TANYA RICHES

Tanya Riches is a Ph.D. student at Fuller Theological Seminary, currently investigating worship and social engagement practices of Aboriginal-led congregations in Australia from a missiological frame. Her previous M.Phil. study addressed the global expansion of Australia's Hillsong Church, and is entitled *Shout to the Lord! Music and Change at Hillsong: 1996–2007*. A well-known singer/songwriter in Australia, Tanya seeks creative ways of illuminating the lived experiences of those at the margins of the worship community. Her first solo album, *Grace*, was released in 2012. It was composed ecumenically with Christian songwriters in Sydney, and was inspired by listening to the experiences of people with disability. She regularly tours regional and transnational Pentecostal communities, including, most recently, Sicily and Malaysia.

In this article I outline a renegotiation of identity boundaries as observed within the musical performance of Initiative Church, an Indigenous-led urban Pentecostal church in the suburb of Mount Druitt, Sydney, Australia, which performs under the name "Mount Druitt Indigenous Choir." The group's engagement with its various "others" is evident from its appeal to traditional Indigenous eldership accountability, and its location within a Pentecostal Christian religious identity. Language use and integration of culturally charged identity-markers, however, provide a subversive method of communicating both resistance and reconciliation to dominant culture holders, as music becomes a common point of intersection between various "others": local Dharug nation elders; nearby dominant-culture Pentecostal congregations; Australian mega-churches, such as Hillsong, that disseminate music; and their North American Pentecostal counterparts, such as Bethel Church in Redding, California. Pentecostalism provides the context for Initiative Church to negotiate global and local influences, re-imagining their own group identity in music. In this article I suggest that performing an Aboriginal Christian identity also assists members in gaining solidarity with these various (opposed) groups that they connect to, and that communicating an integrated self to others empowers Aboriginals within the congregation.

Australia is popularly regarded as a secular nation.[1] Despite this, the 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data show that 73% of Indigenous Australians self-identify as Christians.[2] In contrast, only 1% of Indigenous Australians self-identify as practicing traditional religion (this figure increases to 6% in "very

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[1] Although some people, such as Australia's former Human Rights Commissioner, and many of the clergy, question this assumption, it is still accepted by the general public (Innes 2009).

[2] Compare to the wider population statistic of 61%. ABS footnotes indicate actual Indigenous responses were as high as 74%, with statistics adjusted due to concerns these Australians misinterpreted the survey.

remote" areas).[3] Questions regarding the collection of census data, nominal religious identity, and forced affiliation with Christianity may all be appropriate. However, this figure is minimized by many academics, and Christianity in Oceania (particularly Pentecostalism) underemphasized (Hutchinson and Wolffe 2012, 236; C. Schwartz and Dussart 2010). Yet Hutchinson and Wolffe show many indigenous groups in Oceania are in fact highly Christian.[4] Melanesians are credited with long involvement in evangelistic efforts in this region (Brock 2005). Malcolm Calley first documented Pentecostal tent revival meetings amongst the Bundjalung nation, in rural areas of the state of New South Wales, in 1955 (Calley 1955; Ono 2012). And the "Adjustment Movement," a significant revival of the 1970s, ignited Australian Indigenous evangelistic movements (Berndt 2004; McIntosh 1997; Charlesworth, Dussart, and Morphy 2005; Magowan 2007; Palmer 2007; Trudgen 2000; C. Schwartz 2010). The history of the Australian Indigenous-led church is communicated orally, but it is seldom mentioned in the literature. However, Pentecostal and charismatic worship practices are evident even amongst Catholic and Anglican Indigenous groups (Versluys 2002; Loos 2007). From the written and oral accounts, I estimate that perhaps as many as 60% of Indigenous Australian Christians may be Pentecostal or charismatic, here defined by a theological emphasis on lay participation, the practice of glossolalia (speaking in tongues), and rites of healing (Bouma 2006).[5] Initiative Church and its musical outreach as the Mount Druitt Indigenous Choir provide a glimpse of urban indigenous Pentecostal music-making within an Australian context.

Australia and mission history: an overview

Prior to colonization in 1788, Australia comprised over five hundred Aboriginal nations, each with unique language and spiritual practices (Rolls and Johnson 2011, 169). Although a great diversity of religion and culture has been noted, the shared Indigenous worldview is often called "The Dreaming," signifying a spirituality linked to particular geography, and maintenance of the land through ritual and ceremony (Rose 1992, 89). This name represents the time that the Creator Beings slept, while the world was formless. Following their creative action, these various ancestors returned to their sleeping state, held within the Australian landscape (Graham 2008). To locate a person's "Dreaming" is to locate the "country" or land to

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[3] The ABS classification "very remote" is one of six indicators. It measures remoteness in terms of accessibility along road networks to urban service centers with a population above five thousand. This term "very remote" covers many regional areas, including Australia's desert regions, the Kimberley, tropical Arnhem Land, Cape York, and the Torres Strait. While traditional ways of life are observed by some Indigenous communities, the statistics show very low self-reporting of traditional spirituality, even in these areas. In urban centers, however, fewer than 1% of Indigenous respondents reported that they observe traditional religion.

[4] The authors state that Christianity is the "dominant" religion in both Tonga and Fiji. In fact, ethnic Fijians affiliate with Christianity—and in opposition to immigrant Hindu and Buddhist populations—and for Tonga, Methodism is "intrinsic" to the kingdom's identity. They also note that Maori and Solomon Islander evangelists traveled the islands preaching the Christian gospel. This is presented as the "indigenization" of Christianity in Oceania, in response to some scholars who view Christianity as a British or American import, regarding indigenous Christianity as a remnant of colonialism.

[5] Within Australia, Pentecostals can also be considered evangelical; this is predominant amongst most Indigenous Pentecostals I have observed, with a few notable exceptions.

which his or her responsibility lies, and therefore his or her creative, spiritual, and social identity. Before colonization, overland trade and travel were conducted to sung accompaniment, through short stanzas called the Dreaming tracks, strings, or songlines. Songs assisted movement through the landscape, recalling the stories of the ancestors (Kerwin 2006, xiv; Rose 1992). The tracks were punctuated by waterholes, each about a day's walk from the next; this information was woven into the songs (Chatwin 1987, 154; Keen 1988, 227). Individuals were initiated into a localized repertoire as children (Breen 1989, 9), but their song knowledge grew throughout their lifetime, as groups traveled and shared songs (Keen 1988). Singing was accompanied by the rhythm of clapping sticks, boomerangs, and hands (Maddern 1988, 595; Dunbar-Hall and Gibson 2004, 73; Treloyn 2003). Over time, however, the didgeridoo spread southward and became the most iconic pan-Aboriginal instrument (Moyle 1981).[6] Local verses in the collective memory connected into a functional musical mapping of the landscape, stretching across the continent and forming the basis of an Aboriginal economy (Kerwin 2006; Dunbar-Hall and Gibson 2004, 21). Trade with Dutch merchants occurred in the north from the 1500s, but colonization became systematic after English settlers reached Australia's east coast in 1788. This also marks the date of the British declaration that Australia's original inhabitants were "flora and fauna" in the doctrine of *terra nullius*, or "empty land" (Banner 2005), and the wide-scale transition to Western farming methods, legal systems, and economy.

Historian Peggy Brock, in *Outback Ghettos: Aborigines, Institutionalisation, and Survival*, challenges any homogenization of Aboriginal experience during the mission era. She asserts that Christianity predated, worked in collusion with, and postdated colonization in Oceania (Brock 1993, 2). However, dehumanizing secular theories considered Indigenous peoples as racially inferior, and Dunbar-Hall and Gibson believe this influenced many missionaries and perpetuated a range of contradictory images within evangelicalism (2004, 40). International texts continue to reference Aboriginal peoples as definitively primitive—particularly in regard to technological advancement (Pinker 2002) and religion (Durkheim 2001). But in Australia there is continuing and profound disagreement, with the national narrative polarized following the 1980s bicentennial celebrations with the "history wars" (Brantlinger 2004). The so-called "whitewashers," led by Keith Windschuttle, continue to depict Aboriginal disadvantage as a refusal to rise to modernity (Grieves 2008, 287), questioning oral histories and most particularly the accounts of genocide, while politically left-wing scholars, known as "black armband,"[7] characterize Aboriginal people as victims of a brutal colonial dispossession.

Ian McIntosh (1997) suggests that a division in narratives first arose from contradictory missionary and anthropological reports. Missionaries elicited compassion from congregations in Australia and England, asking for pecuniary funds and government assistance for the charges in their care (Bouma 2006). At the same time, E. P. Elkin, the first anthropology chair in Australia, promoted Darwinian theories, proposing that Aboriginal peoples would eventually die out, and therefore these cultures must be urgently recorded (Brock 1993; Kenny 2007). In contrast, Indigenous scholars communicate lack of representation from both sides of the historical

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[6] The didgeridoo (or didjeridu) is a traditional Aboriginal wind instrument consisting of a hollowed-out piece of wood, played using circular breathing.

[7] See http://www.blackarmband.com.au

debate, with Vicki Grieves denouncing "hegemonic" sites of Western knowledge production (2008, 288). Instead, Brock notes that Indigenous peoples use "survival" images of "heroically resisting the white invaders [while] . . . battling to survive in their own land" (1993, 2). Australian missiologists, such as Ross Langmead, have encouraged critical Christian reflection upon mission theory and practice, and decried historical action in collusion with White Australia policy and the Europeanization of Aboriginal culture, language, and music— while recognizing that this was not true of all missionaries (Langmead 2002; 2004; 2007; Loos 2007, 41; Breen 1989, 4). However, the church's role in "The Stolen Generation," through forcible government removal of "half-caste" children to the missions, was the subject of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's national apology, acknowledging the ongoing effect of assimilation and cultural loss for Indigenous peoples (Rudd 2008). This national statement of reconciliation was largely accepted by the Indigenous community.

What is often underreported within the literature is the continuing story of Aboriginal Christianity following mission handovers. Church leaders were motivated by the self-determination policies of the 1970s to empower Indigenous leadership. These Christians played a large role in the evangelization of Australia and the growth of Christianity in their communities. The Elcho Island charismatic revival, or Berndt's "Adjustment Movement," can be understood as an Indigenous-led reconciliation movement, seeking to integrate missionary teaching with an anthropological push for reclamation of culture; at this formerly Methodist mission in the Northern Territory, Indigenous leaders erected Christian crosses upon the *madayin*, or secret sacred sites, and a revival ensued (McIntosh 1997, 281). Fiona Magowan (2003, 296) notes that Terry Gondarra wove traditional rites, sacred objects, and the Ten Commandments into an influential Aboriginal theology And David Burramurra reportedly declared, "Walitha 'walitha was one and the same as the Christian God" (McIntosh 1997, 278). Magowan charts the Yolngu nation's musical development, as new "translocal" charismatic choruses promoting "brotherhood," "love," and "friendship" replaced the Wesleyan hymnbooks (Magowan 2007, 469). Following this revival, Indigenous evangelists and musicians carried these indigenized Pentecostal, charismatic choruses and "sing-along" practices throughout Australia (Brock 2005, 143).

Soft Sands, an Indigenous Christian rock band from the Northern Territory, was highly influential in Arnhem Land popular song (Dunbar-Hall and Gibson 2004, 195; Corn 2005, 64). An evangelistic touring band, their rock instrumentation and song structure, drawn from Christian contemporary music, was widely emulated across the Top End. Dunbar-Hall and Gibson's book *Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places* emphasizes the significance of Aboriginal participation within contemporary music forms. They state, "Aboriginal people have consumed and performed folk music, gospel and choral music for at least a century, and country music for over fifty years. At what point these musical heritages take on meaning as 'traditional' is unclear" (2004, 17). And yet in their book they only feature a very small selection of Indigenous Christian and gospel recording artists,[8] and they omit all congregational worship music entirely. Chapters on the influence of evangelicalism upon Aboriginal

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[8] The authors highlight Lexine Solomon, Soft Sands, and Adrian Ross; however, for Ross the only works listed are secular, and his extensive work with Hillsong and other Christian contemporary bands in the 1980s and 90s is unmentioned. The authors review the 1994 recording *Manmoyi-Garmadi Black Gospel*. These relatively few pages of the book are not an accurate representation of the number of Christian musicians and recording artists.

music are written in past tense and left as historical emblems of the mission era rather than considered representative of a Christian faith continued into the present day.[9] The personal faith of Aboriginal musicians and its influence upon their music is left out. Scholars often ignore Indigenous musicians within Christian genres, perhaps because of their own discomfort with the effects of colonization upon the well-being of Indigenous peoples. However, these authors illustrate the popularity of contemporary music, and argue that musicology must engage the living musics of Australian Indigenous peoples.

The rise of Indigenous leaders was not limited to the Methodists. Arthur Malcolm was appointed Australia's first Indigenous Anglican bishop in 1985. Yet despite this event Indigenous Anglican clergy still cite cultural tension within denominational hierarchical structures and continue to petition for greater Indigenous oversight ("Call to Fund Full-Time Aboriginal Bishop" 2012). In contrast, Pentecostal denominations often give Indigenous pastors flexibility, theologically and liturgically. The oldest of these denominations, the Australian Christian Churches (ACC), is a movement of loosely affiliated, autonomous, local congregations. Internationally these congregations are best known for creative worship expression disseminated by music publishing houses attached to churches, such as Hillsong and Planetshakers. The ACC Indigenous network has previously resisted Indigenous leadership, but an official denominational department was established in 2013, overseen from Queensland by Bundjalung pastors Will and Sandra Dumas. The annual Ganggalah conference integrates traditional instrumentation and charismatic practice into Pentecostal worship songs, thus opening the worship space to Indigenous cultural identity. The church often features younger, urban, Indigenous Pentecostal musicians. This Indigenous Pentecostal movement—which includes Initiative Church in Mount Druitt—constructs its identity in relationship to both Aboriginal and Christian communities, a dialogue visible in its musical performance.

Identity and culture

Identity as a psychological and sociological notion can be traced to Erik Erikson's theories in the 1950s. In the 1980s this literature burgeoned, with the identity status approach, and continued to grow with cognitive and process-oriented approaches (S. J. Schwartz, Luyckx, and Vignoles 2011, 2). Symbolic interactionists examine social roles played by individuals, in order to explain interpersonal scripts and predict recurring social behavior, including prejudice (Burke and Stets 2009, 4). Despite all the differing views, Schwartz, Luyckx, and Vignoles mark four aspects as pertinent to all identity discussions: the individual (the self and its definition, including spirituality, goals, values, beliefs); material (the body, clothing, artifacts, and habits of consumption); collective (identification with groups and social categories); and relational (the roles one plays interacting with others) (S. J. Schwartz, Luyckx, and Vignoles 2011, 4). These aspects overlap and intersect, negotiated through narrative in communal meaning-making.

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[9] While significant songs such as "Royal Telephone," performed by Jimmy Little, are highlighted, they are depicted as a product of the 1950s and 60s, and not as a communication of personal faith of Indigenous artists. Interestingly, the lyrics of the song describe an omnipresent Spirit with whom a person can communicate experientially: a classic Pentecostal concept, with the subversive idea of all people gaining access to God.

Colonization forced Indigenous people to subordinate collective and relational aspects of identity to a more homogenized Western emphasis upon the individual and material. Randall Collins suggests this earlier European shift to interiority occurred within the Protestant reformation (2004, 366), but it became global during the mission era's quest for individual souls. Within Australia, assimilation was facilitated by the state's suppression of languages and traditional performance, but is continued today within Australia's Western popular aesthetic (Dunbar-Hall and Gibson 2004, 22). Rather than appearing on mainstream radio, Indigenous music has become an icon of tourism, funded by the state (Dunbar-Hall and Gibson 2004, 153). For globalizing Indigenous peoples, meaning-making can be fraught with difficulty as they grapple with change, trauma, and culture loss. Moshman defines personal identity from within a context of violence and genocide as "[holding] an explicit theory of yourself as a person—that is, as a singular and continuous rational agent, extending from the past through the future, and acting on the basis of beliefs and values that you see as defining who you are" (2011, 918). In addition to this, social identity charts our relational links with others, forming a broader picture of the way an individual acts and is acted upon in building self-understanding. Within Australia, Indigenous identity is largely framed in government definition as both—through self-identification, but also relationally, through acceptance by the Indigenous community (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 1996).

For many urban Aboriginal people, the dialectic between personal and relational is most visible at the intersection of religion and culture. For Indigenous Australians self-identifying as Christian, religious practice can be a way of negotiating (and renegotiating) social change, as spirituality nurtures connections with the land (as sacred), community, and self, assisting the formation of a coherent story (S. J. Schwartz, Luyckx, and Vignoles 2011). Eugene Roehlkepartain, Peter L. Benson, and Peter C. Scales speak about this role for spiritual identity:

> Individuals . . . participate in, lean [into], respond to, and integrate multiple cultures . . . Culture informs inherited texts, narratives, stories, language, symbols, rituals and norms that shape identity. . . . Taking multiple cultures seriously has great potential to strengthen the theory and research on spiritual development by challenging both the assumption that worldview and practice are essentially the same (and presumed to be like one's own experience) and, on the other hand, avoiding approaching the worldviews as either "exotic curiosities" or antidotes to the "spiritual emptiness." (2011, 557)

Deborah Bird Rose and Fiona Magowan explore the social importance of ritual and musical expression in rural areas. Rose outlines how important shape and movement are for actors as they mimic the landscape (1992, 46), whereas youth in urban spaces experience dislocation and have been known to say, "I don't know my reason: I can't find my Dream country" (106). Magowan explores the use of the arts (songwriting, singing, and dancing) in the Northern Territory as "poetics," noting ways in which traditional performance both informs and raises awareness, but also obscures local knowledge from settler Australians. Her work suggests that Aboriginal performers are cognizant of the dual messages transmitted in transcultural performance spaces.

Pentecostalism is known to appeal to marginalized constituents. Although deprivation theories have considered its worship practice compensatory, other scholarship challenges this idea. In 1997, for example,

Nicole Rodriguez Toulis noted a renegotiation of black identity amongst Pentecostal Caribbean migrant women in Birmingham, England, with worship facilitating their relative economic success. This success was indicated by a 12% increase in income compared to white female peers (Toulis 1997, 44). She frames religious and ethnic identity as "overlapping constellations"—different for each individual but constantly negotiated with other church members and in relation to external groups and their perceptions (1997, 204). This type of imaginary community building, in the vein of Benedict Anderson (1991), is termed the "imaginaire" by Pentecostalism scholars Ruth Marshall and André Corten (2001, 1). This collective "imaginaire" becomes a social force that uses existing forms, images, and ideas to express the self in new ways (Droogers 2001, 43). Birgit Meyer notes that the Pentecostal imagination powerfully sustains belonging, organizing thought and feeling in ways that expand into the public space in Nigeria (2010, 119). A similar self-negotiation is noted by Christine Kray amongst indigenous Mayans in Yucatán, Mexico, where Pentecostal worship is one option within the religious field of production. Whereas Catholic mass emphasizes tradition and community, Pentecostal worship provides space for "refashioning" the self as an autonomous individual in locally constructed ways. She notes both practices as significant to social transformation within the Yucatan economy, saying,

> [recognition of] fluidity, fragmentation and contingency of self is directly related to [recognition of] fluidity, fragmentation and contingency of "culture." However what is typically missing from [identity] discussions is the practice of self-creation, how a person might actively undertake practices and seek out experiences that reconfigure the self, that downplay certain aspects and highlight others, and thereby achieve, if only momentarily, a measure of integration. (Kray 2001, 396)

Kirk Dombrowski notes increasing political global "indigenism"—self-identification with indigenous ethnicity— that opposes, and is co-opted by, states. He describes how for landless Pentecostal Alaskans revival meetings facilitated a redefinition through ritual burning of Native corporation logo merchandising (2002, 1069). Despite the public outrage that followed, this event allowed some of the community's most marginal members to renegotiate their identity as opposition to the degeneration of the land, charging this position-taking with spiritual importance. The evidence suggests both individuals and congregations negotiate their identity through Pentecostal practices. The role of globally distributed congregational music in facilitating this imagined community building is outlined by Gesa Hartje-Döll (2013, 143), and Christy Smith points out how this changes over time for local communities (2007, 277). Akrofi, Smit, and Thorsén's edited volume, *Music and Identity: Transformations and Negotiations* (2007), highlights the use of the church in many African nations as a recovery site for indigenous culture with newly contextualized scripture and the rediscovery of old musics. This also occurs in Australia, through the resurgence of Indigenous instruments, language, and aesthetics. But Joel Robbins, in his research on Pentecostalism, also defends the right of indigenous peoples to "rupture" with their cultural past as the world continues to globalize (2010; 2004). Loos notes that Australian Indigenous peoples continually negotiate through both continuity and rupture (2007, 12–13). I will now illustrate this negotiation with the use of Pentecostal global choruses and original songs sung by Mount Druitt Indigenous Choir, the musical outreach of Initiative Church.

Negotiating lived spiritualities: the Mount Druitt Indigenous Choir

Mount Druitt is an economically disadvantaged suburb bounded by freeways, thirty-five kilometers away from Sydney's center. Local residents describe gangs and substance abuse (Blacktown City Council 2007, 33). However, it is also "the largest urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in NSW with over 7,000 people [and just under] 3% of the area's population" (http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au). Those living in the area are predominantly young, single-parent family units (Blacktown City Council 2007, 6). David and Angela Armstrong founded the Mount Druitt Indigenous Choir in December 2010. They have since performed over forty times, at Indigenous events such as Sorry Day and NAIDOC week, and also in dominant-culture spaces, such as for local Pentecostal congregations, private state functions, and even for Australia's Governor-General.[10]

I was first introduced to David by email while completing the residential component of my Ph.D. in Los Angeles. He was a newly appointed faculty member of the Pentecostal college where I had previously lectured: Alphacrucis, in Sydney, Australia. I had a number of email and Skype conversations with the Armstrongs in 2011, who shared their working documents regarding the choir, as well as various conference and teaching presentations that articulated a nascent urban Aboriginal Pentecostal theology suitable for the Western suburbs of Sydney. During my month-long summer break in Sydney in 2012, I attended weekly rehearsals, church services, and two key performances. I participated by teaching some simple breathing and vocal warm-up exercises to the children. The first performance I attended was a concert in the Mount Druitt town square (where the choir sang versions of their songs that omitted reference to "Jesus" as well as other explicitly religious sections) and the second was a performance conducted at a worship service in a local Pentecostal church called C3 Prospect (in which the choir performed their more explicitly Christian songs, and included references to God). Their decision to highlight the different aspects of their cultural and religious identity as a group is motivated by the desire to build links that locate them firmly as members of both groups.

Regular choir members vary in age from three to sixteen years, although any church congregant is free to perform, and older members occasionally join for performances. The vision of the choir is "To empower people for one good day through dreaming, healing, leading."[11] This encapsulates their intention that the children have fun, experience music, and explore Christianity safely in ways contextually appropriate to the Mount Druitt land. The leaders of the choir experiment in connecting music to faith, the Dharug nation, the Mount Druitt community, and the environment. Angela Armstrong explained that it was "calming" for the children to rehearse outdoors, even in winter. Various cultural standards are observed: for example, during my time with the choir it was stated repeatedly that girls should not touch the didgeridoo, but clapsticks were handed out freely to all. Angela was honest about her personal and leadership struggles to accommodate

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[10] The Governor-General is appointed by the Queen as her representative, and is respected as the highest formal authority in the Australian state.

[11] This was communicated through personal communication with the Board in a strategic planning meeting I attended on May 2, 2014.

conflict that regularly occurs between choir families. This ultimately led to two weekly rehearsals, which also allow kinship "avoidance" norms to be observed. Most importantly, Angela explained, local Dharug elders had encouraged the choir to sing in the language of the Mount Druitt land, although it was no longer in active use. They had expressed grief over the loss of language, which motivated the Armstrongs to incorporate it into their musical activity in the Mount Druitt area. Vocabulary is drawn from the online archives of local universities, as well as from conversations with Dharug elders, in order to compose and translate the original compositions which the children perform. The community gathers around this intergenerational revitalization activity. New song lyrics become a point of conversation between the community, choir leaders, and Dharug elders. Eventually the songs are taught to the children, who add actions and rearrange each song's musical form. Due to extensive performance opportunities available to the choir, there is a growing awareness of the Dharug national group within the Sydney area. Whether this will lead to further cultural revitalization projects is yet to be determined.

Angela considers it empowering for the children to select the songs and order the repertoire, which they do for each of the rehearsals. I turned up to a Thursday rehearsal and found them on the front lawn of a choir member's house, sitting on a rug around a piano. The first song the children selected to sing in my presence was in the Dharug language:

> Gi Walawa Nalawala
> Gi Walawa Nalawala
> Gi Walawa Nalawala in Jesus
>
> Warami Wellamabamiyui
> Warami Wellamabamiyui

This lyric was translated as, "Please stop here and rest in Jesus, It's good to see you wherever you have come from." This was the children's way of observing the Indigenous ritual of welcoming visitors onto land, called "welcome to country." Many Australian government departments and schools conduct this ceremony to recognize Indigenous landowners at the beginning of meetings. Contained within this song is also a statement on Indigenous survival,[12] as the chorus states:

> Dreaming of our past,
> Dreaming of our present,
> Dreaming of our future

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[12] The word "survival" is used within Aboriginal Kriol language to indicate continuous Indigenous culture and Dreaming spirituality beyond the Europeanization of Australia. This word is used in local nations but also in national discourse, and marks alternative pan-Aboriginal national celebrations on Australia Day (called Survival Day). Many organizations also promote indigenous survival internationally, and thus it is also an international discourse (see http://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/aboriginals).

While the simple form and repetitive lyric of the song is reminiscent of any Australian Pentecostal or charismatic chorus, the "Dreaming" content sung in this context represents the tradition of the Indigenous peoples of Australia carried into the future. It also locates Christian activity as continuous with the Holy Spirit's activity in the land, and with Dharug notions of being.

The choir's songs are usually simple: four-line rhyming sections that flow into each other, allowing for spontaneous reconfiguration, and thus they can be put together to appeal to different audiences. The songs navigate the real and imagined relationships the choir has with local Indigenous elders, local and national Pentecostal congregations, and even international Pentecostal performance artists, such as Bethel Live and Darrell Evans. In adapting their performance repertoire they can achieve the aims of evangelism, reconciliation, and cultural awareness. This became clear to me while watching a YouTube video of this song performed at a local Mount Druitt Australia Day event. This national commemoration is contentious, since it marks the date of British landing in 1788,[13] and this particular event was attended by a presumably largely non-Christian Aboriginal audience comprised of elders and Mount Druitt residents. In the video version the choir omitted the chorus they had sung in my presence, instead choosing to include a section of the global congregational song of North American origin— "I'm Trading My Sorrows," written by Darrell Evans:

> *Yes Lord, Yes Lord, Yes, Yes Lord*
> *Yes Lord, Yes Lord, Yes, Yes Lord*
> *Yes Lord, Yes Lord, Yes, Yes Lord*
> *Amen*

It is possible this song's reconfiguration was coincidental, but my perception is that the song's purpose was changed into a confrontational statement on Indigenous Christianity and the arrival of the Bible to Australia's shores.

The song "Deep Cries Out," recorded by Bethel Church in Redding, California, was also a favorite that the children often chose to sing while I was with them. They danced, laughed, and sang the lyrics at the tops of their voices. This international song was imbued with local meanings due to the dance actions the children created:

> *I've got a river of living water*
> *A fountain that never will run dry*
> *An open heaven, You're releasing*
> *And we will never be denied*
>
> *'Cause we're stirring up deep, deep wells*
> *We're stirring up deep, deep waters*
> *We're going to dance in the river, dance in the river*

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[13] Along with "Australia Day" and "Survival Day," the event is also known to the Indigenous community as "Invasion Day."

In this first verse section, the children made circular motions with their arms at the word "stirring." This action, combined with the phrase "deep, deep waters," and the Indigenous identity of the singers, evokes the stirring of an ancient Australian waterhole, also called a billabong. The waterhole is an iconic feature of the dry Australian land, celebrated within Aboriginal culture and linked to the songlines (Breen 1989). The term "billabong" was adopted into settler culture through Australia's unofficial anthem, "Waltzing Matilda," with lyrics written by Banjo Patterson in 1898, and became the reputed home of the folkloric animal named the "bunyip." In Indigenous culture, to stir or disturb the water is to risk awakening the spirits, sometimes considered "malevolent" (Reichardt 2009, 101). Thus, to intentionally stir the water hole is an act of holy defiance. The lyrics continue,

> Deep cries out to deep cries out to You
> Deep cries out to deep cries out to You
> So we cry out to, we cry out to, You Jesus

This refrain, or chorus section, of the lyric identifies this defiance as an act of faith in Jesus's power, and emphasizes the Spirit's involvement in Australian land. The following section connects movement to the Spirit, and the children follow these lyrics by walking to the left, to the right, and then jumping up and down in great delight as if playing in puddles of water:

> If He goes to the left then we'll go to the left
> And if He goes to the right then we'll go to the right
> We're going to jump, jump, jump, in the river;
> Jump, jump, jump everybody

Often this section of the song is repeated, but with the word "dance" or "shout" replacing "jump," and with new actions. David Armstrong made the connection between the physical and spiritual realm explicit: "I take a group of aboriginal kids to a park. Immediately they will start talking about the spirits or ghosts in that area. We are more spiritually aware and receptive to the spirit world. The spirit world is more real to them than the physical or material world" (Armstrong 2011).

This belies a nationalist rhetoric of Indigenous Christianity as excelling in both worlds, framed in opposition to Western rationalism and skepticism of the spiritual realm. During rehearsals and church services, the children yelled to finish each public prayer "In Jesus's name! In Jesus's name! In Jesus's name!" This ritual was linked to the power of the name of Jesus to dispel evil spirits, as reported by the disciples in the biblical passage of Luke 10:17.

Conclusion

Within the musical ministry of Initiative Church, reconciliation becomes more than just an ideology. It forms the strategy behind the church's work to build an Aboriginal Christian identity upon Dharug land. Their ideal is worked out in the composition of original musical songs and borrowing of international ones, brought into

their song (cycles), and imbued with new, local meanings expressed in performance. Leaders actively engage local Dharug elders on behalf of the church—for repentance and reconciliation, and in recognition of cultural loss facilitated by the church. They structure their music to include iconic cultural markers, including Dharug language, clapsticks, and the didgeridoo, but performing them within what are often considered dominant-culture global Christian musical forms in Pentecostalism, and in dominant-culture spaces. In this way, the children have become local icons of a successful identity negotiation that synthesizes cultural, ethnic, religious, relational, and individual markers in the urban environment. Indigenous Christians are taking the initiative to forge national and global relationships that require no mediation from their non-Indigenous Australian Pentecostal counterparts. Thus, any negotiation occurs on their own terms. In the living music of Australia's Indigenous peoples we can see Christianity's potential for reconciliation in all its spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions. Pastor David Armstrong claims the Dharug language can be resurrected, "just like Jesus." And the leadership of the choir, seeing audacious Pentecostal claims from 2 Chronicles 7:14, suggest that through the children's songs of prayer and repentance the Dharug people, their land, and even the wider Australian nation can be healed.[14] It remains to be seen whether such performance will effect real, lasting change in the lives of Indigenous children in Mount Druitt, Australia.

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[14] This passage, 2 Chronicles 7:14, is often used in Australian Pentecostalism to explain a cause and effect relationship between Pentecostal prayers, song, and the land: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (New International Version). By claiming this verse, Pentecostals believe God will effect widespread reconciliation not only on for them, but also the "other," as they worship.

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