

Chapter Two

Two (or Three) For the Price of One.

'I know what you're thinking about,' said Tweedledum; 'but it isn't so, nohow'.

'Contrariwise,' continued Tweedledee, 'if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be, but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic'.

Lewis Carroll (1968:185)

This chapter and Chapter Three trace the emergence of the group I call 'darug custodians'. Before I can adequately conceptualise the constitution and organisation of 'darug custodians' in Chapter Three, I need to present a history of the group which gave rise to 'darug custodians', namely Darug descendants.

Darug descendants are a group who can prove that they conform to the official definition of 'Aboriginal'. This definition is formulated in the *Native Title (New South Wales) Act 1994*, and is the same as that used in the *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993* and in section 51 (26) of the Australian Constitution, 'Aboriginal' is defined as:

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.

In Australia, both self and community cultural identification, as well as genetic descent, determine who is 'Aboriginal'. The Australian legal definition of 'Aboriginal' defines it as a social category which is derived from genetic heritage.

As I suggest in the thesis Introduction, both Darug descendant self-consciousness and their legal identification as 'Aboriginal', first came about largely

through the work of Dr. James Kohen (1993, 2000). Kohen's work with Darug descendants began about twenty five years ago, soon after the advent of native title in Australia. Kohen, a biologist with interests in both pre-colonial bio-resources in the Sydney area and the archaeology of pre-contact Aboriginal resource management, told me in an interview (2003: pers.comm) that he was asked by some 'Sydney Aboriginal descendants' to use his research skills to conduct genealogical - or 'family heritage' - research. He explained that this research was aimed at tracing living descendants of Aboriginal people. That is, he wanted to identify people who were genetically linked to Aboriginal people who inhabited Sydney before British invasion. Kohen told me that native title was co-incidental to his research in the beginning (FNJK 23.5.03). This must have been so as Kohen could not have anticipated the advent of native title legislation in the early 1980's. Kohen's work was a result of new access to resources that land rights legislation produced in Australia. His research was and is still being conducted in the context - and within the era - of native title, and it has been used to prepare three native title claims.

Kohen (2003: pers.comm.) claims that his research was undertaken at the request of people who self-consciously identified as descendants of Aboriginal people connected with geographical places in western Sydney. These people called themselves 'Richmond Road Tribe' and 'Bungarabee Tribe' among other names - names which self-identified them as groups in and around western Sydney near Plumpton, near Mount Druitt (see map 1).

From seven ancestors, Kohen successfully traced a large number of descendants of a group of Aboriginal people, some of whom eventually identified themselves with the name 'Darug' in order to include Aboriginal people from other

places in western Sydney besides Plumpton. According to Kohen's (1993) research, 'Darug' were a 'language group'²⁹ of Aboriginal people, whose 'traditional country' comprised land from the area in the west now called the Blue Mountains, to the Pacific Ocean in the east; and from the area in the north now called the Hawkesbury River to Appin in the south (see maps 1 and 2). Kohen (ibid.) deduced that prior to contact between these people and Europeans, there were about sixty clan groups within what he claims was a 'language group' which had specific geographic affiliations within the traditional country referred to above. According to Kohen (1993), these groups spoke various dialects of a Darug language.

As well as documents such as 'blanket lists', church records and other colonial records, the kind of knowledge used to make genealogies and maps, and to draw other conclusions regarding who and/or what is/was a particular kind of Aboriginal group, is derived from both archaeological evidence and interpretations of often patchy ethnographic and historical documentation made by early explorers and colonisers, amateur and professional anthropologists, missionaries and pioneers. Kohen (2003)³⁰ claims, however, that much of his knowledge has also been informed by knowledge passed down through generations of Darug descendants. Kohen, worked and continues to work collaboratively with these people in generating a knowledge bank of Darug history and traditions based on archaeological and ethnographic methods. Yet, although these sources have claimed to produce knowledge concerning Darug identity, it is on the genetic assumptions produced by Kohen's 'Darug family trees' that Darug descendant claim to 'authenticity' is based. In

³⁰ Whether these later groups reproduced any of the same or similar cultural productions that pre-contact groups maintained we will never know.

other words, it is on an assumption that Darug genetic substance has been passed down through generations to particular people living in the present that the Darug identity claim is based. It is primarily on the assumption that there is an on-going, continuous *genetic* link between living Darug descendants and pre-contact Aboriginal people that contemporary Darug descendant identity claims are founded.

The main reason for the fragmentary nature of European records concerning Darug culture and traditions stems from the almost total annihilation of 'Sydney Aboriginal People' within the first three years of the arrival of the first fleet. Watkin Tench (1788/1996) and David Collins (1788/1975), young officers with the first fleet and primary chroniclers of the times, both report that by 1791, the population of one 'clan' of Aboriginal people living close to Sydney Harbour was reduced in number from about sixty to three as a result of disease. Tench and Collins' descriptions of the extent of the calamity which caused Aboriginal people's bodies to go unburied and communities to be wiped out make harrowing reading. Some Sydney Aboriginal people, did, however, survive as self-conscious cultural groups at least until the turn of the 20th century when amateur anthropologist and surveyor R.H. Mathews (1905) documented the name 'Darug' as being associated with a group of Aboriginal people he met on an expedition along the Hawkesbury River (see map 1).

Some senior Darug descendants claim that when they were young, they heard the name 'Darug' being used to refer to certain people. Kohen admits that when he began his research no-one was using Darug language fluently. However, he claims that the original Sydney Aboriginal descendants who contacted him maintained strong, continuous and inalienable connections to their traditional country, extended family and continuing traditions and customs (Kohen 2003:ibid.).

I have been told by some people, who have since identified as Darug descendants, that other Sydney Aboriginal people (i.e. Aboriginal people who lived in Sydney but did not know if they were Darug or not) contacted Kohen for help in tracing their genealogies. I have also been told that many of these people, prior to Kohen's work had lived marginalised lives as undifferentiated Aboriginal people. One such person was the late Uncle Jimmy, whose sister, Alma Jones has been a principal collaborator in my fieldwork. Both Alma and Kohen (2000:pers.comm.) explained to me that Uncle Jimmy had told Kohen that he had no notion of his Aboriginal origins and sought Kohen's help in establishing some connections for his family. Kohen quickly identified Uncle Jimmy's family as Darug descendants. Alma seemed bitter when she explained how she had experienced her own Aboriginality before Uncle Jimmy's contact with Kohen:

We knew we was Aboriginal. How could we forget? We had them welfare ladies comin' round all the time. We got called 'blackfellas' at school. Teachers used to say that we didn't need to learn because we wouldn't need to read to sweep the streets.

AJ200104.

Before contact with Kohen, Alma and many other Sydney Aboriginal people may have known that they were Aboriginal. 'Aboriginal' for many of these people seems to have been a generic category i.e. one was either 'Aboriginal' or White. But before contact with Kohen, they did not know that they were, or even had the potential to be, specifically Darug; nor did they have ideas about what 'Darug' meant. Alma expressed her thoughts about this to me in an interview:

We thought there was only one kind of Aboriginal. That you were just like either Aboriginal or not. We didn't know that there was like Darug and Dharawal and all that, you know? I'll never forget the

day that me brother rung me. He was so happy. He said: 'I know who we are! I know where we come from! We're from 'ere!'. We was so happy. To know that we come from 'ere and that's special.

FN AJ (2001: interview 9).

After establishing contact with Kohen and other Darug descendants many Darug descendants, including Alma and her family, began to link their knowledge with that of other families. They began to claim that particular words, ideas, knowledge of plant and animal species, practices and places make up specifically Darug knowledge.

According to Alma, her great-uncle, whom she called 'grandpa' was a fully initiated Darug man. He bore the scars of his ordeal and was able to speak Darug language. Alma remembers 'grandpa' taking her and her siblings on long walks through the bush, when he used words and described the uses of particular plant and animal species that Alma now claims as aspects of Darug knowledge (AJ 2001 interview 10).

As a result of Kohen's work and funding provided by the federal government, an organisation was established to allow newly identified Darug descendants to meet each other and further research their genealogies. This group was called *Darug Link* and was part of the federal *Link-Up* program which was largely designed to re-unite Aboriginal family members in an attempt to redress wrongs done to the *Stolen Generation*³¹. In providing a forum for Darug descendants to meet each other, many for the first time, *Darug Link* and Kohen's genealogy had the effect of relating Darug descendants to each other in a way that they had previously not been related.

³¹ See *Bringing Them Home* (1997) for details concerning the institutionalised separation of Aboriginal children from their families over more than one generation.

Darug descendants who previously did not know each other, who are members of different communities and who, except for the 'natural fact' of their common ancestry may have shared few common experiences, found themselves bound together as 'The Darug People' by Kohen's genealogy. This had the effect of joining previously unrelated people in remarkably intimate ways. They are treated as one party in native title and other land claims by legal counsel. They are consulted jointly by state and local government, National Parks and Wildlife, the Roads and Transport Authority, property developers, and other state and private agents on issues concerning what is claimed as 'Darug' Land. They are joined together by state and local government and various other interested people for various 'cultural' projects. One such project has been the creation of a CD-ROM by a local council detailing some of the past and present cultural forms produced by Darug people, and the dedication of a native garden at Mount Tomah Botanical Gardens in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney to Darug. This joining together of people who previously did not know they could be understood as one group can be attributed to some taken-for-granted assumptions made by both White people and some Darug descendants themselves.

Out of the Woodwork.

While rules concerning eligibility for land claims under land rights legislation are somewhat different from those determining native title, the definition of 'Aboriginal' in the *Aboriginal Land Rights (New South Wales) Act, 1986* is the same as it is for native title: it is *both* a genetic and social category. In New South Wales, Aboriginal Land Councils were instituted under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (New South Wales) Act, 1986* so that Aboriginal peoples, who have been alienated from their traditional,

pre-contact countries, may gain access and benefits to land with which they now have various kinds of connections and which can be realised through land claims. Under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (New South Wales) Act 1986*, these 'connections' do not need to pre-exist White settlement and may be related to histories of pastoral or industrial relationships with a particular tract of land or to long term settlement in a particular area. Land eligible for these kinds of land claims, often classified as Crown Land or State Forest or some other kind of state administered public land³², can be converted to free-hold title and hence disposed of. Aboriginal Land Councils may represent Aboriginal Traditional Owners, who live in the area that the Council represents, and may lodge a claim under native title on behalf of Aboriginal Traditional Owners. Under native title, the claimants must prove that they remain connected to a 'body of traditions, observances, customs and beliefs of Aboriginals or of a community or group of Aboriginals whose traditions, observances, customs and beliefs are applied to particular persons, sites, areas of land, things or relationships'³³ as demanded by the *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993*. Land won under native title is not disposable and its subsequent usage is highly circumscribed. Aboriginal Land Councils are legislated to be the representative bodies of Aboriginal peoples now living in a particular area. Members of Aboriginal Land Councils are elected. Land Councils administer land, administer proceeds from the disposal of land and other resources for the group of Aboriginal peoples they represent³⁴.

³² But can also, for example, be a public building of special significance to a particular Aboriginal group.

³³ *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976*. (Canberra: Government Printer, 30 th April 1992)

³⁴ In this section I gloss huge issues to which this thesis cannot attend in any greater detail. These brief comments and descriptions should be taken as offering evidence of the extent of Darug descendants' lack of representation and their marginalisation.

What is particularly politically difficult is that incumbent members of Aboriginal Land Councils are not necessarily Aboriginal Traditional Owners of the area they represent.³⁵ Especially in long colonised places like Sydney, people sitting on Aboriginal Land Councils may have either long term connections to the places and peoples they represent or only recent connections. Regional Aboriginal Land Councils which are supposed to represent Darug descendants (and all Aboriginal peoples in western Sydney) include the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, Sydney Metropolitan Land Council and Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council. However, none of these Aboriginal Land Councils have any Darug descendants sitting on their boards. A number of Darug descendants have told me that members of both local Land Councils, i.e. *Metro* and *Deerubbin*, in fact deny their existence. Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council, for example, recently won a land claim under the *Land Rights Act (NSW)* at Maroota in Sydney's north-west. The claim was not a native title claim and was not claimed as 'Darug Land', but as a place of on-going and continuous significance to Aboriginal people of the area. But, the land in question is claimed by Darug descendants to be 'Traditional Darug Country' and is home to a vast number of pre-contact and early contact Darug art sites. After a particularly hostile exchange over the Land Council's alleged plans to develop the Maroota land, Uncle Frank, a senior Darug man, told me that:

[t]hese Land Councils is all the same. Deerubbin, Metro. They don't want to know about traditional owners 'cause they don't want to have to deal with us. They don't want to have to share with us or put our rights into the picture. They tell the gov'ment that

³⁵ This varies from place to place. For an example of a New South Wales Regional Aboriginal Land Council which appears to largely represent traditional owners (Wiradjuri) see Macdonald (2004).

we don't exist 'n' that we just want a bit o' the pie. That bloody, you know 'im. 'E's bin tellin' everyone that there's no such thing as Darug people, Darug art or nothin'. I said a word or two about it to 'im out Maroota yesterdy, an' ya know what? 'E said it to me face! To me! Married to a Darug woman! Darug kids 'n' grandkids 'n' 'e has the cheek to tell me Darug don't exist!

FN AW0801.

Uncle Frank went on to tell me that the same representative of Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council told a hearing for a land claim in 2001 that Darug descendants have only recently 'come out of the woodwork' and that the only appropriate representative of Aboriginal people living in the Hawkesbury area is Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council. The Land Council's claim under the *Land Rights Act* to the Maroota land was subject to a far less stringent 'continuous connections' rule than the *Commonwealth Native Title Act* demands and was successful.

In Darug native title claims, both the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council and the Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council, have joined as respondents to the applications. That is, the local Aboriginal Land Councils have joined with the state to oppose the claims. So far, there have been no successful Darug claims, although there has been one claim for a culturally significant site that was settled in a co-management agreement with a Local Government Council which excluded the involvement of Land Councils³⁶.

Clearly, in the cited contexts, the interests of the Sydney Metropolitan Land Council, the Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council and Darug descendants

³⁶ This claim was originally a native title claim. It was a term of the co-management agreement that all native title claims to the land in question be relinquished.

conflict³⁷. The state recognises the Land Councils as representative of all Aboriginal peoples living on what is claimed as 'Darug Land', but those same Land Councils evidently do not want to recognise the existence of Darug descendants. In the Darug descendant case, the native title claims of Aboriginal Traditional Owners not only complicate land claims made by Land Councils, but also compete with them.

How Various Dominant Discourses Define and Determine Urban Aboriginal Culture.

As I discussed in the thesis Introduction, the dominant assumption that urban Aboriginal peoples have been so dispossessed of their traditional cultures that they are only able to represent their contemporary identities in modern forms, often 'borrowed' from other Indigenous groups and the dominant society, results in judging these cultural forms 'inauthentic'. This thinking is prevalent in discourses concerning Aboriginal art, for example, where urban Aboriginal art is characterised as individualistic (as opposed to traditional collectivist), representing a politics of dispossession and cultural lack, and as being specifically without traditional religious significance, see for example, Vivien Johnson (1990), Dion Mundine (2000) and Terry Janke (1999).

Historians consistently reproduce narratives of early dispossession of country and culture claiming that urban Aboriginal people who claim traditional ownership are invariably culturally bereft and sometimes even physically extinct. This historical tradition began as early as 1788 in Australia when Watkin Tench (1788/1996) reported the early decimation of Sydney Aboriginal peoples, and continues into the present with works by authors including Reynolds (1989, 1998), Applin (1988),

³⁷ This is not always the case in all regions and in all circumstances. See Macdonald's (2004a, 2004b) argument for the viability and desirability of Regional Aboriginal Land Councils.

Broome (1996) and Goodall (1996).

Linguists including Walsh (1993), Yallop (1993), Schmidt (1990), Eades (1993) and Troy (1990, 1993) have recently become more sensitive to the importance of recognising various 'Aboriginal Englishes' as representative of distinctively Aboriginal world views, allowing for some recognition of the distinctiveness of urban Aboriginal language use. Linguists have also increasingly been involved in work related to the revival of Aboriginal languages including the pre-contact languages of some urban Aboriginal traditional owners. In Australia, these authors include Eades (1976), Capell (1970), Dixon (1976), Walsh and Yallop (1993), Wurm (1972), Yallop (1982) and Troy (1990, 1993).

As I mentioned previously, the only anthropological reference that directly concerns Darug descendants is that produced by Kenneth Maddock (2001) in his report on a land claim. Darug descendants claim traditional Aboriginal ownership of a large part of modern Sydney (see map 1). Maddock's report advises that, based on historical, linguistic and genealogical reports pertinent to 'The Darug People', and on his own textual research, those who currently claim Darug descent do not qualify under the *Native Title Act (NSW) 1994* as land claimants. So, although Darug descendants qualify under the statutory definition of 'Aboriginal', and although their family trees demonstrate their descent from people who inhabited Sydney prior to British invasion, because they are urban Aboriginal people - understood *fait accompli* to be completely dispossessed of language, culture and tradition - they do not qualify for native title.

Complicated Separations

Darug land claims are always made on behalf of 'The Darug People' which

does not include the vast majority of Darug descendants who do not identify as Darug, but does include both 'Tribal' and 'darug custodian' Darug descendants. In the vast majority of cases, these projects have resulted in competition, hostility and outright fighting among different groups of Darug descendants. The original *Darug Link* which was implemented and supported by Kohen, drew its members from interested people who were identified as Darug descendants by his genealogical research. That is, as newly identified Darug descendants were contacted by letters from Kohen, he invited them to join *Darug Link*. Some accepted Kohen's offer and by the mid 1980s *Darug Link's* membership had grown to about sixty people (Kohen 2001:pers. comm). But by 1986 it had developed two dominant factions and subsequently divided into two groups. One group of about thirty people, consisting of Darug descendant individuals and families were committed to an approach which furthered knowledge about their heritage in ways already established by Kohen, that is, through various kinds of research. The other group, largely consisting of members of one extended family were committed to processes of cultural 'revival' with which they had begun to experiment when they first identified as Darug by Kohen's genealogy. Each of the groups became a different Aboriginal Corporation in 1986. Thus, there are two 'official' groups of Darug descendants, not counting the vast majority of the people Kohen has identified over twenty-five years as Darug descendants who do not choose to identify with any group of Darug and who take no part in any Darug activities.

The Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation and its rival organisation the Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation registered within days of each other in 1986 under the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act* 1976. The Act was instituted as one of the recommendations of Justice Woodward of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Commission*

as part of the Whitlam Labor government's (1972-1975) reform of administration of Indigenous affairs. To attract recognition by the state, Aboriginal communities and groups must incorporate under the Act, limit membership to Aboriginal peoples and their spouses, carry out activities nationally, and base their rules on Aboriginal customs and traditions (so long as the customs and traditions are not illegal³⁸). These organisations represent important ways in which Aboriginal communities can at least gain some state acknowledgment, state recognition of groups is always a special problem in a liberal state which ultimately only recognises individual rights³⁹.

The registration of two different groups of Darug under the Act was the result of hostilities erupting at a meeting called to prepare the registration of a joint group. The group who were to become Darug Custodians walked out and registered their own group before Tribal people registered themselves, thereby increasing hostilities.

The two organisations reflect the fact that Darug descendants have divided into two communities, ideologically opposed and distinct in constitution and collective practice. While it is theoretically possible for Darug descendants to belong to both groups simultaneously, this has only occurred once in my experience. Three Darug descendant siblings joined both organisations and attempted to participate in the different kinds of community life connected with the two organisations. It did not take long for suspicion from both communities concerning the siblings' motives to force them to choose between one group or the other. Questions about the siblings'

³⁸ See Beth Povinelli's (2001) compelling account of the hopeless double bind native title causes Aboriginal peoples who need to be able to prove 'on-going connection' to 'traditions' performed in a primordial time before the polluting presence of 'us', and the illegal nature of the performance of many of those 'traditions' in the present such as ritual spearing as punishment for crimes for example.

³⁹ See Charles Taylor's (1996) analysis of relationships between multiculturalism, different kinds of 'group rights' and types of liberalism.

wisdom in trying to belong to two such different groups were rife in the community in which I work. As Darug descendant Elder Uncle Ken insisted when I questioned him about the possibility of the siblings' successful bridging of the Darug cultural gap:

They's gotta make a choice. Youse can't bilong both mobs.
Ya knows that yaself Krissy. Remember what that other mob
did ta ya? We told ya didn't we? 'An ya found out the hard way
we was right.

FNKP 2001:030801.

The incident to which Uncle Ken refers occurred early in my fieldwork when I attempted to work with both groups of Darug descendants. Almost immediately it became clear that already existing boundaries between the groups did not allow for fieldwork with both. My already-established friendship with Alma was seen, by at least some Tribal people, to be evidence of an unacceptable partisanship, which might make my project biased toward a more sympathetic view of 'Her [Alma's] mob' than was acceptable to Tribal members.

This was made very clear by a senior Tribal woman who had been involved in organising a conference at Macquarie University in April 2001. The woman in question, Aunty Lena, a former school teacher, worked for the New South Wales Art Gallery. Although the conference was supposed to be inclusive of all 'Aboriginal Sydney' peoples, and Alma had been invited to attend, Aunty Lena's response was hostile when Alma avoided the rest of the conference and only attended my paper. Aunty Lena confronted me somewhat belligerently, introducing me to my first serious experience of aggression between the groups when she said with an unsuccessful attempt to lower her voice:

Look, you're treading on thin ice here Kristina. You're a trouble maker.

It looks like you're playing us off against each other. It looks like Alma is only here to see you. I don't think your research is possible. I don't think any Darug people will work with you if you stay friends with Alma. You just can't be objective. I'm warning you nicely.

FNAM042001.

The 'trouble' that Aunty Lena claimed I 'made' came from my position at that time as 'go-between' Tribal and Custodians. There was a great deal of anxiety expressed by both Tribal members and Custodians that I be 'very careful' concerning information I might intentionally or unintentionally 'feed' from one group to the other. As I said, Aunty Alma was 'officially' invited to attend the conference, but I doubt that she was expected to accept because the conference was organised by Tribal members and their supporters. That she came to witness my presentation not only demonstrated her support for my project, but also was a way for her to keep the representations I made concerning 'darug custodians' under surveillance. This not only served to support the integrity of my research with Custodians to that point, but also demonstrated to Tribals that my pre-existing relationship with Custodians was more established than my relationship with them. Tribals apparently found my relationship with Custodians threatening, and rather than persevere in collaboratively developing a relationship with me became increasingly negative, evasive and sometimes hostile in response to my queries and proposals. All of my other experiences involving the two groups, some of which I describe in Chapters Five and Six, have also worked to reinforce my situation as a Custodian supporter and researcher rather than a bipartisan researcher.

I remind the reader that there are two main differences between Tribals and Custodians. The first is behavioural. Unlike Custodians, Tribals eschew any attempt to dramatically assert claimed identity in the performance of a (re)invented Darug

cultural tradition. They do not publicly sing, dance or make speeches in an Aboriginal language. The second is that most Tribal members are Darug descendants who are not all members of the same family whereas Darug descendant Custodians are a minority in their community and are closely related to each other. I present a description of the two groups below.

Darug Tribal:

Ironically, the sociological characteristic that most distinguishes Tribal members from Custodians is that most Tribal members are Darug descendants. This, of course, is the only characteristic that links Tribals to Custodians. The difference between Tribal Darug descendants and Custodian Darug descendants is that Tribal Darug descendants are not all closely related to each other. Because there are many more Tribal Darug descendants than Custodian Darug descendants, they come from different families, many of which are not related.

As I have said, the antagonistic Tribal-Custodian social relations have prevented me from conducting fieldwork with both groups. I do not know anything about the detailed running of the Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation. My only knowledge concerning Tribal members comes from infrequent contact with some members at meetings concerning land claims, archaeological digs and protests. I do know from conversations with Jim Kohen, however, that many of the 'core group' of 'Sydney Aboriginal people' who originally contacted him to conduct his genealogical research became Tribal members. That is, at least some Tribal members are, or are the off-spring of Sydney Aboriginal people who were a self-conscious group before Kohen conducted his research.

I also know from informally meeting some of these people, that they live in the

'same' areas of western Sydney as Custodians. That is, they live in the Blacktown/ Penrith/Blue Mountains area. Kohen (1993) and Brook (1994) provide some historical detail concerning many living people's forebears and their lives in Sydney's western suburbs and on the Hawkesbury reserve and mission which operated between 1889-1946. This historical information reveals that at least some Tribal members come from a long history of marginalisation as Aboriginal people in western Sydney.

The Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation has grown in number from its original thirty or so members to 'about three hundred' if what I have been told by some current Tribal members is correct. The three hundred members include associate members, so it can be said that from the original thirty Darug descendants the Tribal group has grown to include about one hundred and fifty Darug descendants over twenty years. Jim Kohen is currently the organisation's Public Officer. As I have said, Kohen, in association with some key Tribal members and other White academic supporters, has been instrumental in preparing a number of land claims for 'The Darug People'.

Although prepared in the name of all 'Darug People', these land claims in fact rely on Kohen's own genealogical research, his and others' archaeological evidence, historical documents, linguistic evidence and the anecdotal testimony of some Tribal members concerning cultural memory and on-going practices. Memories may include eye-witness accounts of the performance of ceremony, speaking of language, and maintenance of sacred sites. On-going Tribal practices are limited, however, to the use of occasional words and expressions in Darug language, knowledge of family connections, and technical knowledge such as traditional cooking methods (Kohen 2003:pers.comm). In other words, Tribal cultural practices carefully comply with the dominant academic and legal discourses I have outlined above, which claim

that urban Aboriginal traditional culture is extinct and that contemporary culture consists of memories, participation in research, and other modern forms which reflect long-term contact with the dominant culture.

In particular, Tribal people do not paint traditional Darug art. In fact, I have been told by Tribal leaders that there is no such thing as Darug art. Tribal people do not speak any version of a 'Darug Language', although they participate in the work of linguists reviving Darug language from White documentary sources. The only ceremony Tribal people conduct is *Welcome to Country*⁴⁰, where they ritually claim traditional Aboriginal ownership of land. That is, by making a formal speech of 'Welcome' onto a specific tract of land, Indigenous traditional owners make a ritual rather than legal claim to that land. I say more about this in Chapter Seven.

Tribal people do not conduct any Aboriginal religious ceremonies and do not, to my knowledge, participate in any Aboriginal cult.

The main forms of collective practice observable in the Tribal community are related to maintaining their profile as Darug descendants and traditional Aboriginal owners. They attend many of the same meetings with Commonwealth, State and local government representatives that Custodians attend concerning Darug interests, rights, responsibilities and involvement in various government projects. Often, representatives of local Land Councils are also present at these meetings. This means that there is frequently great competition between Tribals, Custodians and Land Councils for the attention of government bodies who hold these meetings with the intention of treating all three groups equally.

⁴⁰ I offer an account of *Welcome to Country* in Chapter Seven where it can be seen that Tribal Welcome to Country ceremonies are significantly different from Custodian ceremonies.

What tends to happen is that each group, Tribal, Custodian and Land Council, have their own 'pet' departments in government and other organisations where relationships have developed over time with certain individuals who privilege one group over the others. Tribal, for example, will be asked to provide *Welcome to Country* for certain events with a particular local council year after year. This happens with a different council for different events with Custodians. This means that Tribal members do not usually meet Custodian members or Land Council members at events where they conduct *Welcome*.

But there are other situations where Tribal and Custodian members meet. They both participate in the same archaeological digs by providing manual labour to archaeologists and by providing representatives to perform 'site inspections' where land for proposed development is surveyed for significant Aboriginal artifacts. High levels of competition are maintained in these situations where Tribal representatives vie for the attention and recognition of archaeologists above Custodian representatives and vice versa.

Tribal members and Custodian members also meet in situations where a combined 'front' of Darug descendants may empower them in a contest with the government or some other power broker of the dominant society (cf. Sider 1986 in a Lumbee context). This has happened in the hearings of land claims and joint management proposals and also in organised protests such as one organised to prevent the construction of the M2 freeway in Sydney's north west which, it is claimed, runs through significant pre-contact Darug sites. But even in such situations Tribals and Custodians still represent themselves as separate groups and always compete with each other to impress a third party as to the greater 'authenticity' of one group

over the other. This is done in various ways as I explain below. In all situations in which Tribal and Custodian members meet there are a number of common features:

1. There is always a third party which represents the dominant Australian society.
2. There is always competition between Tribal and Custodian members for greater recognition of one group over the other by the third party.
3. Tribal members and Custodian members always set up symbolic separations between themselves. At archaeological digs, for example, there is always a spacial separation between the Tribal 'camp' and the Custodian 'camp'. At meetings Tribal members will sit at the opposite side of the table from Custodians. Darug demand that legal counsel at court hearings provide separate sets of documents to each group.
4. Tribal members and Custodian members always make representations which demonstrate their different cultural practices. Tribals, for example, will often assert their research as evidence of their 'authenticity'. Custodians may refer to an art exhibition or a Welcome to Country ceremony.

As well as the meetings and other work involved in maintaining their public profile, Tribal people engage in projects involving the researching of genealogies and family histories, and participation in the projects of academics which may shed light on pre-historic Darug culture. These activities are all related to substantiating and supporting land claims.

Like the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, the Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation limits full membership to Darug descendants only. The wider community associated with the Tribal group are predominantly spouses and White academic supporters and are often non-Aboriginal. These people are eligible to be

associate members of the Tribal organisation. While non-Darug descendant Tribal people may participate in researching pre-historic Darug culture, they are excluded from any activity which could negatively impact on a native title claim. Thus they are excluded from most Tribal public representations.

Clearly, Darug Tribal deserves much more attention than I am able to provide in my thesis. The sociological details of the community's constitution, the details of the organisation of the Corporation, details concerning relations between the community and the dominant society are all areas for future research. Unfortunately, because of my close association with Custodians such research cannot be undertaken by me. Conducting research with Tribals would severely damage my relationships in Custodian society because, to some extent, I am a member (albeit an attenuated member) of the 'darug custodian' community. As I explained in Chapter One, and elaborate in Chapter Three, it is only as a community member that one can participate as a 'darug custodian' because the community only exists as an outcome of the collective practice of its members. These were the only terms on which I could conduct research at all. But Custodians do not attend Tribal meetings or participate in Tribal 'business' making my ability to also work with Tribal, from a Custodian point of view, impossible. Also, because I have already conducted research with Custodians and because I have close personal friends who are Custodians I am identified by Tribals as a Custodian supporter. I have already experienced the kinds of treatment that such an identity evokes from Tribals including non response to requests to conduct research, being shunned at functions and meetings, and having my name besmirched to my peers. As far as Tribals are concerned, rightly or wrongly, I am *persona non grata* and my ability to gain information concerning their community has

been effectively quashed.

Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation:

As I explained, the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation was incorporated shortly before the Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation. From the original number of about thirty Darug descendants who 'split' from *Darug Link* the number of Darug descendants has not changed significantly in twenty years. This is largely because most Darug descendants who are members of Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation are also members of one extended family. Most of the thirty Darug descendant members are closely related. They are the original people who split from *Darug Link*, and those people's children and grand-children. Over the twenty years since the formation of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation family members have passed away and others have grown into adult members of the organisation so numbers have not changed significantly since 1986. But, due to the deaths of older members there are, in fact, only six original Darug descendant Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation members who have survived since 1986, my main informant, Alma, being one of them.

Darug descendants and their spouses are the most long-term members and the most regular participants at monthly meetings. Associate members make up the largest part of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation and include spouses, friends and supporters who bring the total membership to about one hundred and fifty. Of these associate members about fifteen are spouses of Darug descendants, who are all either White settlers or immigrants, most notably Maori.

The vast majority of associate members, however, are Aboriginal peoples from other parts of New South Wales and Australia who now live on what is claimed by

Darug descendants as Darug land. As well as 'official' financial members of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation there are also about fifty people who are 'unfinancial', people who attend more than five community events or meetings of the Corporation per year, but who have not paid their \$AUD5 per annum membership fees, so cannot be registered as 'official' members.

All of the non-Darug Aboriginal members of the community now live in the Mount Druitt-Penrith area of Sydney. Many came to live in Sydney during the 1960s when the New South Wales Government terminated the Aboriginal mission and reserve policy closing many (but not all) of the so-called missions. People who had lived for generations on missions found themselves suddenly forced to operate as independent communities or to live in fringe communities on the edges of the White towns near the defunct missions. The response of many was to try their luck at finding work for themselves and education for their children in Sydney (or another large city). Some people already had family contacts in Sydney and places like Redfern and Waterloo became renowned as 'Aboriginal places' where newcomers would be cared for while they 'found their feet', a crucial support for people who had lived in small, close-knit communities.

Mount Druitt and other outer western suburbs were less well known as 'Aboriginal places', but recent 'social problems' have highlighted the significant Aboriginal population now in these areas. Many of the non-Darug Aboriginal people who have become 'darug custodians' made contact with the community through the Holy Family Catholic Centre at Laverton. Holy Family has, for many years, provided welfare and other social programs for local Indigenous peoples. As well as the provision of essential financial support to needy families, Holy Family provides an

Aboriginal art centre called the *Bunnil*⁴¹ Centre where local Aboriginal artists meet weekly to produce works for sale. It employs a number of local Aboriginal people to liaise with people in need. It also provides space, food and a free weekly bus service so that local Aboriginal people can meet socially at the centre. As well as all this, Holy Family provides performance space for plays, dance and ceremonies.

In 1998 Alma and her sisters were invited to Holy Family to perform *Welcome to Country* and were introduced as traditional Aboriginal owners of the land where Holy Family stands. On that occasion, a number of Aboriginal people approached the Darug women, expressed their strong emotions at being 'welcomed' onto Darug land by traditional owners and established an on-going relationship by inviting them to a number of functions to be held at Holy Family. I have since witnessed many Aboriginal peoples' responses to *Welcome to Country* by Darug descendants as highly emotionally charged - especially for those who now live on Darug land. It seems that there is something profoundly comforting for many Aboriginal people in having their presence recognised by traditional owners. This sense of comfort when living on 'someone else's land' seems to be increased when people join the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation as Fran, a Bunjalung woman now living at Mount Druitt explained:

Sydney can be a cold place for Aboriginal people.
It's a cold, hard place. Th' traditional owners warm it up
a bit. Bein' members of th' organisation, by helpin' Darug
people look after their land it doesn't stop us from bein'
ourselves. Doesn't take away our identity. I'm still a Bunjalung
woman. Jest means we've got a warm place 'ere.

VDO Lapar. 02.

⁴¹ A Darug word meaning 'sun'.

Since that first 'Welcome' some Aboriginal peoples who are or have been associated with Holy Family have also become associated with the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation. Some have been long-term members and attend meetings occasionally (once or twice a year). Others, although registered as members, never attend meetings. There is, however, a 'core' group of about twelve non-Darug Aboriginal people who are long-term members (although some are unfinancial) and regularly attend meetings (more than six per year).

I myself have been an associate member for six years and I am currently Public Officer. It is my role to receive correspondence, interpret that correspondence and explain its contents to full meetings of the organisation. Much of the correspondence addressed to the organisation is from government agencies (including federal, state and local representatives, schools, police, art galleries, museums and botanical gardens), private businesses, art dealers and local clubs which want to involve the community in certain projects such as providing art works, Darug language names to projects or buildings as well as *Welcome to Country* ceremonies. It is not my role to advise meetings as to what to do in response to requests from correspondents, but clearly, when interpreting the intent of these letters, phone calls and e-mails my own judgments will often have some influence. The issues are discussed by all those attending the meeting, however, and I am often asked further questions concerning details of the correspondence before decisions are made by members. I am then asked to draft replies to the correspondence which are then read to community leaders for their approval and either given back to me for amendment or sent by the secretary of the organisation who is a full member.

As well as correspondence, issues are often raised by members at meetings

which might involve, for example, a perceived misrepresentation of the community or an item involving the community in a newspaper, an advertisement or a government announcement. On a number of occasions members of the community have complained that senior Darug descendants have not been adequately acknowledged by government representatives at official functions. If directed by the committee, it is my job to write a letter to the newspaper, government body or other organisation on behalf of the community explaining the views of community members (see examples in appendix).

An example of this was when, at the opening night of a high profile art exhibition at Government House in Macquarie Street, Sydney, a non-Darug woman was invited to perform Welcome to Country in Alma's presence. I was also present and was surprised that many high profile Aboriginal people from other places were acknowledged but not Alma. I was approached by a number of people on the night who were outraged, including Alma, but she cautioned me to say and do nothing until after the next meeting of the organisation. At the meeting, members debated what the most appropriate response to the organisers of the event should be, and it was decided that I should compose a letter. The main points to be included in the letter were dictated to me at the meeting and the final draft was approved and sent by the committee. So, although I mediate, to some extent, between the community and interested parties outside the group, I am not autonomous in that role. I act very much under the direction of the committee.

I also edit the community newsletter. Like my role as Public Officer this is not an autonomous undertaking. I am sent complete articles and information to compose into articles by e-mail, telephone and letter by community members. It is not my job to

collect information directly, but to edit the material I am sent and to 'translate' it from Aboriginal English into standard English. This, of course, is never a straight forward, uncomplicated task. There is never a direct or 'objective' way for me to 'translate' the information sent to me. Aboriginal English is not always easily translated into standard English because some words and sentiments simply do not directly translate. As well as this, sometimes the sender conflates the information for the newsletter with personal information for me and I need to use my own judgment to separate what is news for 'everyone' and what was meant for me. Clearly, my own ideas and sentiments must necessarily be included in the newsletter articles to some extent (see appendix for an example of a newsletter and some of the material used to compose it).

Although 'darug custodians' are interested in academic research which sheds light on their cultural history, and enthusiastically participate in archaeological digs and other projects, they are far more concerned with the 'traditional' forms that their culture now takes. Custodians perform religious ceremonies with increasing frequency. They paint and tell 'stories' related to their dominant religious cult, the cult of *Baiame*⁴². They make public speeches in a version of their own 'language'⁴³. In other words, regardless of the consequences of native title claims (which are inevitably also Tribal claims), or of the criticism and even ridicule and hostility that such behaviour attracts from Tribal members, academics, lawyers and 'others' generally, Custodians will not relinquish what they now call their culture.

⁴² *Baiame* is a primary ancestor figure and his cult is practised by many Aboriginal communities in the south-east of the continent. I present some details of the cult as practised by 'darug custodians' in Chapter Eight.

⁴³ This 'language', as I describe in Chapter Seven, is more properly understood as ritual vocal action rather than an understandable language.

Another extremely problematic difference between Custodians and Tribals is that non-Darug members - including non-Aboriginal members - of the wider community participate, to some extent, in many of the Custodian 'traditional' Aboriginal practices. There are some activities which restrict full public participation to Darug descendants in order to maintain 'authenticity'. But all performances include at least some involvement of non-Darug community members if only in the preparations. This has the effect of maintaining if not a hierarchy, then particular kinds of boundaries between Darug and non-Darug community members by determining the extent of their participation in collective practices - especially those relating to Aboriginal traditions. While non-Darug community members participate in dancing, public speaking in a version of an Aboriginal 'language' and in art production, they *never* fully participate. This has the effect of guarding the 'authenticity' of representations that are presented as Darug. But, as I explain further in Chapter Three, it also has the effect of creating a system of ranking. With reference to the production of art, for example, during my fieldwork, non-Darug Aboriginal people and even non-Aboriginal community members participated in collecting materials for the production of art works and engaged in telling and listening to the stories related to particular objects, people and places. They also engaged in the sale and marketing of the works. Although some non-Darug community members, including Aboriginal non-Darug people paint and make artifacts their works are never sold as *Darug* works, even though they are often produced in exactly the same way, using the same materials, employing similar styles and within the same social milieu. My description of funeral rites in Chapter Eight shows that non-Darug community members can be included in 'private'⁴⁴ ceremony as full

⁴⁴ A ceremony prepared for community members as opposed to those specifically prepared for White audiences.

participants, some with more authority than younger, less knowledgeable Darug people. This has the (rather ironic) impact of making sympathetic associate members of the community 'other' to Darug descendants. Their status helps to maintain a sense of boundary separating the status of Darug descendants from others. I say more about this in Chapter Three.

Boundaries between Darug and non-Darug community members' participation in collective practices are more likely to matter when the judgment of 'outsiders' is an issue. Two inter-related boundaries are then affirmed. Firstly, the boundary between Darug and non-Darug and the boundary between public and private. Within the community, in private, the boundary between Darug and non-Darug is not always pronounced in the ways in which it is outside the community. White and non-Darug Aboriginal 'darug custodians' often fully participate in ceremony, can dance, can paint, can tell stories. In public, the boundary between Darug and non-Darug is much more rigidly enforced. Non-Darug 'darug custodians' *never* fully participate as community members in public. This is a boundary between public and private domains, which community members seem to impose on themselves for political rather than cultural reasons. *A propos* outsiders, these boundaries are imposed to protect the 'authenticity' of Darug descendants and their claims. It seems that both Darug and non-Darug community members, at this moment in their emergence as a collective, are concerned to assert, maintain and reproduce narratives concerning the 'authenticity' of Darug descendant community members. This is done by making Darug descendants a privileged category within the group and has the effect of creating a status system.

'darug custodians'

This chapter provides a history of the conditions which precipitated the 'ethnogenesis' of Darug descendants. It also examines the ways that Darug descendants have divided into different social and cultural groups since their emergence. I argue that it is on the 'ethnogenesis' of Darug descendants that the identity of 'darug custodians' depends, but they are not solely Darug descendants. Non Darug descendant 'darug custodians' engage in relationships with Darug descendants which recognise Darug descendants as 'people of the land': those descended from the ancestral spirits of the land. It is through this relationship that non Darug descendants can themselves become 'of' Darug land.

'darug custodians' are both part of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, but different from it. Although members of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation engage in traditional cultural activities⁴⁵, which are not the kinds of prescribed behaviour that the state and various dominant discourses generally expect of urban Aboriginal peoples, they do comply with state rules concerning the constitution and administration of the Corporation. In this they do toe the state line. But, as I explain in Chapter Three, it is a different matter for the wider community connected with the Corporation. They do not comply with all of its rules and they do not define themselves solely in terms demanded by the Corporation.

⁴⁵ The expectations of the state, of White people, is a complex and changing state of affairs precisely because as I discuss in Chapters Six and Seven 'darug custodians' are asked to do dances, make speeches and participate in state occasions as representatives of 'traditional Aboriginality'. That is, they are expected to have language, culture and tradition, not just lack, loss, nothing.

Chapter Three

Community

'And the moral of that is - 'Be what you would seem to be' - or, if you'd like it put more simply - 'Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.'

Lewis Carroll (1968:99)

In this chapter I tease out the distinctive ways in which the 'darug custodian' community is constituted and the unusual ways in which 'darug custodians' are bound. Recognition of the 'darug custodian' community requires rejecting the more conventional idea of 'community' as static, immutably bounded and singular. It is necessary to think about the multiple forms that 'communities' can take in one person's life. It is also necessary to recognise the ways in which community is not truly an entity, is not fixed in time, place or constitution, although it is none-the-less experienced as such by those participating in its social world (Gupta and Ferguson 1987, Clifford 1988, Bhaba 1989). I do not understand myself, for example, as a member of one, homogeneous, unchanging 'Australian community'. My associations are flexible and fluid, I identify with innumerable communities of peoples in a wide range of contexts. My associations with some 'communities' are mutually exclusive to my membership with others. For example, at some level, I identify as a colleague at the University where I teach and study. This association is not something that I advertise when I engage in the uncomplicated pleasures of supporting my son's local football team. Here, I want to be identified as 'one of the mums' and engage in relationships based on our brief encounters as a community with the narrow focus of

watching our sons enjoy their sport and the shared meanings arising from this activity. It is not the place for discussing the socially controversial details of my work, and I am sure that my work colleagues would be generally less than excited by a detailed account of the weekend's game. This example of multiple 'communities' includes complicated symbolic systems of shared meanings, knowledges and practices.

Strategies used by the 'darug custodian' community can also be understood in the terms that Benedict Anderson (1991) made famous. These strategies include the ability of 'darug custodians', who are an otherwise disparate people who do not live in geographic proximity to each other, to imagine themselves to be bound in particular ways, and to imagine their fellow 'darug custodians' to be leading 'darug custodian' lives in simultaneous time. According to Benedict Anderson (1991:6):

In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.

The ways in which a given community is imagined however, depends on how the imaginary is represented and communicated. Anderson describes the uses of various kinds of texts as media between people within a nation state as both an expression and a material connection between the constituents of an 'imagined community'. He also argues that texts, such as novels and newspapers in modern Western nations are not only media as communication, but are also media as commodities which support the primacy of capitalism in these states. Anderson's (1991) argument is convincing as a theory of community especially at the macro level, but also for thinking about the ways in which 'darug custodians' 'stay in touch' through meetings, newsletters and e-mail.

Arjun Appadurai (2002) insists that the modern world needs new ways to theorise what is a 'strikingly new' interactive system. The power of print capitalism in Anderson's terms was only the beginning of the kinds of new technologies - the speed of travel, mobile telephones, e-mail - which now allow for an unprecedented freedom from face-to-face communication between people who may be imagined in various ways to be related. Appadurai (2002:49) wants to bring together the old Frankfurt School idea of images (especially mechanically reproduced images), Anderson's imagined community, and the Durkheimian concept of *imaginaire* as a constructed landscape of hopes and desires, and represent these imaginaries through modern media.

Appadurai's and Anderson's understanding of community as primarily imaginary is important for my purposes, but it must be also be remembered that community is not only 'imagined', but grounded in enacted social relations among people in 'the flesh'. The extent to which community is imagined is thus variable and this variation influences the nature of the 'imaginary' process. Many 'darug custodian' articulations of group identity are performative and representational and Anderson's and Appadurai's conceptualisations of community disrupt ideas of connectedness needing to be based on genetic, 'racial', geographic or 'natural' relatedness. Yet, as I said in Chapter Two, it must also be recognised that 'darug custodians' actually *do* understand a fundamental element of their connectedness to be genetic, at least as far as all members' relationships with Darug descendants are concerned. That is, Darug descendants living today *must* be able to prove their genetic relatedness to Aboriginal people who lived in what is now called Sydney before 1788. This is the fundamental basis of their claim to being Darug. Non-Darug descendant members do

not need to be *genetically* related either to each other or to Darug descendants, but they must be *socially* related to Darug descendants and each other - they must recognise the traditional Aboriginal ownership of darug descendants and participate as members of the 'darug custodian' community - to count as 'darug custodians',

Different Kinds of 'darug custodians'

The next section of the thesis depicts and analyses the constitution of the 'darug custodian' community. But, unless I resort to some rather artificial ways of segmenting community members into 'groups' this will be an impossible task. I think it is misleading to separate 'darug custodians' into three groups because the people who constitute each group are quite different from each other. However, by 'putting' people into 'categories', it is possible to present the reader with a *sense* of the kinds of people who have become 'darug custodians' and the social conditions which have shaped those people. Analysis of their social formation does shed light on processes which might have strengthened people's motivations to become 'darug custodians' in the first place as well as their on-going commitment to the community. 'darug custodians' themselves may not always 'group' members in these sorts of terms at all, although they may sometimes. In other words, the reader should bear in mind that although there are some quite striking similarities there are some equally striking differences within the 'categories' I present. These 'groups' are 1. Darug descendants, 2. spouses of Darug descendants, and 3. associate members who are not spouses of Darug descendants. The people within the last 'category' are perhaps most problematically grouped together. This group comprises White middle class supporters who are not, in some important ways, *really* community members at all as I describe in more detail below, Maori extended family members of Darug spouses,

including children from previous Maori marriages; and non-Darug Aboriginal peoples originally from places other than Sydney. Some of these people are not 'financial' members of the Corporation, but attend more than five community events and/or meetings of the Corporation per year. All of the figures I present are approximate, and subject to constant change as people move into and out of the community. In order to make my analysis clearer for the reader I have further 'sub-divided' this last 'category' into groups which I think may have more in common than others. That is, I have distinguished White middle class associate members who are not Darug spouses, Maori who are not Darug spouses and non-Darug Aboriginal associate members who are not Darug spouses. Arguably, of these 'sub-categories', it is non-Darug Aboriginal associate members who are not Darug spouses who have least in common with each other. Many people in this category have come to Sydney from country towns in New South Wales to seek employment and education within the last thirty years, others have recently come from remote areas including Arnhem Land and Far North Queensland, while still others have lived in the Mount Druitt-Pennrith area for generations.

Darug descendants

There are about thirty adult Darug descendant members of the 'darug custodian' community. Most are closely related to each other as members of the same extended family. The oldest living generation of the dominant family group were among those who split from *Darug Link*. As well as this original family, there are Darug descendant individuals who are community members who originally either split from *Darug Link* or are descended from some of those who did.

Occasionally other Darug descendants who have been informed of their

descent by Kohen come to meetings and gatherings. In my experience, however, these people have not usually participated as long-term community members. Few newly identified Darug descendants become community members. This could be due to the enormous time commitment that is required of members as I explain further below. It could also have something to do with the 'closed shop' atmosphere that is created when one or two extended family groups dominate an organisation and a community. Some have also left the community because of the many frustrations that arise from negotiating their identity in contentious conditions where conflict often arises between members concerning the 'proper' (most appropriate and/or 'traditional') way to conduct cultural practices and the most appropriate participants in those practices as I explain later in this chapter. However, the 'darug custodian' Darug descendant population has remained fairly stable numerically over the last twenty-five years because Darug have tended to have large families which have so far been able to replace those who have passed away, moved away from Darug land or left the community for whatever reason.

Most Darug descendant members of the community are either retired, unemployed or work for, or on behalf of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation. There are some who are qualified teachers or have some other professional qualification, but at present, even these people have chosen to work part-time or not at all so that they can contribute to the significant amount of work required to 'be darug custodian'. Being 'darug custodian' requires attending meetings, not just of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, but local government, state government, federal government, meetings concerning land claims and meetings with various committees concerning the planning and organisation of events to which 'darug custodians' may contribute. It also requires attendance at events organised by others

and those organised by the community for the community. It means contributing to these events by performing certain aspects of ceremony including speech making, producing paintings for art exhibitions, and performing dance. At this stage of the community's development it requires a considerable time and energy commitment to be a fully contributing member. In other words, being a Darug descendant 'darug custodian' is a vocation as well as an identity.

As well as the work required to be a 'darug custodian', the Corporation, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, sub-contracts members and associate members as labour on archaeological digs and to conduct surveys on the significance of land under proposal by private developers and government for development. This work, although well paid, is not reliable. Digs may last some months, sometimes two or three are happening at the same time, and then again, there may be no digs at all for a number of months. People who have no alternative employment consequently need to rely on government welfare from time to time.

This unreliability of work also results in an unreliability of workers. It is mostly younger members and associate members who take advantage of the work provided by digs as it is hard physical labour often beyond the capabilities of older or infirm people. These young people often have children and other financial responsibilities and need to resort to other forms of income if digs become irregular, and so they are often unavailable when digs do begin again.

That the Corporation can provide employment for members is vital both for the sustainability of the Corporation and for the members concerned. Indeed, some associate members have told me that they originally joined the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation because of the employment it offers. Sam, the son of the Maori spouse of a Darug descendant from a previous relationship explained:

If it wasn't for the organisation I'd be back in gaol.
No-one else'd give me a job. Couldn't get a job
before I went to gaol. Maybe that's why I was in there
in the first place eh? No, I joined up just so I could
work. I didn't promise anything else.

FNCR0903

I asked if he felt comfortable belonging to an Aboriginal organisation and being
employed by archaeologists who assumed that workers were Aboriginal.

I've got no worries because Darug people haven't
got any worries. They're happy to have m'help. I turn up
every day. I work hard. They have trouble getting people
to turn up and work hard. It works for us both.

FNCR0903.

So as well as attracting new members, the provision of employment is a vital
community service. Most people who work on the digs are otherwise unemployed and
some find employment outside the community difficult because of personal histories
which include imprisonment, substance dependancy, mental illness and some other
conditions.

The Corporation also acts as a contact for government departments, agencies,
schools or private organisations that want to employ Aboriginal dancers. The dance
troupe *Bunda Bunya Miumba*⁴⁶ which is constituted by community members is
regularly contracted through the Corporation. The Corporation also acts in this way
for those requesting Welcome to Country⁴⁷ ceremonies, and this makes it the hub of
the community providing culturally appropriate employment and support for members.

Because the 'darug custodian' community is small and is not self-sustaining,

⁴⁶ I say more about *Bunda Bunya Miumba* in Chapter Six.

⁴⁷ I explain the significance of *Welcome to Country* in Chapter Seven.

Darug descendant members, like all its members, must also belong and contribute to various other, 'non-darug custodian' communities which are part of the wider Australian society. These include school as parents or students, sporting communities, the neighbourhood community in which they live and various other White dominated communities. They shop in suburban supermarkets, ride local buses and trains, drink in local bars and clubs, and play sport in teams of predominantly non-Aboriginal players. In many of these communities Darug descendants experience discrimination. In some of them, for example, school communities, Darug descendants are sometimes marked out (even if positively by giving them extra services) as Aboriginal and this often has the effect of marginalising them from the dominant group⁴⁸. As well as often being identified by White communities as Aboriginal for the purposes of benefits, Darug descendants are proud of their Indigenous status and often identify themselves as Aboriginal. Even if such identification results in negative discrimination and in alienation from their work and in social dealings with the dominant society as it often does, Darug descendants are very vocal and teach their children to be vocal in declaring their Aboriginality. This is despite the fact that many Darug descendants do not look Aboriginal and could 'pass' as White.

The kinds of discrimination Darug descendants face, consequently, more often depend on what they say and how they behave than on how they look. One of Alma's grand-daughters explained that the reason she was in fights at school was because school mates refused to equate her 'white' looks with her Aboriginality:

⁴⁸ I present some specific examples of this in Chapter Four.

I don' care what they think of me. But if they say I'm a liar
'bout bein' Aboriginal I'll biff 'em. After what Nan went fru [through],
an' all our people went fru ... not bein' able to say they was
Aboriginal. I'm standin' up 'n' tellin' everyone I'm Darug.

KM0504.

Some Darug descendant 'darug custodians' try to operate in non-Darug Aboriginal communities as well as White communities. Some such Aboriginal communities recognise Darug descendant 'darug custodians' as traditional Aboriginal owners and accord them the respect that living on Darug land often elicits from Aboriginal peoples from other places. Others, who are embroiled in intra-Darug politics, may only recognise Tribal members as traditional Aboriginal owners and snub Custodians. The Aboriginal art community in Sydney, however, largely shuns Darug descendant art as 'inauthentic' making it necessary for Darug descendant 'darug custodian' artists to exhibit independently of other Aboriginal artists. These conflicts are very complex and interesting and warrant future research.

As well as adult Darug descendants there are about thirty Darug descendant children from babies to adolescents who regularly participate in community life. Although these children are ineligible to be members of the Corporation until they turn eighteen, meetings of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation are often used as opportunities to teach skills, language and protocol to them and adults new to the community. This is done before and after meetings when tea is served and people break up into informal groups. Meetings are often held at Alma and Kevin's house⁴⁹ which is set on five acres at Oakville in Sydney's west with room to run and throw

⁴⁹ But are also held at significant sites for Darug people such as Euroka Clearing in the Blue Mountains. I say more about Euroka Clearing in Chapter Eight.

spears and boomerangs⁵⁰. 'Bush tucker' including yams, bush tomatoes and geebungs⁵¹ are propagated on the block and native bees are kept in a hollow log for sugar bag⁵² so that more knowledgeable members can teach the less knowledgeable about traditional food and medicine sources. Meetings used to be held in a large shed on the property until Kevin built an extension on the house especially for them and converted a garage into an art gallery come class-room. The shed is now used by knowledgeable people to teach fellow members how to make artifacts, and the art gallery is used to display community art work to visitors and to teach 'language'⁵³.

Darug descendant children are allowed to be full participants in all ceremonial occasions, paint 'dot paintings', some dance in the dance troupe and some publicly speak a version of Darug language at *Welcome to Country* ceremonies.

Without Darug descendants the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation and the 'darug custodian' community could not exist. But without the Corporation and the community, it would be very difficult for Darug descendants to exist. To begin with, without the Corporation, 'darug custodian' Darug descendants would not be included in the category 'The Darug People' in land claims made by Tribal because they would not be recognised by the state as Darug at all⁵⁴. Furthermore, without the wider 'darug custodian' community it is very unlikely that 'darug custodian' Darug

⁵⁰ Alma and Kevin's conspicuous prosperity in contrast to other community members comes from Kevin's interstate trucking business (see Chapter Four).

⁵¹ A small mango shaped fruit which grows on the geebung tree, is a kind of acacia. The bark can be soaked in water to make an infusion with similar properties to aspirin.

⁵² Very sweet native bee honey.

⁵³ I say more about 'Darug language' in Chapter Seven.

⁵⁴ The majority of Darug descendants identified by Kohen are not recognised as Darug because they do not belong to a Darug organisation.

descendants have the numbers to sustain an on-going identity separate from Tribal or any of the non-Darug communities to which they belong. It would be very difficult for them to administer and maintain the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation and it would be virtually impossible for them to maintain their public profile through dancing and various other cultural practices. Most importantly, without the wider 'darug custodian' community, Darug descendants would have a difficult time asserting and reproducing their status as traditional Aboriginal owners. This difficulty would not only arise from not being party to land claims, but by not being able to organise public assertions of their claims such as *Welcome to Country*. It would also be difficult for them to maintain their morale without the constant moral and material support provided by non-Darug descendant community members. Non-Darug descendant community members depend on Darug descendants' status as traditional Aboriginal owners to ground their own identity as custodians of Darug land and culture. They work hard, as I explain below, to provide the means and the support for Darug descendants to make their claims publicly. They also constantly assert and afford respect⁵⁵ to Darug descendants as traditional Aboriginal owners reinforcing and affirming that status and identity as the foundation of the community. Thus, two kinds of 'oppositional' relationship are important for 'darug custodians': one 'external' and antagonistic, at least in some sense, and the other 'internal' and celebratory. But non-Darug Aboriginal members also, as I explain later in this chapter, challenge the ways that things are done in the community by drawing comparisons with the ways in which things are (or were) done in their communities of origin. This makes it necessary for all community members to engage in debates which involve defending, justifying and

⁵⁵ This does not mean, however, that all interactions between Darug descendant community members and non-Darug descendant members are without conflict.

negotiating their practices. This is productive in making people consider some previously taken for granted behaviours in more reflexive and self-conscious ways. It means that people need to more clearly and more fully articulate what they do and the meaning of what they do in relation to others within the community.

It has always been the case during my association with the community that Darug descendant leaders have made certain claims about the meaning of certain behaviours as people have tried to 'work out' who they are as a group and how they can best be together. This often occurs at ceremonies, dances and speeches when an act, such as a particularly well executed dance move for example, will be analysed as meaning that 'darug custodian' dance is developing to an unprecedented level of expertise. Leaders will often praise dancers as 'the best in Sydney' and make claims that membership of the community dance troupe imbues dancers with prestige as dancers and community members. This has the double-sided effect of affirming membership of the community and emphasising the benefits of commitment to the community.

This kind of discourse within the group has redoubled, however, with the relatively recent influx of non-Darug Aboriginal members, some of whom are considered to be 'cultural experts' due to their seniority in their 'home' communities. Some non-Darug Aboriginal members are in positions to judge the performances of Darug cultural forms in relation to those of other Aboriginal groups from the perspective of having been participants or observers in other Aboriginal cultural practices. Sometimes, non-Darug Aboriginal members do not agree with the judgments made by Darug leaders. Sometimes, when a Darug leader praises a dance performance, for example, a non-Darug Aboriginal dance 'expert' may suggest that some changes may improve the performance, or claim that more successful out-

comes are achieved by dancing on a different surface, or using different music. This kind of interjection is only tolerated if it comes from very senior people who have demonstrated both their cultural expertise and their long term commitment to the 'darug custodian' community. If Darug leaders ultimately agree with the judgment of a non-Darug cultural expert, then changes may be made and the performance will be said to have been improved by instigating the expert's suggestion. If, however, Darug leaders do not agree then the suggestion is ignored and the performance is said to be excellent without change. Although senior non-Darug Aboriginal members have prestige in the community it is always ultimately Darug leaders who make decisions concerning the form and content of cultural practices. Darug leaders' judgments are always respected by non-Darug Aboriginal members (although not always without conflict). This has the effect of making an emerging status hierarchy more visible.

Spouses of Darug descendants

About fifteen people who are partners of Darug descendants are also associate members of the Corporation and participants in most aspects of community life. Darug descendants, their partners and their children are the most regular attendees at meetings and other gatherings. Most partners of Darug descendants are White settler males and all are adults, mostly between the ages of thirty-five and sixty-five.

The children of White spouses of Darug 'darug custodians' are considered, by them and the rest of the community, to be Darug. In this way, White 'darug custodian' spouses are connected to Aboriginal community members by 'blood'. All fifteen of the White partners of Darug descendants have told me that they came from 'working class' families, most of which are long time settlers in Sydney's western suburbs. When considering their family background, 'working class' seems to mean both a

Weberian idea of unequal power in the market place, and a Marxian concept of 'relations of production'. That is, they come from family backgrounds that they regard as both poor and low status. Interestingly, all of these people still identify as 'working class' even though a few, like Kevin, are quite affluent and some are independent contractors rather than wage employees (see Table Two). When considering their own class positions in the present, they seem to be using a social rather than economic concept of class to perhaps more closely identify with the low status of their Aboriginal partners and children in relation to the dominant society.

Many of the fathers of White spouses of Darug descendants were farm or builder's labourers, some worked on the New South Wales railroads and main roads as unskilled workers, some did not know their fathers, and one suspects that his father was a criminal. Many came from large families of six or more children and most of their mothers did not work outside the home. The education level of this 'group' of 'darug custodians' is below year 10 (see Table 2). Many told me that finishing school as early as possible was a priority so that they could either contribute to the family income or become independent. When I asked people in this group where their families originally came from most claimed Irish descent, a few English, and many suspect, but cannot prove Aboriginal descent.

All of the people in this 'category' of White partners to Darug spouses told me that their families were, at least initially, unhappy about their marriage to an Aboriginal partner. Kevin explained:

We 'ad nothin'. Nothin'. Me dad run off b'fore any of us knew anythin' about it. Left mum with ten of us ta feed. I was on th' road workin' at thirteen. But at first mum thought we was too good for Alma. I 'ad ta run off ta be with her.

The partner of one of Kevin and Alma's daughters, also a White settler man, thirty seven years old and an interstate truck driver remembered his family's reaction to his marriage:

Oh, ya woulda thought we was the royal family! Th' carry on.
'Ow we gunna tell ya grandma?', 'What'll the neighbours think?',
'What if ya 'ave kids - they'll be black!'. We don't 'ave too much
to do with 'em now & that suits everyone fine.

FNGM022002.

It seems from my enquiries that most White settler partners of Darug descendants came from impoverished working class backgrounds. One person even described his background as 'white trash'. But still, it seems that most partners' families and the social circles their families moved in considered their association with Aboriginal people to be a shameful step down from their social position. Gillian Cowlishaw (2004:118) argues that in some communities it can mean a sort of social death where the White spouse is considered to become Black by association and is no longer considered part of the White community. She goes on to say that marriages between Whites and Aboriginal people often lead to severance from one of the families of origin. White 'darug custodians' I have spoken with have affirmed this and added that in their cases the severance has always been from the White family.

It appears that White 'darug custodians' who married Aboriginal spouses before the advent of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation shared their partner's sense of a generic Aboriginality that produced alienation, not only from their

family of origin, but from the dominant Australian society. Kevin explained that it was a life where not only Alma's, but his own difference from the dominant society was constantly invoked by Whites:

They was good days on th' road. We'd load up the truck, pile in all six kids 'n' orf we'd go. We'd camp with Aboriginal people near th' river wherever we could. With six little black kids runnin' around we was never welcome anywheres where there was whitefullas. We bought a block of land up Kingscliff [on the border of NSW and Queensland] once, but we 'ad ta sell it cause when th' neighbours seen me kids 'n' missus we knew it was a matter of time b'fore we was run outta town. So we got in first 'n' came 'ome ta Sydney.

FNAW022002.

Since the mid 1980's, however, the situation has changed for Darug descendants and their spouses. The identification of Darug descendants by Kohen and their subsequent public recognition by the Australian state marked a very important turning point in the lives of all those who now identify as 'darug custodians'. Kevin and all the other previously marginalised White partners of Darug descendants now share in some of the new-found public recognition - even celebrity - of their spouses. This came about as a result of the incorporation of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, the emergence of the 'darug custodian' community and the public representations that community members make within the contexts of multiculturalism, land rights and native title. With these things has come a new public appreciation for and awareness of Indigenous peoples and their claims. They and their partners have been invited to public events including the 2000 Olympic Games, to the Governor of New South Wales' reception for Indigenous peoples and to perform *Welcome to Country* during the Queen's baton relay for the 2006 Commonwealth Games. They are still invited to art exhibition openings and various other receptions

and openings as 'official guests'. Suddenly, not just White society, but the cream of White society want to be seen shaking 'darug custodian' hands and having their photos taken beside them. White spouses still suffer the everyday marginalisation and 'authenticity' problems of their Darug partners, but membership of the community now gives them a kind of public status in White society which was undreamt of until very recently.

As I have said, most White Darug spouses are men. This is not only because, as Cowlishaw (2004:118) explains, gender and racial hierarchies are preserved, where the man's superior 'racial' status is supported by his gender status, but simply because there are more female Darug descendants who are members of the community than men. One reason for this is because women have out-lived men. There are currently only seven adult male Darug descendants who are members and these men are all between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five. The children of these men are not yet over eighteen years old and thus not eligible to be members of the Corporation, and their male Darug elders have passed away. There are, in short, no surviving males from the oldest generation of Darug descendants. There are some male Darug descendants who are members of the dominant family, but are not community members. For example, in one family with four adult sons only two participate as members of the community. This may be because, as I have said, the time and energy commitment required to be a member is prohibitive for many people, particularly for people who need to earn an income outside of the community to support families. This is the case for the two siblings I cite above who are not community members. One is a truck driver and the other is a hotel employee and both are married with children. All of the Darug descendant males who are members of the community are otherwise unemployed, and all are currently single. All those

who have been married were married to White women. This may indicate that White female partners of Aboriginal men are generally more intolerant of Aboriginal culture than White male partners, but this may not be a reasonable inference because the numbers are so small. What can be said is that the partners of Darug descendant men have not tolerated long term unemployment and the largely unpaid dedication of their former partners to community affairs.

Most Darug descendant women, on the other hand, have been or are currently in long term relationships with non-Aboriginal partners. Arguably this support from their spouses allows women to be more active and effective community members. The moral support is supplemented by material support. Most White male spouses of Darug descendants are employed in jobs outside of the community. They do not work for the Corporation on archaeological digs, and do not rely on making incomes from community enterprises. In most 'darug custodian' families where the female partner is a Darug descendant it is the White or Maori male spouse who provides the income that allows other family members to devote their time to community involvement; they can afford to do the large amounts of unpaid work required of community members. The most common employment among this 'group' is interstate truck driving, building construction work and road construction work. Of these only four or five, including Kevin who is now retired, are independent contractors and they all appear to be relatively prosperous when compared with Aboriginal members of the community.

At present only one partner of a Darug descendant woman is Maori. He and about ten other Maori associate members are afforded special status as Indigenous people by 'darug custodians'. They occasionally participate as associate members of the Corporation and attend ceremonial gatherings, but they are much more active members in their own community affairs and often include 'darug custodians' in Maori

celebrations, ceremonies and rituals. Their experience in New Zealand has led Maori 'darug custodians' to explain at Darug gatherings that achieving and maintaining recognition is an on-going project for Darug people. Maori have proven to be invaluable sources of inspiration and support for the community. Also, as Indigenous people, the Maori who are now associated with 'darug custodians' insist on acknowledging the traditional Aboriginal owners of the place where they now live at all of their formal gatherings. This has the effect of not only honouring and supporting Darug claims, but of providing a moral grounding for Maori who now inhabit Darug land. The scope of my research has not allowed for the collection of data relating to the constitution and organisation of Maori communities in the western suburbs of Sydney, but clearly, future research in this area would be valuable.

As well as these qualities Maori have a special appreciation for what it means for Indigenous peoples to inhabit urban areas. Over eighty percent of Maori live in New Zealand's cities. By the end of the 1980s Maori had regained a treaty right to a share of New Zealand's lucrative commercial fisheries but the New Zealand government and Maori have struggled ever since to find ways to appropriately distribute the approximately \$US350 million in fisheries assets that have been held for factions of retribalised and urban Maori since 1992 (Webster 2002:341). Legislation promoting tribes (*iwi*) and other traditionalist concepts has meant that the numbers of *iwi* that qualify as tribal organisations for the purposes of compensation for the misappropriation of fishing rights since 1840 represent a tiny proportion of Maori. Larger urban and other Maori organisations, on the other hand, are not recognised as tribes and are therefore excluded from claiming compensation. This has all taken place amid the Maori cultural revival movement, *Maoritanga*, which was led from the

1970s by groups of urban students and workers who were strongly influenced by the American civil rights movement (Sissons 2005:76). *Maoritanga* has produced a respect for and pride in traditional Maori values, but clearly has not resulted in any significant economic changes for urban Maori although it has significantly benefited a minority of Maori who have retained a tribal lifestyle in remote areas (Webster 2004:341).

Sissons (2005:71) argues that in New Zealand and elsewhere Indigenous traditional cultural movements such as *Maoritanga* can be understood as an urban politics of relocation. Concerns including loss of language and culture, structural racism, alienation of Indigenous youth, family breakdown, substance abuse and imprisonment, to name a few, are highlighted by urbanisation. *Maoritanga* has proven a powerful influence providing urban Maori with a sense of pride, dignity and hope for the future which sustains a traditional urban Maori cultural identity. Sissons (ibid.) cites, as another example, the American Indian Movement (AIM) which emerged from the alienation experienced by the children of Indigenous Americans who relocated to urban centres like Minneapolis in the 1950s. 'darug custodians' have been reproducing their own version of these phenomena as their own cultural 'renaissance' since the mid 1980s. I am not sure, however, judging from my own first contact with the community, that initially there was a strong awareness that Indigenous peoples in other parts of the world were doing the 'same thing'. In fact, when a team of 'darug custodian' soccer players returned from an international Indigenous soccer competition in Canada in 1999, some seemed to perceive Inuit, Cree and other Native American representations to be more 'authentic', better preserved and more highly recognised than their own. Gale, one of Alma's daughters told me that:

We was embarrassed! All them Indian people have so much more culture than us. It felt like they was lookin' at us 'n' thinkin' that we weren't really Aboriginal.

NM052000.

Fears similar to Gale's were expressed to me by many 'darug custodians' in different contexts in the early years of my association with the community. This indicates that many 'darug custodians' may have been unaware that the plight of Darug descendants as unrecognised urban Indigenous people who are ineligible for state compensation for past losses is by no means unique. They also appeared to be unaware that many Indigenous groups' cultural practices are a result of recent processes of (re)emergence rather than on-going traditions. They were clearly unaware that Huron in Quebec, for example, struggle for recognition in ways very similar to 'darug custodians'. Roosens (1989:20) reveals how Huron, like Darug, were able to create a self conscious people, emanating from a very few 'scraps' of cultural relics of a Native American past. Also like Darug descendants, Hurons were only minimally different from the culture of French Canadians and deliberately set about developing a Huron counter culture. But, unlike 'darug custodian' Darug descendants, Huron have a 'homeland', they have a reserve that they gained through political activism and are now recognised as a powerful Indigenous group in Canada. Also, regardless of the amount of intermarriage between French Canadians, other Europeans and Huron over time, it must be assumed from Roosens' account that most of those who claim Huron identity have *some* biological grounds on which to make that claim. 'darug custodians', in contrast, ground their identity as a group on the biological claims of the tiny minority of Darug descendants.

Lumbee in North Carolina (cf Blu 1989, Sider 2003 reprinted) also bear some

striking similarities with as well as differences from the cultural emergence of 'darug custodians'. Lumbee, like Darug descendants, were not recognised as Indigenous people until recently. Lumbee, although of 'mixed' Native American, European and African heritage, were classified in 1835 as 'free persons of colour' and later as 'free Negroes' (Blu 1989:3). That is, unlike Darug descendants, although Lumbee claims to Indigeneity were not recognised, their difference from White society was. Lumbee actively refused to accept the Black classification imposed on them by Whites and paved the way for other Indigenous groups in North Carolina (Blu 1989:5). They did this, Blu (ibid.) claims, through political activism more than through strategic traditional cultural practices. That is, they deliberately changed the image of Native Americans from feather wearing, bead working, horse riding and teepee dwelling to politically active and modern. As well as already being recognised at least as a 'group', there are 30,000-40,000 people who are today legally designated as Lumbee. They are the fifth largest Native American group in the United States and even if their claims to services through the Bureau of Indian Affairs are not recognised because they have never had a reservation, Lumbee have become increasingly politically active in pan-Native American affairs and have considerable influence through weight of numbers alone (Blu:1989:1).

The story of Alutiiq (cf Clifford 2004) cultural revival in Alaska also bears similarities to and differences from the 'darug custodian' story. Urban dwelling Alutiiq had been dispersed between various regional Indigenous Corporations and were unsure of their status or identity until they enrolled under the Alaska Native Claims and Settlement Act 1971 (ANCSA). Like the Land Rights (NT) Act 1976 and the later Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993 in Australia, the ANCSA made it pay to be Indigenous in Canada, perhaps for the first time (Clifford 2004:7). After a history of

similar intense disruption and trauma as Darug descendants - and arguably most 'darug custodians' - the process of ANCSA provided a renewed sense of Indigenous identity for Alutiiq. New cultural productions based on remembered or newly revived traditional practices blossomed addressing diverse local regional, state and international audiences. According to Clifford's account, Alutiiq, like 'darug custodians', have renegotiated traditions for new situations. Equally analogous with the 'darug custodian' situation, Clifford describes an apparent Alutiiq lack of concern with definitive origins and clear ethnic borders, he argues that 'they were privileging one part of their genetic and cultural background and underplaying others' (Clifford 2004:25). But again, Alutiiq represents significant populations of people who live in a number of different urban centres and non-urban areas and, although they have so far been unsuccessful as claimants under ANCSA, they must be recognised as a political force.

It appears, from the literature cited above, that perhaps the most pervasive difference between the situation of 'darug custodians' and other unrecognised Indigenous peoples who have been engaged in processes of cultural renaissance, are that the 'darug custodian' community is extremely small to take on such an enormous task and that it includes proportionally large numbers of different peoples who do not claim genetic linkage to the cultural practices they enact, to the people who claim to 'own' those practices, or to the country to which those practices are linked. But as well as these important differences there are some equally important similarities. The similarities include an original 'disappearance' brought about by state policies that did not recognise Indigenous groups who had prolonged contact with non-Indigenous groups; social, economic and cultural losses; recent state policies that have allowed for a (re)emergence of these groups as 'a people' (but only if they can validate their

identities by proving their Indigenous origins), and recent on-going projects of cultural 'renaissance'.

'darug custodians', however, do not generally read anthropological texts, and their awareness of these similarities and differences, as I said, did not seem to be well developed when I first met them. And, although I might have been able to offer some insights, my advice is generally only sought on issues concerning communications with government and other White power brokers. As a middle class White person my involvement in 'Indigenous concerns' is often limited within the community as I describe later in this chapter. So 'darug custodians' awareness of the stories of other Indigenous peoples has needed to come from other, more appropriate sources. The first Maori partner came into the community in 2000, and I think that since then 'darug custodians' have become more conscious of the global significance of their cultural practices. This, of course, is not only because of the influence and support of Maori within the group, but is also a result of wider contact with other Indigenous peoples through various advances in media technology including the world wide web and videos, a more confident and organised approach taken by many Indigenous political groups in recent years and greater support for Indigenous political movements from Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists. These forces have produced a growing awareness for 'darug custodians' of the remarkably similar ways in which urban Indigenous consciousness is manifested in all post-settler states. As 'darug custodian' cultural practices develop, community members are becoming more aware that although the forms of their practices are different and may have different meanings to those of other Australian Aboriginal peoples, Native Americans and Maori, for example, they are cultural practices which produce similar effects and which are born out of similar backgrounds and processes as those of other Indigenous

peoples - especially other urban Indigenous peoples. I recently asked Gale if she still thought that North American Indigenous peoples' representations seem more 'real' than 'darug custodian' practices. We were watching a dance performance of 'darug custodian' children when she said:

Funny you should ask 'bout that. I was just thinkin' that I wish them fullas could see this. I reckon we've come a long way in a few years. We're gettin' better 'n' better. Maybe them Indians was just a few years ahead of us when we saw 'em?

FNNM0703

Non-Darug Associate Members who are not spouses of Darug descendants Maori Associate Members

As well as the one Maori spouse, there are about ten Maori associate community members. Some are the children of Maori partners from previous marriages, some are the brothers and sisters of Maori partners, others are Maori who now live on Darug land. Maori associate members do not usually attend meetings of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation and are not usually active in organising community events, although some do occasionally attend ceremonies. Maori associate members tend, in short, to only minimally participate as community members, although, as I have said, they do include 'darug custodians' in Maori events.

Although the one Maori partner of a Darug descendant works outside the community, this is not the case for all Maori associate members. Especially young male Maori associate members rely on work provided by the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation on archaeological digs as a primary income source⁵⁶. This

⁵⁶ Although, as I have said, it is not reliable and needs to be supplemented.

work is as essential to some Maori as it is to some 'darug custodians'. So, it might be said that most Maori associate members take advantage of the work opportunities that the organisation provides without being involved in other aspects of community life to a large extent. This seems to be acceptable to 'darug custodians' because they are sometimes desperate for good, available workers.

Maori have contributed to the 'darug custodian' community by giving moral support for the 'darug custodian' cultural project, by recognising the traditional ownership of Darug descendants and by sharing their own experience of the political and cultural effects of *Maoritanga* in New Zealand. Maori status within the community as a 'model' of successful cultural renaissance does not mean, however, that Maori members are any less discriminated against than 'darug custodians' as members of the dominant Australian society. In fact, White racism is arguably more or at least just as prevalent in the lives of Maori members as it is for many Aboriginal 'darug custodians' because Maori, in contrast to many Darug descendants, are generally black, have different facial features, speak with a different accent, and are consequently more identifiably 'other' to White society. Also men and women Maori members typically wear light summer clothing all year around⁵⁷, often revealing elaborate tattooing and body piercing, men often wear their hair long and have long beards. Most Maori, in short, present a 'rough' and 'dangerous' image to White Australian society. This image, along with their general 'otherness' makes gaining employment difficult, attracts negative attention from authority figures such as police and teachers, raises the suspicions of security personnel in shops, banks and pubs

⁵⁷ Many Maori members tell me that they do not feel the cold in Sydney, but I do wonder whether not wanting to cover tattoos is also part of the reason for wearing singlets, shorts and thongs in cold weather.

and often makes relations with Whites generally tense. These kinds of negative relations within White Australian society mean that a strong sense of empathy exists between them and 'darug custodians'. Not only do Maori have experience of cultural revival, but they also share many of the everyday frustrations of managing their identity in relation to the dominant society with 'darug custodians'. They also understand the sense of belonging that the community provides to such marginalised people. John, a Maori associate member put it thus:

If we [Maori and 'darug custodians'] don't stick together
who else'll give us a go, eh?

DR0704

Non-Darug Aboriginal Associate members

As I explained in Chapter Two, the largest group of 'darug custodians' are non-Darug Aboriginal associate members of the Corporation. Although first contact with most of this 'group' of people originally came about through 'darug custodians' association with Holy Family, this group is constituted by Aboriginal peoples from a wide variety of backgrounds. A few are new arrivals from relatively 'traditional' communities in remote parts of Australia, most have come to Sydney with their families to find work and education in the last thirty years, others have lived in the western suburbs for generations. It is important to note that while this group of people constitute a community through their involvement at Holy Family, they are also members of diverse other Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities which inhabit the western suburbs as well as the 'darug custodian' community. Some live in the Housing Commission at Mount Druitt and are members of that geographic community. Although the Aboriginal community at Mount Druitt is marginalised from the dominant

society and reproduces some negative behaviours entrenched through processes of dislocation and alienation, it also sustains a close-knit group of Indigenous peoples from various parts of Australia providing support to people living far away from their home communities. Most of the peoples who belong to Holy Family and Mount Druitt communities are much more identifiable as Aboriginal by looks than most Darug descendants and are consequently more often discriminated against in their everyday activities in the dominant society. Like Darug descendants they also belong to work, school, social and sporting communities associated with the dominant society, all live with and among White neighbours, and all suffer various degrees of racism, alienation and marginalisation accordingly. One family, for example, were recently evicted from the house they were renting in Penrith at the bottom of the foothills of the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney. The (White) landlord's reason for the eviction was that he wanted to move into the house himself.⁵⁸ White neighbours, however, stood outside the house and cheered as the family were leaving saying that all their complaints about 'you dirty Abos' paid off. Two months later, the landlord had installed new tenants (White) into the property and the 'darug custodian' family was still living in a shed behind Alma and Kevin's house. Eventually they were able to move into a Housing Commission house at Mount Druitt.

It needs to be made clear that Holy Family provides a venue for local Indigenous people to meet each other, transport to get there, food and other resources for people in need and facilities for people to conduct their own social events. But the Indigenous people who attend the centre for their own social gatherings are not necessarily parishioners of Holy Family. In other words, what

⁵⁸ Which under the Tenancy Act is an acceptable reason for giving notice to tenants.

attracts people to the centre is not necessarily (or even usually) Catholic worship, but the opportunity for Indigenous people who are alienated from their home communities to make contact with other Indigenous people living in the western suburbs of Sydney. As I explained in Chapter Two, for some of these people, making contact with people who claim traditional Aboriginal ownership of the place where they all now live was an emotional experience because they found a way to connect with that place in an Indigenous way. This experience became an on-going commitment to supporting and then belonging to a group who claim a custodial relationship with Darug land and Darug people. In speaking with many different non-Darug Aboriginal associate members it has become clear that community membership provides not only a sense of belonging to an Indigenous community, but a sense of belonging to place which many Indigenous people in big cities struggle to find. This belonging to place is also morally sustainable for Indigenous people who worry about inhabiting 'someone else's land'. Perhaps one of the most moving explanations came from Uncle Gary, an old man who came to Sydney from Cobar in western New South Wales fifteen years ago:

Never felt right this place, this Sydney place 'til I met this mob.
Couldn't go 'ome, couldn't go back west. Trouble, ya know?
Trouble with the mob back 'ome. Couldn't go nowhere. Hated
it 'ere. The spirits, ya know the spirits of the land? Make ya sick.
Make ya real sick if ya not s'posed ta be 'ere. Big trouble. Real
sick I was. Then me little sista 'ere, me little sista [Alma]. She
welcomed me onto the land. Give me a home. Give me country
ta look after. People ta look after.

KP082004.

Uncle Gary is now an important contributor to both the Corporation and the community. He rarely misses a meeting and is arguably one of the most committed teachers of contemporary cultural practices to less knowledgeable community members.

Of course, non-Darug Aboriginal associate members are vitally important to other community members. With so few Darug descendants as full members and equally small numbers of spouses and other associate members, it would be very difficult for the community to reproduce itself over time without non-Darug associate members. Many of the non-Darug Aboriginal members of the community are unemployed and represent a wider age range than other community members because of their larger numbers. This means that quite elderly people with a great deal of knowledge have time to contribute to meetings and other cultural events. Younger people are available for working on digs and learning skills. That this 'group' is Aboriginal is also important for community identity. Aboriginal associate members provide 'cultural input' to contemporary cultural practices. That is, they often act as 'advisors', explaining how certain practices worked in their communities of origin, sharing perspectives, ideas, experiences and stories. Some, who were removed from their home communities at an early age, or who have otherwise suffered cultural loss are able to learn about traditional Darug culture and potentially become cultural experts.

This, of course, is also fuel for some particularly explosive conflicts both within and outside the community. Most hostilities between community members occurs over disagreements as to the 'proper' way to conduct ceremony, sing a certain song, perform a particular dance, phrase a specific letter. There are often disagreements over the most appropriate person to represent the community in certain contexts or who is the 'proper' person to be the main organiser of an event or ceremony. Because some non-Darug Aboriginal people have become quite powerful within the community, their in-put, influence and public representations have attracted criticism from Tribal members and other non-Darug Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stake-

holders. As Public Officer it has often become my role to try and 'smooth the waters' when official complaints are made concerning what is perceived by those outside the community to be inappropriate representation of the community by a non-Darug person. This has often attracted criticism of myself for defending what is considered to be 'inauthentic' representations. This scenario of intra 'darug custodian' hostilities over the 'proper' representation of 'darug custodian' cultural identity with various outsiders caught in the middle (including and especially White middle class associate 'darug custodians' such as myself) is extremely common. The most regular topic of conversation between 'darug custodians', whether it be at meetings of the Corporation or in social situations, is what acts are considered culturally appropriate and why. That is, there seems to be a group obsession with discussing the 'proper' way to do things and the meaning of collective representations. People are still working these things out, but what is common to all these discussions and by extension to all 'darug custodians', except, perhaps White middle class 'darug custodians', is member's commitment to what they call Darug culture. Various Darug descendants, spouses of Darug descendants, children of Darug descendants, Maori and Aboriginal non-Darug community members have all told me in different ways that it is a better thing to be a 'darug custodian' than it is to be a member of the various other 'non-darug custodian' communities they inhabit. In other words, the community provides people who must otherwise operate as marginalised members of White communities with an alternative identity. Perhaps no-one put it more clearly than Darren, a young Darug descendant dancer, when he told me that he was 'nothin' without [Darug] culture' (FNBPO403).

Middle class White Associate Members

As well as White 'working class' spouses of Darug descendants there are a

number of community members and associate members of the Corporation, like myself, who identify themselves as middle class Whites. By 'middle class' I mean both economically self sufficient and socially powerful within the dominant society. There are currently about thirty such people registered as members, seven of whom are members of my own immediate family. As well as myself, my husband, our three adult children and two of their partners there are other White families, couples and single people who contribute to the community in significant ways.

My own involvement came about through my friendship with Alma, but I was politicised even before that time. I had begun an undergraduate degree majoring in Indigenous Studies before I met Alma and I was already aware of some of the issues and politics which plague Indigenous peoples' lives. Before I began my doctoral research, my commitment to the community was definitely related to a sense of justice. I thought that as a middle class White person that I could, at least in a small way, provide some resources which could help the community to achieve some of their goals. But I was also motivated by an intense personal curiosity. In other words, my commitment was both altruistic and self-interested. As time went on my involvement with the community became more complicated especially when I began my doctoral research. Some people were highly supportive of what they saw to be a project which benefited both the community and myself, while others questioned why I should benefit in White society from my work with 'darug custodians'. My relationships with community members started to involve more and more struggles and hostilities as well as co-operation and negotiations. But by then I was already committed both to conducting my doctoral research and to contributing to the community. There were times when I thought that my relationships with certain

people in the community made continued involvement intolerable but my self-interest in achieving my research goals got me through those times. Conversely, there were times when I wanted to abandon the research so I could work on my relationships without the tension that my work created.

My work in the community has required the kind of enormous time commitment that all community members need to pledge. Initially my husband and family found this impossible to tolerate making my family life as contentious as my working life. Rather than abandon me to live a 'darug custodian' life on my own, however, they all eventually joined the group and now contribute by attending and helping to organise events; working on digs at times of high demand; attending meetings and helping community members who may need legal advice (my husband is a lawyer). Our family also provides material and moral support for community members in need when we can.

Of course, not all of my family's interactions in the community have been pleasant. My husband and all my children and their partners have experienced hostility and their behaviour has been frequently censured by others in the community. My younger son and his partner have both worked on archaeological digs and been criticised because some community members thought that only Aboriginal members should be able to benefit financially from working for the Corporation. When my son argued that he was not prepared to work without pay and that such demands are not made on Maori members, it was counter argued that he has our family's financial resources to support him which is not the case for Aboriginal or Maori members. This, however, has only occurred when there has been plenty of Aboriginal members to provide labour for archaeologists. Whenever more than one dig is in operation at the same time my son is asked to work and is willingly paid. It is a point of pride for the

Corporation to be able to rise to the labour demands of archaeologists because Tribals are also asked to contribute labour to digs on Darug land. If Custodians were unable to raise enough workers leaders fear that it might signify to Tribals and archaeologists that the community is in decline.

The example I cite above of the kinds of censure that White members experience from other community members suggests that 'our' (White) difference is not treated so much as 'racial' as class difference. But this is more complex as I demonstrate below. My elder son was taught to play didgeridoo when he was very young and is now quite expert. He used to be frequently asked to perform with the dance troupe and at other events until some community members argued that *only* Aboriginal people should play didgeridoo at all. The ban has meant that my son is no longer able to 'jam' with Aboriginal didgeridoo players which not only developed his skills, but allowed for a particular kind of community with male 'darug custodians'. It also means that my son is no longer able to teach less knowledgeable players. This was not about public displays of 'authentic' Aboriginality, but a complete ban of an activity on what might seem to be 'racial' grounds. This is complicated because it is only White associate members who are not spouses of Darug descendants to whom this ban applies. White spouses of Darug descendants *can* play didgeridoo, but not in public. It seems that within 'darug custodian' society, at least at this moment in its development, White spouses of Darug descendants are situated in the category 'Aboriginal' which is evidently *not* a 'racial' category, but a social one. Thus, if there is not a 'racial' difference, then there is clearly a status difference between White spouses and other White community members.

This status difference seems to operate by encouraging middle-class White

people's involvement in the community in 'service' type roles and limiting the extent to which they can participate in traditional cultural practices. That is, it is alright for 'us' to share our resources, but 'we' cannot expect to achieve status as 'people of knowledge' within the community. Our status in White society is not transferable to 'darug custodian' society and we are not given the means to 'properly'⁵⁹ learn and transmit knowledge within 'darug custodian' society.

Outside my own family, other White members include activists who have helped 'darug custodians' over the years in organising art exhibitions, protests and land claims. Some are also members of reconciliation groups. I asked one middle-aged White woman how long she had been a member of the organisation and community. This woman had been involved in helping the community organise protests over the F2 Freeway which destroyed some significant pre-contact Darug sites at Pennant Hills, north-west of Sydney. She infrequently attends meetings, but often attends ceremonies:

We began the protests in 96 and my husband and I became members soon after. Oh, you know what I mean when I say that once you're in that's it. I don't know, what is it? It's not just the feeling of belonging. It's the way that you feel *really welcome*. Aboriginal people make you feel like they're really happy to see you and you can't help but feel the same way.

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In return for moral and material contributions some White middle class 'darug custodians' seem to gain a sense of community that they find rare, or at least not as intense, in White society. Or perhaps it is more a case of gaining a sense of welcome

⁵⁹ This is not to say that middle class White associate members cannot fully participate in some activities and events. It is not possible, however, for a middle class White community member to achieve a level of knowledge and experience that rivals that of other 'darug custodians'.

that middle class Whites may not expect in Aboriginal communities due to a history of segregation between middle class Whites and Aboriginal peoples in Australia. This might be a powerful motivation for some middle class Whites to seek association with 'darug custodians'. But all of the middle-class White 'darug custodians' I know other than myself rarely engage with the everyday running of the Corporation and the community. They do not encounter the kinds of frustrations that other 'darug custodians' must contend with during constant rounds of meetings, the perpetual struggles over the appropriate way to do things or the ceaseless contention over who the most appropriate representative of the community might be. Many middle class White members engage in particular projects including art exhibitions or protests and, although they are very likely to encounter some opposition and contention, these kinds of projects are usually 'one-offs' that they are not obliged to repeat. In other words, middle class White 'darug custodians' (including me) are not 'darug custodians' at all. They are free to only contribute what they are willing to contribute of their time and other resources. It is not their identity as a people that is at stake if the community does not survive. They are welcomed for what they can and will contribute, but they are not allowed by other 'darug custodians' to become too knowledgeable in practices which 'darug custodians' claim as their culture. They are not, in other words, allowed to take away from the community what is most valuable: what 'darug custodians' call culture. Still, middle class Whites are also welcomed, I suspect, largely because other 'darug custodians' need the resources that middle class Whites are able to provide. Perhaps then, it is more correct to say that 'our' resources - our educations, material goods, contacts and willingness to provide these things - are respected and welcomed. This, in turn, must provide many middle-class

Whites with a certain satisfaction.

Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation

Having provided the reader with a sense of the 'kinds' of people who constitute the community, where they have come from, why they may have become members and what they get out of membership I shall now examine the functions of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, and in particular to demonstrate how it serves to structure the community in particular kinds of ways. As I said in Chapter Two, the primary function of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, like all Aboriginal Corporations set up under the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976*, is to allow for state recognition of groups of Aboriginal people. In practice, this means that the functions of these Aboriginal Corporations need to comply with state rules concerning membership, accounting and reporting. In practice, it means that a great number of bureaucratic regulations are required. Office bearers are elected by those eligible according to a constitution; regular meetings are convened; meetings are conducted according to particular conventions including the taking of minutes and the regulation of speakers through a Chairperson; financial statements and accounts are kept and reported to members, and all these regulations are under the scrutiny of a government minister. For the purposes of state recognition, members of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation represent the needs, interests and aspirations of an Aboriginal community albeit in a very non-Aboriginal way. This 'community' is constituted according to the state's rules of how an Aboriginal Corporation should (must) be constituted. That is, full membership is limited to those who are genetically linked to Darug ancestors who can be traced to a time before Whites came to Australia.

It might be assumed, because the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation exists, that its members comply with state rules concerning the constitution of their community, and indeed they do, in part. In order to receive state recognition, members and associate members follow government guidelines on how to run an Aboriginal organisation. This, as I have said, includes restricting full membership to Darug descendants. But, it is also within state rules to include, as associate members, non-Darug descendant spouses, other relatives and supporters. Some of these non-Darug descendants are also non-Aboriginal, such as myself. Associate members can attend meetings and even fill non-executive positions on the committee, but may not vote.

In some ways 'darug custodians' have appropriated the formal, Western organisation of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation to structure their own community. They have complied with 'our' ideas of genetic relatedness to privilege Darug descent in the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, but they appropriate and use these ideas differently in the 'darug custodian' community as I demonstrate below.

But, as well as compliance, there is a significant degree of non-compliance in the use of the state required regular meetings of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation and other instruments administered through the organisation, such as the community newsletter to communicate information related to 'traditional' cultural events, ideas, values and beliefs. That is, as well as issues related to land claims and the administration of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, both the meetings of the Corporation and the newsletter are used to communicate dates, and significance and appropriate rules of behaviour related to cultural events such as

ceremonies. Often these unofficial matters are given priority over correspondence with state agencies and other official matters. These unofficial matters are often raised by senior people who are not Darug descendants, as my example below demonstrates.

Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation Incorporated by 'darug custodians',

Attendance at Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation meetings depends greatly on the agenda of each particular meeting. A newsletter containing details of the next meeting's agenda is sent to community members at least two weeks prior to the meeting. If nothing particularly controversial, interesting or important to most members is included the attendance can be as low as ten to fifteen people including committee members. This 'core group' of attendees consists of Darug descendant executive committee members, some of their partners, usually myself, and a small group of about five non-Darug Aboriginal supporters.

This situation, however, has rarely occurred in my experience. It is a rare month that passes without some kind of internal or external 'drama' unfolding. More frequently an item in the newsletter sparks the interest of at least thirty members who attend the meeting with their children who play outside until the meeting is over.

Meetings are usually held at Alma and Kevin's house, but they are sometimes held in conjunction with another community activity. This can be a 'field trip' to a significant local site, such as a pre-contact art site, where the meeting is held after inspecting the site in question and having a barbeque. Sometimes Indigenous and non-Indigenous 'experts' from government agencies or private enterprise come to meetings to provide information on archaeological sites, historical sites or on proposed changes to legislation that may have ramifications for the community.

All meetings, however, include discussion of correspondence, often, after I have been asked to interpret or 'translate' it into 'plain English'. At one meeting the Chairperson, Janine, a thirty-five year old Darug descendant woman, began to read correspondence concerning a request from a major liquor retailer for information about the drinking habits of community members. Before she had finished the first sentence, however, Uncle Reg, a very senior, very respected non-Darug Aboriginal associate member from Kempsey, on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, interrupted her reading by broaching what appeared to be an unrelated topic:

Sorry daughter, but that ceremony we 'ad up there in th'
mountains. Me & Uncle Bill told some yarns what I reckon
you young 'uns need ta 'ear right now.

WM 1204.FN.

With that, Uncle Bill, a senior Gundungarra man, began telling a story⁶⁰ concerning spiritual associations between the community and a particular place. All other issues on the agenda were suspended while certain attendees discussed the significance of Uncle Bill's words at great length. Those engaged in the discussion were all older people with knowledge and experience of the issues raised by Uncle Bill. Uncle Bill, as a traditional 'neighbour' of Darug people claims that he possesses knowledge concerning sites in the Blue Mountains that were shared ceremonial sites between Darug, Gundungarra and Darkinjung peoples (see Map 2). Most of the people involved in the discussion were not Darug descendants and some were not Aboriginal.

⁶⁰ See Merlan (2000, 2005) for discussion concerning the ways in which some Aboriginal people respond to direct questions in a narrative mode rather than a definitive mode.

Despite her position as Chairperson of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation and being a Darug descendant, Janine was unable to contribute to the discussion and was not able to direct the meeting back onto the set agenda. As a person much younger and with far less knowledge on the particular topic of discussion than the other participants, she was powerless to either curb Uncle Bill's interjection or contribute to it.

At first I thought that the Uncles' interjection may have been another example of avoidance strategies I have often witnessed when community members do not want to answer, or even discuss a query from 'outsiders', and in a way it was. But it was also more than this. Alcohol addiction is a serious problem in many Indigenous communities and whenever a 'darug custodian' community gathering is planned organisers agonise over questions such as whether alcohol should be banned, whether people will attend the event if alcohol is banned, and how to police a ban if it is imposed. However, issues of such internal concern are rarely discussed or even aired within the hearing of outsiders. The use of alcohol by community members (and a number of other issues considered 'private') is considered to be 'Community Business'.

In interrupting Janine's reading of the letter for the potential benefit of a liquor retailer the Uncles did not merely change the topic of discussion. In redirecting the discussion to a 'story' about country and people's relationships to that country and each other, the Uncles were reasserting the primacy of the community over the Corporation. They were reminding people that authority rests with knowledgeable community people and loyalty is due to the community above the interests and demands of the Corporation and those who attempt to gain information about the

community through the Corporation.

It can be seen from my example, that even when official issues are discussed at meetings, it is not only Darug descendants who offer points of view, raise objections and generally contribute to suggested outcomes. Many people's opinions are respected in meetings, even if they are not Darug descendants (or even Aboriginal), above the opinions of younger, less knowledgeable people, even if those younger people are Darug descendants. In this way, the 'darug custodian' community is constituted very differently from the rules which govern the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation. State rules governing the constitution of Aboriginal Corporations do not take into account 'darug custodian' social rules of transmission of knowledge and speaking rights which far outweigh genetic relatedness.

As I have said, Chairpersonship and all executive positions, according to the rules of incorporation, *must* have a Darug descendant incumbent. Given that the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation includes so few Darug descendants and that most of these people are closely related, most older people have filled these positions more than once over time. Younger people are encouraged to accept these positions in order to more fully expose them to the issues facing the community and to teach them about the running of the Corporation. Ironically, by putting younger people into what are supposed to be powerful positions - at least by the dominant society - it serves to highlight that within the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation, 'darug custodians' operate under a different system of power relations. It serves to teach young 'darug custodians' that a less knowledgeable person can be Chairperson of the Corporation, but the status of Chair is still subject to the social rules of the community.

A status hierarchy is only beginning to emerge in 'darug custodian' society and

its working out, as this chapter reveals, is the source of most internal conflict in the community. Because it is not yet quite certain who has authority in what contexts there are not many situations where a person or persons who claim authority to speak or act are unchallenged. If a speaker is not challenged, as occurred when Uncle Bill interrupted the meeting, they are only unchallenged because they are either charismatic enough, or in some other way powerful enough in relation to those present that their assertion of seniority is accepted. In other words, there are others in the community who were not at the meeting in question who probably would have challenged Uncle Bill's right to interrupt a meeting of the Corporation because he is not a Darug descendant⁶¹.

At this stage of its development the most important factors in achieving high 'darug custodian' status are duration and quality of experience of living a 'darug custodian life', knowledge of traditional cultural practices and contribution of that experience and knowledge to the community. Clearly, younger people are less likely to possess such experience and knowledge to the extent older 'darug custodians' do, but age is not the defining characteristic of high status. There are some older people who have no knowledge of 'traditional' 'darug custodian' cultural practices because they are new to the community for example. Yet, these people are not necessarily placed at the bottom of the burgeoning 'darug custodian' social hierarchy. If they are Aboriginal and have knowledge of traditional Aboriginal cultural practices from another group, for example, their status is boosted within the community. If they are Maori and have knowledge of Maori traditional practices their social position is like-wise boosted. Some long time White spouses of Darug descendants have achieved the

⁶¹ Not, however, because he interrupted Janine. I think most, if not all 'darug custodians' would accept that Uncle Bill has higher status than Janine, including Janine herself.

highest status of leader or 'elder' in the community. Only if community members are middle-class Whites is their status fixed, perhaps not at the bottom of a hierarchy, but outside it. I, for example, have some knowledge of traditional Aboriginal cultural practices gained from anthropological study. My knowledge, however, is unsought and whenever offered it has been dismissed. I never talk about such things these days, but in my early association with the community I was often censured for assuming to contribute to what was considered none of my business.

Conclusion.

Some Darug descendants are asserting 'darug custodian' identity as an alternative identity to the dominant culture whilst simultaneously utilising the dominant culture's organisational strategies such as the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation. An alternative social hierarchy seems to be crystallising which offers 'darug custodians' status within the group which is otherwise not attainable in the non-darug custodian' communities they also inhabit. This hierarchy may be all the more attractive to most 'darug custodians' because it effectively excludes middle class Whites - those who are arguably most powerful outside the community.

It is only Darug descendant 'darug custodians' whose status is based on genetic heritage. This is because 'darug custodian' identity depends on relationships with Darug Country and living Darug descendants. No other 'darug custodian' relation relies on 'blood'. 'darug custodians', instead, relate to each other through a burgeoning status system, collective practices, performed relations, particular behaviours and the living out and communication of certain beliefs and philosophies. This is all done while privileging Darug descendants and their status as descendants of the ancestors whose spirits inhabit Darug land.

Because the lives of 'darug custodians' are almost always negotiated in and with different 'non-darug custodian' communities appropriate behaviour in relation to ways of communicating and ways of conducting certain practices are still being worked out between community members and are consequently subject to considerable disagreement and negotiation.

Chapter Four presents some more insights into the ways in which some 'darug custodians' manage their fragmented and unstable identities as relatively powerless members of multiple 'non-darug custodian' communities. These everyday life realities of suburban Sydney constantly threaten to fragment the group and attenuate their mutual commitments.