

LINCOLN CROWLEY Barrister and Manly Resident

I have been practising as a lawyer for the past nine years and I am presently one of only four Aboriginal barristers practising in New South Wales. My grandmother was a Warramanga woman who as a young girl was removed from her family in the Northern Territory and sent to Queensland to work as a cook on cattle stations. My grandmother eventually settled in Charters Towers where my father grew up. My father joined the Army, eventually becoming an officer. We moved all over the country for various Army postings when I was young but we eventually settled back in Charters Towers when I was still in primary school.

Although I always did well at school, during my secondary school years I began to have some difficulties because I was too busy mucking around in class, arguing with and challenging the teachers all the time and not paying attention to my studies. On one occasion I was grilled by the Deputy Principal for talking during the morning school assembly. I remember the Deputy Principal, who was a Christian Brother, saying to me "Your family are Aboriginal, aren't they. They're the type that end up in jail." As a result of my rebellious behaviour at school I was expelled from that school in Year 11 and then shortly after from another school. At the end of that year, I was asked by the Deputy Principal of the State High School, at which I had ended up, to complete the year, not to return for Year 12.

As I was 16 I could have left school if I wanted to and the thought did cross my mind, however, I chose to knuckle down and focus on finishing my secondary schooling. I repeated Year 11 and after completing Year 12 I had done well enough to get into James Cook University to study law in nearby Townsville.



Portrait of Lincoln painted by his wife Jacinta

Initially, after five years of studying to complete my Bachelor of Law in 1995, I was not overly excited by the idea of practising law. A law degree is a valuable qualification and as I came to find out it

allows you to enter many fields. After sitting for Commonwealth Public Service graduate recruitment exams I was offered jobs with the Department of Administrative Services, ATSIC and the Department of Health and Family Services. I chose the Department of Health and Family Services and in the following year started with the

Department's Brisbane office, working in the Disability and Aged Care programs. After six months I managed to get to Canberra to work on policy in the Department's Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services.

After a year of working in Canberra I was promoted from being a graduate officer to a project officer, a fairly good achievement. However, after a few months I was told that I was going to be placed into another section of the Department dealing with financial matters. I began to realise that I was being trained to be a jack of all trades but a master of none and that I was wasting the real knowledge and skills that I worked hard to achieve in completing my law degree. Then and there I made the decision to return to university to complete the further requirements that would allow me to become qualified to practise law. The decision was a difficult one as it meant giving up a good paying, comfortable job to return to having no real income and a full year of further study.

Continued Page 2

Continued from Page 1

I completed the year of study at the Queensland University of Technology, earning a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice which allowed me to seek admission as a solicitor to practise law. Although I had changed my career path I was still keen to pursue social justice issues for Indigenous people and was lucky enough to immediately be offered a job as a solicitor with the Aboriginal Legal Service in Townsville, virtually back home. For most of the next year I worked in Townsville and in the surrounding towns for the Aboriginal Legal Service, appearing in court every day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people charged with criminal offences. I really knew then that I had made the right choice as now I was able to do the things that I had perhaps always excelled at – standing up for people and arguing for what is right. Except now I was a solicitor and was being paid to do it professionally.

Although the job was going great and I was enjoying practising as a lawyer another problem was looming. One day while I was on Palm Island for court I received a call telling me that the legal service was not going to be funded any more and would be wound up shortly. Sure enough at the end of the week I was unemployed.

Luckily I was able to secure a similar job with the Aboriginal Legal Service in Brisbane within two weeks. The best part of the move was that shortly after I met my future wife Jacinta who was working as a court reporter. One day in court she came up to me and said, “*Has anyone ever told you that you look like Aaron Pedersen?*” (from the TV shows *Wildside* and *Water Rats*). I didn’t think so, but thought it was such a good line that we have been together ever since.

After some time with the Aboriginal Legal Service in Brisbane I began to think whether the job I was doing was really all I could achieve. My wife and I decided to move to Sydney to see if we could further our careers. We moved here in 2001 and I started a job with the NSW Crown Solicitor’s Office as a solicitor in one of its civil litigation sections. I had always wanted to get some more experience in other areas of law and the move to Sydney was a great opportunity. After a while though I began to miss appearing in court and standing on my feet and arguing cases. The job with the Crown Solicitor’s Office was great but was not an advocacy role which I had always wanted to pursue since becoming a lawyer.

I became aware that the NSW Bar Association had an Indigenous Barristers Strategy, designed to encourage and assist

Indigenous lawyers to become practising barristers. Becoming a barrister, a specialist court advocate who argues all types of cases in court, was always a dream for me and now it seemed that there was a way to achieve it. After passing some further intensive exams and then successfully completing the NSW Bar Practice Course, I started practice in early 2003 as a barrister in private chambers at the NSW Private Bar.

Jacinta and I moved to Manly in that year and have lived there since. Over the next few years I advised and represented all types of clients in all types of cases. At the end of 2005 I was offered and accepted a position as ‘In-House Counsel’ with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions Office in Sydney. In that role I now appear in court as Crown Prosecutor in various criminal proceedings in all courts in NSW. My current role is a great achievement of which I am very proud. I hope that in the future I will continue to challenge myself to achieve more and that I will once again have the opportunity to appear for Indigenous clients and pursue the types of cases that really matter in achieving justice.

Lincoln Crowley

THE SECRET RIVER

In the summer issue of *Elimatta* Val Horniman reviewed Kate Grenville’s novel *The Secret River* which is dedicated to the Aboriginal people of Australia, past, present and future. Since the review *The Secret River* has been awarded the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize, the Christina Stead Award (Fellowship of Australian Writers) and was short-listed for the 2006 Miles Franklin Award.

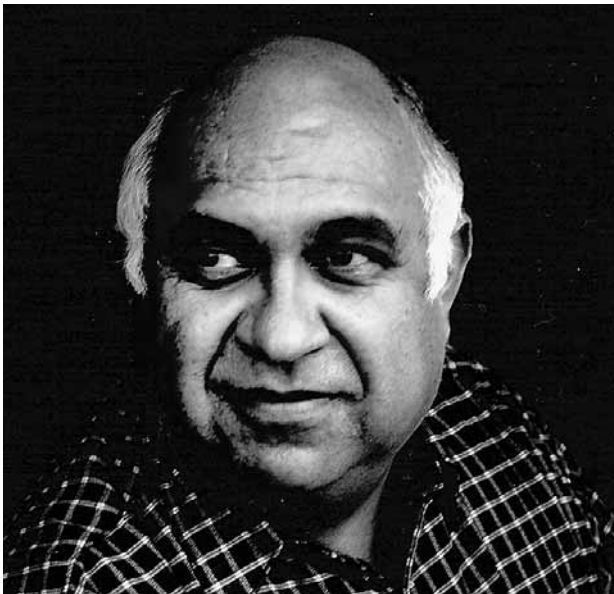
Kate Grenville wrote the following note to Val:

Dear Val,
Just a quick thank you for letting me see your review and a copy of *Elimatta* which I think is a terrific idea. The review – needless to say – made me very pleased. You really understood the book as I’ve always hoped readers would.
Many thanks and keep up the good work with your Group!
Warmest regards
Signed Kate Grenville.

KOORI CONTACT

Multiple Award Winning Photographer Mervyn Bishop at the May ASG Information Night

Those of us lucky enough to attend *Koori Contact* were in for a photographic feast from Mervyn Bishop who, despite being the most famous Aboriginal photographer, remains a very humble, charming and approachable man. Not only did he show some early films of the Brewarrina 'Mission' with commentaries by June Barker who grew up there but he brought prints of some of his iconic photos which have created lasting images of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians for over forty six years. Many of these are now in national museums, galleries and private



Mervyn Bishop photo courtesy Danny Shoemsmith

collections. He also brought the catalogue of his 1991 first solo exhibition *In Dreams: Mervyn Bishop Thirty Years of Photography 1960-1990*, Tracey Moffat (ed.) which was held at the Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney.

After the talk we were invited to look at them closely as he had laid them on top of the grand piano. He told about when they were taken and some of the difficulties involved – for instance the Koori lady early in the morning, standing on some wooden planks to avoid the mud outside her little shelter, throwing out a container of water and Mervyn captured that moment; also the 'life and death dash' of a nun running to hospital with a sick child in her arms. This won him the Sydney Morning Herald's News Photographer of the Year Award in 1971. He was too modest to tell us that in December 2000 he was also winner of the Red Ochre Award which is presented to 'an Indigenous Australian artist who has made an outstanding contribution to the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures at national and international levels.'

Mervyn was later asked by one of the audience whether he considered his photos 'art' and an 'Artist Statement' he made in

1998 seems worth quoting here: "I learnt photography in the school of hard knocks, training as a news photographer with *The Sydney Morning Herald* in the mid-'60s. What I learnt first was how to get the picture the editor wanted. Years later, when working for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs as a staff photographer, I documented Aboriginal communities Australia-wide Throughout all this time I was too busy working to have time to stop and think about how photography related to myself, my family and specifically to the Aboriginal communities I photographed. My relatively recent involvement in education has led me to want to understand much more about how photography relates to my own life and history. I like to take photographs because it makes me feel good and I would like people to stay in the tradition of using the techniques that I came to know and love. Keep photography simple – ie. shooting, processing, printing and so on. There is a place for the new technologies of imagery and that is to me progress, however it doesn't enthrall me. It was magical watching a print that I had made come up in the developer for the first time in my life – I can never forget it. The smell of the darkroom, I was intoxicated by it all. I like to photograph people. Making them feel good about me taking their photograph makes me feel good too"

(1998/www.nga.gov.au/Retake/artists/)

Although Mervyn had been at work all day and had a long way to drive home after the meeting he was very patient and kept answering questions. Everyone was so fascinated by the photos and what he was saying that they simply did not want to go home so the evening ended a lot later than usual after 10pm.

Thanks again Mervyn Bishop for coming to the Northern Beaches to give us that memorable evening.

Ruth A Latukefu

Access All Areas, an exhibition of Mervyn's photographs, will be held from August 16 to September 24 at Customs House (level 2), Circular Quay. Enquiries: 9242 8595

2 UNIT ABORIGINAL STUDIES COURSE

In 2007 the Northern Beaches Secondary College is offering 2U Aboriginal Studies at Mackellar Girls Campus to Year 11 students from across the Northern Beaches. The course will be held on Thursday afternoons and Tuesday mornings. 10 to 12 students are required to make the course viable.

URGENT:

Please contact Ms Richards 9949 2083 or Ms Cobby 9939 6942 for an enrolment application by early August at the latest.

RECONCILIATION WEEK EVENTS

MESSAGE STICK SERVICE

On Sunday 21 May, Nancy Hill Wood, Lois Birk and I attended a special service at St Anthony in the Fields, Terrey Hills. At this service the *Message Stick* which has been going to Catholic Churches throughout Australia was accepted.

The *Message Stick* was taken into the church by Nancy, accompanied by Lois and some young members of the Church, through a line of members of the congregation and placed in the Church.

Nancy, who is the 2006 Warringah Citizen of the Year, had been asked to speak at the service and she related her life story. The whole service revolved around the issues which have been and are still affecting Australian Aboriginal people and included sections of the speech made by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Uluru in 1986. The service showed that many people of the Catholic faith are attempting to bring about social justice for Aboriginal people. After morning tea and chatting to people, Nancy and I prepared to go and see *Ruby's Story* in the afternoon.

RUBY'S STORY

We caught the ferry over to the city to attend *Ruby's Story* at the Sydney Opera House as part of the 2006 *Message Sticks* Program. Ruby Hunter, together with her partner in life and music Archie Roach, told the story of Ruby's life through songs. They were accompanied by the Australian Art Orchestra with arrangements of Ruby and Archie's songs by Paul Grabowsky.

Ruby and Archie are really wonderful to see together and their love for each other just seemed to emanate to me from the stage. Their voices and songs were very emotional and expressive, a unique collaboration.

Playing with the Australian Art Orchestra brought a different feel to the concert. This orchestra's aim is to break down barriers between jazz and classical music, improvised and composed music and Western and non-Western music. It is developing music which is contemporary and Australian in character. This was the first time the AAO had joined with Australian Indigenous musicians and the result was really amazing.

Both Nancy and I enjoyed *Ruby's Story* very, very much. It was just so inspirational seeing them performing together. Also enjoying the concert were Helen and Alan Ford with whom we travelled back to Manly.

NSW SORRY DAY

On *Sorry Day* evening, 26 May, I caught the ferry to the city together with four girls from Biala, Liana, Meleika, Shakirra and Caitlin, to attend the evening session of the NSW Sorry Day Committee's Commemoration.

We went especially to support Nancy Hill Wood on the special occasion which was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

The room in the MCA was crowded when we arrived. The whole program for the night was both very sad, listening to the stories from people of the *Stolen Generations*, and inspiring, listening to and watching the wonderful performers. Of course the stories we heard of children taken away from their families and their often tragic experiences in later years were very distressing – but also very inspirational as the people showed how they had carried on their lives and struggled to find their lost families.

Nancy, as Chair of the NSW Sorry Day Committee, took part in both the opening and closing of the proceedings. She had had a very busy day as there were also events happening during the afternoon at First Fleet Park which some members of the Support Group had attended.

I felt that I had gained so much from being able to attend this evening. The four girls with me also said they had learned a lot from the Commemoration so I was very glad that they could come with me.

BAHA'I FAITH SERVICE

On Sunday 28 May, Nancy and I attended the Baha'i House of Worship at Ingleside for a Reconciliation address by Lynette Riley Mundine to be followed by a Baha'i service. Lynette spoke to a large number of people in the Information Centre, following morning tea. She told of her understanding of what Reconciliation means in the wider community and then what Reconciliation means to her.

One part of what she said when telling us what Reconciliation means to her really struck me. She said that people often use the term 'tolerance' but to her this means that people 'tolerate' Aboriginal people and she certainly did not need to be 'tolerated' by anyone. In her view, what she wants for Aboriginal people and herself, is to have acceptance and understanding from other people. I had never really thought about the word 'tolerance' having such a negative meaning in this sense. 'Acceptance and understanding' seem to me a much more positive way to bring about Reconciliation. So in future I will be careful about my use of this word.

Lynette's presentation, followed by a short question and answer time, was really thought provoking.

We then moved to the House of Worship for the morning service. Although I had quite a few times been inside the House of Worship, I had never before been to a service. I was especially looking forward to hearing the choir and it was a wonderful experience to hear the voices resonate throughout the vast interior of the beautiful building.



Continued on Page 5

Continued from page 4

The service consisted of readings from Baha'i, Buddhist, Jewish and Christian faiths.

Nancy and I had an extremely pleasant morning and spoke to many friendly and interesting people.

Carol Ritchie

SORRY DAY COMMEMORATION - MAY 27

Sorry Day is becoming more and more complex. It brings to me a mixture of emotions that are sadness, happiness, anger, hope, love, peace, despair and a hundred more.

The Saturday before *Sorry Day*, in a Mass at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Mona Vale, I had the privilege of carrying one of the message sticks that Pope John Paul II blessed and commemorated to Australia's Indigenous people. On Mothers Day I attended a similar Mass with my mum who will be 92 this year, making it very special for both of us. I was deeply moved when the children performed the Aboriginal Lord's Prayer and Aboriginal movements in the Mass.

Pope John Paul II's insight into the human rights of our people and his great understanding of Indigenous issues in Australia is incredible. He knew more about our plight then than the Australian Government knows today.

I relate personally to the *Stolen Generations*. Two of my sons were taken from me at the ages of 2 and 4; I agonized and cried every minute of every day they were not with me. I cried when I saw a child or when I walked past shops with children's clothing in them – my heart felt like it had been torn out. I would give my life for my children.

A few months later I found out where the children were (Canberra) and I stole them back. My heart goes out to all the mothers and children who have not been reunited and are still searching. My heart goes out to any parent who has lost a child even for one second.

While the ASG *Sorry Day* events at Billarong Reserve include some happy moments, singing and Didge playing, I feel the most special time is when we join together and place the flowers into the water at Narrabeen Lagoon – knowing the sadness our people have endured.

Thanks once again to members of the Support Group from my family and me for the moral support, caring and love you give to us. It is very much appreciated.

Peace and love – Gundra ha (bless you).

Nikki McCarthy

TEN YEARS OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK



The Reconciliation in Parliament 2006 series is a program of six events organized by community Reconciliation organizations working with the Members of the State Parliament. The aims are 'to continue the commitments to Reconciliation already made by the NSW Parliament and to provide an opportunity for Parliamentarians and the public to hear directly from Aboriginal people on the key issues affecting them and to provide a forum for dialogue....'

The Jubilee Room was packed for the third of the series *Ten Years of National Reconciliation Week*. We were ushered in by a Yidaki recital from Alfred Coolwell before being welcomed to Gadigal Country and the event by Greg Davison, Chairperson of the NSW Reconciliation Council.

Greg recounted the struggle the Eora people encountered with the first settlers; how many were killed by musket fire on the land where we were meeting. He reminded us 'that the path to Australia's future travels through its past' and paid tribute to two past stalwarts for Reconciliation – Nancy de Vries who ensured the truth was told about the *Stolen Generations* and Rick Farley who worked tirelessly for Reconciliation. We were urged to remember that Reconciliation is not a destination but an ongoing conversation, to change behaviour takes time and the need for us all to continue the questioning and keep the conversation about Reconciliation active.

Speakers that followed came from a diverse section of the public: Parliamentarians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Groups, from differing religious persuasions, differing ethnic groups and from young to older people.

Lizzie Landers spoke on behalf of all Local Reconciliation Groups. She traced the history of the ASGMWP which started in 1979 and the development of the later Reconciliation Groups up to the present. These included the formation of the Northern Sydney Region Reconciliation Network which gives our region the ability to pool resources and information.

Vivi Germanos-Koutsounadis Executive Director of Ethnic Child Care Family and Community Services Cooperative Ltd, who has lived in Redfern since the early 1960's, related her experiences with the prejudice that was rife in her early days of residency. Her family cafe was the only place that welcomed Aboriginal customers. Other business refused them service. Things have improved since then, though much is still to be accomplished.

Continued page 6

Continued from page 5

Entertainment was interspersed with the speeches. Sr. Helen Kearins, Executive Officer Mercy Foundation, rendered with guitar accompaniment two of her own compositions. Both had moving words and an opportunity for joining her in the choruses.

Mariam Sawires sang a song from the *Voices of Australia* Project and Stuart Rees moved us all with his poem written in memory of Rick Farley.

Linda Burney MP had very limited time available to spend with us but it was her *Call to Action* that left everyone marvelling at her tenacity and passion. She spoke of the work of her late husband Rick Farley and urged us all to keep up his fight: *"whatever you are doing, keep doing it. In the present dismal political times you are all we have. If you don't do it, who will?"*

It was the youth who left us with a feeling of positive optimism. ReconciliACTION representatives Sylvie Ellsmore and Renee Williams recounted some of their on-going involvement in information nights and in compiling education kits. The young students from Methodist Ladies College Burwood were very impressive with what they saw as needing to be done for the future and how to go about it. With such young people to *carry the torch* the future looks rosier.

Anna Bell

A verse from one of Sr. Helen Kearins' songs:

*IN THE SILENCE
The story of this land
Is writ in blood and sorrow
The people of this land
Were given no tomorrow.*

*And the violence
In the silence
Let the lie go on and on
In the silence
Far more violence
Will go on.*

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

The Aboriginal Heritage Office for Lane Cove, Manly, North Sydney, Warringah and Willoughby Councils is looking for friendly volunteers to help with basic office and administration tasks.

If you feel that you would be able to help with answering phones, filing, organizing equipment and stores, please let the AHO know. Telephone 9949 9882 or email: watdav@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

THANKYOU

DAVE LAWLOR

of the Sydney North Surfing School for his offer for free surfing lessons to Indigenous residents and visitors to the Northern Beaches. For more information please contact Dave on 0415 211 955 or dave@sydneynorthsurfschool.com.au

THE HANDS OF TIME

This painting raffled to raise funds for the Support Group's work was drawn at the *Sorry Day* Commemoration. The winner was John van den Nieuwenhof of Mona Vale. Our thanks again to Manly artist Garry (Possum) Parkinson for his generous donation.

Meaning of the name WARRINGAH

Warringah is an Aboriginal word. In consulting the Aboriginal word books the following meanings are recorded in *New South Wales Aboriginal Place Names and Euphonious Words*, with their Meanings 5th edition compiled by F.D. McCarthy, Australian Museum 1971

- Warringah is a Wirradjuri word meaning *signs of rain*
- Warringah is also one of the Aboriginal names for a part of Port Jackson. The meanings listed in McCarthy for Warringah are – Middle Harbour; country to the south of Middle Harbour; grey head. This Middle Harbour meaning is referred to in other sources, including *Times & Tides a Middle Harbour Memoir* by Gavin Souter, Simon and Schuster, Sydney, 2004. In this context Warringah is usually spelt without an "h" – Warringa. Warringa appears on the Cockatoo Guide Map Sydney Harbour East - Circular Quay to Manly. This map contains Aboriginal place names in Port Jackson and refers to Middle Harbour as Warringa.

Tina Graham
Local Studies Librarian
Warringah Library Service

SHADOWS AT BELROSE

William Yang described his show *SHADOWS* as monologues with slide projection and music. It did not sound the most exciting item on the Glen Street Theatre 2006 program. A modest man, he omitted to tell us that this well researched essay was all about reconciliation worldwide. He had taken *SHADOWS* to New York, Los Angeles, to Canada – Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal – because he believes it resonates more powerfully in countries where there has been colonisation. Whereas Australia has the *Stolen Generations*, Canada had residential schools where *First Nation* children were institutionalised and suffered physical and psychological abuse. In Paris, London, Rome and Germany and at the festival in Adelaide, *SHADOWS* hit another and perhaps darker conscience nerve.

It was almost 15 minutes into William Yang's show before it became clear to me that this monologue with slide projection was not your usual slide travelogue offering. In simple storytelling technique Yang was subtly dealing with taboo subjects with the themes of prejudice, alienation and reconciliation.

William Yang is a third generation Chinese-Australian gay man. His insights on the subjects of isolation and rejection are sensitive and personal. His awareness of the intricate web of culture in the post 21st century – interned migrants, gay rights, black and white histories and social discrimination generally – are part of his complicated plot. Yang writes *"The further I got into the piece and the reasons why there needed to be reconciliation in the first place the darker the piece became, that is why I called it SHADOWS."*

His experiences take him from such apparently isolated incidents as the early days of the Lutheran community in South Australia, its historic and cultural legacy, historic Hahndorf once an educational academy, now a shrine to painters such as Hans Heysen. He becomes involved with a German migrant. To understand his attitudes Yang decides to visit the migrant's homeland to look at his ethnic background.

Progress in Australian attitudes towards individual rights and gay tolerance come to South Australia with the election of Don Dunstan as Premier. Other states are influenced by the enlightened attitude of the charismatic politician.

Yang spends a great deal of time over a long period with an Aboriginal family in Eugongnia, near Brewarrina. To some extent they become part of his extended family. He shares their life style, experiences, shared families, but questions the apparent indifference of this family to the way some babies are fostered out to older relatives. Are the parents indifferent, irresponsible? Is this part of the culture? Or is it further evidence of the experience of isolation?

He feels secure with the group, assumes honorary acceptance but things change when he tries to find an area they shun because of an incident associated with evil spirits. When his efforts to find the site receive little cooperation from the family he wonders if his friendship with the family is really reciprocated. Was their apparent aloofness part of the puzzle of awareness of racial acceptance? Does their attitude mean 'back off' or is it a measure of varying values? The frustration is shared by many, no matter how honestly and lovingly offered the rejection can be chilling.

Yang seeks help from local uninvolved sources and finally finds the site. At first it seems innocuous enough, but evidence of ancient human remains invite further doubts as to whether the area is associated with some sort of terror. A trip to Auschwitz and the scenes of Hitler's final solution leave a final question in the air. Is there a parallel?

The pace, unhurried and deliberate, builds up to a major theme. Racism and isolation are the major and minor chords. William Yang, one of Australia's most powerful photographers, is a keen social observer.

Ria Murch



Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (Metro) has recently launched its website www.metrolalc.org.au Full of interesting facts and graphics, well worth a visit.

Guringai Festival

IMPRESSIONS OF THE GURINGAI FESTIVAL

Warringah Council launched the 2006 *Guringai* Festival at the Dee Why Beach Reserve at sunset on May 21.

The *Thulli* Dreaming performed a Smoking Ceremony and traditional dances, mimicking Australian wildlife. This was followed by Corey Kirk singing with her band. Corey has a lovely voice and a charming personality. Aunty Wendy's Mob with the children from Stewart House was a delight to watch.

Kevin Duncan's singing in his local language was followed by his didgeridoo playing. He is a real virtuoso. Students from NAISDA Dance College were the final performers. The audience was very appreciative and very enthusiastic.

There were many Aboriginal people at the launch. I often feel that, in spite of the fact that there is no law on segregation in Australia, it is unfortunately rare to see so many Aboriginal people in our midst on the Peninsula.

Andrew Partos

Sorry Day/Journey of Healing Commemoration

Sorry Day was held on Saturday May 27 at the Scout Hall, Billarong Reserve, just off the Wakehurst Parkway. The weather had been cold and wet but it is an ideal place and we were able to assemble in the hall by the beautiful Narrabeen Lagoon.

At first it looked as if not enough people would turn up. The musical duo *Nature Nature* were there early, the music started and people flowed in – there's nothing like live music to get people in.

There were lots of small children, teenagers, parents and grandparents, and friends, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

We all loved the music as Henry Phineas, the gifted, blind didgeridoo player who was also playing sticks on didge plus boots, and David McBurney, melodious on flute, clapsticks, Indian shaker and other sound effects, entertained us.

Corey Kirk, the young Aboriginal singer from Avalon, with friends and family sang beautifully, both solo and in harmony, songs expressing the Aboriginal culture.

We had a break for tea and tucker. The sausage sizzle and cakes and biscuits went down well while Nikki McCarthy organized an art participation where we could place our hands in paint and print them on sheets of cardboard – which the children (and I) enjoyed.

Then *Nature Nature* came back with celebrations of nature. It was great to see the lively children out the front dancing to the rhythmic music, doing emu, bird and kangaroo dances to the fascinating sound effects. The star was the little lad in the red, white and yellow hat – lots of talent there. We all joined in and

clapped to the rhythm. Michael Birk then entertained us with his singing and guitar playing. Nancy Hill Wood spoke of her life as one of the *Stolen Generations* and everyone present was moved by her words.

Though the occasion was *Sorry Day* the music and the mood were uplifting; another step 'on the journey of healing'.

Many thanks to the volunteers of the Aboriginal Support Group – they do a wonderful job – and to all the performers and speakers.

Barbara Cliff

ART CONNECTIONS PRINT EXHIBITION

First impressions: exciting, lovely, amazing work.

I get very involved with the prints. They are always impressive to me having done some time learning this art. I know how much work goes into each piece and it is some work I can tell you, many hours of it. To know that these women from the *Art Connections* at Redfern had a short time to learn the different techniques, then produce this wonderful body of work, makes one realise the calibre of the Warringah printmakers at Manly Vale, their ability and friendship, to share this knowledge over many hours of tuition. Etchings, monotypes, photopolymer, linocuts, collographs etc. have a depth within them, messages to viewers about the artist and their lives which I find fascinating. I keep going back to try and find more of the story being told.

The opening of the exhibition held on June 8 in Sea La Vie Café Dee Why Beach, was a touch of genius. Warringah Council who organised it must be congratulated. I am sure that many people who don't normally see such work will enjoy the experience and hopefully buy some works.

Patricia Russell



Cariette Pangas, Nancy Hill Wood and Carol Ritchie at opening night of Art Connections – photo courtesy of Warringah Council

Continued page 9

FILM SCREENING OF JEDDA

The 1955 Charles Chauvel classic *Jedda* was screened at the Collaroy Cinema on 14 June. The Support Group organized the event to celebrate both the *Guringai* Festival and the Centenary of Warringah. This free screening was made possible by the support of Warringah Council, the Mustaca Family of United Cinemas and the Chauvel Estate.

I first saw *Jedda* when I was ten years of age and my enduring memory of it was the powerful performance of Robert Tudawali. I didn't know the word charismatic then but I realise now that Robert Tudawali exuded charisma by the truck load. When I saw the film all those years ago, I thought it was a great story and full of action but this time I also realised what a courageous film it was to make in 1955. Chauvel's usual film backer, Universal, regarded the project as too radical, forcing Chauvel to raise the funds himself. To have Aboriginal people as the central characters in a film then was amazing considering that the general Australian community at that time held Aboriginal people to be of little account. They were not even counted as people in the Census collections of the Australian population. I believe *Jedda* is the first film in which Indigenous Australians were cast to play themselves. This time I enjoyed *Jedda* on many different levels and saw more clearly both its strengths and weaknesses. Both times I saw the film, I saw it primarily as a 'Romeo & Juliet' story, a tale of forbidden love and its fatal consequences. Such stories are universal and are understood by everyone, regardless of culture. The non-Indigenous characters were in positions of worldly power but were totally unable to control events. The prevailing view was that you could never really 'tame the savage qualities' of the Aboriginal people. But the film paid tribute to the longevity of Aboriginal culture and boldly rejected the government policy of the day that Aboriginal people should be assimilated into the norms of non-Indigenous Australian culture.

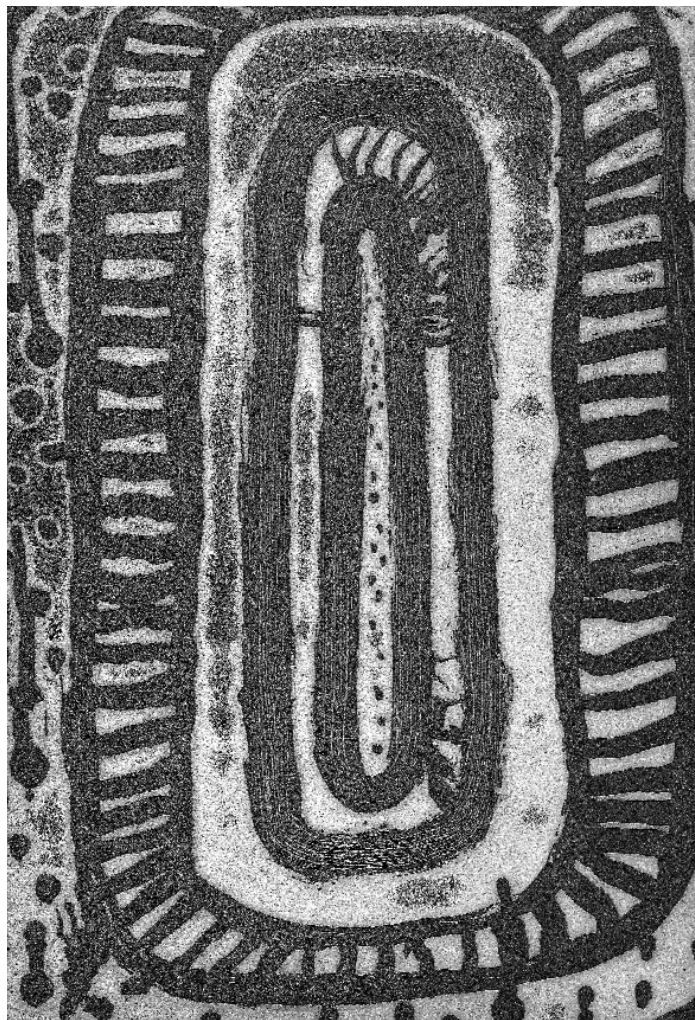
My criticisms of the film were that the setting shifted unrealistically, one minute in Uluru type country, then in buffalo country, then in a Standley Chasm type setting and then the final death scene in the Blue Mountains, which was necessitated because the original Northern Territory footage had been lost in a plane crash. I would like to have seen the *Jedda* character have a bit more spunk, she seemed to spend most of the latter part of the film having fits of the vapours. On the whole I thought the film stood the test of time well, it was engrossing viewing and thought provoking.

Carol Gerrard

Before the screening of *Jedda* a framed certificate of appreciation from the *Guringai* Festival Committee was presented to the Mustaca Family of United Cinemas.

This was in recognition of their support of the Festival over the past 5 years.

Born Belonging was an exhibition of the work of Cromer artist Jessica Birk at Manly Art Gallery & Museum, 24 June to 23 July. Jessica's zinc intaglio etching *The Mighty Clarence* (2004) was of particular interest to me because, when I was ten, I moved from the Central West in time of drought to Maclean on the mighty Clarence. For me, this was like stepping out of Hans Heysen's well-known painting *Droving into the Light* into a world alive with shades of vivid green vegetation under the blue sky – all reflected in the wide river.



Family 2004, zinc intaglio etching photo courtesy Jessica Birk

I was intrigued when Jessica told me that she chose light ochre and olive green shades for her symbolic bird's eye view of *The Mighty Clarence* because these colours convey the land and her sense of belonging to it. This is consistent with her conviction that "the notion of belonging is an abstract one. I aim to develop a visual language that enables my audience to grasp the implicitly rich understanding of a landscape, that is belonging".

A stranger could be forgiven for assuming that a much older Indigenous artist with a wealth of experience created the twenty-two works in this exhibition. They are truly amazing for a twenty-two year old, still studying. What impressed me most of all was Jessica's artistic integrity. Congratulations Jessica.

Val Horniman

Continued page 10

Pittwater Celebrates the Guringai Festival

As part of this year's *Guringai* Festival, Pittwater Council hosted a number of activities to celebrate Aboriginal culture within the Northern Sydney Region. The festival was kicked off with a week long continuous screening of *Unity, People and Place* in Mona Vale Library. This screening showed a number of short films by Indigenous film makers and films with Indigenous themes, including racism, prejudice, Aboriginal art and boxing. This screening was accompanied by an exhibition of artwork done by Kindergarten to Year 6 students of Mona Vale Public School.

Robert Sampson Junior, an Aboriginal storyteller and dancer, provided two sessions of traditional storytelling, singing and dancing to children under 4 years at Avalon Library and students from Mona Vale Public. The kids loved being taught how to move like animals as well as listening to Dreamtime stories including how the echidna and the river systems were created.

Robert Sampson Junior also combined with Raye Newell, Clair Jackson and Rob Welsh to hold an *In the Flesh Youth Forum* for students of Mater Maria College. The aim of the forum was to extend the students understanding and give relevance to their history curriculum. It allowed them to gain a better idea of the issues Aboriginal people faced in the past and how this has shaped their identity today. The four speakers shared personal stories about their background, where they grew up, when they connected to their Aboriginality, what their Aboriginal identity means to them and how their past has shaped who they are today.

Overall the events held as part of this year's *Guringai* Festival were a great success and Pittwater Council hopes to build on these to make next year's festival program even bigger and better.

Simonne Shore

A Modern Day Gathering at Manly took place as part of the *Guringai* Festival on Sunday 2 July, sponsored by Manly Council and Manly Wharf. It was a great winter's day and large numbers of people including many day-trippers from off the ferry were enjoying the sunshine, the entertainment and the various market and information stalls.

The Aboriginal Support Group set up its information stall – thanks to Pat and Don Frater, Carol and Andrew Macintosh, Pat Fisher, Suzen Meagher and myself. We responded to many enquiries and gave out lots of information to interested people. We also sold copies of Nancy Hill Wood's inspirational book of poems. Nancy personally signed many of these, much to the appreciation of the purchasers.

Susan Moylan Coombs was MC for the event. Following the Acknowledgment of Country and the Singing Blessing performed by Aunty Cindy, the Mayor of Manly Peter Macdonald addressed the crowd. There was a great variety of entertainment – singing, acoustic, rap and popular music and the *Yidaki Didg and Dance* Performers. A wonderful fashion parade by young Aboriginal girls and boys showing clothes and designs by award winning fashion designer, Lenore Dembski, featured models from *Brolga Model Management*.

Other happenings included face painting by Nikki McCarthy, story telling by Robert Sampson Jnr, artists' workshops, boomerang painting and craft activities. The *Tribal Warrior* was berthed at Manly Wharf and proved to be a great attraction to many people.

This was a great day involving a very large number of people with something for everyone to do and see. The culture and traditions of Aboriginal people, both ancient and contemporary, were acknowledged and appreciated.

Carol Ritchie

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

At the recent Sydney Writers' Festival the Australia Council for the Arts presented **Ruby Langford Ginibi** with its \$50,000 Writers' Emeritus Award. The 72 year old great grandmother of thirteen is the author of poems, memoirs and history about her family and the Bundjalung people of NSW. Ruby's books include *Haunted by the Past* and *Real Deadly*, both on school syllabuses, and *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, the rights to which have been bought by the University of Queensland Press. It was only five years ago that the Australia Council asked Ruby Langford Ginibi to prove that she was Aboriginal.

Cassie Davis has gained the Certificate of Aboriginal Studies from the NSW Department of Education and Training. A member of the Support Group, Cassie moved from Narrabeen to Dubbo last year with her children Kalina and Jordan.

The 2005 Patrick White Playwright's Award has been won by **Wesley Enoch** for his play *The Story of the Miracles at Cookie's Table*. It is about four generations of an Aboriginal family from Stradbroke Island, Queensland, where Wesley, now 36, was born.

This award of \$20,000, considered to be the most important prize for Australian playwrights, was presented to Wesley on what would have been Patrick White's 96th birthday – May 28, 2006. The judges, who selected *The Story of the Miracles at Cookie's Table* from 137 entries, described the play as a "tough and beautiful story" about the "black history of Australia."

Wesley has also written *Black Medea*, which he directed in 2005 for Company B, *The Sunshine Club* and *The Seven Stages of Grieving*.

Palm Beach resident and journalist **Jeff McMullen** has been appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours. Jeff was recognized for his services to journalism and his work in raising awareness of social, economic and human rights issues in Australia and overseas. As Director (voluntary) of *Ian Thorpe's Fountain for Youth Trust* he is committed to improving the health and education of Indigenous children and in particular is making significant contribution to the Jawoyn communities of the Northern Territory.

Continued page 12

The following letter was sent by the Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater on May 21, 2006 to the federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough:

Dear Mr Brough

The problem of domestic violence and child abuse in both remote and urban Aboriginal communities has recently been in the forefront of public and media attention although it has long been of concern to the members of ASGMWP.

We welcome your efforts to learn at first hand some of the immense problems in your new portfolio of Indigenous Affairs and support your determination to take positive action to find solutions which will help to empower Aboriginal citizens and enable them to deal with violence, child abuse, substance abuse and other problems in their communities. We also hope that ways can be found of improving education, health and economic opportunities for all Aboriginal citizens.

Respectfully, we would like to raise a number of issues that concern us. It is hoped:

- That the proposed Summit on domestic violence/sexual abuse will invite those who have previously written reports and recommendations on Aboriginal community violence and sexual abuse to participate including Associate Professor Boni Robertson, former magistrate Sue Gordon (now Chair of NIC), Dr Mick Dodson, Maggie Brady of AIATSIS and others with similar expertise, and that you will also invite as participants some of the Aboriginal men and women who have long been calling for reforms. There is already extensive knowledge about these problems and how to solve them but many sound recommendations for action, based on comprehensive research reports, have not been implemented.
- That, when much needed extra police are sent to remote communities, they will be given special training to promote their understanding of Aboriginal cultures which should help them to overcome the long-standing distrust and hostility felt towards police by most Aboriginal people because of their past experience of "police protectors".
- That community justice groups and Circle Sentencing involving Elders be encouraged and measures taken to protect them from abuse or insult. Also that reporting of child abuse be made mandatory for those who treat victims or know of such cases.
- That Indigenous community housing in remote areas be given the \$700 million needed over the next five years, as recommended by Drs Jon Hall and Mike Berry of RMIT in their recent report for the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. Overcrowding, unacceptable housing and lack of basic services are contributing to violence and child abuse.
- That Federal funding be continued for existing women's refuges and more be established in remote communities, like the one in Alice Springs, which has been used by 250 women and children over the past 6 months. This has the support of Workplace Participation Minister Sharman Stone after her visit to a remote Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory last week.
- That reliable youth and recreational programs be supported in all remote communities to combat boredom and drug abuse, noting particularly the success of Mt Theo-Yuendumu in reducing petrol-sniffing with its positive results in its Willowra Youth Program.
- That control of alcohol outlets and the policing and prevention of drug supplies including non-Opal petrol to Aboriginal communities is urgently needed. This is an area where community education similar to the National Drug Offensive of the late 1980s may need to be targeted at Aboriginal youth.

We know that the task you face in trying to overturn so many years of neglect and acceptance of different standards for Aboriginal people is an enormous one but, if this government can put into effect new policies that bring improvements and are acceptable to Aboriginal people, it will be a tremendous step forward in the progress to genuine Reconciliation.



ASG Information Nights:

- September** **MEET ROBYNNE QUIGGAN** – Monday 4th at 7.30pm.
 Robynne is an Indigenous lawyer and long time resident of the Northern Beaches.
 She will speak about her work in the areas of Indigenous intellectual and cultural property and social justice issues.
- October** There will be NO information night due to the long weekend
- November** **GOING BUSH** – Monday 6th at 7.30pm.
 Video of SBS documentary of Olympian Cathy Freeman and Actor Deborah Mailman on their journey visiting remote Aboriginal communities from Broome to Arnhem Land and revealing the stories behind Australia's rich cultural heritage.

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

Information Nights are held throughout the year on the first Monday of most months at 7.30pm.

Venue: **Angophora Room**

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

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

☎ For further information ☎

(02) 9913 7940 (02) 9982 1685

P.O. Box 129 NARRABEEN NSW 2101

www.asgmwp.net

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



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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Continued from Page 10

The latest book by the Avalon Indigenous author **Philip McLaren** is being released in France prior to being published in English. It is entitled *Tueur dans l'Utopie – Killer in Utopia*. Another of Philip's novels *Lightning Mine* is also being translated bringing the total number of his books in French to four. *Scream Black Murder* became a bestseller in France when it was released in paperback last November, selling out the first print run in just under three weeks.

Ten Canoes, directed by Rolf de Heer, has received a special jury prize at this year's Cannes Film Festival. The award recognizes films screened in the *Un Certain Regard* program of the festival. Set in the distant past and shot on the Arafura Swamp in north-eastern Arnhem Land, it is the first Australian feature film to be made entirely in an Indigenous language. The English narration is by David Gulpilli whose son Jamie plays one of the main characters.

Ten Canoes opened the Sydney Film Festival on June 9 and is now in general release. It has also been selected for screening in the contemporary world section of the Toronto International Film Festival.

Lizzie Landers reviewed *Ten Canoes* in the autumn issue of *Elimatta* after seeing it at the Adelaide Festival where it had its World Premiere. (You heard about it here first!) The 2006 Cultural Programs and Projects Award presented by the NSW Local Government and Shires Association was shared by **Warringah Council** and Tweed Shire Council. Warringah was presented with the hand-blown glass award for a project developed in conjunction with Brewarrina Shire Council. Entitled *Connexions in Time*, it brought together young people from the 'Sister Cities' of Brewarrina and Warringah for a series of photographic workshops. The resulting exhibition of their work has been displayed recently at NSW Parliament House as part of the 2006 *Guringai* Festival.

Pat Frater



THANKYOU!

A grant from Dee Why RSL has greatly assisted in the production of this newsletter.



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