

## **Winamaldi-watjeri-ungai. Winamaldi and Jesus**

*Uncle Ken Sumner, Auntie Rose Rigney and Sean Weetz with Chris Budden*

In this colonially constructed cavern  
Winamaldi has been undoing  
By weaving us together  
Stitch by stitch  
Circle by circle  
Side by side  
Forming heaven on earth  
Winamaldi-watjeri-ungai ('in the fullness of the Creator')  
As it was  
As it will be

This Ngarrindjeri world is a world in which the Creator holds everything together; everything is connected and related, the land and the waters are alive, and creation and re-creation are an ongoing act. Sin and broken-ness are existential things to be confronted and healed, not the defining core and shaping heart of the universe.

Invasion, settler-colonialism and mission disrupted and fractured that world. Many First Peoples became followers of Jesus, with pressure to abandon old ways. When a people reclaim their world what does this mean for the way they speak about Jesus? How does Jesus enter this Ngarrindjeri world; a world where the people see Jesus already in the sustaining work of the Creator? What does the historical Jesus have to do with One who is seen as 'ngatji' (inadequately described as 'totem')?

This paper will explore the world of the Ngarrindjeri people of Australia. It will suggest that the biblical/church Jesus becomes important because of the disruption of colonialism. It will offer some reflections on how Jesus both affirms and strengthens their cultural identity and offers a counter narrative that helps them critically engage with ongoing colonial occupation of land, lives and minds.