

# Singing Up Worlds: Ceremony and Conflict Transformation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in Australia and the United States

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## Abstract

In colonised countries such as Australia and the United States, Indigenous and Settler peoples suffer from the largely unaddressed legacies of colonisation: ruptured relationships, mistrust and on-going injustices. Epistemic violence toward Indigenous people's worldviews is another painful, on-going legacy of colonisation that must be addressed in order for conflict transformation to be sustainable. Reconciliation ceremonies that involve Indigenous and Settler descended peoples are showing promise as effective conflict transformation processes, in part because the ceremonial experience closely reflects Indigenous worldview. Thus, when Indigenous experience is addressed during ceremony, the process encompasses intellectual, emotional, and spiritual experience and the natural world, creating congruence between process and worldview. Ceremonies are characterised by a creative flux of potential positive transformation, enhancing opportunities for imagining and enacting more just societies in colonised countries.

**Keywords:** ceremony, conflict transformation, Indigenous, reconciliation, Settler, worldview

Persons in ritual are transforming the world.

Driver, 1991: 175

In colonised countries such as The United States and Australia, people live in ‘wounded worlds,’ in societies and landscapes scarred by policies of genocide and massacres of Indigenous peoples. A great deal remains to be done to truthfully account for and respond to colonial violence and its current effects on the people who inhabit these lands. As scholar Martha Minow (1998) states, it is impossible to respond fully to genocide. Nevertheless, justice requires that we respond as ethically as we can. In Australia and The United States, a growing number of people are involved in creating and performing ceremonies that address colonial violence in ways that heal, transform conflict and effect reconciliation.

In this article, I analyse the transformative power of reconciliation ceremonies involving Indigenous and Settler peoples in colonised countries. In the first part of this article, I describe the potential of ceremony to create an experience of shared worldview, a time and space in which often marginalised Indigenous worldview is respectfully engaged. Then I go on to provide a detailed example of the ways in which ceremony ‘sings up healed worlds,’ or envisions and performs just relationships between Indigenous and Settler peoples. Lastly, I share a narrative of the 2006 Myall Creek Memorial Ceremony and discuss the ways in which it integrates Aboriginal and Western worldview. I conclude with an evaluation of the role of ceremony in conflict transformation in these settings.

## Transformative Power of Ceremony: Reducing Epistemic Violence Through Holistic Processes

In Australia many massacres and genocidal acts are hundreds of years old. In such situations, when the designers, perpetrators and victims have been dead for over a hundred years, many argue that there are no effective ways to respond to the legacies of colonial violence. Obviously, the victims and perpetrators can no longer be brought into a court of law, nor before a truth and justice commission. Restitution is also difficult as property has passed through many hands since the beginning of colonization. Because of these challenges, some scholars and practitioners argue that it is time to move forward and forget what happened to Indigenous peoples in the past.

The attitude of forging ahead and forgetting the past is not acceptable to many Indigenous peoples whose daily lives are shaped by the injustices their people have endured. In addition, many Indigenous peoples' time cosmologies are cyclical, in which past, present and future co-exist and injustices of the past are keenly felt by those alive today. Many Indigenous peoples argue that those alive today are responsible for addressing the injustices of their ancestors, thus creating a better future for the coming generations of offspring. A growing number of Indigenous and Settler peoples are implementing processes that build better relationships and address injustice, creating a more peaceful society for all living in colonised countries.

Ceremony is a process that transforms people and societies (Driver, 1991: 166-92), creating the potential for more peaceful and just nations. A number of Indigenous and Settler descended peoples in Australia and North America are coming together in reconciliation ceremonies designed to share silenced histories of Indigenous experience, to grieve colonial violence, to heal, and to

envision and enact more just relationships. Some of the more notable ceremonies in The United States are the Nez Perce Memorial Ceremony at Ft. Vancouver, Washington and the Two Rivers Powwow in Twisp, Washington. In Australia, the Myall Creek Memorial Ceremony and Ceremonies for The Stolen Generations are highly regarded as effecting measures of reconciliation.

There is a range of ways in which these ceremonies transform conflict and promote more just relationships. They create space and time for the performance and telling of silenced Indigenous accounts of colonial history. They facilitate public mourning and grieving which did not take place at the time of the atrocities. Participants in the ceremony both apologize and offer forgiveness. However, in order for these processes to facilitate sustainable conflict resolution, they must also honour and respect Indigenous peoples' worldviews.

Ceremonies have always been at the heart of Indigenous cosmologies in which humans celebrate and revitalise their relationships with the natural and spiritual worlds. They have also been key processes in Indigenous peacemaking and conflict transformation. In contrast, the disciplines of Western conflict resolution and peacemaking have largely marginalised ceremony as an effective and rigorous form of conflict resolution (Schirch, 2005).

Conflict transformation requires that people's relationships are nurtured, strengthened and repaired, and that people are empowered to deal with conflict (Bush & Folger, 1994). In situations arising out of colonisation, relationships between Indigenous and Settler peoples reflect severe power imbalances, which conflict transformation processes must also endeavour to redress to ensure fair outcomes. Reconciliation Ceremonies such as the Myall Creek Memorial Ceremonies have the potential to facilitate balanced conflict transformation, in part because they address power imbalances by reducing violence against

Indigenous peoples' worldviews.

During colonisation, Indigenous worldviews were considered to be primitive, pagan and superstitious. Similar attitudes continue today in many scientific disciplines. Indigenous knowledge, if acknowledged at all, is often considered to simply be raw data for Western science. This marginalisation permeates the Western discipline of conflict resolution in which only a few scholars and practitioners are engaging respectfully with Indigenous worldviews and peacemaking practices.

Reconciliation ceremonies are effective in part because they engender a respectful engagement with the Indigenous cosmologies that the processes of colonisation were designed to destroy. Before colonisation, the Aboriginal peoples of Australia and North America, their systems and beliefs formed vast networks throughout the continents. The cosmologies of the colonisers were vastly different from those of the Indigenous peoples who cared for the land, and the colonisers forcefully imposed their worldview, excluding many of the aspects of experience that are real and meaningful to Aboriginal peoples. A great deal of current conflict resolution continues this trend, marginalizing or silencing Indigenous ways of knowing and being, including Indigenous peacemaking traditions. For example, the dominant Western problem-solving models of conflict resolution are time-urgent, linear, and focus on reaching agreements rather than building relationships. The emotional aspects of human experience of conflict tend to be dismissed or addressed as aspects to be "worked through" so that practitioners can get down to the "real business" of reaching agreements (Avruch & Black, 1991). The spiritual aspects of human relationships are seldom addressed in Western problem solving models, and then only by a minority of practitioners and scholars (notably Gold, 1993, and Umbreit, 1997). Finally, Western problem solving models of conflict resolution

fail to address in any manner the ways in which conflict is shaped by peoples' relationship with the natural world. Johan Galtung (1990), the father of peace research, expressly criticises the way in which nature is 'desouled' within the dominant Western models of conflict resolution.

The worldviews underlying Aboriginal Australian conflict management and Native American peacemaking are in stark contrast to the dominant Anglo-European worldview. The worldviews of these Indigenous peoples integrate intellectual, emotional, and spiritual experience and the natural world as critical aspects of transforming conflict (Walker, 2001). To address these differences in worldviews, conflict transformation requires attention to reducing the epistemic violence inherent in the imposition of Western worldview on Indigenous peoples. Conflict transformation processes such as ceremony which integrate the worldview of Indigenous peoples can begin to address these issues in a more equitable and just fashion.

Differences in worldview are more than exotic curiosities. They exacerbate existing conflicts and impact negatively on conflict resolution between Indigenous and Settler peoples. Edward T. Hall (1983: 7-8), anthropologist who lived and worked among many Native peoples in the Southwestern part of The United States, explains, "As long as human beings and the societies they form continue to recognize only surface culture and avoid the underlying primary culture, nothing but unpredictable explosions and violence can occur."

Effective conflict resolution requires an understanding of the worldviews of everyone involved in the conflict (Docherty, 2001). In order to implement sustainable conflict transformation processes involving Indigenous and Settler peoples in colonised countries, the processes must acknowledge and respectfully accommodate differences in worldview. Cindy Cohen (1997: 71)

describes the ways in which worldviewing is an essential conflict transformation skill in peacebuilding and reconciliation: However, even after our intentions not to harm the other are firm, further steps are required to warrant a former adversaries' trust. To avoid offending or violating the other unintentionally, we must learn about the other's systems of meaning (i.e. the myths, the narratives and symbol systems that inform and reveal the perspective of the other). To become worthy of the trust of someone who has been an enemy requires coming to know them and the world through their eyes.

To illustrate the effect of epistemic violence on conflict transformation between Indigenous and Settler peoples, I draw on the experience of my own people, the Tsalagi (more commonly known as Cherokee). However, these same processes of “disappearing” the ontologies and epistemologies of Indigenous peoples are evidenced throughout colonization, and continue today. Tsalagi cosmology can be depicted through the Medicine Wheel, a hologram of our worldview, representing what we consider to be real and necessary to maintain the balance and harmony of our lives and of the cosmos. Our processes of coming-to-know and of living in harmony require attention to and respectful engagement with the mind, body, spirit and the natural world. In ancient time and today, we engage in processes designed to bring balance to these aspects of our existence, including our peacemaking and conflict transformation processes. However, the Anglo-European colonisers who dominated our lands focused on the “rational,” which they defined as intellectual reasoning, excluding many of the aspects which we consider to be part of rational endeavours. This privileging of the mental aspects of experience continues today, shaping professions and practices that affect Indigenous peoples. These practices create a type of “cosmological tunnel vision.”

Today many Indigenous peoples struggle to fully express themselves

within their own worldview. Indigenous peoples continue to be shaped by the discourse of the Anglo-European cultures that dominate the United States and Australia. In these countries, Indigenous ways of knowing are often fragmented by the West's largely singular focus on the analytical, intellectual aspects of experience. However, a growing number of Indigenous and Settler descended scholars and practitioners are creating processes that facilitate inter-paradigmatic dialogue in which knowledge and experience from both Indigenous and Settler worldviews are respected and integrated. The reconciliation ceremonies discussed in this paper provide powerful examples of respectful engagement with the Indigenous worldviews that have previously been marginalized.

Ceremonies integrate intellect, emotions, spirituality and the natural world. In so doing, they bring Indigenous and Anglo-European settlers together into a common "ceremonial worldview." Ceremony is a process in which these aspects are celebrated and called forth in their fullness. Native American scholar Taiaiake Alfred (1999) explains that Native American rituals imbue the practitioners with power, creating unity between the material and spiritual worlds. Likewise, in Western ritual studies, scholars describe ceremony as integrating mental, emotional, and physical aspects of human experience with the natural and spiritual worlds. For example, Jennings (cited in Driver 1991: 188) explains that knowledge is processed "through the body ... not by detached observation or contemplation but through action." Driver (1991: 174-75) also describes ritual as a holistic process that integrates "the psychological, the socio-political and the material worlds." Western conflict resolution scholar Lisa Schirch (2005: 157) explains that ritual "involves people's minds, bodies, all or many of their senses, and their emotions." These descriptions are strikingly similar to the worldviews of Native Americans



and Aboriginal Australians. Ceremonies afford processes which respect Indigenous worldviews through holistic integration of aspects of experience that are integral to many Indigenous peoples.

However, although the processes of ceremony create an experience of shared worldview, this in and of itself is not enough to effect conflict transformation. Ritual scholars and Indigenous scholars and practitioners remind us that ceremony must be held within a larger framework of values and intent in order to provide experiences that build more peaceful relationships and societies. “Human beings gain access to a natural power source through ritual; in other words, power is summoned and hosted by human beings who become conduits for it” (Hinton, cited in Alfred, 1999: 50). This power of ceremony, pregnant with patterns and potentialities, can be used for healing and restoring balance. However, the power of ceremony also holds the potential for great harm. Driver eloquently describes the potential benefits and risks of the transformative power of ceremony. “When it is imbued with the spirit of liberty, ritual becomes part of the work through which a body politic (a people) throws off its chains. But it is not always so imbued, and the transformations it brings about are not always so liberating ... Nothing in the nature of ritual per se insures that the social transformations achieved by it will necessarily be good ones, for this depends upon the aim and will of the performers” (Driver 1991: 190-91).

In living memory, there are many ceremonies that are infamous for fostering or celebrating genocide, rather than mourning and healing such violence. In contrast, reconciliation ceremonies must be held within frameworks of peacebuilding. That is, they must foster and nurture people’s capacities for forgiveness and apology, for creating relationships of mutuality and for imagining new, more just societies with the potential of being enacted

beyond the ceremony. We are reminded that ceremony in and of itself does not transform conflict in ways that lead to sustainable peace, and that the transformative power of ceremony must be directed toward just and peaceful outcomes in order to transform conflict.

In colonised countries, part of the peacebuilding framework of ceremonies must focus on respectful engagement with Indigenous worldviews. In the following section, I discuss in detail one aspect of worldview that often causes or exacerbates conflict between Indigenous and Settler peoples, and describe how ceremony effectively engages this aspect of Indigenous worldviews.

## The Shared Worldview of Ceremony: Healing Worlds through Shared Conceptualisations of Time

Ceremony creates a space of respectful engagement between Indigenous and Anglo-European peoples, particularly in the way in which it facilitates shared conceptualizations and lived experience of time. The time cosmology of ceremony is one in which time is cyclical, fluid and generational. Past, present and future co-exist, and time is measured by natural and social events. These cyclical processes engage with ancestors and coming generations. Western theologian and ritual scholar Tom Driver describes the time cosmology of ceremony in terms that are similar to those of Indigenous cosmologies. Driver (1991: 190) states, “Because it is performance, ritual brings the far-away, the long-ago, and the not-yet into the here-and-now.” By facilitating shared experience and understanding of cyclical time, ceremony provides a process which reduces the epistemic violence evidenced within the dominant Western problem solving models of conflict resolution.

In facilitating shared understandings of time, ceremony is in stark contrast

to the dominant Western problem-solving models of conflict resolution. Models such as Fisher and Ury's (1981) interest-based approach, and John Burton's (1996) problem solving approach are time urgent, with processes being completed in very limited time frames. They are also based on linear time measured by clock and calendar, in which time, once passed, is gone forever, and if not used well (that is, forcefully shaped) is considered to be 'wasted.' In the dominant Western conflict resolution models, humans demonstrate responsibility by seeking to *control* time (Lederach, 2005) This contrasts starkly with the time cosmologies of Aboriginal Australians (Stanner, 1979) and American Indians in which the past, present and future co-exist and responsibility is exhibited by responding to time in ways that consider the effects of decisions or actions on generations of ancestors and the generations that are yet to come.

In his text, *The Moral Imagination*, conflict transformation scholar John Paul Lederach (2005: 131-32) shares a story of his experience of the impact that different Indigenous and Anglo-European concepts of time can have on conflict transformation. He describes himself as operating from within the dominant Anglo-European worldview in a conflict resolution process in which he was involved in Nicaragua. He states: "I was pushed and was pushing to get things done on time." His approach was one of controlling time before it was lost forever. In contrast, Lederach's Indigenous colleague experienced time quite differently. Lederach explains: "Andy read time, as in paying attention to the *coyuntura*, the meaning of the moment ... Andy saw himself in an expansive present in which he moved toward much that was unknown, little of which could be controlled directly. What he knew were the patterns of the past, and the potentialities of the expansive moment." Within Andy's Indigenous time cosmology, time is fluid, cyclical, resistant to control, and responsive to the

past, present and future.

These two stories portray the ways in which differences in worldview can affect Indigenous and Anglo-European peoples working together to transform conflict. These differences in time cosmology are much more than seemingly exotic differences, they impact on conflict and conflict resolution in profound ways. In discussing the 1990 Oka crisis involving the Mohawk Nation and Settler descended Americans, Lederach (2005: 133) described the critical impact of unrespected, misunderstood and unacknowledged differences in time, “I have come to believe, all else aside, that it is possible to explain the failure of those negotiations purely from the standpoint of time. For the Mohawk, the past was alive. It accompanied them every step of their journey. The very nature of who they were in that crisis and how they were in relationship with other peoples and nations arose from a historical context that was alive in the responsibility they felt for the well-being of the lands and the lives of their great-grandchildren. For the Mohawk, it was as if the negotiation table were an expansive space of time that connected the voices of a distant but very much alive past with a distant but very much present future.” Western negotiators were focused solely on the present crisis.

In contrast to these two examples in which stark differences in time cosmologies affected conflict transformation in a negative manner, ceremony provides a process in which Indigenous and Western peoples can share a common, lived experience of time. In ceremony, time is a flux of possibilities and potentialities, in which past, present and future co-exist. Victor Turner (1977), anthropologist and author of the seminal research on liminality describes ceremony as a time of flux, a space of potential transformation.

In Australia and the United States, reconciliation ceremonies are transforming conflicts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Perhaps one effective aspect of these ceremonies is the facilitation of a process that incorporates respectful engagement with cyclical time both for Indigenous and Settler descended peoples. In the ‘everywhen’ of ceremony, where past, present and future co-exist, structural violence toward Indigenous peoples is decreased by creating a place of respect for Indigenous time cosmologies. Ceremony invites all, Indigenous and settler descended peoples into the dance of cyclical time. Native scholar Gabrielle Tayac describes the power of this cycle, what we might call ‘healing worlds’ during a reconciliation ceremony held at the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian. She states that, at the conclusion of the ceremony, “It felt, in that moment, that centuries of history had completed the turn of a great wheel: A wheel that in its five-hundred year revolution, beginning in 1492, had wrought shattering cultural cataclysms; but one that had left enough of us standing to begin a healing process for both Native people and those who had come to our shores. We still have a long journey, but this is one that many recognize we must take together. We are all part of the story of this land now, and the choice to follow the original instructions in our own ways is open wide before us” (Tayac, 2004: 83).

Native scholars Gerald McMaster and Clifford E. Trafzer (2004: 44) also describe connections between healing and the cyclical time of ceremony: “Among many different Indian peoples ... holy rituals keep the Earth alive and moving. The grass grows and rivers flow ... We sing our songs, perform our dances, and pray. In many ways we remember the old traditions, and by telling our stories of being, we re-enter and renew our sacred circles. With each song, story or ceremony, the Native world is recreated, linking the present with the past. In so doing, we bring ourselves into the larger circle of Indian people, nurtured by sweet medicine that lives today. Native Americans stand in the

center of a sacred circle, in the middle of four directions. At this time and for all time, Americans Indians are in the presence of, and part of, many vast, living, and diverse Native universes.” Thus, in reconciliation ceremonies that respectfully incorporate Indigenous and Settler descended peoples and cosmologies, our colonised worlds are in some measure recreated, as we link the present with the past and call forth the future. In this liminal state, in the possibilities and potentials of transformative power, we may sing up new, more balanced and just worlds of multiple, connected circles of people who envision and enact new, peaceful ways of being together.

## The Myall Creek Memorial: Conflict Transformation through Ceremony

In this section I share my experience of the 2006 Myall Creek Memorial Ceremony. Then I go on to discuss the ways in which the ceremony transforms conflict through respectful engagement with Indigenous peoples, their histories and worldviews.

The Myall Creek Memorial Ceremony commemorates a massacre that occurred against Aboriginal people of Australia on June 29, 1838. Shortly before that date, the Gamillaroi people of the Myall Creek Catchment area in New South Wales had gathered at a local pastoral property, seeking protection from the “secret war” waged against the Aborigines in this area of Australia. This Gamillaroi clan had struck up a warm, close relationship with some of the station hands, although the Aborigines had only been there for a few weeks. On the day of the massacre, all the able bodied Gamillaroi men were away gathering bark when a mounted group of 12 stockman galloped into the station and demanded that all of the Aborigines be handed over to them. The stockmen

bound 38 Aboriginal old men, women and children with ropes, over the objections of George Anderson, one of the station hands. George could hear the women crying and pleading for help as they were led away. In a short while, he heard two shots, then silence. Although he had saved one Aboriginal child, he felt unable to take further action against so many armed men. No more shots were heard because the armed men hacked the Aborigines, men, women and children to death with swords, severing the heads of the defenceless people. The stockmen returned a day later and burned the bodies, but no fire could erase all traces of such an atrocity.

June 10, 2006, was the sixth annual Myall Creek Memorial Ceremony. Approximately 200 participants, both settler descended, immigrants and Aboriginal, walked in the rain along a country road in New South Wales near where the Gamillaroi people were bound in ropes, taken away and brutally murdered. Some of those present walked in silence in the rain, others chatted quietly in small groups. Lyall Munro, one of the senior Aboriginal people who instigated the Myall Creek Memorial Ceremony, reminded us that it was also raining on the day of the massacre. He explained that the rain assisted in bringing the perpetrators to justice, as it created a path of muddy tracks which led William Hobbs, the property's superintendent, to the massacre site.

We gathered on the hilltop overlooking the massacre site, where all were invited to paint their foreheads with ochre or ashes, symbols of sorrow and grieving from both the Aboriginal and Settler descended peoples. We passed through the smoke of gum leaves, an ancient and contemporary Aboriginal cleansing ceremony. We stopped along the path as pairs of young people, one Aboriginal and one of European settler descent, read the dreadful history of the massacre and the secret wars from the plaques on each memorial stone along the path. Finally, we gathered at a monolithic stone directly above the massacre

site, where we were greeted by the bass song of an Aboriginal bullroarer. Sue Blacklock (2006: 2), the great-granddaughter of one of the survivors of the massacre, told us that the bullroarer was informing “the spirits of the Aboriginal dead that we have come to perform the ceremony, and calling everyone to be respectful.”

Rosemary Breen (2006: 2), a descendent of the Settlers, led us in prayers, explaining that we were surrounded both by the spirits of those Aborigines killed on the slopes below and across the country, and those of the “good settler people who have worked for justice, respect and understanding between our peoples.”

We were reminded that the ceremony intends to address current injustice toward Aboriginal peoples, as well as historical injustices and reconciliation. Rosemary Breen (2006: 3) asked in prayer that the ceremony “give us courage for the work that lies ahead of us and that it bring hope and healing to all of us.”

John Brown (2006), the Uniting Church pastor who was instrumental in working with Aboriginal people to create the Myall Creek Massacre Monument and Ceremony, described the kinds of social justice processes that are connected to the day’s ceremony: “We are grateful for all the good work done over the last few years by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together to set the record straight about our history in this land; for the acts of personal reconciliation that have been achieved; for apologies offered and accepted; for forgiveness offered; for jobs created, and people included who were previously isolated” (p. 3).

This ceremony was not, as some critics of reconciliation claim, an event that encouraged the losers of the frontier wars to become reconciled to the current state of affairs. In contrast, in addition to mourning colonial devastation



of Indigenous peoples, the ceremony facilitated people expressing their commitment to actions that will address current violence and injustice toward Aboriginal peoples. In unison, those present, both Aboriginal and Settler descendents intoned: “We acknowledge that we still have a long way to go in building a society where people have comparable opportunities to develop their innate potential. We are here today to commit ourselves again in the hard work of reconciliation between our peoples. We remember the past so that we may understand the present. We commit ourselves to the tasks of the present so that our children and grandchildren may have a better tomorrow” (p. 3).

Those of us present at the ceremony were not left in an imagined distance from the unthinkable horror of genocide, rather we were called to examine the role we might play in similar circumstances, and to examine the role we are playing in current situations of violence and injustice toward Aboriginal Australians.

Although the Myall Creek trial was the first time in Australian history that white men were hanged for the murder of Australian Aborigines, unfortunately the verdict led not to a decrease in murder of Aborigines, but to deeper secrecy in those murders. Massacres continued throughout the next 90 years on the Australian frontier. In the ceremony, we acknowledged that those of us alive today are the inheritors of the legacies of those massacres that affect all of us living in Australia.

As the ceremony neared its close, once again the bullroarer filled the clearing with song, and a settler descended Australian gave a blessing from the following poem linking both Aboriginal and Settler Australians into relationship with ‘country,’ with the land and natural and spiritual systems that are now called Australia.

May you always stand tall as a tree;

Be as strong as the rock Uluru;  
As gentle and still as the morning mist;  
Hold the warmth of the campfire in your heart;  
And may the Creator Spirit always walk with you (Pike, 2006).

## Myall Creek Memorial Ceremony: Singing Up Healing Worlds

The Myall Creek Memorial Ceremony is a powerful, transformative process which facilitates a shared ceremonial worldview for both Aboriginal and Settler participants. In the time cosmology of ceremony, participants experience the ‘everywhen,’ the co-creative flux of past, present and future.

As can be seen in the narrative of the 2006 ceremony, both Settler peoples and Aborigines call on their ancestors, and share their histories of colonisation and social justice. These processes effectively bring the past into the time of the ceremony. The participants also integrate young people into the ceremony and dedicate the process to the generations yet to come.

In the Myall Creek Memorial, the transformative power of ceremony is held within a framework of peacebuilding. Apologies are offered, and forgiveness extended. Links are drawn between historical injustices and current injustices. Those present dedicate themselves to creating new social worlds that are in some measure healed. For example, after the initial Myall Creek Ceremony, Uniting Church pastor John Brown (2007: 10) described a type of ‘healed world’ created through the ceremony. He stated: “It was a powerful moment for everyone there and it was an extraordinary releasing moment. People said afterwards ‘It seemed as if a great load had been lifted between us and we were set free. We can go to that space now and it seems peaceful.’” Sue Blacklock (2001), granddaughter of one of the Aboriginal survivors of the Myall Creek Massacre, further describes this healing process. Sue explains that previous to the Myall Creek Memorial Ceremonies, members of her family did go near the Myall Creek Massacre site because of the suffering of the ancestors and their ‘country.’ Her people seldom spoke of it, and when they did, it was

with great pain. Sue explains that now that the ceremonies have been held, the site feels peaceful, and that her people can go there and not relive the horrors that occurred at that place and time. She states that the ancestors and the land are at peace. Other Indigenous peoples have spoken in a similar manner about the transformation that has taken place after successful ceremonies held at massacre sites. In time cosmologies in which the past co-exists with the present, perhaps new 'healed worlds' may be effected.

## Conclusion

Ceremony is a powerful process which can facilitate conflict transformation between Indigenous and Settler descended peoples in colonised countries. Ceremony is effective in addressing colonial violence in part because it creates a space and time of shared worldview. 'Ceremonial worldview' share many similarities with Aboriginal and Native American worldviews. This process is in stark contrast to much of Western conflict resolution in which Anglo-European worldview is imposed on Indigenous peoples, continuing the legacy of epistemic violence that has characterised colonisation. Lederach (2005: 149) describes the potential for conflict transformation which facilitates shared understandings and experiences of worldview, particularly in regard to experiencing cyclical time, which is the time experienced in ceremony and in Aboriginal and Native American worldviews:

... the moral imagination requires us to develop the art of living in multiple time and space spheres. Even in the moments of greatest crisis, when the urgency of the situation seems to hinge on quick short-term decisions, multidimensionality is present ... To live between memory and potentiality is to live permanently in a creative space, pregnant with the

unexpected. But it is also to live in the permanency of risk, for the journey between what lies ahead is never fully comprehended nor ever controlled. Such a space(time) however, is the womb of constructive change....

In ceremonial spacetime, structural violence toward Indigenous peoples may be decreased, creating a place of respect for Indigenous cosmologies. Ceremony invites all, Indigenous and settler descended peoples, into the dance of cyclical time, with its healing potential for transformation. Perhaps in reconciliation ceremonies that respectfully incorporate Indigenous and Settler descended peoples and their worldviews, our colonised worlds may in some measure be transformed into more peaceful, more just societies. The effects of these ceremonies stretch far beyond the ceremony itself, into the people and their lands. Speaking at the initial Methow Valley Reconciliation Powwow, Tlingit participant Ray LaVeque, stated, “Let us work at this relationship. It’s not a one-time ceremony; it’s a way of life. So let the healing begin. Let our dances be our prayers. All this land is sacred to our people” (2003: 7).

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## 唱揚世界——澳洲和美國境內原住民和非原住民之間的儀式和衝突改善

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### 摘要

在澳洲與美國等殖民國家，原住民和墾殖者後裔不但仍為殖民時期所留下的破裂關係、不信任感和持續的不公義等所困。學術社群粗暴地將其本身價值觀強加在原住民族世界觀上，則是另一項痛苦與持續中的殖民遺害。這些都待進一步闡明，以便使衝突改善可以繼續。而原住民族和墾殖者後裔的和解儀式，所展現出能有效改善衝突的進程，部份是因為這樣的儀式經驗密切反映了原住民的世界觀。因此，當原住民的經驗可以在這個儀式中被表達出來，過程中完整地涵蓋智識的、情緒的和心靈的經驗，以及自然世界；讓衝突改善過程和原住民的世界觀產生一致感。儀式則被賦予創造潛在積極改善衝突氛圍的角色，以增進殖民國家想像和實踐公義社會的契機。

關鍵字：儀式、改善衝突、原住民族、和解、移民者、世界觀。