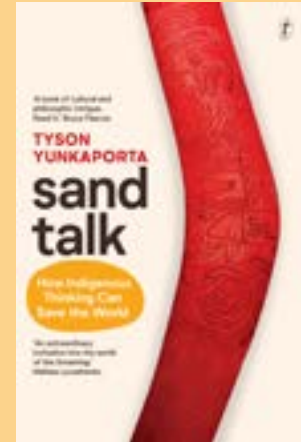


## SAND TALK: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World



### Tyson Yunkaporta

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#### PRAISE FOR *SAND TALK*

'It was certainty that drove a bulldozer through the oldest and deepest philosophic statement on earth at Burrup Peninsula. *Sand Talk* offers no certainties and Tyson Yunkaporta is not a bulldozer driver. This is a book of cultural and philosophic intrigue. Read it.' BRUCE PASCOE

'Radical ideas, bursting with reason.' TARA JUNE WINCH

'An extraordinary invitation into the world of the Dreaming.' MELISSA LUCASHENKO

'After two hundred years, Indigenous thinkers are claiming the right to interpret Aboriginal Australia. It is a revolutionary change: here, in this compelling book, are its first fruits.' NICOLAS ROTHWELL

'An exhilarating meditation on different ways of knowing and being. *Sand Talk* is playful, profound and fiercely original.' BILLY GRIFFITHS

'A familiar Indigenous sense of humour and generosity of sharing knowledge makes this book enjoyable to read...Like *Dark Emu*, Yunkaporta's book will have people talking.' BOOKS+PUBLISHING

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#### ABOUT TYSON YUNKAPORTA

Tyson Yunkaporta is an academic, an arts critic, and a researcher who belongs to the Apalech Clan in far north Queensland. He carves traditional tools and weapons and also works as a senior lecturer in Indigenous Knowledges at Deakin University in Melbourne.

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#### A READER'S INTRODUCTION TO *SAND TALK*

We are accustomed to a certain way of thinking. We want the world to be simple, but we talk about it in complicated ways.

Indigenous thinking knows the world is complex—that to simplify it is, in fact, to destroy it—and finds deep ways to communicate this knowledge: pictures, carvings, stories.

In *Sand Talk* Tyson Yunkaporta shows how patterns and symbols and shapes can make sense of the world. He yarns with the keepers of different knowledges, looking for ways to connect the elements of a coherent world view. He uses sand talk, honouring the Aboriginal custom of drawing images on the ground to bring clarity to complexity.

He asks: what happens if we bring an Indigenous perspective to the big picture—to history, education, money, power and so much else? Is it even possible to have proper concepts of sustainable life without Indigenous knowledge?

He challenges us to think differently—and save the world.

THE FOLLOWING THOUGHT EXPERIMENTS AND QUESTIONS ARE PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR FOR YOU TO HAVE A GUIDED CONVERSATION.

1. Reflect on the Indigenous idea that 'If you don't move with the land, the land will move you'. If we had to redesign Australia's infrastructure according to this principle, what might this more mobile and adaptive society look like? **Chapter 1, The Porcupine, the Paleo-mind and the Grand Design**
2. This chapter introduces the idea of finding the most creative solutions in the most marginal of viewpoints. Can you think of any examples in which dialogue with an unlikely outsider has produced startling innovation? **Chapter 2, Albino Boy**
3. Different models of physics in different cultures result in diverse experiences of time and space. Could this possibly be true, or are the laws of physics culturally neutral and universal? **Chapter 3, First Law**
4. In this chapter we alter the symbolic colours and shapes of the Aboriginal flag (red for land/resources/environment, black for people/community/society, yellow circle for spirit/values/law) to represent different political and economic systems. Using this model, how would you represent China's economic system? **Chapter 4, Forever Ltd**
5. Throughout the book, the author has been using the dual second person form of 'us-two' which is common in Indigenous languages but absent from English. How does this change the experience of reading, for the reader to be addressed as if within a kinship pair relationship? **Chapter 5, Lines in the Sand**
6. The Indigenous concept of the gut is that it is the seat of spirit and intelligence, like a second brain. Are there similar ideas in European cultures, or even scientific research to suggest there might be something to this idea? **Chapter 6, Of Spirit and Spirits**
7. Choose a historical narrative that does not reflect your point of view, one that has been told from a point of view that is not your own. What would that story look like if you, the outsider, told it? What could people learn from your version of this history? **Chapter 6, Advanced and Fair**
8. Imagine that the official pre-history of harsh, brutal, primitive cultures is inaccurate and that Palaeolithic lifestyles were in fact characterised by abundance and a rich intellectual culture. Imagine what your own ancestors would have been like in this scenario, then imagine what you would be like if you were raised in that culture. How would you be different? **Chapter 8, Romancing the Stone Age**
9. What are the most essential kinds of data and knowledge that might be 'backed up' off-grid through oral culture methods within intergenerational relationships grounded in local landscapes? How could this be done? **Chapter 9, Displaced Apostrophes**
10. This chapter cautions against the assumption that every word out of an Indigenous person's mouth is wisdom. So how can you tell if somebody is sharing important knowledge with you, or just being silly? And what is the right way to respond in both situations? **Chapter 10, Lemonade for Headaches**
11. Modern civilisation offers a very narrow range of sexualities within hetero-normative and homo-normative frameworks of being in physical relation to each other. Can you imagine what kinds of sexual experience may have existed before these limiting categories came into being? **Chapter 11, Duck Hunting is Everybody's Business**
12. Consider the Aboriginal concept of 'protection' as opposed to the idea of 'safety' (which does not exist in Aboriginal languages). Protection in Aboriginal cultures carries agency for groups and individuals acting with intense awareness of their surroundings. Safety is a passive thing, provided by authority through one-size-fits-all policies. How might Indigenous ideas of agentic protection improve workplace health and safety systems? **Chapter 12, Immovable Meets Irresistible**
13. Do the 'Dream Walk' described in the second half of this chapter or [listen to the audio version](#) and share your experience **Chapter 13, Be Like Your Place**
14. How might you use some of the ideas in this book to become a true 'agent of sustainability'? **Chapter 14, Which Way?**