptions of recognition as well as some standardization of both. It is an indication of change, as well as of its limits in indigenous-nonindigenous relationships. [*recognition, reconciliation, rituals, apology, indigenous-nonindigenous relations, Australia*]

RESUMEN En este artículo, examino el reciente surgimiento en Australia de dos menores, y ahora regularmente efectuados rituales: "reconocimientos" y "bienvenidos al país." Estas son expresiones de *reconocimiento*, o respuesta a percibida negligencia e injusticia. Reconocimiento se ha convertido en un tema global, parte de una política más amplia de reparación focalizada en indígenas y otros pueblos colonizados y subordinados, e incluye prácticas de disculpa y reconciliación. En Australia, reconocimiento implica la expansión de la relación entre categorías de gente que ha estado en términos desiguales, distantes y (a algunos niveles) inapreciables como colonos y nativos, colonizadores y colonizados. Las políticas de reconocimiento son por lo tanto ambiguas: ¿Qué es lo que va a ser reconocido y cómo va a proceder el reconocimiento? Aquí, considero esos rituales y sus orígenes putativos, estructura, contenido, variaciones, y afecto de los participantes y audiencias. Ambos rituales estructuran reconocimiento en formas que continúan décadas recientes de énfasis nacional sobre emplazamiento, juicios con respecto a originariedad, y autenticidad; "el bienvenidos" también reestructura relaciones en términos de un marco anfitrión-huésped. La emergencia de estos rituales promueve nuevos tipos de expresión pública indígena y recepciones de reconocimiento así como también estandarización de ambos. Es una indicación de cambio, así como sus límites en relaciones indígenas-no indígenas. [*reconocimiento, reconciliación, rituales, apología, relaciones indígenas-no indígenas, Australia*]

RITUALS: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND WELCOMES

This article concerns the recent emergence of two small rituals of recognition in Australia, enacted on a growing number of public occasions.¹ One of them, known as “Acknowledgment,” is delivered at the start of a public event and involves a short spoken statement of traditional belonging on the part of indigenous people or groups to the place or region in which the event is taking place. It is usually delivered by someone in a recognized or official role but who is frequently not an indigenous person.

The other ritual of recognition, “Welcome to Country,” has a more complex structure. It involves the delivery by an indigenous person (or persons) to those assembled, minimally of a verbal statement of welcome. This may be accompanied by dance or other performance elements such as small rites of “smoking” (cleansing and purifying with smoke). Welcomes are understood to be based on a general level of acceptance of the entitlement and willingness of the person or group in whose name he or she speaks to issue such a welcome. Welcomes thus presuppose indigenous entitlement and indigenous reception of the audience to whom the welcome is extended.

These rituals are forms of recognition, normative response to perceived neglect and injustice (Taylor 1994). Recent decades have seen similar moves in many parts of the world; in states of settler colonial origin such as Australia, recognition has focused on indigenous people who have been colonized, marginalized, and treated in discriminatory fashion (Tsosie 2006).

In this article, I examine the emergence and variability of these rituals in Australia as well as differing receptions of them. The structure and content of these rituals reveal continuing inequalities in capacity to set context by indigenous and nonindigenous people and interests. Though overtly forms of recognition of indigenous people, these rituals reinforce certain mainstream emphases on indigenous identity and being. They also, however, create a new space for indigenous public presence. While some of the limited writing by Australianist anthropologists on these rituals has tended to see them as implicitly coerced “whitefella business,” or as the product of liberal cunning, I suggest that they also need to be seen from other perspectives. Importantly, they are taken up by some indigenous people and groups in ways that appear to reflect some ongoing convergence between societal impulses toward recognition and indigenous responses to it, complicating dismissive moral or political judgment of them.

RECOGNITION

Recognition is one term within a suite of themes and practices having to do with amending historical injustices, including apology, reconciliation, restitution, and reparation (Barkan and Karn 2006; Torpey 2003). It involves deliberate attempts to move away from earlier inhospitality to difference and toward greater hospitality to it that acknowledges the worth of other peoples, cultures, and cultural productions.

In recent decades, recognition has become a dimension of official and government outlooks, with respect to not only indigenous peoples but also other minorities.

John Torpey (2003) links the global spread of these “reparations politics” to postwar growth of “Holocaust consciousness.” Elazar Barkan (2006:91) remarks on further dramatic developments during 1989–1999 in relation to wars (Africa, Yugoslavia) and transformations in governance (Eastern Europe, South Africa, Latin America) during the period. Ian Burruma (1999) has said that an identity rooted in victimhood “cannot result in mutual understanding.” Citing this approvingly, Barkan (2006:93) proposes that growth and change in what used to be more starkly seen as victim and perpetrator identities informs this new space in national and international politics. Recognition is a dimension of broad global trends, carrying with it questions about acknowledgment and mutuality of relationship.

Recent critical work on the concept of recognition gathered pace from the 1990s, strongly underpinned by Hegelian accounts (Honneth 1996; Taylor 1994). Simon Thompson and Majid Yar (2011) characterize these as based on the idea that we are formed by interaction with others, not independently of them—that we come to know ourselves in others. To this certain theoreticians attach the morally positive notion that we can “flourish” to the extent we are recognized, as well as its negative corollary, that a person or group “can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (Taylor 1994:25). Such concepts of recognition have attracted critical response (e.g., as reifying identity; see Fraser 2000) as well as more detailed discussion of the complementary notion, misrecognition (McNay 2008). All these accounts nevertheless presuppose kinds of interdependence. Efforts at practical realization of recognition in contemporary Australian circumstances imply the existence of ways of interacting—and, to some extent, create them.

One thing anthropologists can do is critically engage with this normative move to recognize coming forth from the societies within which we live and practically engage. I suggest that there is liable to be considerable ambiguity in recognition as normative project. In the case of indigenous minorities, recognition involves transaction between parties that have been (and largely remain) in relations of inequality and separateness. They are now to become recognizable to each other in new ways, through some shared sense of what can count as a positive exchange or transaction between them. In settler colonies such as Australia, such transactions have to do with the question not merely of recognition in a neutral sense but also, as some see it, of forgiveness of past wrongs and kinds of interaction as well as a determination to “do better”: notions of apology and reconciliation. Others, however, respond to such ideas of forgiveness and admission with disquiet, unease, or outright rejection. State sanctioned and advocated, recognition involves forms of public expression characterized in actuality by some degree of novelty.

Some indigenous supporters seek to validate them as “traditional”; other critics (both indigenous and nonindigenous) regard these forms of recognition as “whitefella business,” not engaging closely with indigenous people and concerns; and some nonindigenous others see them as intrusive, alienating, and perhaps as hokum. All reactions, it is worth repeating, occur in the context of continuing systemic inequalities between most indigenous people and their nonindigenous countrymen. Interactions of recognition thus have political and social significance well beyond their immediate contexts of enactment and are freighted with all kinds of legacies and connotations.

Anthropologists have taken up various viewpoints on what can be seen as forms of recognition. Many are highly critical of such efforts, seeing them as unremittingly colonialist, even in their liberal and seemingly progressive modes. In that vein, in *The Cunning of Recognition*, Elizabeth Povinelli (2002) contends that Australian Aborigines are made to meet impossible standards of cultural authenticity to gain recognition in land claims, which have been central to recognition efforts in Australian government indigenous affairs policy over the last 40 years. Her view has been acclaimed but also critiqued (Moses 2011) as limited by dichotomous “resistance/cooption” terms (either resistant to or captured and taken in by them) of indigenous people’s responses to state initiatives. Dirk Moses alleges that analysis of state measures as nefarious attempts to incorporate and domesticate indigenous perspectives leads to inadequate representation of indigenous responses to them and misjudges indigenous agency. The work of another Australian anthropologist, Philip Batty of Museum Victoria, has long been concerned with repatriation of human remains and sacra—yet another element of reparations and recognition policies. Batty has argued that repatriation “can be seen as just one element in the broader desire for national redemption” (2006:60), rather than as responsive to erstwhile owners and their concerns. Gillian Cowlishaw (2011:170) characterizes recent (state-led) support of allegedly “traditional” indigenous cultural expression as creating “myths” about indigenous people that are “neither instigated nor controlled” by them. All these authors call into question whether capacity to demonstrate one’s entitlement in land claims, repatriation, and distinctive cultural capacity is about recognition of “cultural diversity,” as government policy and national discourses might suggest, or whether these efforts amount to management of postcoloniality (Morton 2003) and a striving for national redemption. While there are valid grounds for such critiques, I think that the recent attempts at recognition discussed here are not only guileful but also, on some levels, soulful, reflecting the desire for inversion of power-laden indigenous–nonindigenous relations on the part of some sections of the mainstream population. I also suggest that responses to these rituals are diverse, and especially to the extent that they are regularly taken up by indigenous people, the rituals are potentially transformative in ways that unitary moral or political judgment of them does not recognize.

A striking thing about Australia is the extent to which indigenous issues are constantly before the public and have been so for decades. Stories about woeful indigenous living and health conditions, welfare reform and jobs creation, sacred sites, environmental disputes involving indigenous people and lands, the lack of any indigenous–nonindigenous treaty on this continent, land rights and native title cases, indigenous rates of incarceration, schooling, human rights, Aboriginal art, and constitutional recognition of indigenous people, to name just a few themes, are regularly front-page or prominent news items—in all media, including Australia’s most conservative daily newspaper, *The Australian*, which is the biggest-selling national broadsheet (published by Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp Australia). These matters are disputed, but they are regularly before us. Indigenous issues, in short, are treated as unfinished business by the nation at large, matters of ongoing responsibility and repudiation. It is out of this context that rituals of recognition have emerged.

STRUCTURES OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND WELCOME

Acknowledgment involves admitting or owning up to something, a matter of appreciation, or a declaration made to ensure legal validity. Acknowledgment rituals are structured as an affirmation of the entitlement and belonging of indigenous persons or groups to a place, typically by an outsider. Acknowledgments are sometimes spoken by indigenous persons regarded as nonlocal, this degree of externality allowing them to do this (and explicitly provided for in some recent government protocols for such events).

Welcomes have a classic host–guest structure in a way Acknowledgments do not. A host is normally someone who has an entitlement or belonging within a domain to which the guest is admitted. The host is to be respected but is also morally bound to extend hospitality to the guest. While an Acknowledgment may be made by someone without direct address to those understood to be acknowledged, and without reciprocation, a Welcome frames both parties as participants of the event.

Acknowledgments and Welcomes are commonly delivered at universities, schools, government or public service events, exhibitions, building or facility openings, conferences, sports events, and other gatherings. There is a particular sense of their appropriateness at events having to do with indigenous affairs and organizations but not only there.² They seem to be especially common in the large urban seaboard cities and major regional towns where government departments and professional facilities are centered. These are the institutional interfaces between experts and intellectuals (both indigenous and, more often, nonindigenous) employed in them, who are aware of “reparations politics” broadly speaking, and indigenous community structures, representative organizations, and persons.

Attached to the wall of various venues at the university where I work (in Canberra, the national capital) is a generic

“Acknowledgment of traditional custodians that may be used within the University, as appropriate,” which reads:

I acknowledge and celebrate the First Australians on whose traditional land we meet, and whose cultures are among the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

This form of statement leaves out any specific “tribal” name. This strategy is sometimes adopted for places where, as in Canberra, indigenous originariness is contested among competing groups or unclear for other reasons.³ Such statements celebrate the land as traditionally that of First Australians and tend to focus on the antiquity of indigenous cultures. They also leave judgment open regarding when such an Acknowledgment may be appropriate.

A somewhat more elaborate form suggested for use (their own and others’) by an indigenous incorporated body of Adelaide, South Australia, runs as follows:

The Tramountanas-North Association Incorporated acknowledges that the land we meet on today, in respect of the Adelaide Plains region, are [sic] the traditional lands of the Kaurna people and in respect of the Elliston District, are the traditional lands of the Wirangu people.

We also acknowledge the Kaurna people as the custodians of the greater Adelaide region and the Wirangu people as the custodians of the western Eyre Peninsula region.

We respect the Kaurna & Wirangu people’s spiritual relationship with their country.

*We recognise that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still important to the living Kaurna and Wirangu people today.*⁴

Here an indigenous corporation recognizes indigenous people and groups and their attachments to land, the wording implying its externality to them. Institutions are encouraged and given directives for Acknowledgments and Welcomes to become a dimension of their protocol. The New South Wales Health Department (2005) specifies events or occasions for these rituals as including the following: commemorations and major festivals; area health service meetings; opening of new hospital wards; major policy and program launches; conferences, forums, and statewide meetings; and major sporting events at which NSW Health is a major sponsor.⁵ Forms of welcoming also occur in smaller and more remote locations on particular occasions, especially ones featuring prominent outside visitors, but in the inland region of the upper Northern Territory that I know, I have never yet seen a Welcome to Country of the kind described here in a remote community. Welcomes occur at and demarcate a boundary in a way most characteristic of particular settings in which indigenous–nonindigenous relations to place and to each other are not presupposable or self-evident.

The “Welcome to Country,” on occasions of the kinds mentioned above, is issued by an Aboriginal person locally selected for the task to open the proceedings. Usually this is someone designated an “elder,” a respectful term that connotes qualifications of age, experience, and local standing (usually grounded in specific family membership, together with an individual’s ability and willingness to act in situations in which Aboriginal interests are to be represented before a public). The category of eldership, whatever it may have

been in the past, has been continually exposed to expanding and changing demands for ostensibly authoritative Aboriginal representation, including at events such as these.

The invocation typically involves a short speech—preferably, where possible, at least partly in an indigenous language.⁶ Fluent speakership in an indigenous language may be one local criterion of status and of selection for this role. Other elements include dance, music, and sometimes a ritual purification, usually a smoking (exposure to the smoke of green leaves) of participants’ bodies, considered cleansing and renewing. The content of Welcomes varies regionally in ways that reflect the history of indigenous–nonindigenous relations and the nature of local indigenous culture and practice.

PRECEDENTS AND CONTINUITY?

In considering these rituals as continuous with earlier ones, or as innovations, it is important to balance assumptions that would count any similarity between present and past practice as continuity against a critical assessment of the nature and conditions of the contemporary practices. There is no doubt that some elements of Welcomes (such as dance) have long been in use among groups of Aboriginal people, especially among those whose ceremonial and daily practices remain more continuous with earlier ones of their people and distinct from those of other Australians. Others are clearly recent. Overall, to see these rituals as simply continuous with earlier practices would, in my view, miss what are very considerable dimensions of change. In this section, I explore what we know of Aboriginal greeting and welcoming when these activities were not explicitly focused on relations with nonindigenous outsiders as a background against which to place current Acknowledgments and Welcomes and contextualize understandings circulating in Australia about their origins. That these rituals are widely understood to be recent does not, of course, prevent either indigenous or nonindigenous people from wishfully identifying them as traditional.⁷

Precolonially, Aboriginal people regarded as kin anyone with whom they had regular contact and could readily extend kinship and other forms of social classification to others with whom they had less frequent contact. Beyond that range, others were stereotyped as strangers, often enemies, and sometimes distant beings were thought to be monsters—at least until they came within interactional range and could be considered otherwise. Situations like that of northeast Arnhem Land in which there were regular visits from people (Macassan trepangers from Sulawesi) who remained foreign were unusual. No particular “welcome” ceremonies are reported in the context of Macassan visits over perhaps two centuries, nor does Macassan evaluation of Arnhem Landers as uncivilized seem to have changed significantly, despite periodic complex interactions, including travel of some Arnhem Landers to Sulawesi for periods of time (Macknight 1972; Campell Macknight, personal communication with author, March 25, 2013).

Documentation from various parts of the continent (Smyth 1972 for Victoria; Spencer and Gillen 1927 for the Center; Thomson 1932 for Cape York) indicates that indigenous people had highly structured protocols for encountering others from whom they had been separated for periods of time and those with whom their relations were infrequent or distant compared to their more habitual companions. This documentation suggests that coming together was typically gradual and restrained, mediated by acts and events of (re)integration rather than outreach as if to people unknown.

The account of Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen (1927:505) for Central Australia illustrates the restrained and gradual nature of encounter. Travellers or visitors to a camp (singly, or typically in small numbers) made smoke signals by lighting fires so that their intention to approach was made clear; they then placed themselves within sight of the camp. The visitor

does not at first go close up to [the camp] but sits down in silence. Apparently no one takes the slightest notice of him, and etiquette forbids him from moving without being invited to do so. After perhaps an hour or two one of the older men will walk over to him and quietly sit down on the ground beside the stranger. If the latter be the bearer of any message, or of any credentials, he will hand these over, and then perhaps the old man will embrace him and invite him to come into the camp. Very likely he may be provided with a temporary wife during his visit, who will, of course, belong to the special group with which it is lawful for him to have marital relations.

Spencer and Gillen (1927:505) recount that after the ice was broken, people fought over unsettled grievances. Those coming together shared a sense of the mores and constraints to be observed, as well as a sense of what were mutually relevant affairs and events, even if there were scores to settle among them. This combination of recognized difference and reintegration in restrained tenor seems characteristic of the material we have for similar parts of the continent from the reports of outsiders who were privy to events that remained, at least in the main, focused on the relations among Aboriginal people.

Anthropologists and others who achieve some degree of local recognition are aware of other protocols. Some indigenous people (largely those remote dwelling) who live on country for which they exercise custodianship may enact small rituals to introduce newcomers or visitors to particular places: they water their heads from local water sources, rub underarm sweat on them, and speak to forebears and Dreamings at particular locales to make the newcomer known. Such practices as these differ from recent Welcomes in important ways.

First, interpersonal ritual acts such as head watering and sweat rubbing were (and are) applied to small numbers of visitors at close quarters. Such visitors are typically already known in some measure but are coming into closer contact with the living countryside for which locals consider themselves responsible. Making visitors who bear some kind of

difference more like the local self is the prerogative that head waterers and sweat rubbers take on themselves. This distinguishing act among (relative) equals is based on a claim of the local to belong intimately to the surrounding country to which the visitor is to be introduced. The second main point of such small practices is to introduce the visitor—not to other persons as such but to the country and to the particular forces (including people now deceased) inherent in it. Thus, small Welcomes enact a triangular kind of relation in which locals mediate between country, understood to be sentient and able to be addressed, and visitors. Third, the very act of taking on such mediation is understood as an aspect of local belonging, which need not be—and in my experience usually is not—formulated verbally at any general categorical (such as “tribal”) level but, rather, in terms of kinship between person and place (e.g., a local may address a sentient locale as “uncle” or “mother”) and is enacted by rubbing, watering, speaking. Fourth, from a local indigenous point of view, such introductions are protective, not simply “welcoming” in the ordinary understanding of that word as “kindly reception or greeting.” There is a pervasive indigenous sensibility that the living country may present dangers to people unknown to it and whose being is not intimately involved with it. Therefore, practices like head watering and sweat rubbing, as well as a local’s addresses to ancestral beings announcing who has come to visit, are understood to reduce that element of foreignness that might attract harm.

There is a noticeable olfactory dimension to local belonging: people who perform these kinds of acts assume that the country and its living forces are sensitive to smell, that locals and nonlocals can be distinguished, and the olfactory difference between them can be reduced by these small acts. While this aim is overtly inclusive, in my experience the implied claim to distinction that Aborigines themselves attend to with social acumen is between those who take on themselves the right, and the duty, to perform such rituals—as they see it, on behalf of others to protect them—and others not entitled to do so.

Since the advent of land claims in the 1970s, such small rites have sometimes been enacted as part of opening protocol in claim hearings, as protective and welcoming gestures, and also as a demonstration of traditionality, highly valued in this setting. In such communities, dance may figure in ceremonies and as an element of welcoming outside guests, but typically this occurs without the verbal declarations of self-identification that constitute the basic enactments of recent Welcome protocol.

In recent Welcomes, on the other hand, address is to an audience constituted in the event as a “welcome public” in contradistinction to the welcomer(s). A welcome public is composed of a set of people who typically came together for some (other) purpose. This is related to awkwardness of fit between the Welcome’s host–guest structure and aspects of the event structure in which it is performed, as discussed further below. The audience is typically constituted in terms of a

modern social imaginary that assumes forms of strangerhood and professional, occupational, or other purposes outside of persons as constitutive of gatherings. There may be performative elements, but these may or may not directly engage the “Welcome public.” **There is little, if any, emphasis on making welcomer and welcomed more corporeally alike.** Events usually begin with welcomers’ verbal declaration of local belonging, together with a verbal “welcome,” usually in the sense of friendly, receptive greeting. Such events are ones of **“stranger sociability”** (Deem 2002), in which indigenous people declare aspects of their identity before people relatively unknown to them as part of enunciating their local belonging. An example below shows that the content of a Welcome, in a region where there persists relationship to country as sentient and embodied, continues the older emphasis on the duty and prerogative of locals to protect visitors.

RECENT ORIGINS: RECONCILIATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

Most Australians realize that both ritual forms have become part of public protocol in the recent past. Given their recency, one might imagine that their origin could be pinned down, but they remain **the product of an era of reparations politics and, thus, cannot be so neatly located.** It seems likely that **Acknowledgments arose in Australian governmental and bureaucratic contexts, energized by actions and statements that prominent Australian politicians authored and put into circulation.**

Reconciliation implies **the “reciprocal recognition of the moral worth and dignity”** (Verdeja 2009:3) of different parties as those between whom relations are to be mended. A touchstone of settler–indigenous relations in North America and elsewhere (e.g., South Africa) in the 1990s, reconciliation was institutionalized in the decade 1991–2000 in Australia. In 1991, the Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommended a formal process of reconciliation, resulting in that year in the establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR), which took initiatives at national and local levels.⁸

A speech by Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating in 1992 captured and energized the reconciliation mood. He made an address, now often called “the Redfern Speech,” on December 10, 1992, in the inner Sydney neighborhood of Redfern Park. A significant indigenous population had lived in the area for the previous several decades; they were certain to be a large proportion of the audience. In this speech, Keating was the first Australian prime minister to publicly **focus on settler responsibility for resulting and continuing conditions within Australian Aboriginal communities.** He said: “We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practiced discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice” (Keating 1992). This grabbed public attention and continues to be seen by many as a landmark moment.

Sir William Deane, previously a High Court judge and then the 22nd governor-general, appointed by Keating, was a strong supporter of the reconciliation movement and also emphasized the acceptance of moral responsibility. In his inaugural 1996 Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture, “Some Signposts from Daguragu,” he said:

It should, I think[,] be apparent to all well-meaning people that true reconciliation between the Australian nation and its indigenous people is not achievable in the absence of acknowledgement by the nation of the wrongfulness of the past dispossession, oppression and degradation of the Aboriginal peoples . . . Where there is no room for national pride or national shame about the past, there can be no national soul. [Deane 1996]

Such readiness to publicly acknowledge settler responsibility for shaping contemporary indigenous conditions became an index of a conciliatory approach. Many government institutions worked over the reconciliation decade and beyond to develop public practice or protocol embodying it. As part of its reconciliation effort, for example, the primary Australian multicultural and multilingual radio and television broadcasting service, SBS, was determined by the late 2000s to acknowledge as part of their screen design the traditional custodians of the land where SBS offices stand in Melbourne and Sydney. By 2010, descriptions and protocols for developing and practicing both Acknowledgments and Welcomes to Country were sections in such documents as the *Handbook of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies* published by Queensland education authorities (ATSI Handbook 2010), as well as in those of The New South Wales Department of Education and Training, the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc., and the New South Wales Teachers Federation (NSWTF 2008) and NSW Health (2005) cited above. **Protocolization was accompanied by bureaucratic elaboration: specification of the elements of the rituals that may be performed, fee structures for services rendered, payment methods, possible differences in protocol varying according to whether acknowledgers were nonindigenous or nonlocal indigenous persons, and so on.** In a few years, the practices have become if not required, at least highly prescribed and formulated as institutional protocol.

Such readiness to **acknowledge settler responsibility** has also become a crucial dividing political sentiment, however. It is more typically (though not uniformly) associated with positions of the Australian Labor party (which Keating headed in 1991–1996) than its main political rival, the Liberal-National coalition. Keating’s successor and opponent, John Howard (Liberal-National Party Prime Minister from 1996–2007), saw the Redfern Speech as a regrettable display of political correctness and a marker of the “soft left.” Historian Geoffrey Blainey, not long after the Redfern Speech, dubbed this sort of readiness an overly negative **“black armband” view of Australian history.**

The reconciliation decade also saw various “people’s movements” for reconciliation as well as pursuit of a federal inquiry into the “Stolen Generations.”⁹ This became a

standard way of referring to (indigenous) children who were taken from their parents (approximately between 1909–1969), supposedly for their own benefit, and institutionalized or made available for adoption or fostering by other parents, both indigenous and nonindigenous. The inquiry culminated in the 1997 publication of *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (Australian Human Rights Commission 1997), leading to public pressure for the issuing of an apology. The CAR planned the first National Sorry Day for May 26, 1998. It placed Sorry Books for signature throughout government offices and businesses throughout Australia, allowing thousands to express their support for apology and reconciliation by signing. Despite such intensifications in the late 1990s, Prime Minister Howard resolutely refused to issue an apology concerning the Stolen Generations, issuing instead a statement of “regret” in 1999. His semantic guardedness was clear: regret involves a feeling of sadness, repentance, or disappointment over something that has happened or been done, but it is not taken to entail admission of involvement or depth of sorrow concerning “something that can neither be forgotten nor forsaken” in the way that an “apology” does (Tavuchis 1991:34).

In sum, recently the theme of settler responsibility for indigenous conditions was articulated at influential levels and entered public discourse. This heightened sentiment in favor of reconciliation and public acknowledgment of indigenous identity and belonging. In a counter-movement, these themes also shaped up as politically differentiating and divisive.

WELCOMES: PERFORMING THE DIFFERENCE

There are specific but differing accounts of how Welcomes arose. Some suggest that they, too, were stimulated by CAR’s suggestion in the 1990s, which urged observing protocols and “negotiating with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders or representative bodies to include appropriate indigenous ceremony into official events” (<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/orgs/car/roadmap/pg3.htm>).

There is another more actor-specific version. In a blog entry that may have been intended to be derisive, journalist Piers Akerman (2010) recounted a claim made by nationally known indigenous move star Ernie Dingo that he and a friend were responsible for the Welcome to Country:

It has now been revealed that the concept of the welcome-to-country ceremony was made up in Perth by entertainers Ernie Dingo and Richard Walley in 1976, after pressure from visiting Pacific Islander dancers who refused to perform at a festival unless they were welcomed with a ceremony, as was traditional in their own region.

This has the whiff of disdain for something “made up,” not traditional, about it. According to the two men themselves, in consultation with Perth “elders,” they devised something acceptable to the visiting New Zealand and Cook Island

dancers.¹⁰ Dr. Walley says he was later asked by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission to perform the Welcome in Alice Springs in the mid-1980s. The practice grew from that time, only becoming widespread in the 2000s—that much is clear.

Dingo identified the recent rise of Welcomes with contexts of interaction between Aborigines and other Pacific Islanders and its later transfer to “settler” publics. This suggests a distinction between Acknowledgments, which appear to have been fostered within the Australian sociopolitical context as described above, and Welcomes, which may have emerged in engagement between indigenous Australians and Pacific Islanders around visits and cultural events. Initially, at least, they seem not to have been simply a product of internal Australian indigenous–nonindigenous relations.¹¹ Dingo did not say how he saw the connections of the Welcome with earlier indigenous Australian practices.¹²

The character of Welcomes varies with place and the nature of indigenous and other practices current in those locales. Kim Doohan (2008) describes the growth of Welcomes between miners and indigenous people at Argyle, an important diamond mine site in the East Kimberley, Western Australia. Most Australians would consider this a remote area, relatively sparsely settled by outsiders until fairly recently (though those that came had considerable impact on indigenous people), and its indigenous inhabitants relatively “traditional.” Welcomes have come to be a regular part of the miner–indigenous interface, grounded in an intimacy of indigenous relationship with country.

A diamond-bearing lamproite pipe was found in 1979 at a site that Aboriginal people associate with a Barramundi (fish) creator. Local indigenous people regard the signature diamonds found there as Barramundi’s body fat and internal organs. At that time, large mining companies were becoming aware of the need to forge new kinds of relationships with indigenous groups, especially in light of an intense dispute in a neighboring region. In 1980 the Western Australian government of the day enjoined exploration company AMAX to drill for oil on what Yungora people had claimed and defended for some time as a sacred site: the pastoral property Noonkanbah in the Western Kimberley.¹³ Wishing to avoid another such dispute, the Argyle miner, CRA Exploration Pty Ltd., took the unprecedented action in the same year of negotiating a Good Neighbour Agreement with indigenous people local to Argyle. Despite its shortcomings (Doohan 2008:22), the negotiation marked a change from governmental force majeure, which had characterized the Noonkanbah dispute.

With continuous debate over the relationship throughout the 1980s, made more tumultuous by threatened mine closure, from 1996 local Kija people began to perform a ritual welcoming, *manthe*, that “includes an enactment of the host-guest relationship and confers safe passage in the landscape and protection from malevolent spirits and beings” (Doohan 2008:117). The ceremony involves burning of green leaves and “smoking” those being welcomed,

together with dancing and singing of songs connected with the Barramundi dreaming. Local indigenous people understand the **manthe ceremony** as a means of **seeking permission from the country and the spirits of old people to disturb the ground as well as for protection for the outsiders**. While day and casual visitors are not required to attend manthe, there is apparently debate about whether they should do so. Since 2002, new workers **to the mine site have been required to attend a manthe as part of their induction (Doohan 2008:118) and to undergo cross-cultural training**. Senior people who provide the manthe service are self-selected and are paid. How people view manthe “ranges from the traditional indigenous interpretation to the skeptical cynicism of some Miners” (Doohan 2008:134). Outwardly, miners typically remove their hard hats, bow their heads, and behave deferentially.

Kelly Greenop (2013) writes of Welcome to Country protocols that have emerged over the last ten years in **Inala**, which has been, for the last 50 years, a suburb of urban Brisbane (Queensland). The area has a mix of indigenous and nonindigenous residents. The names of indigenous socioterritorial groups have (revived?) currency; traditional owning groups include Jagera, Yuggera, and Ugarapul. Indigenous people distinguish “**traditional owners**,” those they regard as having long-term connections to the area of Inala, from more recently arrived “**historicals**” (some of whom may claim “traditional owner” status elsewhere). Both phrases reveal the pervasiveness of concepts originating in the recent decades of claim and other state-led processes. The number of recognized traditional owners is small, as compared to the overall size of “Murri” (indigenous) community in Inala.

Greenop argues that Welcomes have been taken up in the local community in ways that reflect “**transcending sovereignty**”—that is, authority deriving from local participation, acceptance, and recognition, rather than from state-led processes.¹⁴ Some indigenous people eschew involvement in native title, feeling they need not prove their credentials regarding land to anyone. A typical Inala Welcome is short:

Good morning everybody. My name is — and I am the Jagera traditional owner person of this country. I'd like everyone that's coming into our country . . . to know that you are welcome here, you are welcome in the country of the Jagera people. I would like you all to remember the forgotten ones, the ones who are passed, and left us. [Greenop 2012]

Speaking for country, Greenop says, is done by traditional owners; acknowledgment, or speaking about people and country, largely by historicals. But, she argues, at events seen as “whitefella business” (such as Welcomes to state representatives), **there is a tendency for “historicals” to give welcome speeches and for “traditional owners” to do so at funerals and football carnivals**—more intimate, community-internal events. An Inala Welcome to Country for Babies ceremony was innovated in 2011, intended to increase the sense of community belonging and togetherness.

Greenop writes against suggestions (Cowlshaw 2011) that these rites are to be understood as external impositions on Murri (indigenous) community. She argues that their **existence is integral to indigenous self-understanding and internal process, distributed and organized in relation to locally significant distinctions**.

My sense is that these Welcomes are the product of both external influence and community-internal social process, but one must see these as linked to each other and not separate. The Welcome and other arrangements are clearly products of considerable self-consciousness about the defining, supporting, and building of Murri community as something worthy of recognition in, but different from, other aspects of suburban Australia. These concerns have become internal to local social activity.¹⁵

Over the last several decades, repatriation of cultural and skeletal materials has been a significant dimension of recognition and reconciliation work. Katherine Lambert-Pennington (2007:317) describes a Welcome to Country pronounced by the chairman of the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council on the occasion of return of the return in 2002 of 21 indigenous individuals to this area in urban southern Sydney. La Perouse, from being an early landing place in colonial times, became a marginal area of growing greater Sydney, the site of an infectious diseases hospital and a fringe-dwelling indigenous population, and then an industrial suburb. It has long had a substantial Koori (indigenous) population. Speaking as a Dharawal elder, the welcomer acknowledged the efforts of the Australian Museum and other authorities that allow these remains “a proper burial in their own lands” (2007:317). Lambert-Pennington sees such rites as having produced new avenues for Aboriginal representation and as making external organizations “wake up” to the possibilities of new kinds of relationships with indigenous people and organizations.

Reconciliation, acknowledgment, and welcome were very deliberately brought together in an event, “the crowning gesture of a ‘reconciliation’ process” (Moses 2011:146), which took place in 2008 in Canberra, the national capital, at which I was one of hundreds of attenders. This was another Keating-like gesture on the part of the Labor Prime Minister elected to office in 2007 after Howard, Kevin Rudd. On February 13, 2008, Prime Minister Rudd made a motion of apology to the Australian Parliament regarding the above-mentioned “Stolen Generations.” In the apology Rudd referred to “mistreatment”:

Today we honour the indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history. We reflect on their past mistreatment. We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation's history. [Rudd 2008]

This carefully selected term—*mistreatment*—was probably heard as appropriate in the context of discussion of the removal and management of children, a topic of heightened

public profile in the Anglo-American world in the last few decades.¹⁶

Public, including indigenous, reception of the Rudd Apology was largely positive (see Moses 2011), but predictably it met with criticism from the federal opposition. At the same time, Rudd proposed that Acknowledgment of indigenous relationship to the area of Canberra, the national capital, become established as required opening protocol of parliamentary sessions. Some two years later a first Welcome ceremony marked the opening of Parliament in 2010, shortly after Rudd had been succeeded as leader of the Labor Party (and as Prime Minister) by Julia Gillard (June of that year).¹⁷ Canberra indigenous elder Matilda House was invited to conduct the opening of this 43rd Parliament (666 Australian Broadcasting Corporation Canberra 2008). One of her grandchildren handed Prime Minister Julia Gillard a message stick. Gillard declared that “to begin our proceedings with a welcome to country is a powerful demonstration that Australia’s Indigenous heritage now lies at the heart of our public life” (PM 2010). Inviting parliamentarians to walk through the smoke of a small smoldering fire burning on Parliament’s decorative mosaic forecourt, Matilda House remarked encouragingly, and (one may guess) not without irony: “Please move forward and get a cleansing. It helps.” At this, however, an indigenous acquaintance commented to me critically that smoking is meant to drive away bad spirits; was it appropriate for Welcomes? (personal communication with author, September 29, 2010).

On this occasion, four different indigenous groups danced and sang for 40 minutes. That the ceremony occurred in the members’ hall, a semipublic space between the House and Senate chambers, rather than in parliamentary space has been suggested to be a significant dislocation of the event from the central place it should have had (see Macauley [2011], who also senses disparagement in comments, including those of Kevin Rudd, that the dances were “entertaining” rather than involving or moving).

ETHICS, AFFECT, ENTITLEMENT

Many Aboriginal groups have come to consider performing a Welcome to Country to be their prerogative. Depending on the location and what they do, they may charge upward of several hundred dollars for it.¹⁸ Many who are regularly called on to perform pride themselves on offering a Welcome they consider to be of good standard. Internal indigenous criticisms seem common, in my experience: allegations of inferior or inappropriate performance or absence of legitimacy to perform (see again note 3). Such considerations are sensitive and of intense interest within local indigenous communities, and event organizers are often aware of them. Relatedly, sometimes Acknowledgments, and especially Welcomes, are passed over by event organizers. A range of difficulties often affects staging of the rituals: contention among indigenous groups, for example, and the fact that sometimes performers show up late or not at all. At university conferences when the effort to find a welcomer

confronts such difficulties, it may be given up or may not be considered from the outset—although event organizers feel some moral pressure to do so.

Kristina Everett (2009) suggests that Welcomes are a safe alternative for mainstream Australia, offering relatively cost-free recognition of indigenous precedence. But she also notes that these events cannot be completely scripted or controlled. The Welcome framework can be a vehicle for indigenous expression that departs from the expected script. For example, she details how indigenous Welcome performers, at an event organized in western Sydney by the Australian National Trust to celebrate the location’s colonial significance, enacted—instead of the expected “Dreaming” story—a shooting of locals by the British. The dying performers refused to leave the stage, creating a spectacle that, interestingly, both indigenous and nonindigenous audiences evidently found discomfiting.

Emma Kowal (2010, n.d.) and Eve Vincent (2012) consider welcoming in relation to questions of belonging from the perspective of two subgroups of “white anti-racists.” Kowal (2006) has done research with nonindigenous people who work in indigenous health, in whose workplaces and conceptual frameworks whiteness carries a certain stigma of supremacy. Such “white antiracists” transform their sense of feeling unwelcome, she argues, embracing the position of dependence, of invitee, that a Welcome makes explicit. Vincent (2012) explores the relations of “Greenies” to indigenous people who share certain environmentalist (e.g., antimining) sentiment and offers them the possibility of participating in environmental rehabilitation on their lands in terms of a host–guest relation. The focus for both authors is on “antiracist” acts as opening spaces for change and inversion of standard indigenous–nonindigenous social relations. Kowal (n.d.) also notes rejection by those who see both kinds of rituals as challenges to what they assert as their incontrovertible belonging.¹⁹

Based on reactions from academic and other participants in audiences of which I have been part, it seems that while many feel these rituals may be a positive step in the indigenous–nonindigenous relationship, there is also widespread unease about them. This is not due to reluctance in these audiences to recognize indigenous people and belonging: willingness to do so is especially great in academic audiences. Nor does it seem to arise from disparagement of these rituals as “invented tradition.” While observers sometimes cite these rituals as continuous with “traditional” ones, there seems to be a more general sense that these forms have developed and been circulated and adopted over the last few years. Other ethical issues seem to underpin this unease.

One relates to the fact that these gestures continue the Australian state’s long-term prioritization of traditional relationship to land and to specific regions and locales (not simply to the continent as a whole) as fundamental to indigenous self-recognition, as well as to others’ recognition of indigenous entitlement. The unease sometimes surfaces publicly around the issue of entitlement to local

recognition where it is contentious and known to be so in academic and government circles, such as in Canberra. What are we to make of this often-notorious difficulty in establishing who is originary with the expected certainty and historicity? Event organizers may be put in the position of preferring no Acknowledgment to having to navigate such difficulties. And what of the fact that indigenous people prioritize questions of legitimacy and respond to each other with acrimony?

While many indigenous people can rightly celebrate their sense of traditional belonging in particular locales, others are unable to because of the considerable dislocations and disposessions that have characterized so much of colonial and recent history. While locatedness is taken to be positive, one must acknowledge the pressures that so centrally foreground it and ask whether this constitutes a mechanism of exclusion, allowing a continuing focus on what the public understands as an Aboriginal “high culture” of Dreaming and territoriality as opposed to cultural conduct of everyday life.

Second, Welcomes raise questions, not only about who is speaking, and entitled to, but also about whether those speaking may in any sense be seen as having been coerced to do so by public expectations and how indigenous and other participants see the elicitation of indigenous voice and presence. Both indigenous and nonindigenous spokespeople have raised the question of whether Acknowledgments and Welcomes are becoming compulsory and, thus, less genuine—though clearly indigenous people often approach them with commitment and pride. A handful of indigenous people, however, have expressed to me that they sometimes feel as if organizers simply want them to perform. And above I observed that indigenous revelation of identity, and claim to relationship to place, is made the basis for creating a form of “stranger sociability” between indigenous and nonindigenous.

Third, these events also raise questions of disparity between claims to belonging thus publicly enacted and celebrated and considerable limitations on social and economic participation of indigenous people in Australian society. In an article that touches on the subject of Welcomes to Country as part of a wider treatment of dance as performative dialogue, anthropologist Fiona Magowan (2000) mentions that she and other academic colleagues were deeply divided about organizing a Welcome in 1999 for the Musicological Society of Australia in Perth, Western Australia, on the grounds that it might be seen as token and hypocritical—a salve of conscience rather than a genuine contribution to change in attitudes and conduct.

These grounds for unease invite further reflection on the structure of Welcomes. They frame the indigenous person or community as host and the settler others as guests. A host is normally someone who has an entitlement or belonging within a domain to which the guest is admitted. The host is to be respected but is also morally bound to extend hospitality to the guest. The host–guest relationship is about mutual but

differentiated regard and reciprocity. In Welcomes, what is the host hosting? To what is the guest being admitted? And is the guest going to leave?

There is some awkwardness of fit between Welcome to Country events and norms of host–guest relations. Events introduced by Welcomes are often ones that arise from nonindigenous concerns and forms of organization: university conferences and events, municipal and school celebrations, and national and international sporting events (Everett 2009). Most of these have gone on for years without Welcomes. By the same token, the notional “guests” or audiences being welcomed at many Welcome events are fully at home in them; they are guests or outsiders only with respect to the Welcome moment. It is the indigenous welcomers, many times, who are actually in the practical position of special invitees, their timely appearance sometimes in doubt. Finally, the welcomed “guests” are not about to leave; in fact, they are usually about to make use of the event space for predetermined purposes.

While the status inversion of Welcomes may fulfill some “antiracist” desires (Kowal n.d.), that Welcomes also continue to be contested, and reparations politics rejected, is illustrated by Blacktown’s (western Sydney) Town Council in November 2012 having dropped recognition of Dharug nation traditional owners from the opening protocol of council meetings while it investigates conflicting claims from other Aboriginal groups. That this is a political statement and not simply temporary or tactical is suggested by the fact that the same newly elected Liberal council, following on two decades of Labor local government, has also brought back a portrait of the queen that had been in storage and prayer by an Anglican minister instead of the Labor-mandated “moment of reflection” (*Aussie News* 2012).

CONCLUSION

Acknowledgments and Welcomes to Country might be seen to conform to the postcolonial charge levelled at Western self-critique (Spivak 1988) and reparations rituals (Batty 2006): attempts to challenge or alter the dominance of Western people and practices thinly veil ways of reconfiguring and conserving that dominance. Put more benignly, some Australians are deeply invested in recognizing indigenous people and rights, and discourses of apology, reparations, and reconciliation have accordingly circulated widely over the past two and a half decades. So far have sensibilities become oriented to recognition of the other as part of what it means to preserve the self that one can scarcely imagine a recent history without public displays of indigenous recognition, however strongly contested by some.

Rituals channel participants into particular versions of social order (Handelman 2004). Acknowledgments and Welcomes continue to orient their publics to imagery of indigenous people as entitled insofar as they belong to places. This version of indigenous being grew in strength with the call for land rights in Australia from the late 1960s. Increasing

public, including governmental, expression of nonindigenous responsibility heightened public awareness of indigenous conditions in other ways. All of these things have led to greater acceptance over the last few decades of indigenous precedence on the continent and mainstream desire for indigenous presence in the public sphere. Australia's passage through a variety of policy periods and governmental practices has brought some sectors of mainstream, especially urban, Australia to a point of experiencing as oppressive the absence of the (cooperative?) indigenous interlocutor. Positive ways of experiencing indigenous presence have included art, music, imagery, and advertising. As sentiment changed, there emerged a question for at least some of the public of how the absence might be filled corporeally and in those public places where people are personally or institutionally most favorable to recognition.

The trend of change toward indigenous recognition in Australia has been significant, though not uniform. The extent to which Acknowledgments and Welcomes will accompany and stimulate broader change in the tenor of social relations remains to be seen. With Acknowledgments, indigenous presence is sometimes only named in its absence. With Welcomes, personal representation becomes an issue within the specially constructed frame. These events give public prominence to a recognizable indigenous agent, usually an "elder," who the wider public can assume is speaking with some rightful authority and who usually does have status within local indigenous networks. Do rituals of recognition encapsulate such people in a certain kind of indigenous, often "high indigenous Culture," iconography? Some incidents recounted above (e.g., of the indigenous performers miming dying who refused to leave the stage) show that these events can open up moments of frame breaking. However, they also support and provoke contention about belonging, precedence, and legitimacy among indigenous people, who to that extent comply with the majority society's value orientations to authenticity and historicity. Is recognition momentary, with things then continuing as before? Not entirely, for Acknowledgments and Welcomes continually present moments for consideration of inequality and incompleteness in indigenous–nonindigenous relations. Examples above also suggest that, to some extent, these forms of recognition and value become internalized by indigenous people in a perhaps increasingly conventionalized and convergent public conception of indigeneity.

Earlier I noted Barkan's (2006:93) assertion that growth and change in what used to be victim and perpetrator identities informs the new reparations space in national and international politics. Recent Acknowledgments and Welcomes are intended to engender recognition between categories constituted as "indigenous" and "nonindigenous." This inscribes difference but does so in terms of transformed categories more positively cast as hosts and guests. But while the host–guest relation encourages collective consciousness raising, it continues to be at odds—sometimes discomfitingly

so—with both the structure of events in which Acknowledgments and Welcomes are performed and broader structures of Australian society.

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NOTES

Acknowledgments. Thanks to AA's anonymous reviewers, and to Editor-in-Chief Michael Chibnik, for their criticisms and suggestions that helped to shape this article. I am indebted to Kelly Greenop and Emma Kowal for sharing unpublished material that is cited here; to members of the Australian National University anthropology seminar series and the Institut für Ethnologie und Ethnologische Sammlung, University of Göttingen, for comments on earlier drafts; to Cameo Dalley, David Dinwoodie, Nicolas Peterson, Joel Sherzer, and Tony Woodbury for suggestions concerning Australianist and Americanist sources; and to Alan Rumsey for critical and editorial reading.

1. I have observed these small rituals over the last 15 years from within the academic institution where I work as well as in numerous other government and professional venues, mainly in the national capital, Canberra, but also in the Northern Territory. I have also spoken with colleagues and others in the audiences about their reactions, observed (mainly) academics struggling with the question whether or not to stage these rituals at academic events, elicited e-mail responses from colleagues, spoken with some indigenous people involved directly or indirectly in these performances, researched the academic literature on reparations politics, and paid attention to national media reports and blogs.
2. The percentage of indigenous population for Australia as a whole is estimated at 2.5 percent but varies from .6 percent for Victoria to 31.6 percent for the Northern Territory. In terms of absolute numbers, New South Wales and Queensland have the largest indigenous estimated resident populations. An approximate third of overall indigenous population is resident in major cities (e.g., Sydney), while only 25 percent of people identified as indigenous live remotely or very remotely. The categories "indigenous" and "nonindigenous" are underpinned by a binaristic logic that overrides the complexities of (changing) processes of self-identification and the character of populations. See <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4705.0>.
3. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ngunnawal_people for an account of tensions among various groups. In 2013, an ACT government anthropological report was released concluding that the struggle among indigenous groups (Ngunnawal, Ngarigu, Ngambri) for the mantle of Canberra's "first people" is likely to remain uncertain. The report stated that evidence gathered from the mid-1700s onward was too scant to support any group's claims. See <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/canberras-first-people-still-a-matter-for-debate-20130408--2hhq4.html>.

4. See <http://www.tramountainas1842.org/content/KaurnaWiranguTraditOwnersStatement.pdf>.
5. See also <http://www.nswtf.org.au/pages/welcome-country-or-acknowledgement-country.html> for the protocol of the NSW Teachers' Federation.
6. Everett 2009 describes the use of a reconstructed Aboriginal language in a Welcome in western Sydney in 2001 organized by the Australian National Trust. Developed by people of Dharug affiliation, who claim Aboriginal ownership of a large part of what is now modern Sydney, this use of language was generally well received by the public, though the language forms, reconstructed from limited evidence, were intelligible neither to the performers nor, of course, to the audience. Though Dharug claims are contested both by the Australian state and other indigenous groups, Dharug have nevertheless been regularly invited to perform Welcomes at schools, local councils, and other events, including the 2000 Sydney Olympics and the 2006 Commonwealth Games torch relay.
7. The view sometimes expressed that these events, Welcomes in particular, are "ancient Aboriginal custom" without which it would be dangerous to travel into someone else's country (Macauley 2011) may implicitly presume that they need to be seen as traditional to be publicly valued. I take the view that in many significant ways, they are not—but recognize the defensive impulse to see them as such.
8. A Royal Commission on Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1987–91) was established to study and report on the high rates of death among Aboriginal people in police custody. (Though Aborigines are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, the outstanding indigenous–nonindigenous disparity was the higher rate of indigenous deaths in police custody, as compared to deaths in prison.) This inquiry marked heightened government concern with statistical evidence of national policy's failing to make differences in indigenous health, longevity, and living conditions. Lengthy interview of Aboriginal witnesses gave their voices some national projection.
9. The first Sea of Hands was installed on the October 12, 1997, in front of Parliament House, Canberra, with similar displays in every major Australian city and many regional centers. 120,000 plastic hands representing the signatures of participants were installed on the lawn of Parliament in Canberra to mobilize a "people's movement" for native title and reconciliation.
10. See, for example, Karetu 1993 on the New Zealand *haka*; see <http://www.korero.maori.nz/forlearners/protocols/powhiri.html> on the Maori *powhiri* welcome ceremony.
11. Events that have fostered wider Pacific relations include the Festival of Pacific Arts, which has taken place every four years since 1972. In 1988 it was held in Townsville, north Queensland, with the theme of "Cultural Interchange." The previous festival had been in French Polynesia, and the following one of 1992 was held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands.
12. Brady (1995) has described another context of international indigenous interaction: the rise of indigenous Australian–North American visiting and exchange in relation to "culturally appropriate" substance-abuse treatment programs. Some synthesis in "smoking" or "smudging" practices, perhaps also in greetings and prayer, may be locatable here. In general, however, Brady sees continentally distinctive healing practices (e.g., North American sweats, Australian healers' object extraction) as not readily transferred.
13. Earlier decades had seen disputes, including the one referred to at Noonkanbah, over the coincidence of numerous prospective mining areas with claims by indigenous groups to the sites' significance. This was frequently interpreted by miners as strategic or manipulated on the part of the Aboriginal and any environmentalist groups concerned and as not preexisting their own mineral finds.
14. Indigenous people sometimes speak of the wider Inala-based community as including past and present resident whites.
15. Similarly, Welcome protocols at the Argyle mine are products of self-conscious repositioning of rather different cultural materials that are still very available to senior Kimberley people. However, just a few decades ago, they would probably have been reluctant to reveal these to (very likely inhospitable) outside scrutiny.
16. In the United States, the first National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect was conducted in 1979.
17. Some hoped that other consequences would soon follow the apology—perhaps compensation and recognition of indigenous people in the Australian Constitution. While this has been much debated, it has not yet occurred. Kevin Rudd, suddenly returned to the prime ministership in June of 2013 as the result of an internal Labor Party leadership spill, has again begun to urge constitutional recognition of indigenous people. In an election following shortly thereafter, however, in September of 2013, Rudd was voted out of office.
18. In Alice Springs, the (now incorporated) body considering itself entitled to perform Welcomes has recently advertised in the local newspaper, asking for the public's cooperation in not resorting to others willing to perform.
19. As journalist Andrew Bolt (2010) has put it: Welcome to Country ceremonies are racist and anything but welcoming to non-Aborigines who were born right here. *The Herald-Sun*, in which this comment appeared, is Melbourne's (and the nation's) largest-selling tabloid.

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