

Ngurrajili 'continued giving': coming together around yuraal, food, as decolonising practice

Yandaarra including Aunty Shaa Smith, Neeyan Smith, Paul Hodge, Lara Daley, Sarah Wright

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Introduction

In this chapter, we share stories of garlaany (pippies, a small, saltwater clam), the Golden Hole and guuna (shit) that have taught us much about food and our connections. As they have guided us, we ask garlaany, the Golden Hole and guuna, to guide this chapter as we think through what food relationships might mean to decolonising practice and survivance and how these practices inform debates within vegan geographies. We have written this piece through layers of conversations and experiences together. We have learnt from Country, from garlaany and guuna, from our embodied experiences at, with and as Gumbaynggirr Country, and talked about and reflected on these experiences, on understanding yuraal, food, as ceremony, on veganism and gluten intolerance, on yuraal as colonising and decolonising, on our relationships and positionalities. We have also written reflections individually, recorded conversations and then had conversations about those conversations and early drafts of the chapter, which have again been woven through. Through this, a collective voice has emerged and, in this chapter, we use 'we' to acknowledge our more-than-human collaborative process. We have also, at times, attributed specific quotes to members of Yandaarra where a particular insight or experience comes particularly through a person or interaction. We also want to acknowledge the importance of our differences so that this piece reflects our coming together but not our sameness. We neither aim to homogenise nor silence, and we make effort to speak to this both through the collective voice and in our direct quotes. Country and ngurrajili is bringing us into relationship, not sameness. In this, we are learning to heed the call of Country (Larsen and Johnson 2017), to attend to some of what Country communicates and teaches (Bawaka Country 2016; Smith et al 2020), and to acknowledge and learn from the teachings of the Old Fullas.

In sharing our place-based story, we think through and reflect on what it means to honour yuraal, food, as ceremony and connection on Gumbaynggirr Country in a colonised and colonising, decolonising and decolonial world. We centre Country, and yuraal as ngurrajili, as relationships of continued giving and receiving, and as decolonising practice, rather than veganism. This also means attending to some of the tensions and incompatibilities that exist between decolonising food and veganism. We hope that our chapter will support veganism's ethic of care and responsibility but in ways that invite deeper understandings and engagements with place-based knowledges, protocols and human and more-than-human co-becomings, particularly within the context of colonisation and survivance.

As Yandaarra, we aim to 'shift camp together' which is the Gumbaynggirr meaning of the word. Yandaarra is a Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr collective made up of Aunty

Shaa Smith, storyholder for Gumbaynggirr Country, her daughter, Neeyan Smith, Sarah Wright, Paul Hodge and Lara Daley, three non- Gumbaynggirr academics from the University of Newcastle, our families and Gumbaynggirr Country¹ itself. By shifting camp together, we mean working within ourselves, within our relationships with each other, with Country and with more-than-human others to decolonise ourselves and our relationships. We come together acknowledging our Elders and mentors, and acknowledging Country and its stories. We also come together, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, knowing that we are differently positioned in relationship to Gumbaynggirr Country and Gumbaynggirr Law/lore.

As we commit to shifting camp, in ourselves and in our lives, and as we try to honour Country and live in ways that nourish and support our co-becoming, we have come to see yuraal, food, as an important focus. Yuraal is ceremony and connection. Yuraal has the potential to connect us to each other and with Country. Yuraal is a way that Country nourishes us, and, in our respectful engagements with the beings that we hunt and gather and grow, eat and shit, we nourish Country too. We do so in ways that link us to Country, and support Yandaarra as part of Country from our different positions as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr people. This is ngurrajili, continued giving, and giving and receiving, in Gumbaynggirr.

The Gumbaynggirr nation is on the heavily populated eastern seaboard of Australia, where the colonisation of Australia began. The lands reach from the Clarence River in the north to the Nambucca River in the south with the Pacific Ocean to the east and the Great Dividing Range to the West. While Gumbaynggirr people and Gumbaynggirr Country are often invisibilized by the profound disruptions in human and more-than-human relations that have come with the onslaught of cities, towns, farms, parks and all that make up the colonising landscapes of east-coast Australia, Gumbaynggirr people and Country are still here. Gumbaynggirr people and Country survive, continue, rebuild and create, within and as part of these same landscapes. On Gumbaynggirr Country, ngurrajili, is one of the many ways this survivance is practiced.

Survivance is a term used to highlight vitality and active survival of Indigenous peoples (Atalay, 2006; Glancy, 2008; Vizenor, 2008). The character of survivance, says Anishinaabe cultural theorist Gerald Vizenor (2008, 1), "creates a sense of native presence over absence, nihilism, and victimry". More than just endurance and survival, survivance is "an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (Vizenor, 1998: 15); a "narrative resistance" (Vizenor, 2008: 1), a continuance of stories, remembrance and action. We, as Yandaarra, engage ngurrajili, giving and receiving, as an embodied practice of survivance, which is ongoing and actively continues to nourish humans, more-than-human beings and

¹ Country is an Aboriginal English word meaning homeland, a place of more-than-human co-becoming, lived with and lived as (Bawaka Country 2016; Hsu et al., 2014; Rose 1996). Rose (1996, 7) describes: "Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place, such as one might indicate with terms like 'spending a day in the country' or 'going up the country'. Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart's ease."

Country. As part of engaging ngurrajili, as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr people, we affirm and come into relation with what is not colonised through an active presence of ngurrajili on Gumbaynggirr Country. We do this as we care for ourselves, each other, and Country, and open ourselves up to be cared for as we live yuraal, food.

While we try to live yuraal as ngurrajili, we are also very aware that much of the food we eat, and practices of agriculture that support it, are a significant way that lands, bodies, and relationships, including our own, are continually colonised. Agriculture proceeds apace on stolen land at the same time that Gumbaynggirr people are excluded from their ongoing sites of food production. Simpson and Bagelman (2018, 558) describe the "imposition of a colonial socio-natural order" when examining the case of the Lekwungen territory, commonly known as Victoria, British Columbia. They show the way the colonising present is inscribed in the settler colonial city; in parks, through property lines and settler agriculture, and its effects on a dynamic food system maintained by the Lekwungen over millennia (Simpson & Bagelman, 2018). In many instances Gumbaynggirr people simply cannot access the places where our/their ancestors, and our/their Law/Lore, tell us/them to go. Or those places do not exist in the same way anymore, being under houses or roads or on cleared and privatised land. Or, in order to access them, paperwork must be completed and regulations complied with as laid out by the very systems of possession and authority, which also deny Gumbaynggirr sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). These are the realities of continued colonisation of Gumbaynggirr Country.

There are the disrespectful, colonising relationships with animals and with plants too, that underpin much of the yuraal we buy; the resource intensive agricultural practices and the inhumane treatment of non-human animals and plants. These do not follow or acknowledge the place-based protocols and human and more-than-human relations that have nourished human and the more-than-human over millennia. Here, the knowledges and agencies and lives of animals and plants and waters and lands are not respected (Burarrwanga et al 2012). Some of these concerns resonate with vegan and vegetarian critiques (see Hall, 2009). Many do not, and are not necessarily addressed by veganism. Some are in contradiction.

Given this complexity, this potential for food processes and relations to be both nourishing and damaging, colonising and decolonising, we see our relationships around yuraal as part of the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002), a complex space of interaction between Indigenous and western domains. Our research collective of Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr people and Country, works at this interface too. Torres Strait Islander and academic, Martin Nakata (2007: 199), has theorised the cultural interface as:

a multi-layered and multi-dimensional space of dynamic relations constituted by the intersections of time, place, distance, different systems of thought, competing and contesting discourses within and between different knowledge traditions, and different systems of social, economic and political organisation. It is a space of many shifting and complex intersections between different people with different histories, experiences, languages, agendas, aspirations and responses.

Within this contested space, knowledges, relations, governance and arrangements of power have the potential to be configured in both colonizing and decolonizing ways, including around yuraal. Hunting and gathering, growing, buying, eating and sharing, can both enact survivance and embody the ongoing colonisation of Indigenous lands and bodies at the cultural interface.

Nakata (2002) explains that there are many points of intersection and sets of relations at the cultural interface. As Yandaarra, we are individually and collectively part of these multiple relations, which make and remake the interface in potentially colonising and decolonising ways. The three non-Gumbaynggirr authors must stay attuned to who they are and how they've come to be(ing) here (Snelgrove, et al. 2014, p. 5), in this contested knowledge space and in relationships with yuraal, on stolen lands at the cultural interface. Taking direction from Aunty Shaa, from Nakata (2002), and from our different positions, we need to negotiate tensions and work the interaction of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems in ways which serve Indigenous interests and maintain the distinctiveness of Indigenous knowledges (2002, p. 286). To do this, Sarah, Paul and Lara, as we have reflected elsewhere (Smith et al, 2020), must be accountable for both histories and the continuance of disrespectful and damaging relations, including of research (Bawaka Country et al 2018, Kwaymullina, 2012; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 1999). It is their responsibility to work hard and self-reflexively to not reproduce these relations and to try and be good friends of Country, respectful guests and to “come into a place of relationship through acknowledging and respecting Gumbaynggirr Law” (Yandaarra 2017; Smith et al, 2020: 943). They must also talk back to dominant knowledge institutions, acknowledging how these institutions have disproportionately benefited them, and “create openings with and as Yandaarra for Gumbaynggirr knowledge to shine through” (Smith et al, 2020: 943).

As Sarah and Aunty Shaa reflect:

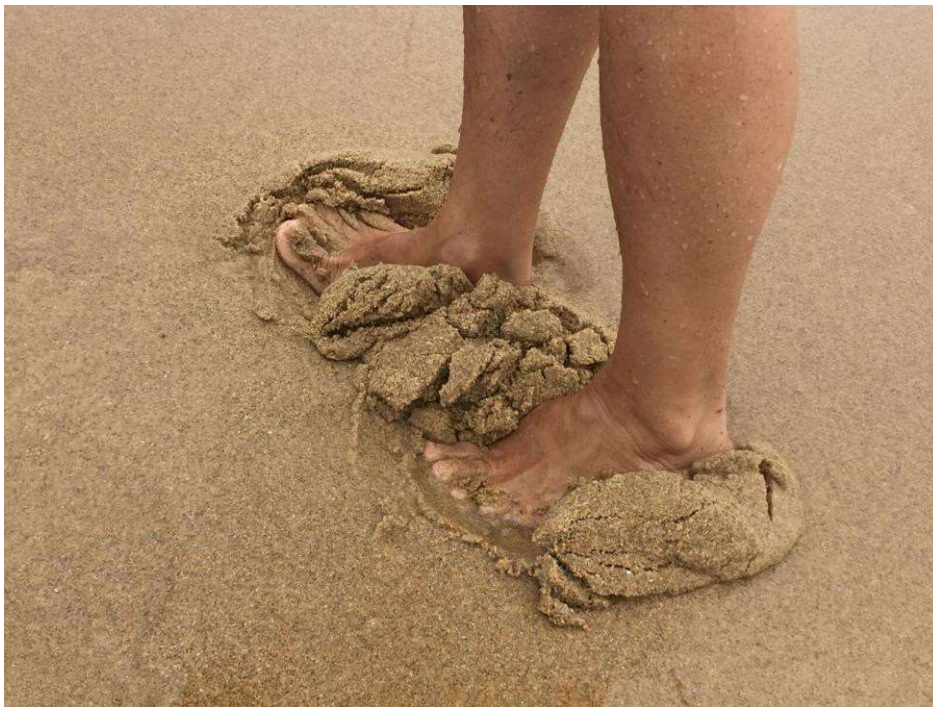
Sarah: The other thing with us as Yandaarra is about acknowledging that we have different positions. We are coming together and it is about everything, it is our interconnected journey, but we are all different.

Aunty Shaa: I think it is good to give it acknowledgement – we are in this meeting, in this coming from different places and it needs to be honoured. So, coming to this place of oneness, how do we live that? How do we practice that together?

As Yandaarra on Gumbaynggirr Country we see that yuraal, the beings and co-becomings that we hunt, gather, grow, harvest, are given, give, sell and buy, are in relationship with us. They make us and they make, and are made by, the cultural interface in ways that both colonise and in ways that decolonise or refuse to be brought into colonising relationships. This is not abstract. It is in Country, it is in our positionalities and relationships, the ways we make and remake survivance and (de)colonisation. As Gumbaynggirr people, Aunty Shaa and Neeyan have different relationships to Country and food-as-Country than Lara, Paul and Sarah who come as non-Indigenous vegetarians and vegans seeking to decolonise their relationships to and as Country and yuraal in-so-far as they can through careful invited steps, living the cultural interface. Country is there too holding it all, the colonising and decolonising, persisting, continuing, creating. This is what we aim to affirm and support,

those parts that can never be colonised, that refuse to be brought into colonising relationships, Country and practices of survivance.

Yuraal and ceremony, yuraal as ceremony: garlaany, pippies, at Myelstrom beach. Our first camp together was at Myelstrom by the beach. Garlaany were centre stage that weekend, as they often are, Uncle Bud² tells us, when custodians come together by the sea in ceremony. This first camp at Myelstrom was the initial coming together of the Yandaarra collective, family and friends, Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr, as part of a five-year collaborative project, led by Gumbaynggirr custodians. After waiting to be invited, the time came to wander to the shoreline with our 'pippie bags' in hand. With Aunty Shaa leading the way, we gradually, tentatively, got into the rhythm of the movement, wriggling our heels, hips, bodies, anticipating the giving over of the garlaany, the feeling of joy once received, and the same over again (see Figure 1). There was a ceremony to this movement, together. Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr moving together, laughing at some of our lack of coordination, swimming together, talking together, connecting together.



(Figure 1: Aunty Shaa in ceremony with garlaany at Myelstrom)

Through these connections, gathering garlaany, we were caring for Country and as Country, caring for each other, for our connections, relationships and co-becomings, and Country was caring for us too (Bawaka Country 2013, 2016). Yuraal was a focus as we came together, it is always a focus. Yuraal is ceremony and connection. Through the ways we eat, and hunt, we respect Country, we are Country. We are there in Country, in the sand, with our feet sliding down, in the water, not separated out or external to place. And when we eat, we take those beings inside of us. We respect those beings and ourselves. We acknowledge them and their

² Uncle Bud is Aunty Shaa's uncle.

Law/Lore. The gathering, the being with Country is an important part of that. If you look at our relationships and how we are building our relationships, it's around the wholeness. This sense of wholeness is also strong in other places where Country cares, gives and 'gifts' *in relation*. For the *Koyukon Athabascans* in Alaska, an ethics of hunting involves "becoming-animal" (Watson and Huntington, 2008: 260). Stories, places, and ancestors are "assembled during the hunt" (Watson and Huntington, 2008: 259) as an intuitive knowing connects moose and Koyukon in co-responsibility and respect. Only when the time is right, the moose gifts itself to the Koyukon—"the hunter warbles his call as he is becoming-rutting bull" (Watson and Huntington, 2008: 268).

Ceremony and connection are also a fundamental part of co-becoming in Bawaka Country, Northern Territory, Australia. To gather yuraal is to connect to the patterns of the universe; being relationally, co-becoming as a responsibility "between humans and non-humans, between Country and all of its beings" (Bawaka Country, 2013: 192). The connections between plants, animals and people are co-becoming time and place.

Gaypal, the wattle, is flowering now. The gaypal is a messenger that tells us the time is right to hunt miyapunu... The djinydjalma, mud crabs, have a lot of meat on them, too; the bapi, snakes, are laying their eggs; and the guya, the fish, are fat. That is what the gaypal tells us when we see its masses of yellow flowers (Bawaka Country, 2013: 193).

Back at Myelstrom, garlaany bring times together as part of the wholeness, part of the ceremony, and also part of the layers of a more-than-human existence. In our conversations within and as Yandaarra we reflect that the garlaany are ever-present, they live in the sea that the two sisters made³. So, the garlaany continue to connect us to the two sisters. They show us that the creation time is here and now. Aunty Shaa likens this more-than-human existence to ceremonial cycles; of garlaany, tides, seasons. Eating yuraal, food, embodies the wholeness in ceremony. For Aunty Shaa eating yuraal is about 'promoting the continuation of that cycle of giving and receiving' connecting to 'the first garlaany hunt' arising from the two sisters' creation. The garlaany, then, bring us together to be together in place and in time. The garlaany are in all times and they gather all times, the times of the ancestors, which is after all the time now, and the times of the future. Ngurrajili – continued giving - in the ways described here, is visceral, bodily, and sometimes hard to put into words. As Aunty Shaa reflects, this embodied knowing with the ancestors in ceremony:

is a feeling, a sacredness, a ritual that infuses all of the things we are doing. There is an intention...maybe ceremony is about doing things in purpose or with purpose, living Country, living the dreaming now (Country leading the way). Listening and trying to tune in. Living the connections (Aunty Shaa).

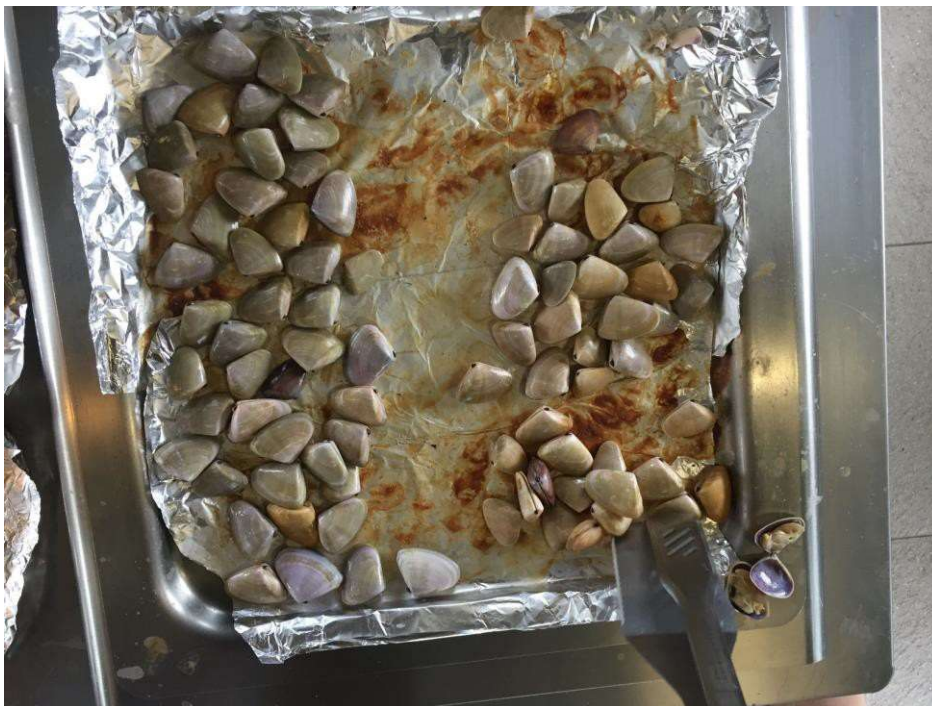
The garlaany are ominipresent, always in existence. And they are in cycles, always in their own time. They live and die and grow in ways that are themselves a ceremony. The seasons for the garlaany are connected with the cycles of the tides. So if you are a coastal person that's a big part of the knowledge that you carry, knowing the tides, knowing the cycles, the

³ Aunty Shaa tells a story of the creation of the sea and all within and part of it.

yuraal, that water, the seasons. It's in living this connection, in the now, that in ceremony you wouldn't be singing *about* garlaany. You would be singing the continuity. It's what's happening when you say it. How could you bring that back? For Aunty Shaa and Yandaarra, that's what we're trying to do. The continued giving is the garlaany saying – it's time to create now! When Aunty Shaa talks about *living Country* and *tuning in*, it is about connecting, being Country, nourishing Country and being nourished by it.

The continuity, the connection, the ceremony also, always, invites playfulness. Country has fun with us in this wholeness. For example, when collecting the garlaany, Country plays tricks. Lara talks about 'pippies playing with us' reflecting on bending down to pick up a pippie then realising it's a pippie shaped rock! We all laugh. Seeing that way of being and being in it. It's our connection to the two sisters; they are playing with us too. Even the waves come to you and play with you. Having a go. Rising unexpectedly. Getting wet.

At Myelstrom, we put the garlaany on the barbeque. We were all there together. There were lots of garlaany. We had a feast, a wonderful feast and they were so good, they just tasted so good.



(Figure 2: Garlaany on the BBQ)

But we weren't *always* there together. As a vegan, Paul shares some of his anxiety, and positionality, as he worked through what it means for him to be vegan in an inter-cultural context. When garlaany are ceremony and connection, what does it mean to not participate in order to stay true to his veganism, whatever that is? Paul ponders whether this might mean continued complicity in the colonial project.

When we arrived back to cook up the pippies I started to feel anxious. I even sat back away from where the food was being prepared, and away from Uncle Bud, Aunty Shaa and Neeyan. One minute I was part of a collective rhythm and

movement. Sharing. Laughing. Talking. Giving. Receiving. Now I was intentionally disconnecting myself from ceremony—from Uncle Bud’s stories, Gumbaynggirr Country’s invitation, the two sisters (Paul).

But something shifted for Paul. In coming down to the beach a shift had actually, already, taken place. The often hard edges of veganism, for Paul, had washed away like our footprints in the sand, and a more nuanced, contextual version emerged. If veganism is about *living* an ethics where non-hierarchical relations of care for our non-human kin are paramount, then *living Country* and *tuning in* as we come into relationship with garlaany on Gumbaynggirr lands, offer such an ethics and something else besides. Grounded in place, co-becoming with garlaany embodies a decolonising practice in creation time now. To feast together at Myelstrom on and with garlaany as a vegan is to embody a practice of veganism that is respectful to context and ongoing colonialism. Participating in this cycle, in this practice, at this time, is, as Aunty Shaas says, 'sharing the spirit and continuation of life – it's a oneness'. The garlaany are ceremony. The garlaany are ngurrājili. The garlaany are life. As Yandaarra the story of the garlaany is the way we come together. We do this on and with Gumbaynggirr Country.

Yuraal and connection to Country/as Country: The Golden Hole

Early in 2017, we had a three-day cultural camp and clan gathering, *Gaarrawaygam*, The Returning, at the Golden Hole, on the southern edge of Gumabynggirr Country. This was a chance, as Neeyan wrote in the plan for the weekend, to “initiate a space of sharing with, listening to and guiding each other, while bringing in the strength of who we are as a family and as custodians of Ngambaa to continue the dreaming of our Country with the support from our ‘Old Fullas’” (Smith, 2017). This camp was an additional layer of sharing as we talked with family about Yandaarra and our 5-year collaborative project and what it might mean on Country, with family on the mid-North coast.

We met at the Golden Hole, where the Macleay River and Clybucca creeks converge, as it is an important place to gather. Aunty Shaa says that the Golden Hole is so rich with yuraal it can have a lot of people go there and feast. This is a gathering place of tens of thousands of years of continuous occupation and custodianship. The Country there can hold many people. The middens of the Golden Hole reflect the thousands of generations of people that have gathered and feasted there, the shells and bones of fish and oysters and yuraal that layer in a more-than-human co-becoming that has literally become the land. It is, reportedly, the largest midden in a temperate estuarine location in the Southern Hemisphere (Connaughton 2012).

This is part of the connections of Country and people, the ways practices and yuraal and ceremony are connected. Elsewhere on Gumbaynggirr Country, a place like Coffs Harbour, Mutton Bird Island, only certain clans are allowed there. This limits the amount of people going there because Country can only hold so many people. The richness of beings on Country lead us, tells us where to camp, where to gather. Country, if we can attend, calls and teaches (Larsen and Johnson 2017; Bawaka Country 2016). As Larsen and Johnson (2017) point out, place convenes our being together and place-based ceremonies

“acknowledge and renew the spirit of place, and the intrinsically life-supportive value of our being-together-in-place” (p78). This, for us, on Gumbaynggirr Country, means ngurrajili.

At the Golden Hole, one thing Country showed us was the wholeness, the potential for wholeness, what it felt and tasted and looked like; ngurrajili, the continued reciprocal giving ceremony and the coming together. Aunty Shaa talked about coming together there and we could all feel it. Neeyan, Lara and the younger women went to get oysters; being in the moment, getting into it, finding the big oysters. Paul, Matt⁴ and other men were off getting paperbark to cook the fish in. Aunty Shaa, Sarah and Fee⁵ were with the kids, watching them swim and play on mud slides. We were all there, different people doing different things, taking different roles, yet connected. We were renewed by, and renewing, the spirit of Country. There was the fish on the fire, everyone standing around the fire, everyone gathered around it, someone having caught the fish and sharing that together. We had a feast. And the kids played, holding an impromptu ‘Golden Hole’s got talent’ dance competition, a re-working of a popular television show with tunes played on phones with poor signal under the camping gazebo. The kids were expressing the joy of feeling and being connected.

As we gathered together, we acknowledged a multi-directional ngurrajili. It was about being cared for by Country, by the fish and the oysters and the fire that called us to stand around. It was about receiving that care honourably. This was not a one-way giving, though, in which Country just gave and gave and we took and took because to understand it like that imposes a disconnection; it mistakes the multi-directional and more-than-human care involved. Nor was it a transactional quid pro quo, where fish was exchanged for planting a tree, or hours spent caring for children was repaid by parents with yuraal. Rather, the giving is a receiving, and gifts come from different directions including through more-than-human relationships, from and as time, from and as place. This is the balance of it all, the web of life that continues as we all are connected, become together. It is the relationality, the knowledge, the sharing, the caring of the seasons, the tides, the fish, the laughter, the dance, the time spent gathering. Yuraal brings us back to all that in and as connection.

At the Golden Hole, beings and people and yuraal were integrated together, as part of the landscape, as Country. So much of the western way makes yuraal separate. It is often grown on a distant farm, away from other parts of life. At the Golden Hole, around yuraal, things were drawn together. There was playfulness, being together, family, in the sun, relating, ceremony. And so, being together at the Golden Hole was a victory in the ongoing nourishment. As we added to that midden there, with people and/as Country still getting nourished, if there ever was a thought that there would be a loss of culture or a dying out, it was like “no.” We *are* here. It was a celebration of connections. We were that midden, adding to the midden, joining and connecting with those more-than-humans who have added to the midden for millennia.

Food, yuraal, at least the kinds of relationships to/with/as yuraal we lived at the Golden Hole, are a way Gumbaynggirr people live their refusal and survivance. It is one way of living Country outside a politics of recognition, outside being judged or valued on terms set by

⁴ Matt is Sarah’s partner.

⁵ Fee is Paul’s partner.

colonisers (Coulthard 2014). When Neeyan was gathering oysters, she was living an ongoing relationship to the oysters, living Gumbaynggirr Country as non-linear time and place, co-becoming through *Maangun*, Gumbaynggirr Law/Lore. Lara, going with the group of women, herself gathering, was coming into relationship with oysters, a vegan navigating a cultural interface, learning and practicing relationality as Country. The connections were with Country, with each other, as Country. Here Lara reflects what this means/meant for her:

There was an awkwardness in my being at the Golden hole. This was a special place and a special camp for the Ngambaa Smith clan coming together, returning, (re)living and continuing their relationships to Country as family and custodians. I wanted to respect those relationships and be open to where I may or may not fit. At one point during the weekend I was invited to join the women – cousins, sisters, mothers - to gather oysters. The laughter, joy and excitement of driving in convoy down the sand track, trying to find the right spot and then running rock to rock searching for ‘the big ones’ was infectious. Being vegan became far less relevant as I was encouraged to get an oyster from the rock and eat it. This was not only eating another being but an invitation to relate to the oyster and Country differently, to become with the oysters in their place on/as Country. It felt my responsibility to relate in this way: to learn to relate, care for and be nourished by Country in the proper way, guided by the women. And also, an invitation which calls upon me to relate with deep care and respect as someone whose history and presence can be, and also is, dispossessing. That felt more important than being vegan at the Golden Hole. I may not always eat oysters but being brought into those relationships of continuance on Gumbaynggirr terms, shifted my understanding of Country: to understand it as strongly constituted by food relationships and Country itself as food – the midden we camped on and were adding to; the oysters on the rocks; the fish in the waterways. (Lara)

Yuraal too, and living as Country, is a way to live non-linear times as part of survivance, the continuation of *Maangun* as non-ruptured. At the Golden Hole, through *The Returning*, *Gaarrawaygam*, Aunty Shaa and Neeyan and their families were able to live and practice and nurture the parts of themselves, those relationships, that remain uncolonized, that can never be colonised. This is a returning and a re-returning, a cycling that connects past, present and future, now. So that survivance through ngurrajili, through and as yuraal, includes relationships with time, nurturing times that go beyond linearity, and being nurtured by them, to be in/as time with the midden, the midden that manifests thousands of generations, with and as the oysters, with and as fish, the paperbark. All the different time-scales of human, animal, plant, tidal, geologic, river activity, the times of Country that co-become. We all added to the midden, and we were those relationships. For Aunty Shaa and Neeyan, this is kin made manifest, their ancestors that lived and gathered there. For Paul, Lara and Sarah and their families, this was an invitation to begin to nurture different kinds of relationships with Country, to shift something of themselves and their relationships at a cultural interface, through the being asked, through ngurrajili, the continued giving of Country.

Neeyan and Aunty Shaa reflect:

Neeyan: Amongst all the colonisation, still, there are intelligent systems we have learnt and we are still learning. We haven't lost our traditional beings, we still have it amongst all this colonisation. Still the western stuff is still valid, it is here.

Aunty Shaa: For me listening to you, it's about we are able to hold both and to speak from that place, from the place of oneness and from the whole and, which starts with us in ourselves. And we do, the core of our beings is expressed from that place, the place that cannot be colonised and can never be colonised. So we are holding all of that.

Neeyan: that place of oneness, inside that can't be touched.

Aunty Shaa: or violated. That's that place that the healing can come from.

While Neeyan and Aunty Shaa share the strength in holding this place of healing and oneness, challenges remain in the creation time now and we are not meaning to make the camp sound perfect, romanticised. We stopped at Woolworths supermarket on the way. There were things wrapped in plastic, sliced ham, the kids had juice in tetrapacks. We weren't always at one with each other or ourselves, either. We had disagreements. There were feelings of hurt and anger. But that is part of it. To have to always be perfect is part of the colonising. Hurt is a part of colonisation, but so is the pressure not to be hurt and to be perfect, to just 'get over it'. We are living, living protocols, living our hurting and our healing, our care for Country (Smith et al, 2020). And yuraal— hunting, sharing, buying and swapping - is central to that. As Sarah reflects:

It seems like another colonising move is to say Gumbaynggirr can't incorporate the Western on their terms or food can only be ceremony if it is done in some rigidly understood 'traditional' way, when the very ways Gumbaynggirr people might access and nourish those relationships has been disrupted.

And there is no denying the structures and processes that continue to work to disconnect us from each other and us from Country, and to keep making instead of unmaking colonialism, those 'generative structures' not of decolonisation but of capitalism and colonialism (Coulthard, 2014). We are always fighting against things that try to colonise time; stop the continuity of place; things that are the opposite of our meeting on/with/at/as the Golden Hole. In terms of caring for Country, there are forms from Fisheries Department of Agriculture and regulations to control, direct, limit and stop people eating, catching, caring for the land and being cared for. There is an intensity to those structures that are there, purportedly, to care for Country, in the ways they regulate people's access to yuraal and act as barriers, a gatekeeper. The forms and regulations that disconnect are doing so in the name of protection. The very ways of thinking and being that are creating the problem are trying to fix the problem, separating humans and non-humans, humans from the land and nature when really we are all connected.

As Aunty Shaa reflects:

To prepare for the weekend, we had to do all a lot of paperwork and get licences from Fisheries. We had to say how much we were going to get, how many people, how many fish. Hannah and Neeyan had to spend hours doing that, all this information that was so irrelevant. You've got Fisheries and Parks and Wildlife carrying that western law in this Country and yet Gumbaynggirr Law/Lore is not recognised, it doesn't carry weight. It's just so complex.

That is what it means to live in a colonising place, on the edge of cities and holiday homes. Neeyan reflects on the devastating irony of these rules, aimed to preserve rather than to shift relationships and ways of being:

If the colonisers would follow the law of the land in the first place, we wouldn't have to have all these regulations, the layers of bureaucracy.

Yet, in spite of this, there is ngurrajili. Aunty Shaa saw potential even with the forms, as a means of coming into relationship with Fisheries. And with being on the Golden Hole, in relationships there is an active presencing. This is not Gumbaynggirr people or Gumbaynggirr Country as victims, but as ongoing flourishing of Country and people and the worlds that nurture us. Neeyan evokes this flourishing:

The Golden hole was different. With the Golden Hole you had to go through those forms, which were kind of like blockages but then when we got there we were just being in it.

Another colonisation: Food asseparation

When we come together around yuraal as Yandaarra, to nourish and be nourished we also acknowledge a disruption of ngurrajili, some separation which needs mending. There is a colonising of land and bodies, human and more-than-human in food too, which can at times disrupt continued giving and at other times exists in tension (Watts, 2013). There has been a colonising of multiple bodies, human and more-than-human, through a western diet and industrial food production, which breaks some of the threads of Gumbaynggirr food knowledges and practices, changing diets and also affecting relations.

As Aunty Shaa reflects:

Not feeling connected to what we are eating is a big part of it. The joy and participation isn't there. And the food is not tasty - it is so processed! Since colonisation there have been big changes around food so that we are not fishing enough in the proper way, following maangun.

Colonised relations infuse the whole process of how food is created in the first place and how we are connecting (or not connecting) to Country. For example, shopping at Woolworths, there is a disconnect from so much of what we are buying and ingesting. This disconnect is underscored by colonisation on many levels. It is not simply that much industrial food production involves monocultures, damaging chemicals and cruelty but that the food production process is separating people from Country. Agriculture has produced

forms of land tenure that exclude Aboriginal people. For at the most fundamental level, most food production in Australia is premised upon stolen lands and the ongoing dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). The food production process is part of that continued taking, which needs to be healed by getting back to Country, back to fishing, to continue ngurrajili. It's about mending the threads that have been broken by colonisation and it's about the prior Law/Lore of this place.

The taking plays out in everyday ways too as we buy and ingest food from which we are disconnected. Neeyan reflects on how this serves to disrupt Gumbaynggirr food knowledges and practices, thinking about butchery as a profession:

Butchery is a whole professional industry, where people learn how to become a butcher and so people become licenced to do that. We, Gumbaynggirr people are not licenced to get our food. And we have to get permission to get our food our way! So, we've got this butchery profession to get our meat for us and we have to go buy it at that shop, which takes away our ability to learn how to gather our own food. We are reliant on professionals and money to get food. This means there is no connection to anything, it's not supporting any cycle and the important part is that we are not learning with Country (Neeyan).

Feeling connected to our bodies and our yuraal is part of ngurrajili, an integral part of continuing giving, with and as Gumbaynggirr Country. When we have dug the garlaany out of the sand and caught a fish, there is more desire to sit and enjoy it, we are connecting, participating. However, when we are not connecting with our yuraal, that has a big impact on our minds and bodies, we are not connecting with Country and Country is not being properly nourished. This is a material reality, felt in our bodies. As Aunty Shaa shares, the becoming one with another being through devouring it is a sharing of that spirit - the continuation of life. On Gumbaynggirr Country, humans and more-than-humans depend on each other for that to happen. This is a bodily dependence in which human and more-than-human beings are giving and sharing. As Neeyan explains:

When you think about it, it is not just us humans that have been colonised. It is the animals that have been colonised, their way of being and living. They have lost their way too. They would have relied on that connection with us, just as much as we have relied on that connection with them (Neeyan).

From a Gumbaynggirr perspective, hunting on Gumbaynggirr Country is about being in the cycles of continuing giving. It is not taking from Country because it is all present on/as Country and eating on/as Country. It is all in the cycle. When you are fishing it is a human and more-than-human process. It is not just you and the fish, there is the tide, the dolphin that might hunt the fish toward you. Everything is connected at that very time you are throwing out that fishing line. In these hunting practices humans and more-than-human's bodies and relations are being nourished. Neeyan gives an example of this from a time she was fishing:

We burleyed up the water, to make it easier so that the fish came to us. But ten minutes later something huge in the water came up and scared the fish away. Probably a shark or dolphin. So, we helped that dolphin get a feast! (Neeyan)

Yuraal, including eating other beings is about a process, living the cycles and continuing the purpose of everything. Colonisation has brought in a breaking of some of the threads of food knowledges and practices, getting in the way of Gumbaynggirr people accessing Country, disrupting the human and more-than-human protocols of continued giving. There are barriers to humans as well as more-than-human beings living their purpose. As Neeyan shares, we are not seeing the purpose of the animal anymore. On Gumbaynggirr Country simply not eating non-human animals doesn't necessarily attend to ngurrajili and re-tying the threads which have been broken through ongoing colonisation. Continuing giving on Gumbaynggirr Country, in this context of colonisation means pulling some threads back together around relations, affinity with animals, to really get into a stronger place of connection with Country – caring for Country.

As Yandaarra, a collective of Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr peoples with different histories and relationships with/as Gumbaynggirr Country how we connect to yuraal as Country is different. Paul and Lara, for example, come into the circle as vegans and this calls upon them to reflect and to shift as we find a way to be together as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr peoples on Country. Lara reflects on this from the cultural camp, *Gaarrawaygam*, at the Golden Hole:

Standing around the fire with the fish that one of the men caught with everyone being together and sharing the fish, I wanted to also eat the fish as for me this feels a part of respecting relationships with Country – the relationship of catching the fish, the relationship between family, the deep and long relationship the family has with the Golden Hole. Eating the fish was also to respect the fish itself who was there at the fire offering nourishment. To me this is an entirely different thing to walking into a fish shop and buying a fish, which involves a whole process that demonstrates little respect or care. Eating fish from the fire is part of my learning to relate to Country guided by Auntie Shaa, Neeyan and their family (Lara).

Certain relationships with food, then, reflect the way colonisation has empowered and been empowered by a fabricated nature-culture dualism that imposes a distinction between people and the environment, people and animals, animals and plants and more, rigidly imposing boundaries and locating agency within certain humans to the exclusion of more-than-human Others (Plumwood, 1999; Hall, 2009). As Sarah reflects:

I look at a cling-wrapped cabbage or something from a supermarket and I see it as a manifestation of so many layers of colonial relations, and layers of separation. It is like the plastic is suffocating us all. On whose land was it grown, with what chemicals that killed what animals, what stories are held there both told and untold now, what death brought that cabbage here, what erasures and violences made it possible for me to be here, buying it? So, I think of the ways to reconcile with that cabbage, to acknowledge its agency, and to re-configure my

relationships with food that are so central. As a non-Gumbaynggirr person living on Gumbaynggirr land, I am part of that colonising. I am standing in that shop knowing that is me, that my life has proceeded from it. Yet, even though that is always there and always to be acknowledged, I must still work on changing my relationships to land and people and all the beings of Country, including food. So that is where I am coming from.

I have been a long-term vegetarian, somehow it's 30 years now, but I think of it in terms of responsibilities of co-existence with place, learning from place, walking with place. Rather than starting with it being about not eating meat, I feel an importance to be responsible through my relationships with other beings, being in good relationship, not avoiding relationship. And I have learnt from wonderfully generous Indigenous mentors that sometimes it means eating the hunted meat that comes from a place of connection and respect for Aboriginal Law, rather than buying the packaged soya product flown in from afar. It's not respectful to say no to these gifts - What would I be refusing? What would I be empowering by doing so? (Sarah)

It is not just people and animals, then, that are colonised, but plants too, and land and Country and relationships. This is the Gumbaynggirr people stolen from the land and its relationships, and the land and relationships stolen from them. Plants, even more than animals, are often understood within a colonising framing as a backdrop against which other struggles around yuraal may be played out. But there is knowledge and law and integrity in animals and in plants, in trees and the tides and stories and dreams. The protocols and relations of ngurrajili, which have been disrupted by colonisation are also, importantly, relations with plants as yuraal and Country. Like the tree fern that Aunty Shaa tells us about in the following section. And like guuna, shit.

But shit doesn't hold us back: The Moon Man

Ngurrajilli doesn't end when we eat together in ceremony. To eat is to shit. The yuraal we eat is a physical and bodily connection to and with Country. We ingest to be nourished and to connect and relate to Gumbaynggirr Country as ceremony. Yuraal becomes us. We become Country. And it is in this co-becoming with yuraal that we continue giving. To shit is to uphold ngurrajili as we return nutrients our bodies no longer need to Country. Country absorbs, retains, renews, and gives back too. Guuna, shit, is important too, it has its special shit place, guuna miirlarl, with and as Gumbaynggirr Country.

Aunty Shaa tells a story of moon man, a figure of fun in Gumbaynggirr, and the plant people who carry him when he gets the runs:

There is a battle between Nymboida and Richmond people at Nymboida in Gumbaynggirr Country. They had a good go the Richmond and Nymboida people. They stand opposite one another in straight lines and throw their spears. But moon man is hiding behind a tree a lot of the time. He's not a warrior, he's not a fighter. So, when he does come out he throws his spear and it misses everyone and then it comes back and spears him in the butt, giving him the runs.

And the moon man is of the Garrabuung section, so the relationships that should help him are the elder brothers, younger brothers and brothers-in-law. They should have helped but they didn't want to carry him because he had the runs. They wanted to move camp and abandon the old fulla.

But then the plant people, the ferns and grasses, step in and stay to carry the moon man. The plant people take turns carrying him, he's got shit all over him and he is putting shit all over them but their concern for him is more important, so they continue carrying him. And moon man doesn't even want to get down on the ground to sleep and says to the tree fern, "I am going to sleep here on your shoulders".

So, the plant people carry him to his special place, Giidanyurgala, his resting place. Moon man says to the plant people, "You all carried me on your backs, you will be all around me here and you will never die. When you die, you will rise again. Go off together and scatter far and wide and flourish all of you, I am remaining on this hill, here I will stay in my Country. On the other hand, those men will all die".

So, the ferns and grasses they have eternal life – they keep generating and regenerating and people are a bit different.

Guuna, shit, is a part of relationships and continued giving. The guuna has given the ferns eternal life as they return after fire, generate and regenerate. You can still see the colour of guuna on them in the fine brown hairs that cover them.

We describe guuna here as practice, as more-than-human agent and as metaphor. As a more-than-human agent, shitting is as much part of co-becoming in practice as is any other part of connecting with Country. Hunting, sharing, eating, shitting, these practices are all part of cycles that nourish us and, in turn, nourish Country. Yet when we talk about shit we are also talking about it as metaphor. Shit is the baggage we each carry and the histories and presences of ongoing colonisation that we are also faced with from our different positions as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr.

The moon man story is a story of ngurrajili, what happens when relationships are strained, what it means to step up when times get hard, and about the capacity of mother earth to continue regenerating - 'carrying the shit of others'. Just as the plant people carry moon man, relationships are sometimes forged, very strong ones, through the carrying of others' shit. The continued giving of the tree ferns remind us that things can be rebuilt in bad times, hard times, that relationships can be renewed, and new relationships can emerge.

Colonisation, modern life, actively separates us from our shit, as practice and metaphor. Toilet cubicles, doors, locks, sprays, each work to distance humans from bodily excrement and disrupt a practice of continued giving, of returning nourishment to Country. Even the thought of being 'in relationship' with our guuna could be seen as offensive, at least humorous and perhaps, like moon man, we are letting the humour teach here. Just as

Neeyan explains the way animals have been colonised and miss out from bodily co-becoming with humans, Country too misses out from the bodily receiving that comes with shitting. And Yandaarra is affected too in this disconnect. At Myelstrom and the Golden hole, for example, our modern life and habits of separation meant that using conventional toilets, which included hiring a portable toilet for the Golden hole, was a given. Setting up an eco-toilet option was not something that was considered or discussed—colonisation has a way of normalising the breaking of ngurrajili.

Likewise, there are attempts to keep the shit of colonisation at a distance, separated from the present. The collective amnesia toward Australia's violent making, past and present, works to keep uncomfortable histories and realities distant from the lives of non-Indigenous people living on stolen lands. They enable public discourse to treat invasion and Indigenous dispossession as an event rather than an ongoing reality. Yet shit, this shit, colonisation, doesn't hold us back (or not always). As Yandaarra on Gumbaynggirr Country, we shit garlaany, oysters, fish, *now* as ceremony, and as ngurrajili (even if it is in a toilet!). We aim to carry each other's shit in Yandaarra in bad times, in hard times and in spite of the shit we face, acknowledging, always, that our shit is situational and different as we come from different places in relation to colonisation. We each have our special shit place that needs acknowledging. This is to recognise that we each carry our own shit and that this shifts and changes too, as Yandaarra and our relationships with each other and Country shifts and changes. At certain times and places, particular members of the collective are better placed than others to carry the hard shit. Realising this, honouring this idea of the shit we all carry, helps to keep Yandaarra generating and regenerating. To keep Yandaarra strong. We are living the shit, the shit of colonialism but we are also surviving as Gumbaynggirr and as non-Gumbaynggirr, mending and remaking relations as Gumbaynggirr and non-Gumbaynggirr in spite of this shit and as it composts. Like the tree ferns that carried the moon man, to give and care and mend the threads of that which have been broken, is to live under, with, and against colonising practices. This is an "active repudiation of dominance" (Vizenor, 2008: 1) as survivance through practice, much in the same way that the Lekwungen people in Victoria, British Columbia, tend to the *camas* fields as part of their ancestral food system, doing so without permission of park lands (Simpson & Bagelman, 2018).

Yuraal as Ngurrajili

Yuraal as ngurrajili is ceremony and connection on Gumbaynggirr Country. As we come together as Yandaarra in our more-than-human beings and co-becomings, we try to hold each other and Country as we negotiate, however difficult, the cultural interface as decolonising practice. The food knowledges we have reflected upon and shared in this chapter, embody our attempts to enact an ethics of continual giving – ngurrajili - and relationality. And while yuraal is colonising too, it is the relationships with and as yuraal that we are making explicit as a practice of survivance on and with Gumbaynggirr Country. Yet, as Yandaarra, we are positioned differently. Survivance means different things to the human members of Yandaarra.

As Gumbaynggirr people, Aunty Shaa and Neeyan have different relationships to yuraal -as-Country than Lara, Paul and Sarah. In this chapter we have shared conversations about what

this means for each of us as Gumbaynggirr non-vegans and non-Gumbaynggirr vegetarians and vegans. By sharing our collective and individual stories of coming into relationship with garlaany, pippies, the Golden Hole and guuna, shit, we have offered place-based examples of what it means to persist, continue, create in colonising and decolonising times around yuraal.

Aunty Shaa talks about ‘the practical work of Yandaarra’ when referring to the strength in being in relationship with place and knowing your place (see also Smith et al, 2020). Coming into relationship with garlaany, pippies, is one example of this ‘practical work’ of maintaining protocols and one way that Yandaarra is trying to decolonise our practices and relationships including, centrally, around yuraal. While this deep recognition aligns with many of the important ethical concerns and generative relationships that vegans and vegan scholars are advocating and practicing in new ways, it differs too and sometimes diverges. Our approach through Yandaarra is one that centres the building of relationships and the honouring of protocols, that begins with the need to recognise the violences of colonisation and separation, and to support practices of decolonisation where we can as we work and live the cultural interface with and as Yuraal on Gumbaynggirr Country.

For Lara, Paul and Sarah, coming into relationship with garlaany, fish or hunted meat to centre relationships and honour protocols, embodies the ‘practical work’ of knowing your place while refusing separation and ongoing violence. The kinds of more-than-human co-becoming shared in this chapter provide a contemporary example of the ecological animalism described by Plumwood (2004), Adams (2003) and others who have questioned the way veganism’s “dualistic account of human identity” (Plumwood, 2004: 55) relies on a human/nature dualism by its refusal to acknowledge cultural difference when it comes to human-non human relationships. To quote Plumwood (2004: 53):

Ecological Animalism insists we must consider context to express care for both animals and ecology, and to acknowledge at the same time different cultures and individuals in different ecological contexts, differing nutritional situations and needs.

For Yandaarra, yuraal as ngurrajili acknowledges and embodies Gumbaynggirr Law/Lore. This is to acknowledge and honour the agency of animals, plants, guuna, tides, the midden, the Old Fullas. This honouring and teaching is ceremony too and this is the practical work of ngurrajili with and as yuraal, with and as Yandaarra. To share this more-than-human co-becoming is to invite new relationships with food, including contextual veganism, in ways that deepen our understandings and engagements with food knowledges within the context of colonisation and survivance.

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