

TITLE: “Escaping assimilation’s grasp: Aboriginal women in the Australian women’s military services”

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ABSTRACT: During the assimilation era of the 1930s-60s, most Australian Indigenous women living in proximity to white Australia were forced to work as domestic servants with few other education or employment prospects. One significant yet under-studied exception was employment in the armed forces’ women’s auxiliaries. As a consequence of such employment, Aboriginal ex-servicewomen learned new skills and new opportunities to improve their social statuses. Through analysis of oral histories from four Aboriginal ex-servicewomen who served in the 1940s-60s, this article examines how work in the women’s forces empowered Aboriginal women and represented an escape from assimilation policies.

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The assimilation era of the 1930s-60s was a time when Australian state and territory governments used policies such as child removal and urban relocation to attack Indigenous cultures and to compel Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into predominantly low-paid, unskilled employment. Government and institution policies and practices geared Aboriginal girls' education primarily, though not exclusively, toward becoming domestic servants.¹ World War II and the formation of women's auxiliary services in the armed forces provided Aboriginal women with one particular alternative path. Though government regulations officially prohibited the enlistment of persons "not substantially of European origin or descent," the crisis situation left recruiters overlooking the race of recruits and admitting almost any qualified applicants.² Enlisted men and women served in integrated units, and testimonies suggest that Aboriginal people were generally treated on an equal level as non-Indigenous service personnel.

Aboriginal women's participation in the armed forces during the 1940s-60s provided one possible escape from their limited options in civilian life and contributed to future leadership roles at the community, state and national level. It is difficult to estimate the number of Aboriginal servicewomen because the military did not record the race of its members until 1993.³ Jan "Kabarli" James' compilation of Western Australian Aboriginal service personnel from World War I through the present suggests small numbers; among James' names of 631 Aboriginal ex-service personnel, only twenty-one are women.⁴ This admittedly incomplete list includes four women who served in the Australian Women's Land Army during World War II, which technically was not part of the armed forces.⁵ This does not diminish the significance of those women's work, as well as the work of Indigenous women who served in civilian capacities in factories, labour camps and in support services such as the Australian Comforts Fund.

Though Indigenous ex-servicewomen may be small in numbers, the importance of their work in the armed forces was significant for the opportunities it provided. Aboriginal women's stories complement much of the broader historical narrative of the women's services, but they did have unique experiences largely due to being Aboriginal women. Themes permeating Aboriginal women's testimonies include their limited prospects before enlisting, joining the armed forces to improve their social positions and learning new skills. After their times of service, these Aboriginal women used new education opportunities and discipline reinforced by the military to break free from the constraints of assimilation and to work for the betterment of Aboriginal Australians.

Oral history and Indigenous ex-servicewomen

Australia is not the only settler society where Indigenous women have served in the armed forces, and in comparable nations there are similar silences surrounding their service. In the United States, for instance, contemporary Native American servicewomen have only received limited attention since the death of Hopi woman Lori Piestewa in Iraq in 2003 – the first ever American Indian woman to die in combat.⁶ When looking at wartime, historians have written some analysis about Indigenous women on the home front. But references to the estimated 800 Native American women who served in the World War II American women's services and to the unknown number of Maori women in New Zealand's military are scant.⁷

Redressing some of these silences is the work of Grace Poulin, who has used oral testimonies to uncover the history of First Nations women who served in World War II in the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC), Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division (RCAF WD) and Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS, commonly called Wrens). Poulin uses a similar oral history methodology as this article, drawing on interviews with First Nations ex-servicewomen to paint a collective picture of their involvement. Poulin

argues that Canadian First Nations women's military experience was similar to non-Indigenous servicewomen, though there were some incidents of racism. Military service also provided First Nations women with new education and employment opportunities.⁸ The only other published oral accounts of Indigenous women's military service derive from the Navajo Nation, where two World War II veterans discuss their reasons for joining the United States Women's Army Corps. They report that they joined primarily out of a sense of patriotism to the United States. Through military service they learned new skills that they could apply in their post-war lives.⁹ The Aboriginal Australian women's testimonies in this article report experiences not dissimilar to their Native American counterparts, though of course there are variations fitting the Australian social and political context.

Just as the dearth of written records led Poulin to use oral history methodology, this article too relies primarily on oral history interviews with three Aboriginal ex-servicewomen, as well as existing records and oral history transcripts from one deceased ex-servicewoman. Two women served during World War II and two served post-war. The author contacted the three interviewees through a variety of networks: Indigenous ex-service organisations, local community contacts and advertisements in the Indigenous press.

Oral history interviews are powerful historical sources because they can paint a collective picture of forgotten women's history while also revealing individualised ways women have seen themselves in that history.¹⁰ Oral history interviews are also valuable as sources not just of what happened in women's lives, but also how they *felt* at different stages of their lives. Uncovering emotional histories necessitates a methodology where the interview is less a series of predetermined questions, and more an interactive conversation between the participant and interviewer.¹¹ Taking a conversational approach, while ensuring not to cut off the interviewees, also aligns with the Aboriginal tradition of *yarnin'* and can create an environment where the interviewees are more comfortable expressing their feelings in their

usual language.¹² The author employed such a methodology for this research, providing a wide scope for the Aboriginal ex-servicewomen to speak in-depth about their feelings surrounding particular events and could stress particular life memories over others.

When interviewing veterans, there is the risk that national narratives may shape how storytellers remember their individual roles in major national wartime events.¹³ Such concerns are not as prevalent for this study because the women's services did not participate in the major 'moments' of national memory in Australian military history, such as the Kokoda Trail in World War II or the Battle of Long Tan in Vietnam. Instead, the Aboriginal women's oral history testimonies focus a lot around work, activities and relationships. As this article will show, in many cases they express similar sentiments as non-Indigenous servicewomen, but there are still points of differentiation especially when they discuss their pre- and post-service lives.

Many of the excerpts in this article are long quotations, allowing the women to speak for themselves. This aligns with best practice when working with oral history interviews to leave the conversational tone intact.¹⁴ Furthermore, given potential power imbalance between researcher (white male) and participants (Aboriginal women), preserving the storytellers' voices is one way to maintain the women's agency. There were multiple different subjectivities at play between interviewer and participants – race, gender and age being the most prominent. As feminist historian Juliette Pattinson comments, subjectivities may have some influence on how storytellers describe their pasts. Yet Pattinson argues that while “awareness of it [intersubjectivity] is important for oral history practitioners because it makes a difference to the narratives told, the effect of this on the content of the narrative may be at the margins. Stories of life experience are, in fact, more resilient than an emphasis on the shaping effects of intersubjectivity acknowledges.”¹⁵

Background on women's services

Australia did not have women's auxiliaries during World War I or at the outbreak of World War II. Women could serve as nurses, but this was skilled employment which was, with exceptions, inaccessible for Aboriginal women.¹⁶ In 1941 the cabinet and military approved the enlistment of women in support tasks to free men for combat. The new auxiliaries formed were the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF), the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) and the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS). The WAAAF became the largest women's service with 26,704 members, 24,026 women served in the AWAS and 3,122 served in the WRANS. Other women also served in nursing corps, bringing the total number of World War II Australian servicewomen to 66,568. Women represented 4.9 per cent of Army, 12.5 per cent of Air Force, 10 per cent of Navy personnel and 6.6 per cent of overall enlistments. When the war ended, all three services were demobilised by 1948.¹⁷

When first commissioned, cabinet and military commanders envisioned that women would take jobs such as typists, drivers, telephonists, wireless operators, orderlies and cooks. Besides being work that did not challenge gender norms, the military employed women in non-combat tasks because they were a source of cheap labour, with pay set at approximately two-thirds the male rates. As the war progressed, continuing labour shortages and growing confidence in women as effective workers led to the expansion of servicewomen into traditional non-combat "men's work". Depending on their occupations, servicewomen learned a variety of physical, clerical, intellectual and communication skills. For instance, women in all three services worked in the respective Signal Corps. Tasks included enciphering and deciphering messages, operating several pieces of wireless equipment and working with access to top-secret information. Women in all three services who worked as drivers learned how to operate a variety of heavy motor vehicles, as well as maintenance and

roadside repairs. These and all other jobs afforded servicewomen the opportunity to develop skills in budgeting, management, mathematics, communication and labour delegation. For the majority of Aboriginal women growing up under assimilation policies, these were life skills often not provided in their limited educations or unskilled employment.

The military also offered servicewomen education courses which both reinforced the gender norms of the time while concurrently skilling its members. The majority of courses were tailored towards women's future work in the home or conventional middle-class women's occupations. The military's hopes that servicewomen would return to the home or women's work for the most part did come to fruition. Yet some women took advantage of rehabilitation schemes to enter tertiary study or other professional training courses. The most popular technical training courses for ex-servicewomen were hairdressing, stenography, dress-making, floral arranging and art, while the most popular tertiary courses were engineering, nursing and teaching. Though for white women the majority of these courses promoted traditional middle-class women's work, for Aboriginal women such courses provided opportunities to deviate from the typical domestic service track.

In July 1950, with fears that there would eventually be another total war and women would again be needed, cabinet approved the re-introduction of women's auxiliary services. The Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) and a reconstituted WRANS formed in late 1950, followed by the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) in February 1951. All three forces had similar roles as their World War II predecessors – employing women in non-combat capacities to free male labour. Like during World War II, pay was set at between two-thirds and three-fourths the male rate, although equal pay for officers was introduced in 1978.¹⁸

By the 1970s there was a gradual recognition of the military as a possible career for women. The WRAAF disbanded in 1977, and from 1978 cabinet approved the full

integration of women into the mainstream Army and Navy. This process was completed in 1984 and 1985 with the disbandment of WRAAC and WRANS respectively. Women's employment opportunities in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) have become more equal to men since the 1980s. For instance, the first woman commenced officer training at the Royal Military College at Duntroon in 1978, combat-related jobs opened up from 1990 and the first female RAAF pilot graduated in 1991. From September 2011, cabinet approved the gradual integration of women into combat roles over five years.¹⁹ Though certainly gender discrimination still exists, the employment opportunities for women in the ADF have improved significantly beyond the realm of solely "women's work".

For the period of the separate women's auxiliaries, notwithstanding discrimination in pay and available jobs, servicewomen were treated equally regardless of race. Aboriginal women fit well into this paradigm, though notably there were no identified Aboriginal women among the senior women officers. Like their non-Indigenous colleagues, work in the military was an opportunity to acquire skills that could serve them beyond a wife/mother career. Unique to Aboriginal women, military service also provided new prospects beyond the customary employment in domestic service. The following four case studies demonstrate the myriad ways that Aboriginal ex-servicewomen used their armed forces experiences to escape the limitations imposed in civilian life.

Civil rights activist: Oodgeroo Noonuccal

The most high-profile Aboriginal ex-servicewoman is Oodgeroo Noonuccal, formerly known as Kath Walker. Oodgeroo was born on Stradbroke Island, Queensland in 1920; unlike many other Aboriginal children during that era, she was fortunate not to be forcibly removed from her family. Nonetheless, she grew up under segregation, and her formal education terminated when she reached the age of thirteen.²⁰ In 1933, like most other Aboriginal women,

Oodgeroo became employed as a domestic servant, working in Brisbane. On several occasions Oodgeroo spoke or wrote about her negative experience as a domestic. In one speech she stated, “I was never happy as I hated domestic work. I was untrained for any other job and in my days the apathy, discrimination and in a lot of cases sheer contempt for the Aborigines prevented any of us rising above the environment which we had inherited from the ignorant non Aboriginal people.”²¹

The formation of AWAS provided Oodgeroo with an opportunity both to escape the drudgery of domestic service, but also to advance her education and work experience. She enlisted shortly after the fall of Singapore in February 1942, where two of her brothers were captured as prisoners of war. Oodgeroo served until March 1944, when she was discharged due to ongoing medical problems.²² Like so many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel, Oodgeroo found herself treated as an equal in the military. She comments, “[t]here was a job to be done, just to get it done, and all of a sudden the colour line disappeared, it just completely disappeared and it happened in so many different ways too.”²³ She made lifelong friendships; in one speech Oodgeroo remarked, “[in] the army, I was accepted as one of them and none of the girls I trained with cared whether I was black, blue or purple. For the first time in my life I felt equal to other human beings...”²⁴

Oodgeroo also claims that she obtained an education through the Army. Oodgeroo wrote to author Ann Howard: “I joined the AWAS principally because I did not accept Fascism as a way of life. It was also a good opportunity for an Aboriginal to further their education. In fact there were only two places where an Aboriginal could get an education, in jail or the Army and I didn’t fancy jail!”²⁵ Oodgeroo worked first as a switchboard operator. She was adept at her job, promoted to the rank of Corporal and made responsible for training new switchboard operators. She also was sent to work in the AWAS pay office.²⁶ Besides just

the on-the-job training, Oodgeroo also took advantage of the educational opportunities being offered to ex-servicewomen. She states:

You see, Aboriginals weren't entitled to any extra concessions of learning and it was the Army who changed the whole thing around. They said if you join the Army, you are going to go into the "dimwits" course and you can learn... And as soon as I got out of the Army, of course, I went into the "dimwits" course and did a stenographers course, shorthand, typing and book-keeping. But it was the only thing open for us, to improve our lot.²⁷

Oodgeroo admits that the stenographers course was difficult because she had such a limited formal education previously, but she persisted.²⁸ The sort of work Oodgeroo entered after the war was the type of work typical of middle-class white women – clerical work with limited opportunities for career progression. Yet for an Aboriginal woman, this was a significant job prospect.

Because Oodgeroo was a fast learner, the trajectory that began with her Army education and training took her life down a path uncommon for Aboriginal women of the 1940s-60s. By the early 1960s, Oodgeroo's interest in politics had grown and she became an active member of the Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (QCAATSI). In late 1960 Oodgeroo was elected as Secretary of the Council, ushering in years of political activism fighting for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Historian Elaine Darling writes, "[t]he strength of Walker's leadership moulded the dwindling support-base of shell-shocked QCAATSI survivors into a force to be reckoned with."²⁹ Through her work with QCAATSI, Oodgeroo was at the forefront of the campaign for the 1967 Referendum and other fights for the rights of Aboriginal people.³⁰

After the success of the 1967 Referendum, Oodgeroo remained involved in Aboriginal politics but also contributed to Aboriginal advancement in other ways. Her first

anthology of poetry – *We Are Going* – was published in 1964 and eventually sold over 10,000 copies in seven editions. Oodgeroo developed international links with other Indigenous peoples and the World Council of Churches, travelling extensively to promote Aboriginal rights and culture. In 1971 Oodgeroo founded Moongalba on Stradbroke Island as a place for teaching Aboriginal cultural practices. Through her work at Moongalba, Oodgeroo took a leading role as an educator of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous school children and adult visitors. To list all of Oodgeroo's achievements would take too much space, and indeed the variety of titles given to her in a tribute published in 1994 include educator, poet, orator, storyteller and pioneer.³¹

Oodgeroo's activism until her death in 1993 took her from the local, to the state, national and even international arena, constantly fighting for the rights of Indigenous people. Significantly, Oodgeroo was quite clear to express that she did not see herself as a leader because in traditional Aboriginal cultures there were no individual woman leaders; rather, she referred to herself as a spokesperson. She argued that as an Aboriginal woman, she was continuing a long tradition of women as the talkers whom men followed.³² It would not be fair to say that she only became an outspoken activist and educator because of her Army service. However, by her own admission, experience and education through the Army certainly catalysed opportunities that Oodgeroo seized in her post-service life.

Public advocate: Sue Gordon

Arguably the second most high-profile Aboriginal ex-servicewoman is Sue Gordon. A Yamatji woman born in 1943 near Meekatharra, Western Australia, Gordon was forcibly removed from her family at the age of four and sent to Sister Kate's Home in Perth. Gordon was raised mistakenly believing she was an orphan with no family. Gordon knows she should not have been removed, and she remembers discrimination when outside the institution and

acknowledges some cases of abuse at the home. But she was not abused and prefers to focus on the close-knit relationships formed among the Sister Kate's children, who continue to consider each other as family.³³

Like other institutions at the time, the education at Sister Kate's was geared towards training boys in manual labour and women as domestic servants. At the age of ten Gordon was already being sent out to work as a domestic during the school holidays. Several historians and Aboriginal women have written about the experience of domestics, and cases varied from being treated as an extension of the family to outright physical, sexual and mental abuse.³⁴ Gordon was not abused, but she hated domestic work. She was fortunate, though, that she happened to be at Sister Kate's during a short period when high-achieving students could pursue further study. She was one of only seven who were selected to attend high school, where she learned to type. Gordon won a scholarship to business college and then worked as a secretary. Gordon was seventeen, and she was no longer allowed to live at Sister Kate's and was forced to fend for herself. She was walking through North Perth one day and happened to walk by the Army barracks. She says, "I went in and oh, it sounded all exciting. They were going to pay me and send me to Sydney. Where's Sydney, you know?"³⁵ At age eighteen in 1961, Sue Gordon enlisted in the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps. As Gordon states, "I swapped one institution for another, but it was the only way I could get away [from Sister Kate's and domestic service]."³⁶ Joining the armed forces was not uncommon for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians who grew up in institutions because it provided food, shelter and a regimental environment.³⁷

Gordon went through basic training in Sydney before being sent to work in Signal Corps in Melbourne. Her experience with discipline and regimentation at Sister Kate's helped her adapt well to Army life, which mirrors the experiences of other removed children who served in the armed forces.³⁸ Describing her work in Signal Corps, Gordon states:

We went, each day, with the men in Signals, training, and because of our background in office work. So we learned to be teleprinter operators. We also became cipher operators, which is – shhh. I won't – don't say anything or I'll kill you if I have to – if I tell you, I'll have to kill you. So we learned how to become cipher operators. So we then became the elite in Signals, so when we went back to our unit, we worked shift work.³⁹

Though Gordon would not reveal the details of her work, she did indicate some of the skills obtained: “[n]ow, you've seen old movies, where these tapes relay machines there and they spit this tape out. Well, we, as part of our training, we had to learn to read the holes in those tapes. That's the Murray Code. You would – you could read these tapes without any typing on them, 'cause you just – you'd learned that.”⁴⁰

Similar to Oodgeroo's testimony, Gordon states that being in the Army was an egalitarian experience with non-Indigenous women: “I didn't encounter any racism in the Army, we all just had our job to do and we did it, and 'sexism' hadn't been invented then. As women we just accepted our lowly place.”⁴¹ Gordon recalls doing communications work at the Empire Games in Perth in 1962, typing up the Reuters and Australian Associated Press reports. She also was on duty during the Cuban Missile Crisis, receiving messages of the highest priority. At the end of her three years the Army wanted Gordon to re-sign, but she decided that she wanted to pursue other opportunities.⁴²

Through the contacts Gordon made in the Army, she was able to continue skilled employment. She trained as a ledger machinist with a WRAAC friend while working in the office of a hotel. In 1967 she got a job with NASA at the tracking station in Carnarvon, Western Australia. All of her colleagues were ex-military, so she fit in well with the routine and regimentation of the work. Gordon moved to the Pilbara in 1969, where she began a long career working in Indigenous Affairs. She first worked with organisations representing the

Iergamadu people, then for the Welfare Department and then for the Commonwealth Employment Service in Port Hedland. It was while working with the traditional Aboriginal people that Gordon received significant community support and went in search of her own Aboriginal family. Gordon did reconnect with her family in the 1970s and they continue to play a significant role in her life. Meanwhile, she continued her involvement with Aboriginal communities, even taking part in some of the peaceful land rights demonstrations at Noonkanbah in 1980. She remembers: “I actually sat on the side of the road in Hedland with all the old people from the 12 Mile Reserve to watch the convoy go past and we were protesting in silence on the side of the road...so I was involved in Aboriginal affairs on the ground.”⁴³

By the early 1980s Gordon was undertaking national roles in Aboriginal affairs, but still grounded in Western Australia Aboriginal communities. She worked with the Aboriginal Employment Committee, managed the Aboriginal Development Commission in Port Hedland, and after years of working with the traditional people she was appointed as the Commissioner of Aboriginal Affairs – the first Aboriginal person to head a Western Australian government department. In that role Gordon continued to work with integrity and prioritised the needs of Aboriginal people. She states, “I always believed in being honest with people. I never made promises, even when I was in charge of anything, I never made promises. So I was getting more involved in national issues.”⁴⁴ In 1988 Gordon was appointed the first Aboriginal magistrate of the new Western Australian Children’s Court. For the next eight years while working as a magistrate, Gordon also completed a law degree part-time at the University of Western Australia. She states, “[b]ut I battled at uni, like a lot of mature aged students, but we had the discipline. The young ones don’t have the discipline.”⁴⁵

Gordon served as a magistrate until reaching mandatory retirement age in 2008. Concurrently she sat on national bodies including the National Committee on Violence, chaired the Western Australia *Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities* and chaired the Howard government's short-lived National Indigenous Council. Her most high-profile national position was as the chair of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce from 2007-8. Gordon was determined to make the controversial Northern Territory Intervention work to stomp out child abuse in remote communities. She says to her critics:

I mean, when I got asked to do the Northern Territory, people – I was treated like a pariah there for – you know, by some people and I said, “Well, hang on. This is about child abuse. This is about bettering Aboriginal people’s conditions who’ve been neglected by Governments of all persuasions for decades. So what do you want people to do? Let the kids continue to be abused? Do you want change in communities or do you want people to stay?”⁴⁶

Gordon has come a long way since her time at Sister Kate’s and her tenure in the WRAAC. She still maintains ties with the WRAAC as a member of their organisation and marches with other WRAAC ex-servicewomen every ANZAC Day.⁴⁷ She is also a member of Honouring Indigenous War Graves, which regularly organises ceremonies and plaques at the gravesites of deceased Indigenous servicemen and women.⁴⁸ Gordon credits the leadership skills she has utilised in the last four decades to the sense of discipline instilled in her early life. She remarks, “I think it was the discipline from the Army. That I realised that if I was – if something was going to happen, I had to make it happen.”⁴⁹ Like the case of Oodgeroo, the Army was not the only reason for Gordon’s success and her contributions to

Aboriginal community development. But work in the Army catalysed the empowerment of an independent woman who has consistently fought for Aboriginal advancement.

Spiritual leadership: Betty Pike

Whereas Oodgeroo and Gordon developed national profiles, other Aboriginal ex-servicewomen have worked for Aboriginal advancement at the grassroots. One of those women is Betty Pike, who served in the WAAAF during World War II. Betty Pike is originally from Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, raised primarily by her white father away from her Aboriginal mother and kin. After finishing the eighth grade, some family problems led to Pike being sent to the Salvation Army Home in Perth. After finishing her schooling, Pike worked in the ironing room at the home; similar to the other Aboriginal women in this article, this propelled her along a trajectory towards domestic service. She did not know that she was Aboriginal until she was sixteen; when she confronted her mother's brother with the information, he reacted angrily. Pike recalls, "[a]nd he said, he was working at Kings Park, he was a groundsman there. He was apprenticed and he said, 'I will lose my job, we will be put into a system. You can't stay here, you just can't stay here with me or with us'."⁵⁰ Pike's uncle's fears were well-founded, for the *Aborigines Act* 1936 left Aboriginal people under near-complete control of the Chief Protector.⁵¹ Pike had little education, no money and few employment prospects. The year was 1943, and one of the few opportunities available was to join the women's auxiliary services. Even though she was only sixteen and thus underage, Pike signed up for the WAAAF both out of interest, but also sheer necessity. She summarises, "[i]f I didn't join up then [1943] I wouldn't have, and I had nowhere to go."⁵²

Like the other Aboriginal women discussed previously, Pike indicates that she adapted well to the WAAAF lifestyle because she appreciated the discipline. She describes it as "[h]ard but I loved it. I like discipline for some strange reason. So it gave me direction

because I sort of didn't have any direction. I didn't have any rules to follow or, I was poor, I never had any clothes and I had a roof over my head, I had a uniform to wear."⁵³ Pike scored high on her aptitude tests and was sent to Melbourne to work as a mechanic.⁵⁴ Pike's labour departed from the traditional realm of "women's work". She says, "[y]ou only worked on engines. And we had to know the oil. I mean when your exams came you had to know all the, you know, the internal, your oil systems, the fuel systems, your water systems, all that and it could be any number of – well I think we had nine different aircraft engines that we used to bolt and vent."⁵⁵

Significantly, Pike kept her Aboriginality a secret throughout her time in the WAAAF. This was primarily a consequence of her experience with her uncle before joining, but also because she lied about her age and place of birth when enlisting. Hiding her Aboriginality meant that Pike was able to "pass" as a white woman in Australian society both during and after the war. This shielded Pike from confronting racial discrimination in her everyday life, but she continuously feared others discovering her secrets, especially that she illegally enlisted underage. After World War II, Pike's status as an ex-servicewoman provided her with opportunities denied the majority of Aboriginal people. Like many other ex-servicewomen from Western Australia she remained in the east,⁵⁶ where she worked as a clerk at a department store and then did clerical work in the Victorian Taxation Department. Pike married and then stopped work to become a housewife.⁵⁷ This life trajectory for Pike mirrored many non-Indigenous World War II ex-servicewomen.

Early during her marriage Pike attempted to reconnect with her Aboriginality, but it was not until later in life – after raising five children – that Pike pursued her Aboriginality further. In 1988, Pike enrolled in continuing education classes to complete secondary school through the precursor to the Institute of Koorie Education at Deakin University in Geelong. She then enrolled in a Humanities course; she says: "I did literature, introduction to the arts,

which like a history of the arts, and comparative religions. So that also helped me start to be a bit rebellious...And I was in a course with a lot of young people, I was the only old person. I was sixty-three when I started at Deakin.”⁵⁸ Through her return to education, Pike became more active in the Geelong Aboriginal community. She worked with Aboriginal children as part of a remedial reading program. She began to write for children, starting with a play performed at the local primary school. Pike was then approached to work for the Catholic Education Office. She describes the job as follows: “[t]here was seventeen schools I had to deal with and then I got to doing, the schools got to know me and then I got to going into schools telling stories and working and some of the teachers said, ‘oh we don’t have any contact with Aboriginal people, will you come and do this, will you come and do that’.”⁵⁹

Since 1998, Pike’s grassroots leadership has continued through her work for Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Melbourne. She describes her role mostly as writing and working as an educator:

I’m very into what, since I’ve been here, trying to connect your Aboriginality within Catholicity or your Christianity. And I like doing liturgy stuff and that’s often, they make me – or they don’t make me, they’ll say “oh we want a prayer for this, we want a prayer for that, will you do something with an Aboriginal focus to it?” And I write for the Jesuit magazine *Madonna*. I’ve been doing that for nine years – writing under the umbrella of the power of story but with an Aboriginal focus.⁶⁰

Pike has also written children’s books with Aboriginal and Christian focuses, such as *A River Dreaming*, and books about Reconciliation and spirituality.⁶¹ She writes, “[m]y reason for bringing these stories to print is to bring some hope to the thousands of people like me, who are happy to own their heritage but have to struggle to do so.”⁶²

By Betty Pike's own admission, serving in the WAAAF represented an escape from a life without other opportunities. Pike, like Sue Gordon, credits many of her life choices to the discipline reinforced during her time in the WAAAF.⁶³ Through such discipline and learning new skills, Pike has worked over the last two decades to empower Aboriginal youth emotionally and spiritually. Though a far cry from her work as a mechanic in the WAAAF, Betty Pike's life has come a long way from the underage girl who signed up for lack of other opportunities.

Grassroots education leadership: Mabel Quakawoot

Mabel Quakawoot is both Aboriginal and South Sea Islander, born in 1937. Three of her four grandparents were indentured labourers from present-day Vanuatu, brought to north Queensland to work in the sugar cane fields.⁶⁴ Her other grandmother is Baialai, from present-day Curtis Island near Gladstone, Queensland. Quakawoot grew up in a large family outside Rockhampton with strong connections to both cultures and kin. Because of their South Sea Islander heritage, her family was exempt from much of the restrictive legislation against Aboriginal people in Queensland. Even so, she did experience racism as a child and recalls segregation against all Black Australians – Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander.⁶⁵

Quakawoot was an avid learner and finished school after grade ten. Even so, finding skilled work was difficult because of discrimination. Consequently, she had little choice but to work as a domestic servant. She recalls, “[w]ell I did housekeeping, house work, because no, no, they didn't believe that dark people could be in an office. They didn't think that you could understand reading and writing and be in an office, which I wished I had, had gone and challenged them, but that would be cheeky of me in those days.”⁶⁶ Quakawoot worked as a domestic servant for four years, and during that time she saw little other opportunity for

personal advancement. What set her on a different path was the fortune of working for a kind family whose head was an ex-World War II fighter pilot. According to Quakawoot:

He was the one who gave me the incentive, and he said, “You have enough brains to join the Air Force” and I who had that. Thought it was quite funny. And, but it was really great because they believed in me, even though I didn’t believe in what I was doing. And I put in an application to join and I had to have an aptitude test, and I passed my aptitude test, and so I was in the Air Force.⁶⁷

Quakawoot’s story of how she joined the WRAAF parallels the other Aboriginal women in several ways. Like Gordon and Oodgeroo, this was an escape from domestic service. Like Gordon, she had not even thought about signing up until a chance encounter with the services. Like all three other women, she felt she had few other opportunities to advance herself.

Quakawoot did not know anything about the WRAAF or what she was getting herself into when she signed up in 1957. She scored well on her aptitude test and was sent to work in the Signals mustering as a telegraphist. She completed her training at Point Cook, Victoria and Ballarat before doing most of her service in Canberra. Like Gordon, Quakawoot would not discuss actual work in the WRAAF because of the top secrecy of Signals. She worked as a telegraphist until she became engaged in 1960. Being engaged lowered her security clearance and Quakawoot was transferred to become a telephonist. Quakawoot was sociable and does not recall experiencing racial discrimination in the WRAAF; neither does she recall any individual examples of gender discrimination, though she does note the unequal pay.⁶⁸ In 1962, Quakawoot married and, per WRAAF regulations barring married women, was discharged and moved to Mackay, Queensland.⁶⁹

Like Pike, it would be later in life that Quakawoot would return to the work force and apply the discipline, communication and study skills instilled in the WRAAF. As was often the case for women in the 1960s, Quakawoot did not seek further employment because her husband did not want her to work. She had two children, and after her younger daughter was in school, Quakawoot slowly began to enter the work force. In 1979, Quakawoot became employed as a teacher at a special needs school. She states:

That was in a very special needs school, you know, and, they had the slow children who could read, but they were slow readers. You know?...I did that for twenty-one years until they – and I forget the year that they put all the special needs children into mainstream schools. And that was the saddest day for those children...And I went and taught at the high schools then, with the special needs kids. I taught them sewing, science, maths, English, reading.⁷⁰

Quakawoot's role as an educator was always working for to better the lives of the disadvantaged, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Through this work, she was able to influence the lives of individual children and their families, serving as a role model.

Since the 1980s Quakawoot has also participated in and initiated various non-profit projects, paralleling the post-service lives of many ex-servicewomen. She has contributed to Aboriginal and South Sea Islander organisations in Mackay, particularly in relation to education. She has served as an Elder on the Murri Court in Townsville. She is a director of the Port Curtis Coral Coast Corporation, managing native title land and fighting to preserve the environment from development interests. She has also shown initiative by establishing simple programs that contribute to community morale and wellbeing, such as offering cups of tea at the local courthouse. Quakawoot also founded the first Returned Servicewomen's League in Mackay in 1978, and it currently has approximately thirty-seven members. She successfully lobbied for the construction of a memorial in Mackay dedicated to South Sea

Islander military service, which is even more forgotten than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service. Quakawoot shows no signs of slowing down; she states, “[s]ee, I’m doing this Certificate IV in Business and Governance and I want to ask, can I go into the communities to find all the adult people who are illiterate and can I set up classes in those communities.”⁷¹

Mabel Quakawoot’s post-service life, like the other women in this article, did not follow the same work she did in the armed forces. What is clear, though, is that the WRAAF furthered Quakawoot’s education and provided the opportunity to escape domestic service. Other members of her family, too, have subsequently served in the military. One of Quakawoot’s sisters also served in the WRAAF and a brother served in the Vietnam War. Reflecting on the position of military service in her and others’ lives, Quakawoot says “[b]ut in reflection, it is a good thing to join...it is something that never leaves you and you’re – I think you become more proud of your country.”⁷²

Conclusion

The four women in this article were not the only Aboriginal women to serve in the Australian armed forces during the period of separate women’s services.⁷³ Though histories of the women’s services have tended to focus on how they paradoxically challenged gender norms while attempting to prepare women for continued feminine lifestyles, for Aboriginal servicewomen the situation was different. While each of these and other Aboriginal servicewomen have their own individual experiences, various themes still run through their testimonies. Whether through acquiring new education opportunities and skills or through self-discipline, Aboriginal women took advantage of the prospects military employment provided to escape assimilation policies. Whether through civil rights activism, chairing national inquiries, writing, tutoring juveniles or serving in the judiciary, these ex-

servicewomen have been role models, persons of influence and worked for Aboriginal advancement. Perhaps it is most fitting to let Sue Gordon have the final word: “all of that [Army] training, it was – it was about discipline, and I said to people, I say it now: ‘You know, that discipline from Sister Kate’s and the discipline from the Army is what gets me now’.”⁷⁴

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¹ For assimilation and child removal, see National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (1997) *Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission); Anna Haebich (2008) *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia, 1950-1970* (North Fremantle: Fremantle Press); Tim Rowse (Ed.) (2005) *Contesting Assimilation* (Perth: API Network); Russell McGregor (2011) *Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press).

² See Robert Hall (1997) *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*, 2d edition (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press).

³ Hugh Smith (2001) Minorities and the Australian Army: Overlooked and Underrepresented?, in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (Eds) *A Century of Service: 100 Years of the Australian Army. The 2001 Chief of Army's Military History Conference* (Canberra: Army History Unit, Department of Defence), pp. 129-149.

⁴ Jan “Kabarli” James (2010) *Forever Warriors* (Perth: Scott Print).

⁵ See Sue Hardisty (Ed.) (1990) *Thanks Girls and Goodbye!: The Story of the Australian Women's Land Army 1942-45* (Ringwood, VIC: Viking O'Neil).

⁶ Al Carroll (2008) *Medicine Bags and Dog Tags: American Indian Veterans from Colonial Times to the Second Iraq War* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press), pp. 207-222; Herman J. Viola (2008) *Warriors in Uniform: The Legacy of American Indian Heroism* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society), pp. 80-81. For First Gulf War Navajo veteran Cynthia Descheeny's life story see J. Boyd MorningStorm (2004) *The American Indian Warrior Today: Native Americans in Modern U.S. Warfare* (Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press), pp. 80-95.

⁷ See, for instance: Kenneth William Townsend (2000) *World War II and the American Indian* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), pp. 177-178; Jeré Bishop Franco (1999) *Crossing the Pond: The Native American Effort in World War II* (College Station, TX: University of North Texas Press), pp. 65; 73; “Maori members of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corp, Wellington wharf, 23 January 1946,” National Library of New Zealand (Alexander Turnbull Library), Wellington, Reference Number: 1/4-001636-F.

⁸ Grace Poulin (2007) Invisible Women: Aboriginal Servicewomen in Canada's Second World War Military, in P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Craig Leslie Mantle (Eds) *Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian Military: Historical Perspectives* (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Force Academy Press), pp. 137-169; Grace Poulin (2007) *Invisible Women: World War II Aboriginal Servicewomen in Canada* (Thunder Bay, ON: D.G. Poulin).

⁹ Peggy Jane Chee and Myrtle Waybenais, in B.H. Johnson (Ed.) (1977) *Navajos and World War II* (Tsaile, Navajo Nation, AZ: Navajo Community College Press), pp. 116-121; 129-133.

¹⁰ Susan H. Armitage and Sherna Berger Gluck, "Reflections on Women's Oral History: An Exchange," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Alistair Thomson, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 78.

¹¹ Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," in *The Oral History Reader*, 129-141.

¹² See Lorina Barker, "'Hangin' out' and 'Yarnin'": Reflecting on the Experience of Collecting Oral Histories," *History Australia* 5, no. 1 (2008): 09.1-09.9.

¹³ See Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Stories: Using Personal Testimony in War History," *War & Society* 25, no. 2 (October 2006): 1-21; Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2013).

¹⁴ Armitage and Gluck, "Reflections on Women's Oral History," 81.

¹⁵ Juliette Pattinson, "'The thing that made me hesitate...': Re-Examining Gendered Intersubjectivities in Interviews with British Secret War Veterans," *Women's History Review* 20, no. 2 (April 2011): 258.

¹⁶ See Sally Goold and Kerryne Little (Eds) (2005) *In Our Own Right: Black Australian Nurses' Stories* (Maleny, QLD: eContent Management). Recently Philippa Scarlett identified a Darug woman living in Canada who served as a nurse with the British army. See Philippa Scarlett, "An Indigenous Australian Nurse in World War One: Marion Leane Smith," 30 October 2013, online, available from <http://indigenoushistories.com/2013/10/30/an-indigenous-nurse-in-world-war-one-marion-leane-smith-smith/>, accessed 2 June 2014.

¹⁷ Australia, Department of Veterans' Affairs (1985) *Study of Returned Servicewomen of the Second World War* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service), p. 11. The most comprehensive histories of the World War II women's services are: Patsy Adam-Smith (1996) *Australian Women at War*, 2d ed. (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Books Australia Ltd.); AWAS: Lorna Ollif (1981) *Women in Khaki* (Marrickville, NSW: Ollif Publishing Company); Grace Johansen (1996) *The AWAS: A Social History of the Australian Women's Army Service during the Second World War* (BA Honours, Central Queensland University); Ann Howard (1990) *You'll be Sorry!* (Sydney and Melbourne: TARKA Publishing); Jean Beveridge (1988) *AWAS: Women Making History* (Chevron Island, QLD: Booralong Publications); WAAAF: Joyce Thomson (1991) *The WAAAF in Wartime Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press); Clare Stevenson and Honor Darling (Eds) (1984) *The WAAAF Book* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger); WRANS: Shirley Fenton Huie (2000) *Ships Belles: The Story of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service in War and Peace 1941 – 1985* (Sydney: The Watermark Press); Kathryn Leslie Spurling (1988) *The Women's Royal Australian Naval Service: A Study in Discrimination 1939 – 1960* (MA, The University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy); Margaret Curtis-Otter (1996) *W.R.A.N.S.*, 2d. ed. (Garden Island, NSW: The Naval Historical Society of Australia Incorporated).

¹⁸ The most comprehensive histories of the post-World War II women's services are: WRAAC: Janette Bomford (2001) *Soldiers of the Queen: Women in the Australian Army* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press); Lorna Ollif (1985) *Colonel Best and her Soldiers: The Story of 33 Years of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps* (Hornsby, NSW: Ollif Publishing Company); WRANS: Huie, *Ships Belles*; Spurling, *The Women's Royal Australian Naval Service*.

¹⁹ Hugh Smith and Ian McAllister (1991) The Changing Military Profession: Integrating Women in the Australian Defence Force, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 27, no. 3, pp. 371-379; Jeremy Thompson (2011) "Women cleared to serve in combat," Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) News, 27 September, online, available from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-09-27/women-on-the-frontline/2946258>, accessed 30 December 2011.

²⁰ Kathie Cochrane (1994) *Oodgeroo* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press), pp. 3-7; Oodgeroo (of the Tribe) Noonuccal, in Roberta Sykes (Ed.) (1994) *Murawina: Australian Women of High Achievement* (Sydney: Doubleday), p. 151. See also "20th Century Aborigines," in papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, University of Queensland, UQFL84, Box 30: Speeches and reports.

²¹ No name or date of speech – simply "Kath Walker," in papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 30. See also Kath Walker, in *Shadow Sister: A film biography of Australian Aboriginal poet Kath Walker, M.B.E.*, directed and produced by Frank Heimans, Cinetel Productions, 1977, 53 min., videocassette.

²² Oodgeroo Noonuccal, in Robert Hall (1995) *Fighters from the Fringe: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Recall the Second World War* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press), pp. 114-116; National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA) Canberra, series B884, item 4648085: WALKER KATHLEEN JEAN MARY: Service Number - QF267190; Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, pp. 10; 15.

²³ Oodgeroo Noonuccal, in Hall, *Fighters from the Fringe*, pp. 118-119.

²⁴ No name or date of speech – simply "Kath Walker," in papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 30. See also "Kath Walker," *This is Your Life*, series 6, episode 1, 1980, 25 min., videocassette; Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, p. 13; Oodgeroo Noonuccal, in Hall, *Fighters from the Fringe*, p. 118; Oodgeroo (of the Tribe) Noonuccal, in Sykes, *Murawina*, p. 151.

- ²⁵ Howard, *You'll be sorry!*, p. 154. See also Ann Howard (1994) *Where Do We Go From Here?* (Sydney: TARKA Publishing), p. 161.
- ²⁶ Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, p. 13; Oodgeroo Noonuccal, in Hall, *Fighters from the Fringe*, p. 118.
- ²⁷ Oodgeroo Noonuccal, in Hall, *Fighters from the Fringe*, pp. 130-131.
- ²⁸ No name or date of speech – simply “Kath Walker,” in papers of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Box 30; Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*, p. 15.
- ²⁹ Elaine Darling (1999) *They Spoke Out Pretty Good: Politics and Gender in the Brisbane Aboriginal Rights Movement 1958-1962* (Wurtulla, QLD: Elaine Darling), p. 186.
- ³⁰ In the 1967 Referendum 90.77% voted to amend the Australian Constitution to include Aboriginal people in the census and to grant the federal government legislative power in Indigenous affairs. It has widely been interpreted as a symbolic vote for Aboriginal equality. See Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus (2007) *The 1967 Referendum: Race, Power and the Australian Constitution* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press); *Vote Yes for Aborigines*, written and directed by Frances Peters-Little, produced by Ronin Films, 2007, DVD.
- ³¹ Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*; Oodgeroo (of the Tribe) Noonuccal, in Sykes, *Murawina*, pp. 152-155; Adam Shoemaker (Ed.) (1994) *Oodgeroo: A Tribute*, special issue of *Australian Literary Studies* (St. Lucia: Australian Literary Studies and University of Queensland Press); Don Dunstan, in “Kath Walker,” *This is Your Life: Shadow Sister*; Jim Davidson (1977) Interview – Kath Walker, *Meanjin*, 36, no. 4, pp. 437-439.
- ³² *Kath Walker Poet and Activist*, directed by Anne Cowden, Equality Media, 1994, DVD; Darling, *They Spoke Out Pretty Good*, pp. 158-159.
- ³³ National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA) ORAL TRC 6260/5, Sue Gordon, interview with Noah Riseman, 25 November 2010, Perth, WA. For Sister Kate’s Home, see Anna Haebich (2000) *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press), pp. 280-287; Quentin Beresford (2006) *Rob Riley: An Aboriginal Leader’s Quest for Justice* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press); Christine Choo (2002) Sister Kate’s Home for ‘Nearly White’ Children, in Doreen Mellor and Anna Haebich (Eds) *Many Voices: Reflections on Experiences of Indigenous Child Separation* (Canberra: National Library of Australia), pp. 193-207.
- ³⁴ See Victoria Haskins (2005), *One Bright Spot* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan); Margaret Tucker (1977) *If Everybody Cared: Autobiography of Margaret Tucker M.B.E.* (Sydney: Ure Smith); Ruth Hegarty (1999) *Is That You Ruthie?* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press); Doreen Kartinyeri and Sue Anderson (2008) *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press).
- ³⁵ Sue Gordon, NLA ORAL TRC 6260/5. See also “Sue Gordon, JP,” in Sykes, *Murawina*, p. 79.
- ³⁶ Gordon, in Sykes, *Murawina*, p. 80. See also Sue Gordon, NLA ORAL TRC 6260/5.
- ³⁷ See Australia, Senate, Community Affairs Reference Committee (2004) *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, p. 161, available online from http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/completed_inquiries/2004-07/inst_care/report/, accessed 5 November 2010; Suellen Murray, John Murphy, Elizabeth Branigan and Jenny Malone (2008) *After the Orphanage: Life Beyond the Children’s Home* (Sydney: UNSW Press), pp. 132-133; Robin Levett (2005) *The Girls*, 2d. ed. (Newstead, VIC: Hudson Publishing), pp. 195-196.
- ³⁸ See Noah Riseman (2011) The Stolen Veteran: Institutionalisation, Military Service, and the Stolen Generations, *Aboriginal History*, 35, pp. 57-77.
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- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ Gordon, in Sykes, *Murawina*, p. 80.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
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- ⁴⁴ Sue Gordon, NLA ORAL TRC 6260/5. See also Gordon, in Sykes, *Murawina*, p. 81.
- ⁴⁵ Sue Gordon, NLA ORAL TRC 6260/5.
- ⁴⁶ Sue Gordon, NLA ORAL TRC 6260/5. For the Intervention, see Paul Toohey (2008) *Last Drinks: The Impact of the Northern Territory Intervention* (Melbourne: Black Inc.); Australia, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2008) *Northern Territory Emergency Response Review*, 30 September, online, available from http://www.terreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/default.htm, accessed 9 August 2012.
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- ⁵² Pike interview.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ The WAAAF was the only World War II women's service to send women interstate. See Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War*, p. 172.
- ⁵⁵ Pike interview.
- ⁵⁶ Lloyd Davies (2000) *Sheila: A Biography of Sheila Mary McClemons OBE, CMG, SJM, BA, LLB* (Annandale, NSW: Desert Pea Press), p. 109.
- ⁵⁷ Pike interview. See also Pike, *The Power of Story*, p. 6.
- ⁵⁸ Pike interview. See also Pike, *The Power of Story*, p. 7.
- ⁵⁹ Pike interview.
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- ⁶² Pike, *A River Dreaming*, p. 33.
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- ⁶⁴ For the Pacific Islander indentured labour trade, see Tracey Banivanua-Mar (2007) *Violence and Colonial Dialogue: The Australian-Pacific Indentured Labor Trade* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press); Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin (1993) *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination*, 3d ed. (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press), pp. 147-234.
- ⁶⁵ Mabel Quakawoot, interview with Noah Riseman, 5 June 2011, Mackay, QLD.
- ⁶⁶ Quakawoot interview.
- ⁶⁷ Quakawoot interview.
- ⁶⁸ Quakawoot interview. Other ex-servicewomen similarly argue that different treatment did not necessarily equate to discrimination. See Bronwyn Lowe (2011) Reflections on Gender and Memory: Personal Experiences of Women of the WAAAF during the Second World War, *Melbourne Historical Journal*, 39, pp. 167-168.
- ⁶⁹ Quakawoot interview. The requirement that women be discharged upon marriage was different from the World War II women's services and did not change until the late 1960s. See Bomford, *Soldiers of the Queen*, p. 15; Spurling, *The Women's Royal Australian Naval Service*, p. 289; Huie, *Ship's Belles*, pp. 273; 287.
- ⁷⁰ Quakawoot interview.
- ⁷¹ Quakawoot interview.
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- ⁷³ See "Alice Lovett," in Alick Jackomos and Derek Fowell (Eds) (1991) *Forgotten Heroes: Aborigines at War from the Somme to Vietnam* (South Melbourne: Victoria Press), pp. 38-42; Christobel Mattingley and Ken Hampton (Eds) (1992) *Survival in Our Own Land: 'Aboriginal' Experiences in 'South Australia' since 1836*, (Sydney: Hodder & Stoughton), pp. 106; 288.
- ⁷⁴ Sue Gordon, NLA ORAL TRC 6260/5.