



## ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

*"The very ink with which all history is written is merely fluid prejudice"*

– Mark Twain.

I have worked in the protection of Aboriginal Sites on the North Shore for many years now and have found and met some of the most beautiful people during my time. One of those people I married and have found happiness and peace for my children and myself. It is truly amazing the time and effort that people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, commit in the daily struggle for Aboriginal rights. The Aboriginal Support Group Manly Warringah Pittwater does fantastic work and is a blessing. I guess I gained a reputation early on as being cranky and unforgiving with some people. Those who know me know that I am very passionate about my work.

Being passionate about work does have a price and personally I have paid that price when it revolves around Aboriginal issues.

Looking back over the past years of my working life as an Aboriginal Heritage Officer sends a shiver up my spine. Just thinking about how I first felt when I took the plunge into this type of work. The feelings of anger, hurt, resentment, frustration and the struggle people endure just to protect evidence of the past and present life of Aboriginal Sydney.

My frustration grew from seeing what little respect a lot of people in Sydney had towards what is perhaps the largest outdoor rock art gallery in the world. Councils re-engraving ancient rock art with jack hammers so local white fellas could see the black graffiti a little clearer.

Things have changed on the North side and people's minds are expanding and absorbing the truth.

*"The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but escaping the old ones, which ramify, for those brought up as most of us have been, into every corner of our minds".*

– John Maynard Keynes.

it is all around them. The simple fact that Aboriginal people lived here whilst Neanderthal man was dragging his knuckles all over Europe and that Aboriginal people had a rich and spiritual culture, which still exists today, is still little appreciated by most people.

Two steps forward and one step back is often the case for all of us either as members of support groups, reconciliation groups or Aboriginal people. We have over the past as a community achieved so much and accomplished goals never thought possible. With achievement in mind, belief and respect grow and there is

light at the end of the tunnel for our efforts and sacrifices. I do believe as individuals coming together as one we can achieve our common goals and objectives. United we stand and let us never be divided.

I have been blessed with some wonderful and kind people to be able to work with in Sydney. Phil Hunt, an archaeologist from Canberra and part-time hippy, sacrificed his own time to try and encourage Aboriginal Sites protection.

*Continued Page 2*



*Vicki and David Watts*

The wonderful part of my work is being able to talk to groups and inform them about what is Aboriginal Heritage and that

## Aboriginal Heritage

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There are so many Government agencies set up to protect Australian resources like Fisheries, Heritage, Parks, Flora and Fauna, but the protection of Aboriginal Sites and Culture and the evidence of the past is left to the National Parks & Wildlife to handle (now the Department of Environment and Conservation – DEC). The amount of resources allocated to the NP&WS is a pittance compared to other agencies.

Aboriginal Culture and Heritage is not something that can be given a second thought anymore. It is endangered and is threatened by the very Act that is there to protect it. The NP&WS is, in my opinion, under resourced to cope with protecting Heritage and lacks a spine legally.

When a part of the oldest living culture on earth today can be destroyed with a simple signature from the Director General, and this happens way too often, then its time to say no more to this.

White man's Culture and Heritage cannot be signed off on so why do the Australian people allow this to happen? I guess it's a simple answer – they don't know about it. So much is hidden about Aboriginal Culture and Heritage that it's something that actually scares people when you mention it. The first thing they think about is land rights and the silly misconceptions about Aboriginal Australia which have existed for too long. Five Councils have taken a huge step towards protecting Aboriginal Heritage on the North Shore of Sydney. Almost six years ago four Councils – North Sydney, Willoughby, Lane Cove and Warringah Councils – committed themselves by employing an Aboriginal Heritage Officer. Manly Council followed six months ago and we all hope that the other Councils will follow shortly. The Aboriginal Sites that exist here are such an important part of our Heritage, a record into the past before European invasion and an insight into what this wonderful country was and still is today. It doesn't matter in my

opinion if you just stepped off the boat yesterday. It's up to all of us to bring about change for the better in preserving a living culture past and present.

I congratulate and appreciate people who in this busy life we all lead today are spending some energy and time in trying to learn and understand more about what surrounds them. Also thanks to the many people devoted to reconciliation and being part of the struggle.

While Aboriginal Sites are (supposedly) protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, which is administered by the Aboriginal Heritage Division of the DEC, it is at the local government level where most decisions are made that are likely to affect Aboriginal Sites.

Councils are the owners and managers of parks and reserves that contain many Aboriginal Sites. They also have a direct role in planning and development decisions that can effect the identification and survival of Aboriginal Sites. Councils also have more direct interaction with the local community which is important in public awareness and education purposes. The day-to-day decisions and actions taken by Councils therefore can have a much greater influence on the Aboriginal Heritage in these locations than state government agencies.

The Aboriginal Heritage Office is important as it is giving greater attention to the nearly 500 recorded Sites in these four council areas and raising awareness among the public in ways that have always been dreamed of by those working in the area but never before achieved. Many other Councils have expressed interest in the Aboriginal Heritage Office but as yet have not had the opportunity to implement their own program. The AHO is therefore a role model for other Councils and the programs that it initiates can be used as arguments by Councils to support their own AHOs, as well as a guide on what programs can be set up by them. I am grateful to the four Councils for having the courage to be the first to initiate such a

program at local government level. The success of the Office is due to many individuals' continued belief and support within Councils and community members, like the Support Group. It has also been successful because the public are interested and want to learn more.

I hope people continue to show an interest in Aboriginal issues and their local area and, through their desire to learn and share, that they can help make a future free of ignorance and prejudice.

In The Struggle

*David Watts*

*Aboriginal Heritage Manager*

Lane Cove, Manly, North Sydney,

Warringah and Willoughby Councils

PH. 02 9949 9882

## THIS GURINGAI LAND

*This land is our land –  
Yours, mine!*

*Your dreaming, spirituality,  
Language, culture,  
Underlay my rootless presence.*

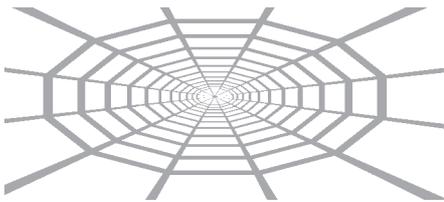
*This land of countless, curving  
beaches,  
awesome cliffs, rugged bushland,  
is my joy and refuge.  
It is your heritage.*

*Before time,  
your people lived in this paradise.  
In my time,  
in our time  
your endless struggle for justice  
is also my commitment  
to work for righteousness.*

*This land is our land –  
Yours and mine,  
to respect,  
to nurture,  
to hold in trust  
for generations to come –  
Yours and mine!*

*Jill Perkins*

## WEBSITE UPDATE



– New Resources Section



[www.asgmwp.net](http://www.asgmwp.net)

If you're looking for almost anything about Indigenous Australia, then make sure the Resources section of our website [www.asgmwp.net](http://www.asgmwp.net) is your first port of call.

The Resources Section has recently been updated and redesigned at [www.asgmwp.net/Resources.htm](http://www.asgmwp.net/Resources.htm).

A great deal more content has been added and the redesign means it should be easier to find.

There are four main sections:

- **Sydney's Northern Beaches** – a comprehensive section includes Local Government, Aboriginal Organisations, Community Action and Printed Resources.
- **Printed Resources** – lists over 80 printed publications on Indigenous issues.

- **Films** – contains a comprehensive list of films and documentaries about Indigenous Australia and the issues of reconciliation faced by all Australians.

- **Web Resources** – this section contains so much information that it is sorted under twelve headings to help make it easier to find. Headings include Government and Land Councils, Culture and Heritage, Health, Human Rights and Legal, Protocol and more...

If you are looking for something in particular, containing a particular word, then simply press the keys 'Control' + 'F' to access the Find function and type in your word.

Your feedback is always welcome, so if you have any questions or comments about the website and the new Resources Section please email me at [vanessa.walsh@optus.net](mailto:vanessa.walsh@optus.net).

Vanessa Walsh

# Indigenous MAKE POVERTY HISTORY



NATSIEC

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) is the peak ecumenical Indigenous body in Australia. It is part of the National Council of Churches in Australia and all members of NATSIEC are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Graeme Mundine, Executive Secretary of NATSIEC, was guest speaker at the Northern Sydney Regional Reconciliation Network meeting held on September 12 at Warringah Civic Centre.

Graeme spoke about the Millennium Development Goals that aim to reduce poverty and promote human rights and democratic governance at both national and global levels.

These draw attention to the plight of the poor overseas, yet Graeme stressed that poverty in Australia is a very real and debilitating issue for too many of the Traditional Owners of this land. *"Here in Australia we must compare the living standards and levels of health and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples with those of the rest of Australia – not to the poorest of the world's poor"* Graeme said.

The *Make Indigenous Poverty History* campaign is about the right for Indigenous Australians to enjoy the same standard of living, health and life expectations, employment and economic opportunities as all Australians and to be full and functioning citizens of this country.

Graeme concluded *"We must work as hard for our own poor and Make Indigenous Poverty History by 2015."*

The campaign was launched on November 2 at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta.

For further information see the website [www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/miph](http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/miph) or telephone 9299 2215.

The 2005 Winter and Spring issues of *Elimatta* are supported by



Warringah Council

## RECONCILIATION AND ART

### A Reflection on the Presentation by Dr. Mark Byrne at the August Support Group Information Night.

I wished I had my dictionary with me. Dr. Mark Byrne of the Uniya Jesuit Social Justice Centre asked us “ what do you understand by the word reconciliation?” All I could think of was ‘conciliation’ and of the time when I expected someone to be more conciliatory towards me. We might have even become friends. Then I realised that the dictionary would not have been much help. My experience gave me all I needed to know at that moment... And the answers to Dr. Byrne’s question were more than adequate as we, as a group, developed a good working definition of reconciliation.

What I was not prepared for was his statement that reconciliation was a cultural and artistic process. Although I had experienced some cultural and artistic aspects of Aboriginal life I had not thought about reconciliation as being a process of culture and art. Without labouring the point we then had the opportunity to look at the artistic medium of film which highlighted the cultural dimension of reconciliation.

In one sense it was a trip down memory lane as we cast our minds back to the times when we saw *Jedda*, *Walkabout*, *The Chant of Billy Blacksmith*. There was a reference to *Crocodile Dundee*. And I was amazed at my ability to recall the pain I felt when I first saw *One Night the Moon*.

Our memories were stimulated as Dr. Byrne gave us his objective and thoughtful summaries of the films, augmented by audience participation. It was not long before we all understood that reconciliation was a cultural and artistic process.

But especially telling were the scenes from *Australian Rules*. White domination of Aboriginal people in the context of a small town environment, expressed through a game, brought home to us the realities of our past. And that not too distant. Tensions are still experienced and grief a daily emotion. And thankfully there is still courage like that of the son who eye-balled his father. In that moment of face to face confrontation, although preceded by violence, the non-conciliatory attitude knew it was defeated. It was nothing more than a puff of dust on a country road, the result of spinning car tyres in a bit of dirt.

That hopeful image did not minimise the difficulties associated with the task at hand. Acknowledgement was made of the long path that still needs to be taken. In this context a member of the audience made reference to the fact that Australia had just become part of ASEAN. The implication was that only now Australia saw itself no longer identified by a White Australia Policy but had started to see itself as truly part of Asia. It has taken ages for that to happen. But it did happen. It is happening.

One day that same conciliatory attitude will prevail within Australia when a white population will no longer identify itself against the Aboriginal community but both together will claim a common humanity. One day.

The stated purpose of the evening was to look at the way in which film, as an art form, had been used to express and bring about change in relationships between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal Australia. The evening achieved that and much more. As a result of Dr. Byrne’s leadership and the participation of the group there was a readiness to long for those

qualities that are the pre-requisite for reconciliation. Art will help us do that. It will contribute to the re-shaping of our culture.

And the Support Group continues to keep that longing for those qualities alive.

Grahame Ellis



### ACKNOWLEDGING SPECIAL FUNDING FOR THE WORK OF ASG MWP

*The Cara Storm Memorial Trust* has been established following a bequest to the Aboriginal Support Group from the estate of the late Cara Storm. Cara was an active and dedicated member of the group, an enthusiastic and skilled letter writer with a passionate commitment to social justice. Her gift will be used annually to support Indigenous people and programs.

A donation has been received from the Manly Warringah Branch of the Union of Australian Women.

Manly Council has given funding to the Group for the promotion of special events such as the *Journey of Healing* next May.

Two grants are covering the publication of *Elimatta* – from Warringah Council for the 2005 Winter and Spring issues and from Dee Why RSL for all 2006 issues.

Funding has also been received from Pittwater RSL for Information Nights including the purchase of videos.

Forestville RSL has given, through the Support Group, a 2005 Youth Grant to Biala Aboriginal Girls’ Hostel at Allambie Heights.

This financial assistance is greatly appreciated.

*Thankyou!*

# SYNDROME X

## THE PLAGUE THREATENING THE HEALTH OF THE WORLD'S OLDEST CONTINUOUS CULTURE

This address was given by Jeff McMullen, the Director of swimming legend Ian Thorpe's Fountain for Youth Trust, to a packed hall at the September Information Night at the Nelson Heather Centre, North Narrabeen. Jeff receives no financial remuneration for this position but it soon became clear as he spoke that this work he was doing gave him deep satisfaction. He is also a writer, film-maker and journalist who said that his world wandering sharpened his interest in the world's oldest continuing culture in his own back yard. Jeff and his family have made many friends among Aboriginal people as a result of their long years of interest in and respect for the culture.

Jeff expressed concern that there is a silent apartheid operating in Australia whereby many non-Indigenous Australians do not regard Aborigines as their fellow citizens deserving of the same high level of services such as education and health enjoyed by the wider community. The majority of Australians tend to view the poor health of Aboriginal adults and children as their problem and not an Australian problem and Jeff issued the challenge to everyone to become involved and to make a difference. The median lifespan for Aborigines is 56 years whereas for the wider community it is 83 years for women and 78 years for men.

The reason for the premature deaths of Aboriginal people and other powerless and poverty stricken people in the world is called Syndrome X and includes conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and kidney disease. There are endless funeral processions in Aboriginal communities so children experience continual deaths which often leads to depression and feelings of

hopelessness. The Menzies School of Health Research together with a similar American Institution found the connection between places of great stress and poverty and the birth of underweight babies whose health outcomes never catch up to normal weight babies and leave them handicapped for life with Syndrome X.

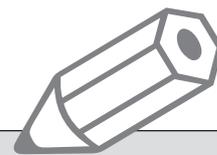
The Fountain for Youth Trust is currently concentrating on assisting the Jawoyn people in the Northern Territory where many people have been found to be malnourished following decades of having only the poorest European diet available to them. Many mothers still do not understand the adverse effect that habits such as smoking have on their babies. Aboriginal Elders are aware and concerned that their communities do not receive services equal to those enjoyed by other Australians and realise that education is the key to getting jobs with reasonable pay and escaping the dire effects of poverty. Unfortunately to date, the education offered to Aborigines often has little relevance for them. Books need to show Aboriginal faces so the children can relate to them and many more teachers need to learn Aboriginal languages and creole in order to communicate effectively. It has been found that those teachers who do take the trouble to learn language achieve much better results. Jeff stated that if you improve the education of the young mother, you will extend the life of her first born by at least four years.

Fountain for Youth was launched in 2000 by the Prime Minister and is a non-profit charitable organisation for the purpose of alleviation and treatment of illness and disease in children under the age of twenty. Ian Thorpe believes that all children

should be given the opportunity to lead a healthy and fulfilling life and his Fountain for Youth has recognised the urgent need to improve the health and education of Indigenous children and has taken up a long term commitment to achieve this. The organisation is working with various partners to improve maternal and child health and literacy, giving Indigenous children the same opportunities afforded to all children. Fountain for Youth supports the Australian Readers' Challenge which aims to raise money to purchase books and to encourage a love of reading in Indigenous communities where literacy rates are very low compared to the rest of Australia.

Ian Thorpe's Fountain for Youth can be contacted via:  
PO Box 402,  
Manly NSW 1655.

*Carol Gerrard*



## MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

2005/06 annual subscriptions are becoming 'overdue'. If you have not recently paid would you please mail your cheque with payment slip ASAP. This will avoid the cost of mailing reminder notices **Enquiries** to the Treasurer David Harrison 9971 4160. Thankyou.

## LAUNCH OF INDIGENOUS SCULPTURES



Shane Haurama with the sculptures  
Photo courtesy North Sydney Council

North Sydney Council's first Indigenous artworks were unveiled on Saturday 17 September at Kesterton Park, Neutral Bay. The sculptures – Manubada Haurama and Abia Haurama – were created by Indigenous artist Shane Haurama and depict a fisherman and fisherwoman. They were commissioned as part of this year's Guringai Festival *Belonging: People and Place*. The festival, organised by Northern Sydney councils, celebrates Indigenous arts and culture with a range of events and exhibitions across the region.

North Sydney Mayor, Genia McCaffery, said she was delighted to be unveiling the works. *"This is a most appropriate home for these particular works, being right at the water's edge and close to Kirribilli, Aboriginal for good fishing spot"*. The Mayor said she was pleased that at last North Sydney has a permanent contemporary fixture to represent the original occupiers of the land.

*"I hope that we'll see more Indigenous artwork around North Sydney in the not too distant future"* she said. *"Shane's*

*sensitivity and awareness are reflected in his use of recycled material as the wooden logs for the sculptures were from trees that have been removed from the local area and would simply have been discarded."*

Haurama, in his early 30s, has already had his work widely recognised by galleries across Sydney, including Salmon Galleries in McMahons Point and Ulladulla Aboriginal Art Gallery in Circular Quay. Shane says *"the style of figures follow those of the Manubada tribe of Yule Island, which is located between Cape York and Papua New Guinea."*

Narelle Spooner

**Planning for the 2006 Guringai Festival** is underway with Manly Council designing and producing the program brochures. Did you know that Manly was the first Council on the peninsula – perhaps even further afield – to fly the Aboriginal flag? That was on Sunday July 5 1992, following the formation of the Manly NAIDOC Committee, later to become MATSIC. From this was born, in 2001, the *Guringai Festival*. That year's theme was *Footprints On The Peninsula* and for the first three years the festival was celebrated in Manly, Warringah and Pittwater. In 2004 it was expanded to include six other Councils within Guringai Country.

Pat Frater.

**Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation and Hornsby Shire Council** have added signs acknowledging Traditional Lands to four roadside signs welcoming motorists to Hornsby Shire. Signs at the Hornsby Shire border on Epping Road at Epping, Castle Hill Road at Castle Hill, Comenara Parkway at Thornleigh and Edgeworth David Avenue at Waitara remind thousands of passing motorists that they are entering *"Traditional Land of the Darug and Guringai Peoples"*.

Funding has allowed only four signs to date. We hope funds can be found later for signs at other shire entry points.

Bob White

**Congratulations to Cr Denise Wilton**, a member of Mosman Reconciliation who was elected Mayor of Mosman at the September elections.

As Councillor of Mosman Council and with the backing of Mosman Reconciliation, Denise was instrumental in having the Aboriginal flag fly some 300 plus days a year outside Council Chambers as well as the Acknowledgement of Country before all meetings.

Mosman Reconciliation and Denise are still endeavouring to have an Aboriginal Heritage Officer employed by Council.

A motion – *"That Council request the Community Development Manager to prepare a report into possible additional funding options above and beyond the \$5000 allocated for the implementation of the Aboriginal Heritage Study of the Mosman LGA on the management and conservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage values in Mosman."* was carried unanimously.

Frennie Beytagh

**Lane Cove Council** has won the *Council of the Year Award* at the annual NSW Local Government Aboriginal Network ceremony held in Wagga Wagga in July. The Council has worked in joint partnerships with Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation, the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, local Aboriginal representatives, Lane Cove Historical Society and many schools and community groups.

The Mayor of Lane Cove, Cr Ian Longbottom, said *"As leaders in our community, we have taken steps forward by presenting information and local history from a shared perspective and in so doing, have been able to pay sincere tribute and respect for the Traditional Owners – the Cameraygal People."*

Kerrie McKenzie

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## Local Government News

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**Willoughby City Council** signed the *Principles of Co-operation* with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council on October 19. At the official ceremony which was held in the Council Chambers Willoughby Mayor Pat Reilly emphasised the importance of addressing Aboriginal issues at the local level.

*"The agreement is particularly important as the North Shore was once home to the Cammeraygal people. Willoughby has more than 80 known significant Aboriginal sites, including rock and cave engravings."*

Metro Land Council Chairman Rob Welsh said he was confident the agreement would promote a greater understanding of Aboriginal culture and history among the local community. Yidaki Didg and Dance performed a series of traditional dances for

the crowd following the signing ceremony.

*Kathryn Ridley*

**Pittwater Council** is developing a Cultural Plan. Vanessa Walsh and Jan Kirk, members of the Support Group, attended one of the meetings held in October to explore the views of the community on a range of cultural issues.

One recommendation made was for Council to install signs acknowledging that Pittwater is in Guringai Country.

*Jan Kirk*

**Ku-ring-gai Council** staff are currently in the process of preparing a report to go to Council regarding participating in the Aboriginal Heritage Office Program. Representatives of the Aboriginal Heritage Office recently made a presentation to Council's Senior Management Team outlining the various activities undertaken

and the benefits to the local area from involvement in this program. David Watts, the Aboriginal Heritage Manager, will be conducting an information tour of Aboriginal sites in the Ku-ring-gai area for relevant Council staff to assist in preparing the report.

The Young Australia Workshop recently conducted an Aboriginal program for Council's Family Day Care Scheme involving 50 children and carers. The program provided an introduction to Aboriginal culture through dance, stories and the didgeridoo.

The Vacation Activity Program also incorporates multicultural activities in all its program activities. The recently conducted September-October Program incorporated an Aboriginal theme including making of didgeridoos.

*Danny Houseas*

# CONNEXIONS IN TIME PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

- a project that links young people in Brewarrina and Warringah held at Manly Vale Community Centre and Brewarrina Visitor Information Centre in October and November.

The *Connexion in Time* photography exhibition of the work of young people from country town and city suburb – Brewarrina and Warringah – truly reflects its title, with creative young photographers depicting their lives and intimate home place, as well as their wider living spaces, in present time.

Landscape studies by seaside-living Michael Cooper and by Brewarrina student Samantha Gordon – the first a dawn study of a typical seascape, the second a dramatic landscape of a red rock-topped sand hill – seemed to me to reveal a

quite passionate understanding for their home places, in times of poetic significance – at dawn and sunset.

The 'connexions in immediate time' with family and friends was shown through loving, quirky and at times touchingly frank photographs.

Bianca Peters' loving photograph of her little brother set on a beautifully textured twig-strewn sandy slope is a masterful work. Another Bre student, Megan Kelly submitted a photograph, which

*"was an accident"* but, in showing the sun-lit golden hair and translucently-lit ear of a friend, it was reminiscent of an ancient sculpting of *The Winged Victory*.

I regret that space must curtail more individual references, but overall the exhibition was a joyous experience – the excellence of technique, the imaginative choice of subjects and a

special delight – the frank, at times droll, notes the students wrote about their works.

Thanks to Brewarrina and Warringah Councils for the collaboration which brought such an accomplished and inspiring exhibition to Warringah.

*Enid McIlraith*



# NORTHERN SYDNEY ABORIGINAL CULTURAL FAMILY DAY

The Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council held a Cultural Family Day on Sunday 25 September at James Meehan Reserve, Dee Why Beach.

It was a beautiful sunny day with around 30 Indigenous people attending, sitting around meeting other community members and having a yarn. The smell of steak, snags and fresh sea breeze with a band playing nearby set a beautiful scene for what was a terrific family day. Fun was had by all, with the youngsters playing in the playground or taking a refreshing swim. Families travelled from North Sydney, Northern Beaches and Inner City. The day was a great success, with great feedback from all.

A big thankyou to all who attended.

This was the first of many MLALC Family BBQs. Now that the weather is warming up and football is finished for another season, this will be a regular event.

For more information about the next *Family Day* or to submit your contact details please phone me on 02) 9984 1877. Metro's Dee Why Office is at Suite 203, 30 Fisher Road, Dee Why.



*Enjoying the Family BBQ*

*Lee Mladenovic*



## BOOK REVIEW

# The Secret River

by **Kate Grenville**

(Text Publishing, Melbourne, Australia 2005)

This novel is dedicated to the Aboriginal people of Australia, past, present and future.

An Aborigine, spear in hand, defiantly confronts convict William Thornhill on his first night in the Sydney Town of 1806. When the Aborigine mimics William's angry shout "*Be off!*" matching "*his tone exactly*" they were close enough for William "*to see the man's eyes...and the straight angry line of his mouth.*"

I felt I was 'there' (with the omniscient persona) watching this hostile encounter between these *Strangers* (the title of the brief introduction) and interpreting the Aborigine's dignified body language

through William's eyes. This approach, making no pretense to 'see' what happens through Aboriginal eyes, makes the telling of the story credible.

Before Thornhill's next confrontation, seven years later, on Hawkesbury River land he asserts is his for the taking, the author reveals where he is coming from, what makes him think as he does. Part One *London* reveals his abject poverty as a child in the slums and why he grew up a fighter. When his hopes, raised when he completes his apprenticeship as a lighterman on the Thames, are dashed within three years, his wife Sal keeps him going. "*Left to himself, he would have slipped under the surface of life like a man fallen into water that is too cold to fight.*" (p.47)

And thanks to Sal's initiative, an appeal saves him from the gallows. This story is also about her.

Part 2 *Sydney* reveals that soon after arrival their hopes are raised; they realise that "*a person who was willing to work ... could make good in no time.*" And they do. (p.68) The prospect of owning land on the Hawkesbury becomes an obsession with him. After Thornhill settles there with his family in September 1813 he doesn't heed the advice of either Blackwood or the feisty Mrs Henning; they give as well as take and so live peaceably with the Aborigines. Amusing situations lighten the story. For example, William begins to see why the Aboriginal women found the newcomers' efforts to grow corn so funny. Unlike the Aborigines, they still had nothing to eat but salt pork and damper each day; William barter a bag of flour for a scraggy kangaroo paw.

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# POLE DANCING FOR PAULINE

About three or four years ago, people stood chatting on a verandah at the Coastal Environment Centre, Narrabeen Lagoon. They were watching the installation of a community art piece and mused that it would be great to paint the green treated poles edging the car park. Lynne Czinner agreed and Virginia Gow offered to paint the poles. Patricia Giles, then Mayor of Pittwater Council, was introduced to the concept and she agreed that this was a worthwhile project.

Years passed. Then late in 2004, Lynne asked Virginia "What about the poles?"

Virginia replied "We would like to paint three large poles to honour Pauline McLeod, the Australian Aboriginal storyteller, who passed on in 2003, aged 46. Pauline did so much for our community living along this coastline."

Early in January 2005 Virginia and Carolyn Pattison designed the concept and faxed it to Lynne, then Mayor of Pittwater. It was accepted. Three black poles were prepared and placed in the ground, awaiting completion.

Carolyn, Lois Birk and Virginia finally set a date, 11th September, to paint the poles. Brushes, paints – 15 little tester pots were chosen because the colours were so

beautiful – and clear varnish for the semi-final coat. Pittwater Council agreed to do the final coat with anti graffiti paint.

"I danced around the poles yesterday," whispered Lois. "They are ready!"

"Sky cried this morning" whispered Virginia. "They are washed!"

Lois brought a picnic, buckets for water, chairs and a picnic rug. They settled in, gathering at the poles to sing, dance and paint together. After a ceremony, the work began in earnest.

On the poles Jessica Birk painted the big green frog and the black crow, both from stories told by Pauline. A willie wagtail and a big black crow visited during the painting and became friends. Jessica shared her talents for stencilling with the group. They painted wonderful, colourful meeting circles and the Cooee Classic dreaming pattern. Meeting place symbols were painted on the top of the poles, a bystander climbing up a tree to finish a symbol too high for Virginia to reach.

Gladys and Pat Lock, Elders from Campbelltown, Susan Moylan Coombs and Lizzie Landers were among the twenty-one people to be congratulated for the fine work created that day and for the lead-up beforehand.

They honoured Pauline, shared their stories about her and the day was blessed with fine weather. This was a gathering of beauty and grace.

"Those mysterious black poles along Pelican Walk outside the CEC beside Narrabeen Lagoon were painted and will be dedicated to celebrate the life of Aboriginal poet, Pauline McLeod. Artists included Elders from Sydney's South West, local Aborigines and also some bystanders. I painted lots of white dots – it's very therapeutic" wrote Lynne Czinner in her last editorial as Mayor of Pittwater Council. "What a gracious lady!" wrote Virginia.

Down the track, Stage Two will remember the names of the people who helped and will acknowledge Pittwater Council. There is a space for a poem by Pauline and also to honour her life and a space to acknowledge the Guringai Ancestors.

Stage Three will be the Dedication Ceremony. Volunteers for this task are sought, can you help?

Many thanks to all who added to this experience. We acknowledge the help of Joanne Tulau from the Coastal Environment Centre, Pittwater Council and the Aboriginal Support Group.

Virginia Gow

## The Secret River

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In March, 1814, six months after the Thornhills settle on the Hawkesbury, Aboriginal "outrages and depredations" (the Sydney Gazette's term) against the property of settlers erupted up and down the river. The Governor took steps to deal with "the native problem" (p.260) and on 22nd March a proclamation was issued in the Gazette to "unleash the settlers." Soon afterwards the Aborigines were no longer a threat. The Gazette merely reported that "The natives had been guilty of depredations and outrages. There had been an affray and the settlers had

dispersed them." (p.322) In the novel, Thornhill was one of the settlers involved.

Up to the Governor's proclamation on 22nd March, ample historical resources were available, in London then in Sydney, as a basis for Kate Grenville's story but not for what happened next. Why Aborigines are no longer a threat to those settlers on the Hawkesbury is not explained.

"Nothing was written on the ground. Nor was it written on any page. But the blankness itself might tell the story to anyone who has eyes to see"(p.325) hence *The Secret River*. It not only represents what happened to Aborigines

there and elsewhere but also portrays the ongoing effect on relationships. Thornhill is haunted by what he did, is alienated from his son Dick, Blackwood and an Aboriginal survivor. His "blankness" leaves a space of silence between him and his wife:

"Their lives had slowly grown around it, the way the roots of a river-fig grew around a rock."

I believe this is a great book, and far and away the best on this highly relevant issue. I treasure it most because Kate Grenville uses her exceptional writing gifts to bring to life both sides of this story without an axe to grind. Do read it and pass it on!

Val Horniman

# NAIDOC WEEK – DUBBO STYLE

Two weeks of NAIDOC celebrations means double the fun!

During July, schools around Dubbo organised their NAIDOC celebrations with flair. Kalina's school invited parents and carers to an informative assembly run by the students. They then held activities in their classrooms for the rest of the day. Year 1 had a day of singing 'Aunty Wendy's Mob' songs, making excessive noise with musical instruments and mixing traditional art with modern art and creating their own masterpieces.

Famous actor Jack Thompson even came to Dubbo to promote Reconciliation with an informative evening at the zoo, as well as visiting the Indigenous youth at community centres and the Juvenile Justice Centre. In September, just when we thought the festivities had died down, the Indigenous children from our school got an invitation

to come together with other Koori students of all ages for a NAIDOC march down Macquarie Street, the main street in town (don't compare it with Macquarie Street in Sydney – it wasn't that much of a hike!)

We were led by the *Yarradamarra* dancers, students from the Indigenous centre at TAFE. At the rotunda, they entertained schools and onlookers with fantastic dances and songs – and they must have encouraged the rain to join in too! But all the rain did was confirm the commitment the community had by sticking it out and getting involved with Jenny who donned the guitar and got us all to dance!

There was a myriad of speakers, including Ray Peckham who gave us an insight into his wonderfully adventurous life.

When the rain subsided, the flag raising ceremony went ahead, giving us goose bumps as we watched an Aboriginal and

non-Aboriginal side by side, with the flags going up to the sky in perfect synchronicity. It was a great day for the children to feel a sense of pride as we celebrated their wonderfully rich culture and important place in the community. This time was filled with activities for all children, with sports days, barbecues, and all-round fun.

So when are you visiting us in Dubbo?

*Cassie Davis*

## BRIDGING THE GAP

We all are given a path to walk in this lifetime. The path that was chosen for me was a true path to learn about the oldest race to grace the face of Mother Earth – the Australian Aboriginal people. For forty-five years I have lived a white nomadic lifestyle to learn lessons by moving amongst people to learn from life's experiences what you cannot learn from books.

At the age of three I was taken to a sacred Aboriginal fire by my father. I was allowed to run around the fire inside the Elders' circle. The Elders watched me running like the wind. They said to my father: "Let this boy go now. He is a free spirit."

It is my free spirit that protects me here upon this most sacred ground, the purest island upon earth – Australia. As a child I had an Aunty Jacky and an Uncle Jacky. This is a sign to me who my spirit guide is – a great Aboriginal tracker who always came home, Jacky Jacky.

I was told stories by my family and Aboriginal Elders to help me work out that everything we go through in this lifetime is for a reason. I was taught to always tell the truth as only the truth will protect you. My father told me to find the old Aboriginal tracks back. To look at history you must go back as far as you can. You can go no further back than the Aboriginal people.

This was my path – to help us realise how important this island and its true custodian owners, the Aboriginal people, are. We all have a right, a path to lead, no matter what the colour of our skin is – brothers, sisters and cousins from the one tree of life that has branched out all over Mother Earth.

These experiences are being reflected in a book I have been asked to write called *The Riddle of Life* and in my paintings.

*Garry Parkinson (Possum)*

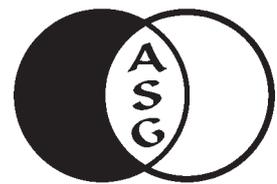
Garry has donated the artwork entitled *Hands of Time* which the Support Group is at present raffling.

*The Aboriginal Support Group Manly Warringah Pittwater was founded in 1979 and is committed to supporting Indigenous people in their struggle for justice.*

*The first newsletter was produced in March 1982.*

*The 1987 Winter edition was named Elimatta for the first time.*

*Elimatta is included in the Pandora Website, Australia's Web Archive set up by the National Library of Australia*



*In one Aboriginal Language, Elimatta means 'our home'. In naming our newsletter this way, we express our dream for this country – a real home to both Aboriginal people and later settlers. That depends on us being 'at home' with each other, and to each other.*

# STOP AND TAKE A LOOK

During a recent motoring holiday in western New South Wales with my friend Sandy, we discovered the truth in the old adage 'give a dog bad name and you will soon hang him'. This was particularly true when we informed inquirers that we intended to stop at Wilcannia. "Don't stop there, don't even think of stopping for petrol, drive straight through and out the other side" we were told on every occasion. Luckily we had made some contact with acquaintances in Wilcannia and our twenty four hour stay in Wilcannia became one of the great highlights of our two weeks away.

Through a fellow ex-student from our Indigenous Studies Course at Tranby College we were introduced to Sister Margaret McGrath, Principal of St Therese's Community School who invited us to stay at the school with her. The Mercy Sisters first came to Wilcannia in 1890 providing primary and secondary school education. Presently there are three teachers and three Aboriginal aides at St Therese's and about forty children enrolled from kindergarten to year two.

At our evening meal Sandy and I realised these Catholic women were no slackers. Sitting opposite us we recognised the elderly rider of a motor scooter that had passed us in the main street earlier in the afternoon.

Florrie, an octogenarian, had been up at the hospital doing pastoral work and was speedily making her way home. We had a real fun evening with her and the others as we participated in the St. Therese's Trivia Team at the local Golf Club competition. Sorry to say we didn't bring them victory.

Our day in Wilcannia was a very busy one. Two school buses pick up the children

from their homes to bring them to school. I was on the bus that went through the new housing area, *The Mallee*, where Aboriginal families who were displaced from their camps on the Darling during the 1975 flood have now been housed. Some had established gardens, beautiful petunias growing. Margaret wished that the local earth brick factory had got the contract to



Anna Bell and Waddy Harris – Photo courtesy Sandy Myers

build the homes so that some jobs would have been available and the local economy helped.

Arriving back at the school, the children were all given milo drinks to start the day and then we were privileged to be included in morning assembly. How special this was! Patricia, who has been senior teacher

at the school for 17 years, was in charge. Three candles in Aboriginal colours were lit by the children, then a conversation took place about a visit they had made to the Mission to see the Elders. The children were encouraged to say what special qualities those Elders gave to their community. A beautiful meaningful song composed by Patricia which included their clan name and reasons for pride was then sung by all.

Being Friday it was Awards Day. Those who had been at school for five straight days without missing a day received a ticket in a bike raffle which is drawn at the end of each term. Children who had not missed a day for two weeks got to choose a small gift. Non-attendance is a major problem. Twenty of the forty students were there on the Friday we visited. It was the Friday after pension day; also the end of term which meant we visited on one of the worst possible days for attendance. "Getting children into the habit of going to school is so important and we encourage this in any way we can" Margaret explained. At the end-of-year prizegiving a bike is presented to a child who has not missed a day all year.

There was also much excitement as the children were going on a camp the following week to Mutawinji National Park. Having just come from

there we could guarantee them a very worthwhile stay and an informative time with Uncle Bill, the guide to the sacred sites.

Our next stop was to the Police Station, where Krys (daughter of a friend) and her husband, a senior policeman, are stationed.

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## Stop and take a look

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They live next door in a two hundred year old sandstone, high ceilinged spacious home. Krys was our guide on the Heritage Trail, the walk around town to see the old magnificent sandstone buildings. First stop was of course the Police Station. Here we met Chris Awege, Police Liaison Officer and a great source of information. She showed us over the old cells, where tortured spirits – the *Goonkies* – still wander the corridors. The place certainly has a sinister presence. Thankfully no inmates were in occupation in the present cells.

Chris has finally had one of her dreams for the Aboriginal community come true.

For years she had been asking for equipment and a few seats so she can hold an outdoor cinema for the local kids. Finally this has happened. The kids come and are all together on Thursday evenings just having fun watching a video. "We need more" she says, "couldn't you see a basketball court here" pointing to a vacant indoor space. Some of the local police have formed a touch footie side and played a team all season. Doug and Krys will have to make a decision soon, whether to leave after their two year tenure is up or to stay on. They think things have improved in the time they have been there. The new housing is one of the reasons and different policing methods another. They wouldn't mind staying on at all, they admitted.

Next we sought out Waddy Harris at the Commonwealth Development Employment Project (CDEP) Office. A senior member of the Aboriginal community, Waddy is known for his wonderful artistry and his work with the local unemployed youth. We went to the park adjoining where he and his students have created a very pleasant place to sit or stop and have a cuppa if passing through. It features some fine sandstone sculptures. Waddy generously invited us out to his home and workshop. The property was given back to Waddy by an Afghan camel driver many years ago and here he now again bonds with his land. We were so aware of this as he told us stories of his early life learning to live off the land and of being taught his craft from his father. Inside in various stages of development were his artefacts, boomerangs and red gum bowls being prepared for his Christmas orders. He is a beautiful craftsman.

Our last stop was to visit Carla King who two years ago finished Year 12 at Mackellar Girls High School while living at Biala Hostel. Luckily she was home on holidays as she is now working full time in Mildura in an employment agency. Carla is looking as radiant as ever. It was a thrill to make contact and bring her greetings from Denise, her art tutor, and from our Support Group. She in return says hello and sends best wishes to all her friends back here in Sydney, the Support Group and those friends still at Biala.

Time was not long enough for us in Wilcannia. Far from hitting the accelerator and driving straight through, we wished we could have spent much longer. It has such potential: a great history Aboriginal and colonial; heritage buildings; the wonderful river and a community full of interesting personalities. Perhaps one day it will be restored to its former glory of *Queen of the Darling*.

If you are travelling that way our advice would be to **Stop, Look Around and Give Wilcannia a Fair Go.**

Anna Bell

# AN INVITATION TO JOIN US...

## The Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater

meets on the third Monday of each month, from February to November, at 7.30 pm

Venue: **Angophora Room**

**Nelson Heather Centre, Cnr Pittwater & Jacksons Roads  
North Narrabeen.**

Entrance to the centre's carpark is from Boondah Road off Jacksons Road

**Special Events are listed on the enclosed Calendar**

☎ For further information ☎

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*Elimatta* is the newsletter of the Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater. Articles are welcome with the understanding that editorial changes may be made and that contributors agree that the material will be archived by the National Library of Australia.

Contributors to *Elimatta* are from many different cultures and backgrounds. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editors or members of the ASG.

Please email articles where possible to [annabell@alpha.net.au](mailto:annabell@alpha.net.au)



If you use any of the material it would be appreciated if the extract is set in context and the source acknowledged.

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