

Barbara Bynder interviewed by Vanessa Smart, on Tuesday 19 May 2020 at Barbara's home in York, Western Australia.

Barbara Bynder :

I've done quite a few leadership programs that are based on a European idea of leadership. And many times I've just gone, now we don't think like that. Leadership in our culture is very much elders first. And I work with the elders on a daily basis. And I can tell you now, I learned so much more from elders about leadership than I have from any other kind of leadership program. And I think, I think non Aboriginal people sometimes, not all non Aboriginal people, but a lot of non Aboriginal people don't understand the method and the methodology of storytelling and narrative.

Barbara Bynder:

But if you listen hard enough, you'll actually get the big message and you just gotta listen and not ask questions.

Vanessa Smart :

How'd feel about it when you first arrived on Rottnest.

Barbara Bynder:

Um I'm fine. I was fine. But we went and looked at the burial ground and I actually felt sick and I was walking around with Walter and I was kind of a bit of a straggler, cause I'm very spiritual and I'm very tuned in to, to the land and to, you know, my ancestors. And so is Walter, and the closer we got to the Burial Ground.

I was like one of those, you know, those sheep that hang around at the back.

I was kinda like, you know, and know my legs were, let's just go and slower and slower and slower. And we were walking, we started walking around on the foot path, you know, that they'd built there. And then Walter stopped walking and then he waited for me. He goes, you're all right, sis? And I went, now I feel really sick, like I'm going to throw up. Like I literally felt like I was going to throw up. And he goes, yeah. He said, I kind of thought you are not feeling too good. I said, Oh, it was fine until I hit this spot. I said, I gotta go. And I said, so you catch up to that mob and I'll just go over there. And I went back to the the meeting room because I just felt really ill and I couldn't, I couldn't even walk around that, that space.

Barbara Bynder :

So I said to them, I said, the last day that we were there, I it was actually the night before we left and I said to the girls, let's just go for a little wonder. I'll show you where the burial ground is. You know, cause I told them about the history of the Island and well, and when, I say history, I told them about the European history of the Island and how they'd created this penal settlement, you know, out of our spiritual place, out of, out of our, our Kooranup.

Yeah. And so I said, okay, so let's go, and I told the girls all about it and I said, let's go and I'll show you where it is. I didn't want to. And I explained to them, I didn't want to bring you there earlier because I know this, you know, let's just have a look. So I took 'em there and my oldest daughter, she did what I did. She felt sick. But as we were walking out, she goes, I can hear them mum and they're all wailing. And I said, yep, needs, needs healing. It needs ceremony. It needs, we need to do the right sendoff. And, and I know that that conversation has been going on forever. When I say forever, 30 years or so. And I'm just kinda going why, you know, if this was a Wadjula burial ground, there would be crosses and it'd be fenced off and there'd be a little building and tell me everything about it.

There'd be a church, probably or something, you know, it would be like Karrakatta, and people don't want to do anything about it. Why? Well, what's the difference? People are buried here. So it doesn't matter whether they're our people or their people or who's people. People are buried here.

It's a cemetery, you know, respect it and put it up the way that it would be in any other part of the world, you know, in any other society. So I've had conversations like that and you can talk about advocating. I did, I did raise that whole process to the chair of the board and just said, look, if this was, and he finished my sentence, cause I said to him, if this was a Wadjula Burial Ground and a cemetery, he goes, we would have done something about it.

Exactly. So, you know, while we're having this discussion all the time, that's a bit, I don't understand. I just, I'm really struggling with that. You know, you, it's, you people admit that that's, that's what would happen, but they don't, they still won't do anything about it. Why? how hard is it to, you know, turn it into a reflective space? Just do it. I don't know what they're going to do to it, but they need to do something anyway, so that's kind of where we're at on that. The Island itself is not a bad place. It's actually really seriously beautiful.

Vanessa Smart:

What does Wadjemup need spiritually?

Barbara Bynder:

Spiritually. It needs cleansing. I won't, I won't get a hut near the, near the near the Quod or near the burial ground.

Barbara Bynder:

It's our responsibility to do ceremony and ritual and practice our culture there so that we can send our ancestors off, you know, you know, in a good way. But it's European responsibility to undo the damage. So how are we going to do that? And that's something we don't talk about, you know, because we always talk about like, it's, it's Noongar Aboriginal people's responsibility to, to fix this problem and I'm just going now you made the problem, you fix it or we need to do is practice our culture on it. And that's to do ceremony, you know?

And I think it needs healing like in a big way, which is obviously going to happen. But at the moment apart from the healing, I think once that's done, I think we need to continue it so that it's an ongoing thing and not a one off. Because I think that's part of the process of, of practicing culture is that, you know, it doesn't just become a one off thing. And I think that conversation we need to have as well. Because right now the conversation we're having is just purely about, Oh, let's do a healing ceremony and then we'll build this and build that and build whatever structure. And you know, personally I wanted to actually burn the Quod and they all thought I was being funny. I said, no, I'm serious. Just burn it. Why, why do you want to keep a building that was where murder took place.

And that's exactly what happened. People were murdered there and apparently that, so, okay, we'll keep the building where a murderer was actually allowed to kill people. And I'm just going, this is so wrong. You know, burn the building. It's, it should not be from my perspective, I don't think it should be a place that we Revere. You know, I don't want to live in it. I don't want to see it as a museum. I just want it gone. And you put a little plaque up and says, Hey, you know, some dude did this here. It was really bad. Because we don't need to keep something that has such bad memories. And, you know, it's like naming the street after him as well. There's a street in the village there, you know, get rid of it. You want it, you want to fix stuff, start putting Noongar names on those streets. You know, get rid of that building and burn it to the ground. Cause it's, that's what you should do with it. However, that's just me personally. And yeah, I think I said that in a meeting and they all went, well we can't do that because it's heritage listed. And I went, Oh well great. I'd still burn it.

Yeah. So it was, and they were all going, we can't burn it Barb. I go, yes you can.

So yeah. I just, I just, to me, that whole Quod thing is a waste of money. You know, it's, it's the fact that people were sleeping in there, but they turned it into bedrooms. How can you sleep in there? How can you, I don't think I would have slept knowing what I know about that place. But then that

goes to show you how much of the history wasn't told. So maybe we need to, you know, I still reckon, you know, personally I'd still like to campaign for burning it, but you know, I, I'd be quite happy to put a sign up here going. Do you want to sleep in here then? Burn it?

I just want to put "Burn It" after every sentence that says Quod. Burn It.

Vanessa Smart:

But when it was finalised so that it was no longer accommodation, how did that make you feel?

Barbara Bynder :

Oh, I was really happy, but I was hoping to burn it. They still wouldn't let me do it after that. It's like, yeah, let's burn it. No, no, no. Seriously. I was really happy and I'm glad it got closed down. I'm sorry that the business lost its, you know, accommodation, but surely you can build it some, there's, there's a whole Island, there build your hotel somewhere else. You know, when it, when it's, the things that Europeans do is they build it all in one spot, you know, they're like ants. They just like, ants, Oh, let's take the space and we'll just build a whole ton of things that go up. You know, it's like this story and I'm sort of going yeah, look. You know, you've got all this land over here, you can maybe take your hotel over there. So it's like a by a Lake.

Barbara Bynder :

There's a beautiful light system there, you know, surely we can build something around that. And it's like, wow. So yes, really glad that it was shut down. I, I know there was talk about turning into a museum, but I know Aboriginal Noongar people won't even go in that if it's a museum that I didn't want to go in there. I went in there, I got as far in the Quod, I got as far as the, you know, the inside where they hung people throw up straight out back. I went straight out the gate because I wanted to throw up, I can't do this and I was gone. And so I didn't actually look into it. I just, I just feel sick when I'm there. And then, and you know, when you burn stuff, you regenerate the earth. You know, you get rid of all that bad karma, get rid of all that bad spirit.

Barbara Bynder :

And if you burn things, that's what happens. Burn the Quod. All that stuff goes, you know, and then we start fresh and we can do some proper healing on it. We can do, you know, land healing on it. It's a bit like the elders where I'm doing a contract where we're demolishing a building and the elders saying, well, we do ceremony around the building before you demolish it. Then you demolish the building or all the buildings in that space. Because if you do, if you do, you do ceremony around the buildings, not in the buildings cause they're coming down. But around the buildings, it keeps the workers safe. And so then when you've demolished and you've removed all the rubble, then you, then you do a ceremony on the whole ground. Yeah. So that the people that build on there are safe. So you've got these ways of grounding people in your spiritual safety.

Barbara Bynder :

And we don't think about that on Wadjemup, you know, we've got a, we've got a building that is literally needs healing and and the spaces need healing and we can't do that if the, while the building still stands, you know what I mean? Cause we can't start fresh. How can you possibly start fresh when it still stands? You've got to get rid of it and then start again. But it's a little bit like for me, it's, I know P I've, I've heard people compare it to, you know, World War II, world war two, and, and you know, the genocide of, of, of Jews and I, I think if you leave it, does that mean that the building is a, is a representation of power of, you know, this is what we do here because a lot of, a lot of the, if you look at a lot of the reasoning for incarceration was for theft or food or, you know upset the local policemen, you know, over retaliation or, or, or the reciprocity law, you know, because Aboriginal people back in the day where we're going, well, we'll give you something, but you have to reciprocate that.

Barbara Bynder :

So a lot of people I think were incarcerated because of that lack of understanding of our reciprocity law and and our laws around punishment. So as Aboriginal people, and I think that was very confus-

ing for a lot of people. The first six people that were there I think were senior law men. I came to realize one of the ways to assimilate another culture is to remove their laws to remove their governance structures because, and, and the minute you do remove a societies structures, then they take on the dominant society. Laws the dominant society governance structures.

Barbara Bynder :

And so now you become part of that society. And so I think at the time, that was the intent of colonisation impacted on. And the way to do that is to take those senior law men, put them on an Island, you know, because that's, that's how you assimilate. You take the, take away our leadership and take away on our governance laws through those men. So I think, I think there's a huge, you know, it's a theory. Yeah. You know how I theorise all this stuff. Yeah. It was, it's a theory. I reckon it's worth, worth pursuing, you know, in terms of learning more about it to, but it, it's just something that I think about and it's like, yeah, I wouldn't mind doing a bit more research around that and not in a practical sense as the way that it Neville Green does it, which is that historian kind of thing, but more in the anthropology, you know, in the cultural, social and economic, political, cultural of Aboriginal society back in that time at that time.

Barbara Bynder :

Because it makes sense to me that if you don't understand reciprocity laws and you don't understand our punishment laws, then you know, if I step over the fence that you built and because I need to go and hunt on my own ground and you've now fenced me fence it off so I can't get to my hunting grounds, you know, become a trespasser. The minute I step over the fence in my own country, that to me doesn't seem fair. You know, cause people didn't recognise that. Well we built the fence, we own the land. I was like, no, you don't it's our land and you build a fence on our land. So, so you know, there's those kinds of things that you got to weigh up in terms of settlement and what actually happened. It wasn't all bad. Obviously there was, there were, there were settlers that got on really well with Aboriginal people. But you know, the intent of colonisation is to assimilate and to own land to wherever they went. It was about wealth. Wealth, land was well in fact that Aboriginal people, you know, one of the elders just recently said to me, you know, we didn't need fences. I go, why is that? And they go, cause we knew where we could and couldn't go.

Barbara Bynder :

You know, and I thought to myself, that is so simple. You know, why is that thought so difficult to understand? Why? Why does there need to be anything else wrapped around that thought? You know, because to be honest, that's, that just makes total sense. We knew where we could and couldn't go. We didn't need a fence to. It's interesting, isn't it? So what's a fence actually for keep people out or keep people in? Yeah, it's really interesting. I was like, yeah, I like the way these elders think. They just, they just, they just put a whole new spin on things.

Barbara Bynder :

when you talk to elders about colonisation and about, you know, the impacts and because they have this lived experience as well, so they, they have a better view of what it is. You know, I think our young people are gonna miss out on all of that lived experience. Mind you, having said that, the young people's lived experience is going to be very different to what we are and what our, what our ancestors had. So it will be interesting to see what they think in 20 years time as to how they live now to where they're going at and where they're going to be.

Barbara Bynder:

I want to change the narrative of how we talk about ourselves. I don't, I don't want to keep talking about ourselves as Aboriginal people using the current narrative because it just, it's just full of depression, you know, and, and sadness and all those things that you just don't want it to be. And I keep thinking, you know, if we're going to move forward, we need to change the way we talk about ourselves. We need to change the way we respond to things. We need to burn the Quod. Sorry, I just thought I'll get that in there. So you see my advocacy and I'm not necessarily loud, I just keep repeating myself.

Vanessa Smart:

What does always was, always will be mean to you?

Barbara Bynder:

Uh that makes me proud. And you're asking me that while I'm sitting on my own country. That's big. That's big. Always was, always will be. Makes me proud. I, you know, out of all the things that we do in Australia, that's the only line phrase that I feel makes me proud to be Aboriginal. And probably because I'm so connected to the country that I live on. This is my, my family's country right here. And I'm really relaxed here. My children, the best way I can describe it is that my children actually said to me, mum, this is the first time we've seen you. Really happy. And cause I am happy here. I feel relaxed here and my son keeps telling me how relaxed I am. And I heard yeah cause I'm home. So it always was, always will be is about, it's really hard to put into words because if you, if you try to explain it to non Aboriginal people, I don't think they get it. I ain't seeing people understand the connection. And for me, when, when you go always was always will, I can smell the earth, I can, cause I instantly go into, I know what it smells like. I can smell roos, I can smell everything that's in this country. And so it's pretty much a sense of pride that I have about always was, always will be.

Barbara Bynder:

Because I don't, I don't, you know, when I talk about changing narrative, I don't let people tell me how to be Nyoongar, I don't even let, Nyoongars tell me how to be. Now it's like, don't tell me how to be Nyoongar. I already know that, you know, I was born that way, so, so it's kind of like, you know, you have a sense of identity, a sense of who you are, then, you know, always was, always will be used as like, yeah, I get it.

Barbara Bynder:

You know, I think, I think, I think for, I always look at it as quiet, our culture was quiet.

Barbara Bynder:

I think the spiritual essence of Wadjemup, prior to colonisation, well, you know, before the sea levels rose and going on to, that's our spirit of our ancestors, the ancestors. And it's not all of Nyoongar country because the Southwest mob have their own their own Kooranup if you like. So for Ballar-dong Whadjuk, it's like straight out to sea. And your spirit goes out there before you go on to the afterlife. And so it's kind of like the resting place, if you like that.

You know, you go there first before you move on to your spiritual life and that's pretty much what Wadjemup is, and it's like you go to the afterlife and you sit down and, and you wait, you wait for your healing, which is given to you by your ancestors, and then you move on into the afterlife and then you come back. So you, you pretty much go out to sea and you come back and then you a part of the earth. So it's, it's almost like a cycle thing that goes up and around like that. And then you come back to become part of the land. So it's like a, yeah, cleansing

And a healing of your spirit before you return. And so when you think of it in that, in those, in, in that philosophical way, you kind of then think about the burial of those, those men, they and boys, you know, we need to help them to go out to sea and come back clean and whole so that they can return to the earth. And if we don't do that, then as Cara said they're just going to keep waiting. Yeah.

You know have nightmares forever. It was like, you know, how do you, how do you do that? It's a really, for me, Wadjemup is a really spirit. It feels good in most places. Just not the burial ground and not the Quod. So burn the Quod and we'll just probably should, you know, sort out that burial ground as well. Don't know. They planted a lot of trees there so you know, you can't just rip them up and all that kind of stuff cause you know where the roots are and what they're entangled in now. So - trees have to stay. But yeah, I don't see that. There's no reason why we can't smoke it and you know, do a proper men's ceremony there. And I think that's the really important part. Men's ceremony needs to be done there. But then I think about that process as well, part of that process.

So from a spiritual level, cause when I go there, I really feel the earth, right? There's something about Wadjemup. Again, I have trouble articulating because it's an internal thing. I can step off that Jetty and I just feel good and he's like, it's beautiful, you know, and everything just feels relaxed. My, my, my journey from, from this beautiful relaxing place to go down the Hill and in through the city and then out to Fremantle is stressful. So by the time I get on that Jetty, I'm just like, yeah, I can't wait to stand on on. Wadjemup, you know? Because when I get there, I feel relaxed. And having said that, I always do a sand ceremony when I go there. So I go there, I get off the jetty and I go straight to the beach.

And I do a sand ceremony before I go and book in to where I'm going. And I do that with my kids as well. So I've taught them how to do sand ceremony, my son does sand ceremonies over in Queensland when he's he's off country. Umm so we do all of that. And the really interesting thing about that is that you feel cleansed but the whole place for me, the minute I step on that Jetty, I can feel it. I can feel the spirit that runs through Wadjemup and not the bad spirit. I'm not talking about the people that have died and talking about the actual spirit that was there from days of Whadjuk peoples taking care of it when there was no water because you know, you think about it, there was no water that going across it and it was land and then people were walking out there because it is our spiritual home.

They were out there doing ceremony and you know, educated guess that they would have been doing ceremony. So it's up to us today to continue that process. If we don't practice it, you know, part of practicing our culture is to do ceremony. So if we don't start smoking Wadjemup, particularly around the burial ground and the Quod, we don't start smoking that area regularly. You know, we're not practicing our culture. We go onto Wadjemup, we're practicing our culture, just being there as well. So that's the other part of that modern concept, you know? Whereas if we continue to say Wadjemup's warra, we can't go there. We're not practicing our culture. You don't avoid a place cause it's warra, you go there and you do ceremony and you clean it up. You don't avoid it. That's a white man's thinking. You know,

Black man's thinking is like, no, we're going to go clean this place up and they'll send in the, you know, the Marman and get Marman to fix it. Now Marman comes in there and fixes all the in bang done, you know, and, and it's clean again. But when people died in an area, they did leave it, but they only left it so long as it before it, until it got cleaned. Once it's cleansed, that's fine. I don't know if you've, after settlement, some of the law men used to smoke the houses so people would go back and live in them. So if anyone died in a house, they'd go in and smoke it all and then they'd go back and now people could go back and live in there. So, when I was in the Halls Creek in the eighties, they were still doing that there.

Then, you know, if anyone died in the house, they'd be smoking it clean and then you can rent it out again after that. So it's, it's just differently I think of, yes, we've been, you know colonised and our cul-ture, you know, has been fragmented, but we can put it back together. You know, we did, and we can do it in a different way, but still practice culture. So it just means, you know, obviously building a fire on Rotto is a little bit challenging because the fire inspector over there has a mental breakdown if you light a match. So it's kinda like, you gotta be really nice to him. So, you know, making him feel comfortable that you're going to be in the w hole and you're going to be in the Quod down and then he's happy. So it's that kind of stuff, you know?

I guess from that spiritual essence of being Whadjuk, you know, I, I feel that. And so that brought me back to that conversation I was having about men's ceremony and doing men. And then I kept thinking, well, maybe it needs men and women, because ceremony wasn't always just about men. It depends what sort of ceremony you're holding.

Right? but if we're doing a cleansing, maybe we need men and women. You know, I haven't really thought about that until now. And just talking to you has made me realise that maybe we need to really rethink that space and not just be a men's thing. I mean, at the moment it's just men because they're men and boys that were, that died there. But men and boys belong to somebody's mother. They're some-body's children. Yeah. A mother had them. Maybe we need to put that part in as well. It needs thought. I'll have to talk to some of the old fellas about that.

Vanessa Smart

So what would you, if you, what would you say to everybody that comes on to the island

Barbara Bynder:

Ah, okay. Yeah. Well my love of Wadjemup is you go on that Island, enjoy yourself. It's, you know pay your respects at the burial ground, but don't let that stop you from having fun. It's a beautiful place.

I'm really in love with Wadjemup. I found it to be beautiful. I'm going back for holidays. I've taught my children to love it. You know, we've talked about the idea of it being Warra. We've talked about that nar-rative that's in the past been, Oh, we can't go there cause it's taboo and I'm going rubbish we're Whadjuk.

We can go there and practice ceremony. You want to do this, then all you gotta do is pay respects to the deceased and be respectful and mindful that it's there. And you know, don't run amok and you'll be fine. And I just think it's beautiful. But I also know that there's a couple of sites around the area, you know, so, but if you, if you're Nyoongar or Aboriginal and you go in there, I think you just need to trust your in-stincts about what the, where the sites are, you know, if it doesn't feel right, if it feels bad, don't go there. Go somewhere else. There's plenty of other beaches around.

Barbara Bynder:

But the thing, I can imagine all the women, because the women, the Aboriginal women used to, they by Bathers Beach, they would light fires to let the men know. The prisoners know that they were still there. And it was an amazing thought to think that from there you could see the fires lit. And then it got me thinking about captain Cook's diary, you know, and he says as he sailing into botany Bay, he sees a thou-sand fires on the hillside. You see a thousand fires on the hillside and you write that in your diary. Then you send a letter back to the crown going, this place is unoccupied. Yeah, well we colonised Australia on a great big fat lie.

Can we revere that every Australia day we revere the lie. We go, Oh, let's celebrate this lie. It's not about invasion. It's about the fact that he lied. He outright lied. He said there's a thousand fires on the hillside and then I'm going to write a letter to the Queen, and go, no there's nothing here, it's just lie. I'm just thinking. Wow, and so I see all those these things go through my head when I'm looking at that Bather's Beach area from, from Wadjemup, you know, and I can see all those fires that the women are lighting, you know, and the men are grieving and because they can't get from there to there and they, you know, this is a big ocean in the middle. And you think about the sadness of that, but also the fact that, you know, it always takes me back to that captain cook thing. Just like, yeah, it's this, this, this country needs healing itself. But Wadjemup is a good place apart from that. You can't help but think about those things when you're there. If you know the history, there is no way that you, but it doesn't mean you can't enjoy it, you know?

So what I do is I do exactly what I said. We have fun and then the day before we're ready to leave. We go and pay our respects at the bit at the burial ground and then we come home. Because when we do that, it makes us all sad. So we kind of give us, it was 24 hours of beating ourselves up and then we get back on the ferry hour right now, you know, it's just that whole acknowledgement thing. I think if you acknowledge it when you first get there, it stays with you. So my advice would be to go there, have fun, you know, day before you ready to go home. Go and pay your respects and then go home. And then that way you can go yeah had a great time. It was awesome.

Vanessa Smart

[Inaudible - something about artefacts].

Barbara Bynder:

It depends. The ones that they left there or the ones that they put in the museum.

Vanessa Smart

The ones that were from people from thousands of years ago before the seas rose.

Barbara Bynder:

I think that tells that story, that it's occupied, you know, it's occupied land. The whole of Australia is occupied land. And like I said, it was colonised on a lie. And you know, the reality, the reality is we still want to believe that lie. But when you start finding stuff like that, you know, and you've got living, physical proof that, that this is preoccupied country and then then you know, historians and you know, people who don't want to think that it was preoccupied, you know, when I find a reason for it not to be and I didn't get here first and you came from another country and blah, blah, blah, not true, you know, it's really simple. The place was preoccupied whether we came from somewhere else or not, we were here. So it's like you just have to accept that. And acceptance I think is a really difficult thing for some people to do.

So even when they find artefacts and they date them back to, you know, that five thousand six thousand years ago before the water came through, they still don't want to believe it. They want to go, no, no, no Why? Cause you want to make it a tourist destination. Great. You can still be a tourist



destination. Do you know how much more tourism you will get if you start looking putting those artefacts in the museum and people go and they look at and go, I was preoccupied, this is who was here. Wow. You know, bit of real history. That's actually true and honest

And you know, that's not a bad thing. That's actually a really powerful story. And it's kind of like if you start exhibiting those things in the museum at Rottnest, you're gonna actually attract people to that space and go, yeah, this is really good. But none of our history I think is, I think, I think our history as Ab-original people is actually really powerful and adds value to the whole story of Australia. So if we continue to, you know, try and deny it all the time, you know, try and prove that there was non-existence, then you're not really adding value, you know, to, to this place we call Australia. And one of the other things that I find with that kind of stuff as well, you know, you find all these artefacts that come back from many thousands of years ago, you get to understand that the place was visited, by our physically, by Aboriginal people.

So if we were visiting that place, because I know for a fact that there's probably and when I say a fact, well educated fact is that there, if we're visiting a place, there's going to be men's and women's places on that Island, you know, ceremonial and then there's going to be the public spaces and going on what I've seen in the built environment I'll give you, UWA for example. It used to be a place of wedding ceremony for Whadjuk people, people still get married there. So that spirit in the land like just comes back through. You're right, because, so that's adding value to what you already know. That's powerful.

Barbara Bynder:

So somewhere in there, if you did an archeological dig, you'll probably find a hearth fireplace here. Camping, yeah, yeah, yeah. Nice. Yeah. Yeah. I kind of liked that cause it, it validates, it validates our pre-occupation prior occupation, you know, and it didn't, for me that's, that story would be really well-told. You know, you know, in contextualise it so that it connects to what we're doing today to that modern thing of, you know, part, part of the new narrative is that we go back there, we have to go back there. And I think Nyoongar people need to go back there and they're not, they're not doing that. They're avoid-ing it because they're listening to the, to a narrative. I look at it this way, the Island was created as a penal settlement by people that weren't us. The narrative is created by people that weren't us. But we're taking it on as if it's our narrative. It's not our narrative.

It's not our story. Our story is one of you go there, you do ceremony, you enjoy the space, you eat your fish, you camp, yeah, you avoid all the spiritual places because you're not supposed to be there. But you can be in parts of that Island and be safe and comfortable and having fun. You know, he said, take your holiday, it'll be great idea. I would like to see those artefacts at some point in the museum, telling that story and connecting it to what we are now. Cause it's, it's, it's really about prior occupation and accept-ing that that's who we are. Here we are. And it would help, I think Nyoongar people to understand that they need to go back and do that ceremony and that ritual. I think I did a talk about it, you know, in 2018 maybe. We did, we did a reconciliation week, you know, and I was talking then about, you know, we need to come back to this Island.

We need to practice our culture and practicing our culture means us being there, you know, doing sand ceremony. For Walter to do smoking ceremonies. You know, those sorts of things need to happen that we somehow, how do you, instead of it being a one off, how do you get it to happen once a month, let's say? Yeah. Every four weeks go into a smoking and then anyone who's on the Island gets to, you know, cleanse themselves. Yeah. As part of, as part of that ritual of, of Whadjuk people and you know, maybe that's the narrative we need to start talking so that we start to practice rather than talk about our cul-ture.

Vanessa: Could you explain the sand ceremony?

Barbara Bynder:

Okay. The sand ceremony, sweat on your armpits, pick up your sand, rub it into your hands and then you throw it in the ocean and you let the Wagul smell you because you are here so, they know that he knows that you here or she that you are here and not for harm but for good and to keep you safe. The sharks don't eat you, cause there's a lot of sharks on that West side. I got the shark app and I checked out this one. Well I'm not swimming there.

Barbara Bynder:

Yes because they ate seals. So they're all on the West side of the Island. Oh no. That's the funny thing about seals. People get all like they're all cute and cuddly but I they're dangerous cause they're like kanga-roos, kangaroos look all cute and cuddly till they stand up on their back legs and then they pound you, and they don't care who you are, and so it's like, ahmmm mmm and seals are pretty, seals remind me of kangaroos. They're all cute and cuddly until you, you know, they want to eat you. And then there's a whole different story. So everybody goes running. It's like a movie. Interfering with nature. Not a good idea. Not to mention that they are food for somebody else. Yeah. That's funny.

Vanessa Smart:

Is there anything else you'd like people to know?

Barbara Bynder:

I would really like people. I just want to reiterate that Wadjemup is beautiful. I love it there. Yeah and, and that's my thing. I love it. It's, it's got a really good feel. I don't feel the Warra that people talk about. I do feel that at the burial ground and the Quod, I don't feel that on the whole of the Island, you know, there's so many great places that you can hang out in, you know, and fishing and just snorkelling and do-ing all those beautiful things that ocean has to offer you. I think that's, that's the life on Wadjemup and it's worth... and best part I think is walking around Island. There's so many things to see and it changes the light.

Barbara Bynder:

I don't know if you've noticed the landscape changes there. And if you really, if you want, if you're Nyoongar or Aboriginal and you want safety, all you gotta do is ask your ancestors to take care of you while you're there. Do your sand ceremony. Ask the Wagul to keep you safe and the sharks don't eat you.