



Elimatta

winter 2009

www.asgmwp.net

Aboriginal Support Group – Manly Warringah Pittwater

Clair Jackson – Educator and local resident

Firstly, my thanks to the ASGMWP for asking me to write something about myself for *Elimatta*. I first came across *Elimatta* in 1994 when I was organising a campus library for Eora TAFE. I've been impressed with this stalwart, justice-seeking group ever since. Their 30th Anniversary is this year: and thirty years ago it was a brave step to be advocating Aboriginal rights on the Northern Beaches of Sydney. Congratulations all of you! And may ASGMWP continue in whatever direction the accelerating changes of this society takes you.

My family moved from the inner city to the Northern Beaches in the late 1950s, my father building up his painting and decorating business here and my mother working at Ferris Radios in Brookvale. My brother and I attended the newly established Narrabeen High Schools. Then in 1961 I returned to the inner city to take up my Commonwealth Scholarship at Sydney University and I've been based in the inner west of Sydney most of my working and married life but three years ago I returned to live on the blessed by nature Northern Beaches to 'retire' but I now seem to be working by consultancy over here for various Indigenous projects.

But I get ahead of myself. This little piece will be a bit of an organised ramble, but I hope will interest you. In it I do want to pay tribute to the struggles of our Aboriginal families and communities who have made possible where we're at personally and politically in Australia today. My life has been easy compared to

theirs. And my life has been far easier than my rural and outback cousins as I've been in the 'big smoke' where opportunities for mainstream education and work are available and where, regardless of government policies, multi-culturalism has existed for two hundred years. My first close schoolfriends were of Chinese, English and Anglo-Indian origins.

Also my life has parallels with the lives of many Aboriginal people of my age in Australia. I can't tell you my joy when, in my twenties, I began to meet other women just like me, who weren't the supposed stereotype of the 'dying race of Aboriginals' of the 1950s. Who are olive-skinned and urbanised and have grown up in their families. I do have family members who were stolen, who were sent to Phantom and Palm Islands, who took to drink in despair, who suffered mental illness and many who, like my dad, 'disappeared' into the mainstream community for 'safety'. We straddle two main communities, being to a greater or lesser degree accepted and successful in both. Living in two cultures rather clears your vision of both, I find.

Life is a conundrum. Now I've reached sixty six years of age I've enough stretch of life to look back on. I was born in Crown Street Hospital, Sydney, in April 1943 and lived until ten years of age with my parents and younger brother in a room with lean-to kitchen in Victoria Street, Kings Cross. In 1955 we moved to the Northern Beaches. My parents, though, were always dedicated Queenslanders.



I am a Ugarapul/Githabal (Jagara Nation, south-east Queensland) on my father's side and French and German on my mother's side. But have grown up, lived and worked mostly in Sydney and am a dedicated Sydneysider.

After receiving an Honours BA from Sydney University in 1965, I started out in work as an English/History/Drama teacher (in NSW and the UK), then followed the development of Aboriginal Studies by the NSW AECG through schools, TAFE and universities; teaching, lecturing, co-writing syllabi, setting up libraries etc. I later did my Dip.Ed through UNE (1972) and Dip.Lib at UNSW (1975).

I have worked for quite a few organisations, from the 1970s always in Indigenous concerns and the arts eg Tranby Aboriginal Collective College, NSW women's and children's refuges, Art Gallery of NSW, AIATSIS in Canberra and have done research on grants from AIATSIS; Sydney Uni, UTS and UNSW.

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Clair Jackson

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During the 70s and 80s I was taking my painting seriously, exhibitions etc, and becoming more involved in the events in Redfern, particularly though Fr Ted Kennedy and Mum Shirl Smith. I realised my way to go was to keep myself financial but to go where my heart and talents led me. Meeting people, learning, gaining experience. So, I taught on and off, worked in factories, fruit picking, sold my paintings, visited and worked in country and outback communities throughout Australia, ferrying people home from the city, generally finding out how other Australians and particularly our people lived. (To the despair of my family!!) – but my main work was 'our cause'. It still is. It's been varied, stimulating, frustrating, sometimes heart-breaking and, with my brothers and sisters, often empowering. We've come a long way from the physical frontier days: we've got a long way still to go.

A few years after the 1967

Referendum, with my brother and myself established in careers, my parents moved back to southern Queensland, home country. Most of my large extended family has drifted back to Queensland also. I don't have children in Sydney, sadly I found I

could not have children. However, I've had and still have many children and young people in my life, as well as my large family. And I am a devoted Sydneysider; being born here, it is in my blood. I'm also very proud of the Koori kids and adults I've fed and taught and laughed with, who have gone on, faithful to their people, quietly or stridently making waves in the wider world. Too many to list here.



Mum and me, Martin Place 1943

I have had many nightmares about being hunted by the Native Police, as my clanspeople were, nowhere safe to go any more, the horrors of colonialism. And I wake and know that we're still dealing with the remains or results of colonialism but the spirits

of the land and our Ancestors are in us and never leave us.

I'll add here that my grandfather and father both were servicemen in the two World Wars: grandfather in the Light Horse WWI and father in the Australian Navy in WWII.

I can talk on about the beginnings of the AECG, the Black Theatre and radio, legal centres, housing co-ops, jails, drying out centres, DV and HIV campaigns, outstations and ex-reserves; International Indigenous Conferences and visiting and sharing with other Indigenous peoples. But that's enough.

I am always grateful for the inspiring people I've met and worked with, who have mentored me and offered friendship, guidance, support.

At the moment I'm Aboriginal Academic Advisor in the DET Quality Teaching Indigenous Program (QTIP) at Mackellar GHS. I am involved with a few northside Aboriginal and Reconciliation organisations and in an Aboriginal cancer research program for UNSW.

In my head is Kev Carmody's song *From Little Things Big Things Grow* – he's from the next mob west from mine, up on the Darling Downs. If that can be said of my life, then I'll be happy. It's been worth the effort.

Clair Jackson

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS ARTS AWARDS

Northern Beaches painter and printmaker Jessica Birk is joint-winner of the inaugural QANTAS *Emerging and Young Artist Award* in the 2009 National Indigenous Arts Awards. Jessica is a descendant of the Yeaghl people from the Clarence Valley, NSW. She has lived in Cromer all her life.

Sharing this award with Jessica is printmaker Fiona Elisala from the Torres Strait Islands.

Yolngu painter and rights campaigner Gawirrin Gumana AO won the \$50,000 *Red Ochre Award*, the most prestigious career achievement prize for Indigenous Arts.



This recognises Gawirrin Gumana's distinguished contribution using his art to raise awareness about Aboriginal land rights. Victorian street artist Reko Rennie and Queensland painter Gordon Hookey won three months' residency in Paris and Connecticut USA respectively.

Jessica will use the \$5000 prize money from her award to create new work for a touring exhibition of regional galleries. Her acrylic painting, *Whale Stories* 2008, is the image for this and last year's Guringai Festival. An exhibition of artworks and sculptures by Jessica and students from Chatswood Primary School can be seen in the foyer of Willoughby City Council, 31 Victor Street, Chatswood.



Entitled *Local Inspirations*, this exhibition is a 2009 Guringai Festival event and will be on display until July 10.

The Autumn 2006 issue of *Elimatta* featured a profile on Jessica prior to her exhibition *Born Belonging* at Manly Art Gallery & Museum.

To read about Jessica and to view her work visit www.jessicabirk.com



ASG 30th Anniversary Celebration

when: 7.30pm on MONDAY JULY 6, 2009

where: ANGOPHORA ROOM, NELSON HEATHER CENTRE

cnr Pittwater & Jacksons Rds, North Narrabeen Carpark entrance from Boondah Rd



In 1979 a chance meeting of three people on a bus led to the start of the Aboriginal Support Group-Manly Warringah Pittwater (ASG). It began as a treaty organisation and later developed into a community of people committed to supporting Indigenous Australians in their broader struggle for justice.

Thirty years on members of the ASG hope that friends and supporters will come and join them in celebrating this special event.

Guest Speaker for the evening is The Hon. Linda Burney MP, NSW Minister for Community Services. Linda is a proud member of the Wiradjuri Nation and is the first Aboriginal Australian to be elected to the NSW Parliament. Her commitment to Indigenous issues spans thirty years.

Linda's early career was in teaching and she spent much of her career working in education. She held leadership positions in the non-government sector and is a former Director General of the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs. In 2002 Linda's expertise was formally recognised when she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Education from Charles Sturt University.

In 2003 Linda was elected Member

for Canterbury. She was appointed to Cabinet as Minister for Fair Trading, Youth and Volunteering in 2007 and was promoted to the position of Minister for Community Services in September 2008. As a member of Cabinet she is able to continue her role as a passionate advocate for social justice.



Linda Burney

Linda is currently the National President of the Australian Labor Party. She delivered the Henry Parkes Oration in Canberra on 17 October 2008.

During NAIDOC Week 1995 Linda was Guest Speaker at a public meeting organised by the ASG on the Northern Beaches. She shared some of her experience of being

Koori and emphasised that, whatever vast differences there might be among Aboriginal people, it was their connectedness with each other that is at the heart of their Aboriginality.

In December 1997 Warringah Council hosted an Aboriginal Reconciliation Forum and it was at this forum that Warringah Council announced the development of Warringah's Reconciliation Strategy. Linda, then President of the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, made a special presentation. She said *"Reconciliation will happen because of what is happening in this room tonight ...in Council halls, in schools, in clubs and in churches, and in our daily lives ...It is not beyond anyone, young or old – we can make something happen."*

Be part of the 30th Anniversary Celebrations on July 6 as we travel together *'On a Road Toward Reconciliation'*.

This Guringai Festival event is part of the 2009 NAIDOC Week celebrations. This year the theme for NAIDOC Week (July 5-12) is *Honouring our Elders, Nurturing our Youth*.

For further details telephone Lizzie Landers **9918 2594** or visit www.asgmwp.net

ABORIGINAL COUNSELLING SERVICE NORTHERN SYDNEY

On Thursday March 26 Relationships Australia NSW North Region celebrated the launch of its Aboriginal Counselling Service. This was a very special event, welcomed by the Aboriginal guests present at the launch, in particular members of the *Stolen Generations*. The launch was well attended by Aboriginal professionals working in the community sector as well as Aboriginal people living in the Northern Sydney area. For North Region it was a dream come true, a dream that has become a reality

through the commitment of our team. I would like to also acknowledge Sue Pinckham, Project Officer, Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan. Our partnership with Sue gave us the connection to work towards setting up an Aboriginal Counselling Service in Northern Sydney.

The service will initially be offered from our Neutral Bay office by Janet Hurley. We are also setting up a reference group of Aboriginal people to provide guidance and feedback to see if we are on the right track with

this service. In the near future we will also be looking for an Aboriginal counsellor to take up an internship.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Uncle Bob Waterer, a Guringai Elder, for the *Welcome to Country*.

Anita Vosper
Relationships Australia NSW

For further information contact Janet Hurley on **9418 8800** or visit www.relationships.com.au





Harry's WAR

Recently the Aboriginal Support Group organized a free viewing of the award winning film *Harry's War* at Warringah Council Chambers. The film was screened for Seniors Week and over one hundred people attended. The film was introduced by Carol Ritchie, and Uncle Bob Waterer, a direct descendant of the Broken Bay tribe and popular Guringai ambassador, gave a *Welcome to Country* speech.

Harry's War is a short film and now a decade old, however the theme of the film will echo for a long time. It is a story about a young Aboriginal man called Harry who joins the Australian army and is killed in WWII.

The irony of the story is the choice of an Aboriginal man to fight a war to defend a system which had continued to vanquish and victimize his race. Harry Saunders, the main character, had grown up on an Aboriginal mission and like all Aboriginal people has had to endure institutional discrimination and prejudice. The choice to join the war gives focus to an argument that by winning the war greater freedoms will be conferred on the Indigenous people, who at this stage had few rights and no citizenship. As revealed in the film it was illegal to serve alcohol to Aboriginal people who as well could only leave missions with written permission.

The optimism of Aboriginal rights was not realized for another two decades after WWII and this seems to sanction cynical Aboriginal claims that the war will not liberate them. The unfortunate liberation for Harry was death at the hands of the Japanese enemy in New Guinea.

The ironic theme of an Aboriginal soldier supporting a system that victimises Aboriginal people runs parallel with a camaraderie that is forged between Harry and fellow soldiers. The evolving mateship in the army gives an insight into Aboriginal beliefs and exposes the equality that soldiering imposes. An equality not realized elsewhere. The director, Richard Frankland who is Harry's nephew, often returns to past events with flashbacks to reference and focus issues of racial discrimination.

The climax to the film is the ghastly killing of Harry in a jungle. His white mate nurses Harry in his death and the notion of brotherhood over-rides the prevailing racial prejudice. Indeed the grief of Harry's white friend is extended in a meeting with Harry's family who are resigned with their loss and pessimism for the future.

The Australian victory in WWII did nothing to improve the position of Indigenous people. Over three thousand



Aboriginal men served in the fighting forces in WWII and a number of Aboriginal women were employed by the army in service industries in Darwin during the war. Their role and sacrifice was rarely noted and yes we forget. Many Aboriginal men killed in the war were buried in unmarked graves and their names were not recorded on memorials that are so significant in our cultural landscape.

Indeed the breadth of discrimination against Aboriginal war veterans saw war pensions and other benefits denied to them and their families for decades following WWII. On many occasions Aboriginal war veterans were denied participation in the Anzac Day March. In recent years the *Black Diggers March* takes place on Anzac Day in Redfern. I recommend the film as an informative slice of our history that judges and reminds us of a past that has ignored the sacrifices of Aboriginal people and their struggle for rights that are so fundamental to us all.

Ian Jacobs



Warringah Council

The ASG would like to thank Warringah Council for once again hosting this annual Seniors For Reconciliation event.



Bob Waterer and Carol Ritchie – courtesy Warringah Council



BLACK DIGGERS MARCH 2009

On Anzac Day, April 25, Nancy Hill Wood and I went to the *Black Diggers* March from *The Block* in Redfern to Redfern Park. There were a large number of people who took part in the march: servicemen, their families, friends and supporters.

Under the watchful eyes of ex-servicemen Uncle David Williams, Uncle Harry Allie and Pastor Ray Minniecon, the march was led off with didgeridoo, clap sticks, banners flying and an Aboriginal horseman, followed by the ex-servicemen, the families and supporters.

All, plus people applauding from the footpaths, were showing respect and remembrance for the soldiers who did not return from wars and also those in all the forces who had served over the years.

At Redfern Park the very large crowd included Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of NSW, and her husband, as well as federal and state politicians and council representatives. There were interesting speakers and then, accompanied by a young Aboriginal man playing the bagpipes, wreaths were laid for the fallen servicemen.

It was a very moving ceremony and included a stirring dance by Terry Olsen with musical accompaniment.

Following this a concert featuring Michael Donovan and guests was held and there were meat pies for all, compliments of *Harry's Café de Wheels*.

Nancy and I did not leave until 4.30pm after a sober but very

worthwhile and enjoyable afternoon. We hope to be able to do this again next year.

Carol Ritchie

JOINING UP

Joining Up is an exhibition which showcases the history of Sydney's Aboriginal defence personnel.

It can be seen as part of the Sydney Harbour Trust celebrations for NAIDOC Week to be held on Sunday July 12 at Headland Park, Middle Head Road, Mosman.

For further details visit www.harbourtrust.gov.au

DYRSL SUPPORT



Thank you to the Dee Why RSL Club for its continued support of the ASG with an annual grant for the production of the group's newsletter *Elimatta*.

Jennifer Holley-Ashton, Marketing Administration Assistant with DYRSL, recently met with several ASG members who are involved in producing and distributing *Elimatta* to talk about the history and activities of the group and the projects it supports. Part of Jennifer's role is to visit community programs that are supported by the club and to meet their members.

After speaking to Jennifer that morning, Clair Jackson wrote to the DYRSL requesting that the Club recognises the contribution that Indigenous people have made to the Australian Armed Forces since 1915. She suggested that a permanent memorial could be placed in the Club's Peace Garden and that the Aboriginal and possibly Torres Strait Islander flags be flown.

To read about the projects the DYRSL supports visit www.dyrsl.com.au/html/press_release.cfm You will see the ASG entry *Australia - Our Home*.



Jennifer Holley-Ashton (centre), with Pat Frater, Nan Bosler, Anna Bell and Clair Jackson - Photo courtesy of Nan Bosler

Remembering Les

On Wednesday July 18, 2009, I was able to go to the Redfern Community Centre to attend the memorial service held to remember and pay respect to the late Les Saxby. Les, a family man with a teenage daughter, tragically died early in February of this year.

Many of you will remember Les, a cultural teacher, dancer/musician, artist and story teller. He had been invited to perform at various events on the Northern Beaches for many years. With his group, *Yidaki Didg and Dance*, Les came to our *Sorry Day* event only last year and as always was warmly received by all present.

Present at the memorial service were his partner and daughter, who bravely spoke fondly of her father. Family members and a large number of friends and admirers of Les attended. It was a sad and moving service but also a time to remember the joy Les brought to peoples' lives.

The last time I saw Les was late last year when I took the girls from Biala Hostel to the Australian Museum where Les was performing and talking about the culture of Australia's Aboriginal people. One of the girls had her photo taken with Les.

So, I was very pleased that I was able to be present in Redfern to say goodbye to Les in this way. It is hard to believe he will no longer be around for us.

Carol Ritchie



BIT OF BLACK BUSINESS

– with GILLIAN MOODY and ADRIAN WILLS

It was the ASG Information Night on Monday May 4 at the Nelson Heather Centre, Narrabeen. The usual jostling of chairs and rushing to get set up and started – no sound – adjustments made and finally all came together.

After Uncle Bob Waterer's *Welcome to Country*, Gillian introduced herself and spoke of her family and her happy life living on the Northern Beaches. Through meeting Aboriginal filmmaker Lester Bostock she gained employment with SBS and for the next ten years worked there making programs such as *ICAM* and *Living Black*.

Bit of Black Business was an initiative where films were developed and financed by the Indigenous Branch of the former Australian Film Commission (now Screen Australia) and consisted of thirteen short films. Gillian had applied to the initiative with her own script but narrowly missed out on selection. This turned out to be not such a bad thing as during the workshops she got to know the team at the Indigenous Branch and was asked by Kath Shelper, producer of the series, if she would like to work on the films in some way. She ended up working across the full series, visiting locations Australia wide and gaining invaluable experience. This led to her present position as Project Manager, developing writers and directors through initiatives such as *Long Black* (feature films) and *The New Black* (short films).

Gillian chose three short films from *Bit of Black Business* to show at the Information Night:

They were:

Jackie Jackie

–writer/director Adrian Wills

A young Aboriginal girl stands up to her non-Indigenous boss Jack in response to his racist innuendoes and criticism of her. She has a sunny, fresh enthusiasm and the serious subject is treated with a great deal of humour but firmness.

Kwatje

– writer/director Trisha Moreton Thomas

Again humour is used. A young Dad is suffering with a bad hangover. His very young 'princess' daughter responds to his frequent requests for water but little does he know it is taken from the toilet.

Nana

– writer/director Warwick Thornton

Beautifully portrays the strength of a Woman Elder through the eyes of an adoring granddaughter. Nana provides meals for her extended family and the needy, keeps the community free of alcohol, keeps alive the cultural customs, gathering bush tucker and doing dot art, cares for the kids and is a wonderful role model. The final sentence of this very tender short movie, 'when I am big I want to be like Nana' says it all.

Bourke Boy

– writer/director Adrian Wills

An unexpected delight of the evening was the introduction to Adrian Wills. He became a close friend of Gillian's when she mentored and produced his first short film *Jackie Jackie*. They discovered they had both grown up around Avalon and had much in common. Adrian gave the Support Group a special preview screening of his most recent film *Bourke Boy* that is one of *The New Black* short films. Seven films were selected for production and all premiered at this year's *Message Sticks* Indigenous Film Festival.

Adrian felt very strongly about wanting to honour the success and milestone of the Group in celebrating its 30th anniversary this year and to acknowledge the work the Group has done in supporting Indigenous people and in educating and facilitating Reconciliation in the wider community.

Bourke Boy is a personal story about a weekend Adrian spent in Bourke with his father. The film explores the issue of adoption.

Having both Gillian and Adrian present to provide answers to our questions and to give us such insight into the making and background of the films further enhanced a most enjoyable night.

Ruth Sutton and Anna Bell

SAMSON & DELILAH

Warwick Thornton is the writer/director of the highly acclaimed feature film *Samson & Delilah*. This film was selected to open *Un Certain Regard* at this year's Cannes Film Festival, the world's leading film festival and won the prestigious *Camera d'Or*, the prize for best first feature. Kath Shelper is the producer.

Samson & Delilah is the story of young love in a troubled Indigenous community. The film is marked by long

silences and what little is spoken is mostly in the Central Australian language Warlpiri.

Winning the *Camera d'Or* is a striking achievement for a film that cost just \$1.6million. It was funded by the Indigenous unit of the Australian Film Commission, the NSW Film and Television Office and the Adelaide Film Festival. *Samson & Delilah* also won the *Audience Award Best Feature* at the 2009 Adelaide Film Festival.

Now screening in cinemas nationally.



Guringai Festival 2009

SORRY DAY

On Sunday May 24 the Support Group hosted their annual Sorry Day commemoration at Narrabeen Lagoon, an event to 'remember, honour and acknowledge the Stolen Generations, past and present.' There was a welcoming sense of warmth and comfort as everyone arrived united in their motivations for reconciliation. The event attracted dignitaries from various levels of government, local Aboriginal Community members, long-time friends and members of the Support Group. All came together to show their commitment to our journey of healing.

The day began with *Welcome to Country* from Guringai Elder Uncle Bob Waterer. Uncle Bob spoke with pride of his Indigenous heritage as a descendant of Bungaree, the 'Chief of the Broken Bay Tribe' as crowned by Governor Macquarie. We were then blessed with the lovely voice and music of Corey Kirk and her

accompanying family and friends. She began with an Indigenous translation of the Australian national anthem, followed by her own piece *The Hippie Song* and finally a cover of Christine Anu's *Cause I'm Free*. Next we listened to Lavina Warner and Kym Moody detail their recent activity in creating a more suitable environment for Indigenous children in local child care centres as well as educating other children on Indigenous culture. Lavina spoke of her own, touching experience as a member of the *Stolen Generations*. Comparing the relative freedom of my own childhood to the struggles Lavina faced certainly revealed the extent of the injustices done to her and to so many Indigenous children.

This was followed by a short break, while the Prime Minister's 2008 Apology played inside and we were treated to a few sugary treats provided by members of the Support Group. Outside there was fun and giggles as attending children painted on a colourful image of the Lagoon

created by Denise Barry. Kim and Lavina worked with the children on the canvas which will be hung in the Dee Why Children's Centre, while others enjoyed the sausage sizzle on offer. After the break we enjoyed a series of Indigenous dances performed brilliantly by Athena Mumbulla and her two daughters. More fun and giggles were had as some of the attending children joined for the last 'fruit picking' dance.

As we left we were invited to take home one of the flowers provided, to remind us both of the occasion and the work that lies ahead on our journey of healing. Thanks must go out to all the performers and to Helen Ford and the members of the Aboriginal Support Group who made this great day possible.

Ned Cooper

Thanks to Pittwater Council for its grant towards Sorry Day and also to Devitt Meats, Narrabeen, for the popular sausage sizzle.



RIVER OF NO RETURN

The local Peninsular community enjoyed the ASG screening of *River of No Return* at Collaroy Cinema on Wednesday June 10. The acclaimed documentary was written, directed and co-produced by Darlene Johnson.

River of No Return tells the story of Frances Djulibing and her dreams of becoming a movie star. The actress who particularly inspires her is Marilyn Monroe and Frances knows most of the dialogue and songs of Marilyn's films off by heart. As a young woman she receives no encouragement from those around her in the Yolngu community as her dreams are seen as unrealistic. Frances' home is in a small community about 30km from the remote township of Ramingining in Northeastern Arnhem Land.

Darlene's film then takes up the story of how Frances' dream came to be realised. The film director Rolf de Heer cast her in his film *Ten Canoes*

after she sold him a cold can of soft drink in the takeaway shop where she was working at the time.

Frances' role in *Ten Canoes* was that of Nowalinguu, a second wife who is abducted by a man from another tribe. For Frances this was a matter of art mirroring life because she herself was abducted and married to a man from another group even though she had been promised before birth to another Yolngu man. The marriage was happy and produced three daughters before her husband passed away eleven years later.

Ten Canoes became a very successful film and Frances enjoyed the red carpet treatment of a movie star. However, for Frances, now a grandmother, life does not follow the script she would like and the film shows the ups and downs of her life. But through it all Frances' irrepressible optimism and fabulously

wicked sense of humour prevails.

After the screening the audience was privileged to hear Darlene speak about the making of the film and in particular about its star Frances Djulibing. Frances has since featured in another of Darlene's documentaries *Crocodile Dreaming*.

The DVD of *River of No Return* is available for loan from the ASG.

Carol Gerrard

The ASG congratulates **Roy Mustaca of United Cinemas** on being awarded the *Order of Australia* Medal in the Queens Birthday Honours. This is the eighth year the Mustaca Family has generously made the Collaroy Cinema available free of charge to screen a film for the Guringai Festival.

Thanks also to **Warringah Council** for the eye-catching posters to promote the event.



THE TALL MAN: Death and Life on Palm Island

by Chloe Hooper – Published by the Penguin Group (Australia) 2008

The Tall Man has deservedly won the Douglas Stewart Prize for non-fiction in the 2009 NSW Premier's Literary Awards. It is an engrossing account of the death in Queensland Police custody of Palm Island resident Cameron Doomadgee and the subsequent course of events including the riot on Palm Island and the eventual trial of Senior Sergeant Chris Hurley for manslaughter. I refer to the dead man as Cameron Doomadgee because his family do and the author calls him by this name in the book. Chris Hurley is the *tall man* of the book's title, a man standing over two metres and the name tall man also echoes a figure of menace in the Aboriginal mythology of some North Queensland areas.

On Friday morning November 19, 2004, at 10.20am Cameron Doomadgee was arrested by Senior Sergeant Chris Hurley for creating a public nuisance and forty minutes later he was dead with severe internal injuries like those of someone who had been in a fatal car crash. The police claimed that he had tripped on a step. Almost two years later on September 27, 2006, Queensland's Deputy State Coroner, Christine Clements, handed down her findings from the inquest into the death of Cameron Doomadgee. She found that Senior Sergeant Hurley, *'the ultimate figure of power and authority on Palm Island'*, had arrested Cameron Doomadgee on a public nuisance charge, the public being the Senior Sergeant who said he had heard him swear.

The Deputy Coroner found the arrest *'completely unjustified'*. She said, *'I am satisfied on the basis of Roy Bramwell's account (Bramwell was the only witness present in the Police Station) of what he saw and heard,*

together with the preceding sequence of events, that Senior Sergeant Hurley lost his temper and hit Mulrunji after falling to the floor.' The Deputy Coroner concluded that the actions of Senior Sergeant Hurley caused the fatal injuries.

It was the first time a police officer had been found responsible for a death in custody. The Deputy Coroner did not have the power to lay charges, but she wrote to Queensland's Director of Public Prosecutions recommending that her office consider charging the Senior Sergeant with manslaughter. This did eventually happen after a lot of stalling by both the Director and the Queensland Government. Senior Sergeant Hurley was found not guilty of manslaughter in a Townsville court in 2007 by an all white jury.

This book presents a cast of amazing people. These include Andrew Boe, a Burmese-born Brisbane criminal lawyer who acted pro bono for the Palm Island community and the Doomadgee family and without whom Cameron Doomadgee's death would have most probably been recorded as a tragic accident; Elizabeth Doomadgee, Cameron's stoic older sister who unstintingly gave background information to the author so the latter could appreciate life for the Palm Islanders; and the officers of the Queensland Police Union who appeared to apply intense pressure to the Queensland Government to accept Doomadgee's death as an accident.

The book raises many issues which need to be thought about by all Australian citizens. These include who in society should have the ultimate authority – an elected government or the police; the policing of Aboriginal communities by Aboriginal police officers with full police powers not just liaison officers; the need for communities like Palm Island to have locals staffing the school, hospital, shops etc which would reduce unemployment; the need for communities to seriously address

Aboriginal violence perpetrated on their own community members; and whether police officers can continue to be exempt from the results of their actions on the old *'nod, nod, wink, wink'* basis.

This is a book that should be read by all Australians.

Carol Gerrard

HEY MUM, WHAT'S A HALF-CASTE?

By Lorraine McGee-Sippel – published by Magabala Books 2009

The startling title and the photograph on the cover give an instant indication of what is to follow in Lorraine's personal story of uncovering and discovery. The beautiful little girl with the bow in her hair doesn't look much like her mum.

Like many children Lorraine is bright and inquisitive and has a sensitive radar to inconsistencies. She quickly picks up on clues to her families' secret. It takes a very long time before her probing gives her some answers to her questions.

It's a hard book for me to read. Lorraine is a friend. We met on the way to the first *Sea of Hands* in Canberra. She is the co-convenor of Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation and in 2008 was inaugural *Yabun Elder of the Year*.

The thing about the book is that Lorraine's voice is so true. It's her voice whether as a young confused girl or now a mature woman that comes across so honestly and the honesty is compelling. The details of the tentative journey she takes us on include meeting her birth mother, brothers, sisters, cousins and grandparents and having to face the fragility of reconnection. She makes it clear that there are no easy answers and no happy endings for the *Stolen Generations*. At the most there can be a sense of belonging, a knowing of where you came from and an acceptance of the gifts and losses of a life.

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HERITAGE LOST

Reprinted from the *Friends of Dee Why Lagoon* newsletter March 2009

We are all conscious that the Dee Why area, with its Lagoon and surrounding wetlands, would have been occupied by Aboriginal people before European settlement. Thanks to Shelagh and George Champion, recently I was able to re-read an article which brings this fact home in an interesting and forceful way.

In a publication of the Australian Museum dated July 1891, R. Etheridge (later to become the Museum's Curator) writes on the *Rock-Shelters or Gibba-Gunyahs at Dee Why Lagoon*. The opening paragraph reads: *'Several fine "Rock-Shelters" may be seen along the escarpment of Hawkesbury Sandstone forming the southern boundary of the hollow wherein lies the Deewhy Lagoon, between Manly and Narrabeen. ... The first examined lay at the south-east end of the escarpment, where the latter almost abuts on the swampy ground of the lagoon. The length was 29 feet, depth 16 feet, height from floor to ceiling 4 feet.'*

The floor of this cave was regular and undisturbed 'hearth-earth'. Etheridge and his companions excavated a portion and found that it was layered. They found four separate fire layers, each one covered with soil. Thus it appeared that there may have been four periods of use.

None of this is perhaps surprising. Obviously Aboriginal clans did live in the area, the cave gave them shelter – albeit a little uncomfortably with its four foot ceiling – and it was used perhaps seasonally.

The salutary moment came when I looked at the detail of Etheridge's excavation. The total depth of 'hearth-earth' in the cave was an incredible 5 feet 6 inches. The original cave, before human use, was nearly 10 feet high. Rather than a few seasons, the period of Aboriginal occupation may have been thousands of years and the four fire layers may have represented four different historical or social epochs.

A second cave was also explored in the same escarpment, a little to the west of the first. It was 74 feet long, 12 feet deep and 8 feet high, with a 'hearth-earth' depth of a further 4 feet. It contained similar fire layers and also – nine inches into the earth – the almost complete skeleton of a young child.

The body had been ceremonially buried and was protected by stone slabs. Etheridge noted that the escarpment then trended in a slightly northwest direction and cut the Manly-Pittwater Road (today's Pittwater Road). Between the cave with the buried child and the road there was a string of large rock shelters but, as the floors had already been dug and explored by others, he did not examine them closely but did note that the nature of the soil thrown out showed that they had been put to the same use by Aboriginal people.

Warringah has never been strong on heritage. We perhaps view our area as 'too young' to have a history. This article from 1891 brought home to me very forcefully just how wrong such a perspective is. However it also showed the fragility of all links with the past.

Much of the second of the two caves examined by Etheridge still exists today. It is at the very rear of a block of home units in Sturdee Parade that was built within the last ten years. If you stand on the footpath at the spot between 33 and 35 Sturdee Parade and look south, between the two apartment blocks, you will see a small part of it behind them.

Unfortunately, I believe that all of the other caves have been destroyed during the construction of unit blocks, most of them only very recently. A number of houses in Sturdee Parade had caves at the rear of their back yards well into the 1980s. All of these houses have been replaced by apartment blocks and the caves have gone, excavated away with the sandstone to maximise the use of the land. It is just a happy accident that one of them lay right on a rear property boundary and thus escaped total destruction.

I have been back and checked some of the assessments made when the relevant DAs for these apartments were submitted to Council. There is no mention of any heritage matters. Although many of us knew of these caves they had long lost their link with the past in our community's collective consciousness. How different it might have been if they had contained just a single ochre handprint! Instead they contained a record of perhaps thousands of years of occupancy, but we did not understand.

Richard Michel

HEY MUM, WHAT'S A HALF CASTE?

Continued from Page 8

Lorraine says she is 'lucky and grateful'. And so are we the readers. Writing such an honest memoir has been a task of courage and endurance and rewards us with a greater understanding of the complexity of this Yorta Yorta

woman's life and a compassion for all adoptees seeking reconnection with birth families

Lizzie Landers

Lorraine McGee Sippel will be Guest Speaker at our September 14 Information Night at Mona Vale Memorial Hall.

LETTERBOX



This is a very entertaining children's TV game show which aims to improve literacy standards of Australian children. It features Indigenous children promoting them as positive role models in their communities. Showing daily at 6pm on NITV channel 40 and channel 180 on Foxtel and Austar.

As a descendent of the Gamilaraay people from NW NSW and a visual artist I feel very strongly for the Aboriginal children who were taken from their homes, family and Country. I try to put this feeling into my paintings so these emotions can be expressed in a visual way. At various exhibitions I have had people approach me and ask why I don't paint the stories of the white kids who were removed from family and home, as they also have a lot to tell.

When I was planning work for my *Identity* Exhibition at Jayes Gallery in Molong in March this year I felt that this was the time to explore the stories of the British child migrants who were sent to Fairbridge Farm School at Molong. This has led me to wonderful people whose stories have saddened me as well as showing me a world I knew very little about.

As David Hill says in his book *Forgotten Children: 'Every childhood lasts a lifetime'*. I have listened with great sadness and anger to accounts from Indigenous and non-Indigenous people about how they felt when they were taken and how the hurt has remained with them. There are no geographical boundaries when removed children are hurting, the pain is universal. It should be the right of every child to have a family and a home, even though to outward appearances that home is not adequate in the eyes of some in authority. Lack of worldly possessions does not necessarily make for a bad home. Love of and by family and extended family transcends perceived poverty and lack of shoes and new clothes.

I don't presume to speak for all children who were removed, some will have had positive experiences as each child has their own unique story to tell. My hope is that the inner children's voices of those who wish to be heard and seen will be in a respectful and compassionate way. My prayer is that this will never happen again.



Freedom

The girls from the Stolen Generations are celebrating the Apology. They are growing their hair, kicked their shoes off ... the next to go is the symbology of the white dresses. They are experiencing freedom.

These were the thoughts I expressed in my catalogue for *Identity* as an insight into my reasons for this exhibition.

In 2008 one of my paintings was again selected for the NSW Parliamentary Indigenous Art Award and was on exhibition at Goulburn Regional Gallery. The exhibition then travelled to Muswellbrook, Brewarrina and to Manning Regional Art Gallery. I won the 16th Annual Mil-Pra Aboriginal Art Award through Casula Powerhouse and I had four paintings in the *Marella, the Hidden Mission* at Penrith Regional Gallery & the Lewers Bequest at Emu Plains.

Last year I worked with the Aboriginal inmates at Bathurst Correctional Centre in conjunction with another Aboriginal artist Lewis Burns, from Dubbo. We encouraged the men to tell their own stories in paintings and we mounted an exhibition of their works which was called the *Girrawaa Stories* at Cowra Regional Gallery. It was a fantastic experience and the first exhibition supported in kind by Corrective Services NSW.

Each year I facilitate a project with the Year 9 Aboriginal girls at Cowra High School as part of their *Breakaway* program. This is a great program which teaches the girls self-esteem and self-awareness.

Art is a component of this innovative project and their work is exhibited at their Award ceremony at the end of the year.

So a lot has happened since I last touched base with *Elimatta*. Our family has grown with the birth of 3 beautiful Chihuahua puppies, who, of course, stayed with us. Our furless family grew with two beautiful granddaughters and now a darling grandson.

My next solo exhibition will be at *Taste Canowindra* in September to coincide with History Week 2009.

Nyree Reynolds, Blayney



Gathering chips

When the very young children, the under fives, arrived at Fairbridge Farm School in Molong they were put to work straightaway as all children at Fairbridge had to work. It meant that the little ones had to walk around all day just picking up twigs for the stoves, very often with no shoes on, on the cold, frosty ground. This was their job. It was a very frightening, bewildering and lonely time for these babies, and it should never have happened. All they wanted were their Mums.

OUTBACK MEETS THE BEACH 2009



Outback Meets the Beach is a cultural exchange and reconciliation program resulting from a partnership

between the North Palm Beach Surf Life Saving Club and the Jawoyn Association from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. The overall aim of this partnership, which has been developing since 2007, is to provide an opportunity for a cultural exchange that promotes two-way learning so that everyone involved in the program can overcome and breakdown their preconceived stereotypes and encourage greater understanding on both sides.

Each year in February the *Outback Meets the Beach* program brings a number of young people, aged between 15 to 20 years, and several traditional owners from three remote communities in the Northern Territory to North Palm Beach. The Indigenous communities involved in the program are Manyallaluk, Barunga and Wugular/Beswick. These communities are located over 120 kms east of Katherine, which in turn is about a 3.5 hour drive from Darwin. Throughout the program the people from the Northern Territory live with members of the surf club in the bunkhouses at NPB SLSC and everyone participates in all the activities together.

The first phase of the program provides the young Aboriginal people with the opportunity to experience the beauty and power of the Barrenjoey Peninsula and the ocean. Instructors for the Manly Surf School teach the visitors to surf. Even though most of them have never seen the ocean let alone experienced waves, they take to surfing very quickly. As well as this they are provided with some education, training, skills and qualifications in specific areas that were identified by the Jawoyn Association as needed within these communities and that would also lead

to greater employment opportunities for the participants.

During their two weeks in Sydney the visitors receive training from members of NPB SLSC, who are all Surf Life Saving Association qualified trainers and assessors in first aid, resuscitation, life saving skills, water safety and swift water rescue techniques. In addition, they receive an introduction to tour guiding, including bush tucker tours from Indigenous Guides and Rangers with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Outback Meets the Beach provides a mentoring program involving a number of successful Aboriginal people. This year Adam Goodes and Michael O'Loughlin from the Sydney Swans, Michael Bani from the Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles, Jimmy Little and a number of other Indigenous people shared some time with the group. The aim of the mentoring program is to develop confidence and self esteem in the participants by introducing them to Indigenous people who have been successful in many different areas of life. A final aim is to promote the behaviours that lead to a healthy life and to provide the young people with information about good nutrition, maintaining hydration levels in hot climates and the problems associated with alcohol and drug abuse.

All the young people from the Northern Territory received awards endorsed by the SLSNSW and took part in patrolling North Palm Beach. In addition they all received Statements of Attainment and Participation from the NSW NPWS.

The second phase of the *Outback Meets the Beach* program – the cultural exchange where the club takes a group of our young people to Arnhem Land communities – will take place towards the end of July. This will provide the city-people with the opportunity of experiencing the traditional ways of Aboriginal culture and living the lifestyle of people from outback communities. During our visit we will be treated to a three

day walk from the communities to Nitmuluk Gorge to explore and experience the Jawoyn country and to have a go at hunting, eating bush tucker, dancing and joining in ceremonies, painting and making didgeridoos. The highlight of our visit will be to take part in the *Walking with Spirits* Festival at Beswick Falls. The opportunity to go to the communities strengthens the partnership between the members of the Surf Club and the Jawoyn people and allows the friendships developed by those involved to become more enduring.

The cost of running the 2009 *Outback Meets the Beach* program was just under \$30,000. The Ian Thorpe Charity *Fountain for Youth* provided over half this amount to cover the travel costs of the group from Northern Territory. The rest of the costs of the program were covered by the Surf Club with the support of sponsors who provided assistance in many ways

Terry Kirkpatrick
North Palm Beach
Surf Life Saving Club

Several members of the ASG were delighted to be involved with the community barbecue and to meet the young people and the Surf Club members.

Congratulations

to RAYE NEWELL, previous Avalon resident and member of ASGMWP, who moved back to her Biripi land last year and is about to take up the prestigious position of *Bringing Them Home* Project Worker with the Social and Emotional Well-Being Team of the Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre, Purfleet, NSW.





Changes to ASG Meetings

all details at www.asgmwp.net

Please be sure to note the venue and dates for all meetings after August 3. Unfortunately, after nine years, the ASG is no longer able to rent the Angophora Room at the Nelson Heather Centre for our Information Nights. In deciding on a new suitable venue it was important that a storage area was available for the Group's equipment.

Monday July 6 **ASG 30th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS**
with Guest Speaker The Hon. Linda Burney MP.
Angophora Room, Nelson Heather Centre,
corner Pittwater and Jacksons Roads, North Narrabeen. 7.30pm

Monday Aug 3 **ASG Business Meeting**
Waratah Room, Nelson Heather Centre, North Narrabeen, at 7.30pm

ALL FUTURE ASG MEETINGS WILL BE HELD ON THE **SECOND** MONDAY OF THE MONTH

Monday Sep 14 **ASG Information Night**
Author Lorraine McGee-Sippel will talk about her book *Hey Mum, What's a Half-Caste?*
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Road, Mona Vale. 7.30pm. Parking available

Monday Oct 12 **ASG Business Meeting**
Waratah Room, Nelson Heather Centre, North Narrabeen, at 7.30pm

Monday Nov 9 **ASG Information Night**
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Road, Mona Vale. 7.30pm. Parking available

Monday Dec 14 **Final ASG Meeting for 2009**
Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Road, Mona Vale. 7.30pm. Parking available

Portraits From A Land Without People

Portraits From A Land Without People is the most comprehensive anthology of photographs to document Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture yet produced. It charts the photographic history of Indigenous Australia from the first photographs by Douglas T. Kilburn in 1847 through to the Prime Minister's Apology in 2008.

'This collection of photographs is a catalogue of past wrongs, a celebration of Aboriginal empowerment and a testament to Aboriginal survival.' – Larissa Behrendt

John Ogden, who researched and compiled *Portraits From A Land Without People*, will have copies of the book for sale at the ASG 30th Anniversary Celebrations on Monday July 6. RRP \$120.



It is hoped that sales from the book will raise over \$100,000 for the *Jimmy Little Foundation*. The money has been earmarked to instal a dialysis unit in a bus that will travel into remote communities.

Orders for the book can be made online at www.aboriginalportraits.com



An Invitation to join us

**Aboriginal Support Group
Manly Warringah Pittwater**

Founded 1979

Membership is \$20 per year
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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. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editors or members of the ASG.

Please email articles where possible to annabel@bigpond.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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