

STILL HERE



AN EXHIBITION PRESENTED BY
MELBOURNE'S LIVING MUSEUM OF THE WEST

STILL HERE

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

**A brief history
of Aborigines in Melbourne's western region
up to the present day.**

Produced by
MELBOURNE'S LIVING MUSEUM OF THE WEST.

Story by
Larry Walsh, Aboriginal Cultural Officer.

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Back Cover: Samantha Walker and Isobel Morphy-Walsh at 'Nuthroki Ilbijerri' in 1995. Design by Kerrie Poliness and Joseph Guario; Photograph by Fiona Brown.

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Kylie Freeman.

Kylie Freeman, who lives in Sunshine, was the Living Museum's trainee secretary and won the State Training Board's Koorie Trainee of the Year Award in 1993. Kylie produced the application for funding submitted to Visions Australia to develop the exhibition 'Still Here'. Thank-you Kylie. Kylie is currently the Aboriginal Liason Officer with the firm International Public Relations.

- Larry Walsh* (Living Museum Aboriginal Cultural Officer) - Wrote the story. Researched and provided most of the exhibition content, directed the research, and its editing. Larry also directed the design of the exhibition format and the use of images and use of symbols.
- Kerrie Poliness* (Artist and Living Museum Exhibitions and Displays) - Worked on and organised the overall design and production of the exhibition and the catalogue and presentation.
- Marcello Cavallaro* (Living Museum Media Officer) - Co-ordinated the photography, the reproductions and the bromides. Researched and kept track of the information, copyrights and many other things.
- Peter Haffenden* (Living Museum Projects Co-ordinator) - Edited and proof-read the text, co-ordinated the project and added knowledge, advice and support to the project.
- Olwen Ford* (Living Museum Director) - Wrote the Introduction, proof-read the catalogue and added knowledge and advice to the project.
- Paul Richardson* (Koorie Education Co-ordination Unit) - Gave advice on and helped edit the texts on 'Education' and the 'Koorie Working Group Meeting'. Paul wrote the Foreword to this catalogue.
- Elizabeth McKinnon* (Living Museum Community Artist) - Photographed people.
- Nigel D Fewkes* (Living Museum Media Team) - Wrote the media release and helped proof-read the text.
- Christine Carley* (Living Museum Musician) - Photographed people and places and also researched information.
- Natacsfia Zinken* (Living Museum Dutch Student Placement) - Assisted in assembling the display and undertaking research.
- Joe Guario* (Graphic design) - Organised catalogue printing and computer graphics of cover.
- Fiona Brown* (Living Museum Volunteer) - Photographed people.

FOREWORD

Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, at Maribyrnong, has recently produced an exhibition of Aboriginal heritage in the region, displaying a variety of subjects of historical and contemporary issues on fourteen display boards. These display boards, that could become posters, describe life as we know it in the western suburbs of Melbourne from early traditional tribal life to contemporary times. The subjects range from Local Ancestors, Heritage to Racism, Referendum and Education. The effects of White Society are described in detail, though in a limited way, purposely for an exhibition.

This display of traditional and contemporary life in the Western Suburbs is well presented in accordance with the history and knowledge of the area. This exhibition is not exhaustive and could be extended in greater detail.

As to why this exhibition was developed, it is due to the fact that this type of project has not been done in this area before. Koorie families who are linked to the western suburbs need to know their tribal roots and the historical and changing events that have shaped their lives in this area. Furthermore, the history of the Aboriginal families in the western suburbs has not been told before, least of all published. It is important that Aboriginal and non Aboriginal families in the area know what has occurred in their own areas in relation to their ancestors and the past as well as the present .

It should be noted that this exhibition will serve as a model for all Koorie Communities in Victoria and Aboriginal Communities beyond.

Paul Richardson 1996.

Koorie Cross Sectoral Co-ordinator,
Koorie Education Co-ordination Unit.

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* Note: All of the text in this catalogue that is contained in inverted commas are the words of Larry Walsh, unless otherwise indicated.

INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal people have been in the area which is now Melbourne's western region for thousands and thousands of years and they are still here. 'Still here' is the strong and powerful message of this publication and the exhibition it documents. It relates to a certain region but the same message can be applied to the Aboriginal story and presence in many other parts of Australia.

The telling of the story of Aboriginal people from their perspective is part of a world-wide movement of black history-making, and of presenting or re-presenting the history of indigenous peoples. This process is also part of the Australian search for identity and a contribution to the reconciliation process between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Until we all know more of the Aboriginal story and experience we have only a limited understanding of our country and ourselves.

There are still huge gaps but this exhibition breaks new ground by asking new questions and seeking for some answers. We are slowly building up a picture. It is especially difficult to develop the picture because of the sudden and drastic impact of the European invasion. This western region was one of the first in Victoria to be taken over by the British settlers. The lush grasslands of the basalt plains attracted the pastoralists and they quickly swarmed in with their thousands of sheep. So this region was one of the first places of encounter - the scene of the first reported rape of an Aboriginal woman by white shepherds; the first reported killing of white men by Aboriginal people; the first systematic killing of Aboriginal people. For a brief time, corroborees, tribal fights and traditional fishing continued and co-existed with new and different lifestyles, but sickness, forced removal and death very quickly took their toll and Aboriginal numbers fell dramatically.

White people, in their ignorance, have assumed that there was no Aboriginal history since that far-off time of early contact. And yet Aboriginal people are here today in this region, at least 1300 counted in the last census of 1991 and many possibly not counted. Through the exhibition 'Still Here', and this catalogue, we gain a sense of Aboriginal activism at work in this region. We meet some of the heroes and heroines of the Aboriginal rights movement of the 1930s and '40s, living and working in Melbourne's western suburbs. We become aware of the great resurgence of Aboriginal cultural activity happening in this region as well as across the country, through Aboriginal storytellers, musicians, dancers, artists, horticulturalists.

Melbourne's Living Museum of the West has been part of this resurgence and is honoured to be part of this exhibition project, which has involved many Aboriginal people. Kylie Freeman, Koorie Trainee of the Year in 1993, initiated the project while working with the Living Museum. Larry Walsh, the Living Museum's Aboriginal Cultural/Information Officer, has been the main voice in the exhibition. Hopefully, the 'Still Here' exhibition will travel far and wide, proclaiming that Aboriginal heritage is a living heritage, and encouraging people in other areas to develop their own 'Still Here' projects.

Olwen Ford
Museum Director

STILL HERE

"This exhibition gives a brief history of the early struggles of the Aborigines in this area but grows to include Aborigines from other areas as we move to present times. Because now Aborigines from all over the country live in these western suburbs of Melbourne and all of them have a story of survival. Until recently the several hundred Aborigines in the western suburbs have been virtually 'invisible', even to other Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organisations. However we were always here and we are still here..."

Since the coming of the Europeans, the Aboriginal communities in the western suburbs of Melbourne have had to operate differently. Today they are perceived as different from other Aboriginal communities in this country and state. At times they have also been thought not to exist any more.

One of the greatest weapons used as a method of control by the Europeans was the control of history. Aboriginal people without their history were denied a culture.

In today's society we are trying to reclaim our history. If we don't, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people will start to believe that we don't exist or that we don't have a culture (just as if they are not careful to reclaim and/or preserve their own histories this could also happen to them).

Aboriginal people from all over Australia have come to this area and have become a part of its communities. They have made and are still making significant contributions to the solidarity of the Aboriginal and Islander communities in this area.

Some of these people have tried to change the conditions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities both here and nationally. They have created changes for, and on behalf of, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of yesterday, today and tomorrow. These people and their contributions are not yet recognised within this region and the rest of this country.

An example of this is that not many people within this region, and the rest of Australia, know anything about William Cooper, who lived in Footscray and who is considered the father of the Aboriginal Movement from which we inherited citizens rights in 1967.

Because an Aboriginal 'corporation' or something of the kind has never been formed in this area, the 'government acts' have not yet recognised the communities that operate in this region.

The main focus of this exhibition is to point out that this area has its own unique Aboriginal and Islander communities that continue to operate in this area.

Another purpose of this exhibition is to say, hey look! we are still here, even if you do not know or recognise us we are still here. It is not just the white people but Aboriginal people themselves who have to recognise that we have a culture here.

However, now we are starting to be recognised as a community by most of the Aboriginal legislation of both federal and state governments.

Larry Walsh - Still Here 1996

MELBOURNE'S WEST

The location of boundaries between tribes and clans is difficult to represent on paper but were precisely known by Aboriginal people, and rarely crossed without permission.

'Each of the two tribes in the Melbourne area was made up of a number of clans who identified with particular parts of the tribal territory.

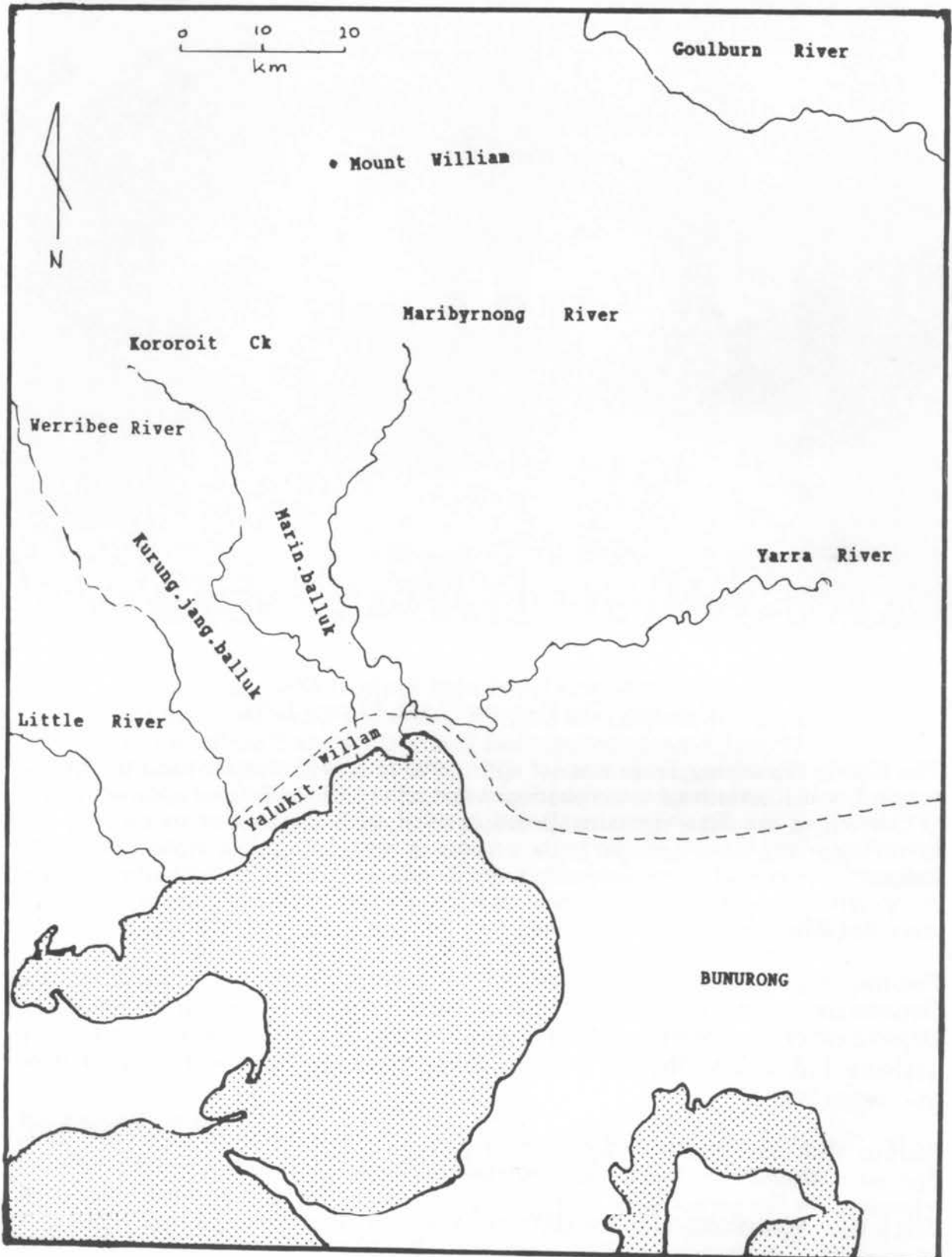
Within the western region, there were three such clans. One of these clans was the *Marin-balluk* and their estate was all the area between Kororoit Creek and the Maribyrnong River and stretching up to Sunbury.

The area to the west of Kororoit Creek as far as the Werribee River was the estate of the *Kurung-jang-balluk*. Both of these clans were a part of the *Woiworung* linguistic group (or tribe) whose territory was all the area drained by the Yarra River and its tributaries, down to where the Yarra and Maribyrnong joined, and west as far as the Werribee River.

The other tribe in the Port Phillip region was the *Bunurong* who lived on the Mornington Peninsula and around Western Port Bay. The Bunurong also claimed a strip of land which stretched around the top of Port Phillip Bay to the Werribee River. This narrow strip, perhaps a few kilometres wide, was the estate of a clan called *Yalukit-willam* and would have taken in all of Williamstown, most of Altona and the southern parts of Footscray, Sunshine and Werribee.'

From; '*The First Residents of Melbourne's Western Region*', by Gary Presland, published for Footscray City Council and Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, 1987.

This is a map of the clan locations in the western region of Melbourne.



Garden recalls a Koorie history

*The gardening team which are based at the Living Museum of the West.
They are (from left) Mathew James, Rob Drayton, Brett Barnett, Mathew Gristwood, Darren
Braybon and Darren Witzand.*



The Koorie Gardening Team in 1993.
Courtesy: The Western Times, 23 June 1993.

The Koorie Gardening Team was set up in 1992 to provide employment for Koorie youth. Local Koorie resident, educationist and artist Melissa Brickel approached Pat O'Connell of the State Training Board in 1991 with the idea of employing and involving young Koorie people in the process of revegetating Pipemakers Park with indigenous plants. The establishment of the Koorie Gardening Team has involved the co-operation, support, hard work and dedication of many individuals and organisations since that time.

Funding was initially provided by the Victorian Education Foundation, the Department of Labour (Workstart Victoria), the office of the State Training Board, the Department of Employment, Education and Training through Western Region Group Training Ltd. and Melbourne's Living Museum of the West with support from Melbourne Water.

Starting with six apprentices the project now has ten apprentices working full time. The team works very much with indigenous plants so the project has a cultural relevance for the participants' own heritage. Recently the Koorie Gardening Team won a three year contract for \$240,000.00 a year from Maribyrnong City Council part of the team's plan to work towards economic self sufficiency.



Two local Aboriginal children, Isabel Paipudjerook and Hannah Nayook.

THE WORD “KOORIE”

“The original inhabitants of the central east coast first felt the full impact of white settlement. By 1845 for instance, the Eora people of the Sydney Cove area had been eliminated, just 57 years after the British arrived in 1788. It is out of respect for the memories of the Eora, my ancestors and other surrounding tribes that I continue to use the word Koori and to identify fully as a Koori, I would also like to see this word become a term of natural identification for all Kooris living in Victoria today.”

James Miller, *Koori: A Will To Win, The Heroic Resistance, Survival and Triumph of Black Australia*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1985, p. vii.

NOTE

As Aboriginal languages are still changing and evolving the word Koorie (Koori) is being added to the Victorian Aboriginal languages.

LOCAL ANCESTORS

"In keeping with a cultural tradition common to all Aboriginal people we acknowledge and respect the culture and traditions of this area before European invasion."

It is not the purpose of this exhibition to go too much into the way of life of the Aborigines in the western region of Melbourne in the early days. That information can be found in other resources. We should say however that the life and cultures of Aboriginal tribes and clans was quite varied and as different from each other as European countries see their cultures as different from each other. The culture of the Aborigines of this part of Victoria was unique in its language and customs.

*"First creation had a dream
who then told all the other animals
who told each other
they then sang the dream
finally the world was created."*

"...Or perhaps the dream was creation..."

"All the Aboriginal world was created by dreaming figures who are represented by animals, birds, fish and reptiles."

"These are some of our worlds, our cultures and our histories where we came from. The people from this area were a part of the Kulin nation..."

"Billibilleri and Derrimut are two of the local ancestors that were here at the beginning of the white man's history in this region. They had a way of living that was different to and possibly much older than European history."

Billibilleri was born about 1791 and died on August 10th 1846. He was a leader of the Gunung-Willam-Balluk clan of the Woiworung tribe and his family owned the rights to quarry a particular stone from Mt. William, near Lancefield, that was traded throughout Victoria and far into New South Wales. He was a stone axe maker and trader. Billibilleri, known as Jacky Jacky to the Europeans, was a powerful figure in his day and was said to be a signatory to the 'Batman Treaty'. Many of Billibilleri's descendants live and work in Melbourne today.

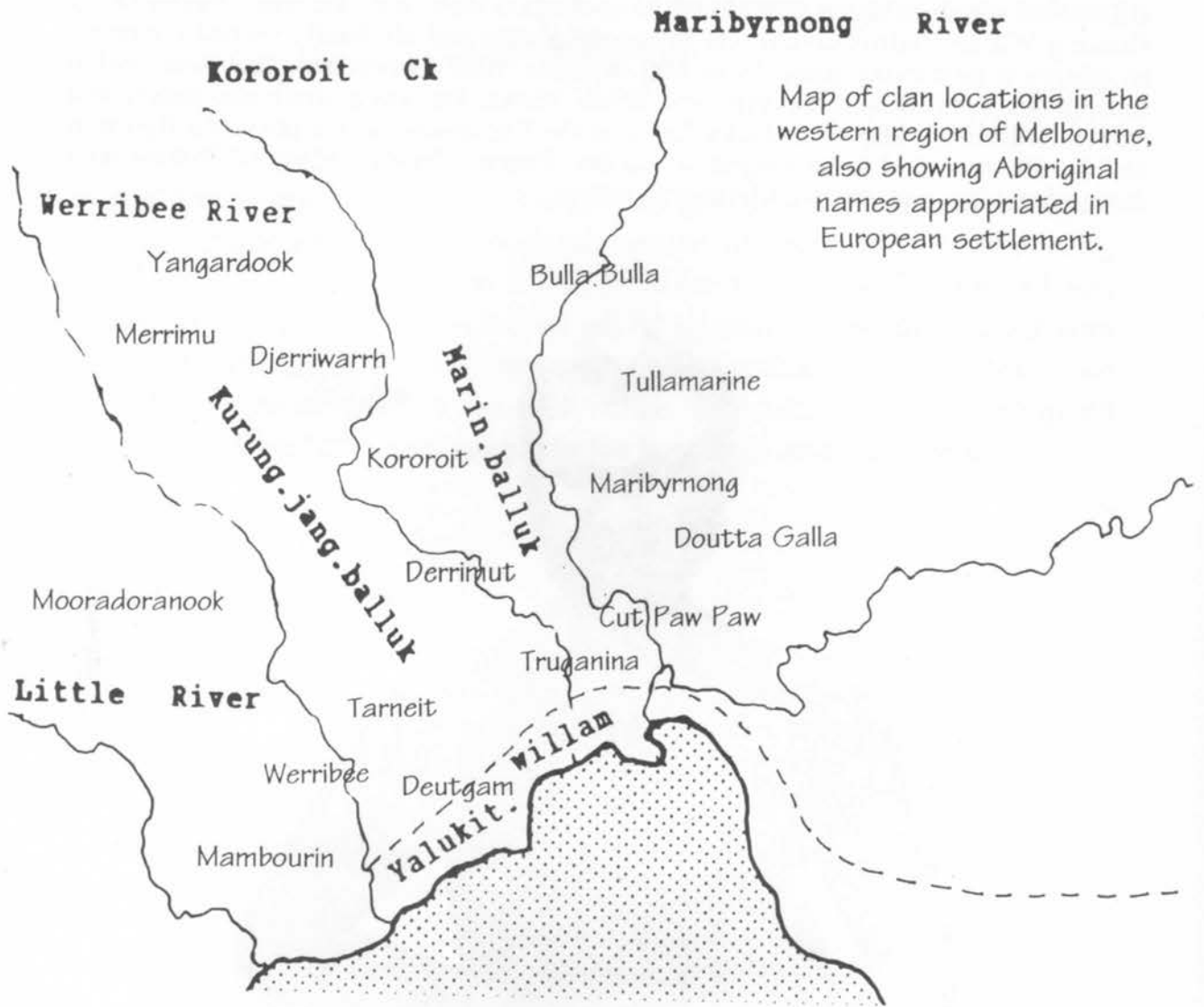


Derrimut

Courtesy: State Library Picture Collection N.S.W.

Derrimut of the Bunurong was commemorated by the early settlers of Melbourne for saving them from a planned attack and massacre by the Woiworung by informing them through a young member of the European party, who he befriended, of the impending attack.

This map shows that some Aboriginal names live on and where they have been appropriated by white man.



Map of clan locations in the western region of Melbourne, also showing Aboriginal names appropriated in European settlement.

NOTE

There are often several different versions of spelling Aboriginal tribes, clans, place names and words generally. There was no Aboriginal written language and the different versions of spelling arose from a variety of attempts to interpret the sounds of Aboriginal languages with English vowels and consonants. Naturally this has led to a certain amount of confusion in records of names.

* THE CREATION OF FIRE *

(Melbourne story)

A long time passed but there were no fires. The population grew, but it was extremely cold and they ate raw flesh - and all were very uncomfortable.

One day the females with their digging sticks (*kannan*) were digging *murrars* - ants eggs, when several snakes came from out of the ground, where the women were digging. They became frightened and began beating the snakes, but the reptiles would not die.

Karakarook appeared with two men, *Tourt* and *Tarrer*, and for a long time the *bagrook* and the *kulin* fought the snakes, when suddenly Karakarook's digging stick became splintered and smoke and sparks came from its tip. It was fire.

The next instant, *Waang* - the Crow - swooped down from the heavens and stole the fire. *Tourt* and *Tarrer* flew off in pursuit of the villain.

The Crow journeyed to *Nun-nur-woon* - the mountainous region which is now called Wilson's Promontory, where *Tourt* and *Tarrer* regained the fire from the Crow. It was *Tarrer* who returned the fire safely, and preserved it by breaking off strips of bark to keep it from going out. Sadly, *Tourt* died on a mountain called *Munnio*, after he'd tried, unsuccessfully, to stop the flames from being extinguished.

Bundjel was so pleased with *Tarrer* and the spirit of *Tourt*, that he bestowed a sacred honour on both men by turning them into two stars which shone fiercely like a fire. This is the explanation of the two stars now identified as *Pollux* and *Castor*.

Karakarook showed the *bagrook* the fire-sticks and told them that they would never be without fire again.

The people with the use of fire were now *Marnumuk*, "comfortable", and the population grew.

This story has been re-told here by Robert Mate-Mate.

STILL HERE

INVASION

Not long after the Europeans arrived war broke out between the two races, in many different forms.

Page 6 - TELEGRAPH Wednesday July 11 1990

WHITE SETTLEMENT FAR FROM PEACEFUL



CULTURE CHANGE - DESTRUCTION OF NATIVE FAUNA

S.T. GILL

'KANGAROO STALKING'

Courtesy: Mitchell Library, Sydney.

"Every one of those pretty little trees has disappeared. Either from senile decay or out of sympathy with the black fellows or kangaroos or what is not known. But they are very much missed. The blacks were fairly numerous about this time until about 1864 when they also disappeared. The kangaroos had gone long before but the possum remained in enormous numbers until about twenty years ago when they also died out."

STILL HERE

For a long time the Europeans denied that the Aboriginal people fought back, in order to deny that these people existed and that they had a culture. To acknowledge the fact that the Aboriginal people fought in proper battles and that they used tactics in war would suggest that they had intelligence and a possibly culture to protect. This would identify the Europeans as invaders.



THE ABORIGINAL WAR

S.T. Gill

“‘Poor harmless natives’ A hint for (?)” 1854-63

Courtesy: Mitchell Library, Sydney

“Most of those left who did not die of disease, bullets, starvation and broken hearts were supposedly moved on to mission stations or Aboriginal reserves.”

Page 6 — TELEGRAPH Wednesday July 11 1990

WHITE SETTLEMENT FAR FROM PEACEFUL

By JENNY-LEE GRAY

Early records suggest that by the time the European Captain Bacchus first came to Bacchus Marsh the Aborigines were well aware of white men and their nature.

Historians suggest the Aborigines knew of the approach of white settlers through their contact with coastal Aborigines from related tribes.

Extracts of early accounts provided by the Wathaurung Aboriginal Co-op in Geelong point out that the Aborigines already had "perfect knowledge" of firearms: they were terrified at the sight of them.

"There is so little known about the social organisation of them. It bespeaks the rapidity with which they were physically destroyed by settlers seeking undisputed possession of

their land," one extract reads.

The extracts, compiled by researchers from Monash University, question suggestions that Bacchus Marsh and surrounding districts enjoyed a peaceful settlement.

One small group of Aborigines did settle on district farms. They were regarded as peaceful and eventually moved on or died. This is where the accepted history of Bacchus Marsh racial relations and factual evidence part ways.

An early settler from the district is quoted in a letter as stating: "A more detestable race of beings approximating to human I have never encountered. They have been very annoying, attacking our stations."

Pentland Hills was listed continually as one site where conflict was fierce. Records state that property owners had problems getting indentured convicts to remain with stock because of their fear they would be murdered by Aborigines.

Early settlers went so far as to suggest Aborigines, apart from servants, be prevented from entering towns. They also suggested the removal of all children between the ages of two and four years from families to mission sites.

Sadly, they were successful. The children were placed in missions as far as possible from their original homes to ensure no contact with relatives — a policy that continued with tragic effect down to recent times.

An 1856 edition of *The Argus* published a private pamphlet receiving quiet support throughout Victoria at the time.

It suggested all Aborigines be placed on one of the islands in the straits, claiming their removal would be no hardship to the Aborigines because they had "little or no attachment to localities."

The journals of the Aborigines' "protector" George Augustus Robinson, appointed in 1839, offer the full force of the reality of what became of the Bacchus

Marsh Marpeang and the entire Wada Wurrung tribe.

Robinson known for his efforts in "resetting" the Tasmanian Aborigines, carried out an investigation of the region. Various estimates suggest there were between 40 and 120 Aborigines to each clan and a total of between 1630 and 3240 in the Wada Wurrung Tribe.

Robinson described the tensions between early settlers and Aborigines as a case of "individuals having 280 miles of country and still thinking it a hardship if a native appears on their run, imagining a 10 pound licence gives them legal right to expel the blacks."

"I have not seen any natives since I have been out. Reports say blacks were shot down for stealing sheep and flour. The view of many settlers is to keep the natives in subjection by fear."

Robinson recounted how early settlers in Western Victoria including Bacchus Marsh, had the opinion that "it was never intended that a few miserable savages were to have this fine country."

He listed extermination by Europeans as one of the main reasons for the demise of the Aboriginal population of the Bacchus Marsh region along with a "lessening of the chances of obtaining food caused by the entire occupation of the best of their country, influenza and other diseases brought by colonists, tobacco and alcohol."

Despite the loss of much of the history of the Marpeang, Bacchus Marsh has at least 48 recognised artifact sites. A number of them are of considerable significance not only to the Marpeang, but to the Aboriginal history of the entire state.

One site in the small patch of Mallee in the Long Forest rivals the Werribee burial site, renowned for its wealth of information.

Another in the same area may provide yet another link in the time line of Aboriginal population of

Australia. It includes the discovery of grinding grooves high in granite rock deposits.

District Conservation and Environment offices work closely with members of the Victorian Archeological Survey to protect and investigate the findings in Bacchus Marsh.

Sadly, until these sites are fully investigated the Victorian Archeological Survey will not release details. While Conservation and Environment is working to educate residents, particularly those who live near or own property on which sites are found, both institutions are extremely wary of releasing any information.

Previous experience with ignorant people and the loss of some important finds has promoted this attitude of secrecy.

There is also considerable frustration. Bacchus Marsh basin, site of the present township, is expected to hold vital information on the Marpeang. Sadly, much of this information, if not all, is now lost due to development of the area.

Other areas of note face a similar fate. However, many in the district are becoming aware of the importance of Aboriginal sites. Residents on properties containing artifacts are working with archeologists and Aborigines to protect them from further disturbance.

The language of the Marpeang lives on in the names of local communities and rivers: Werribee, Coimadai, Balliang and Myrniong.



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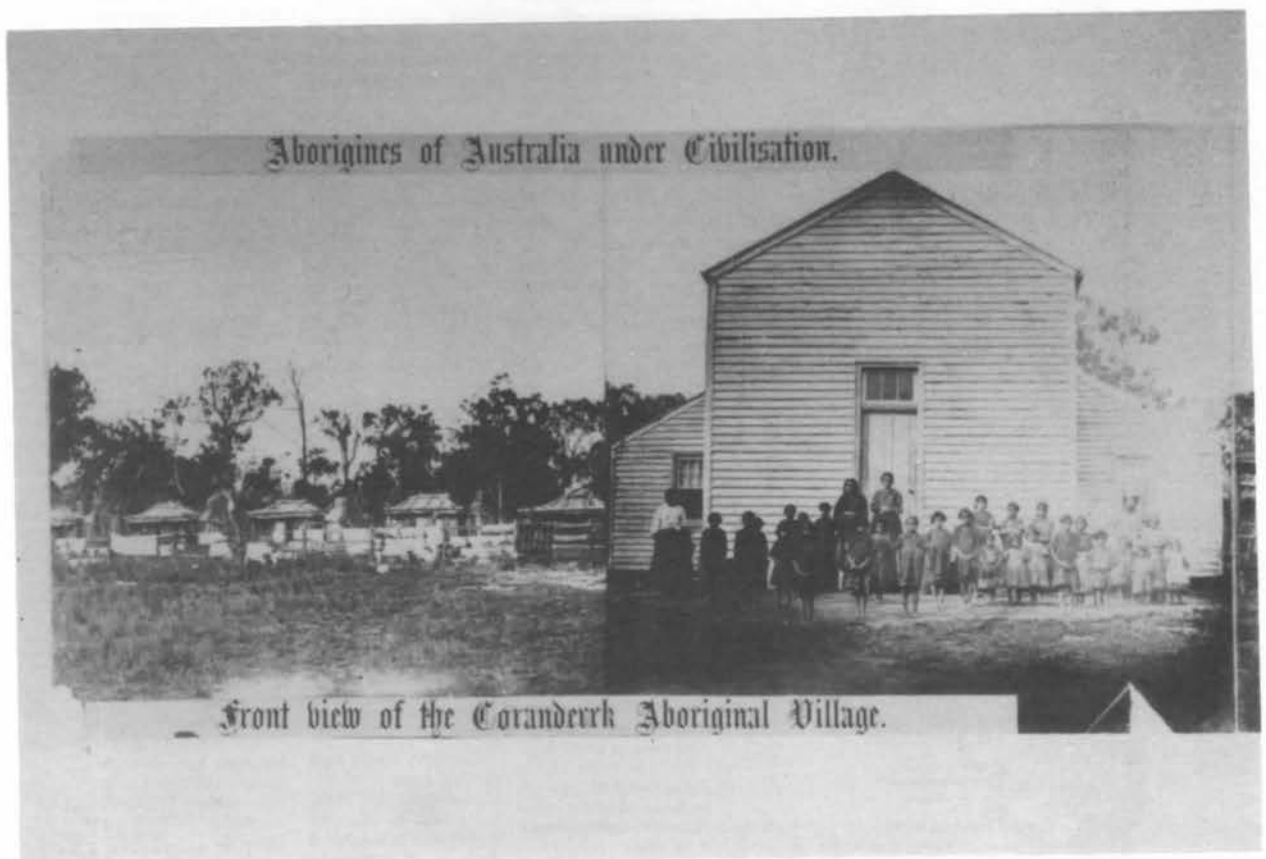
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Courtesy: Telegraph, 11 July 1990.

ASSIMILATION

A strong movement developed by both government and the churches to move Aboriginal people onto missions from as early as 1840. This move was ostensibly to protect the Aborigines from the growing European society but was used to control and destroy Aboriginal culture.



Coranderrk Mission

Courtesy: The Image Library, State Library of New South Wales.

“Today our people look back on the missions and some of the Aboriginal people of today call them the concentration camps.”

Early settlers went so far as to suggest Aborigines, apart from servants, be prevented from entering towns. They also suggested the removal of all children between the ages of two and four years from families to mission sites.'

From an article in the *Telegraph*, Wednesday 11 July 1990, 'White Settlement was far from Peaceful' written by Jenny-Lee-Gray.



Heron of Bacchus Marsh.
Courtesy: State Library of Victoria.

"I often wonder if they really died because of assimilation. No family, country-men, no belonging and none of their own history and culture."

Sadly, they were successful. The children were placed in missions as far as possible from their original homes to ensure no contact with relatives - a policy that continued with tragic effect down to recent times.'

From an article in the *Telegraph*, Wednesday 11 July 1990, 'White Settlement was far from Peaceful' written by Jenny-Lee-Gray.

Assimilation was practiced in Victoria up until 1971.

Although in 1967 there was a referendum which granted the Aboriginal people citizenship, it effectively took three and a half years to change all the different state laws in Australia before these illegal practices finally died out.



THOMAS BUNGELENE
born 1847 died 1865

Thomas and his brother Robert were the first recorded cases of assimilation in Victoria. Robert died at 14. A few years later so did Thomas. They were said to have died of natural causes. Thomas and Robert were orphaned sons of the famed Gippsland Kurnai elder Bungaleena who was named as a fighter in the resistance to white invasion of Gippsland.

In 1861 Thomas Bungleene became the first Aboriginal to serve in the Victorian Navy, however he was a reluctant recruit and asked to leave within a year or two. Thomas had been educated at the Merri Creek school and at the Moonee Ponds National School but resisted higher education and was sent to the Navy in the thought that the discipline there might improve his attitude.

Although Assimilation was a common practice it was never written or recorded in any official document until 1957, when one of the aims stated in the Aboriginal Act of that year was to help the Aboriginal people 'assimilate' to become part of the Australian society.

"Assimilation. This is how they started, first they started dressing Aboriginal people like Europeans. Then they moved them down to missions and reserves, herded them all together. They tried raising them like Europeans. Like Thomas Bungelene, the first example, and the first example of failure because he didn't live to be an old man. They even denied the history of that happening. They denied the history of assimilation happening and they denied the history of now, the present, the children being taken away.

'Still Here' is trying to revive the history and show how it influences today because what happened to him happened to people right up until the seventies... I have to have a shave and a haircut. Otherwise I'm not accepted as decent enough or intelligent enough, or a person of any standing.



Larry Walsh.

Traditional Aboriginal culture has been consistently suppressed and denied in history. Historically Bungelene died at a young age it makes you wonder if it was 'the policies' that killed him and how many people 'policies' have killed since then."

RACISM

RACISM as defined by the COLLINS ENGLISH DICTIONARY is: "1. The belief that races have distinctive cultural characteristics determined by hereditary factors and that this endows some races with an intrinsic superiority. and 2. abusive or aggressive behaviour towards members of a race on the basis of such beliefs."

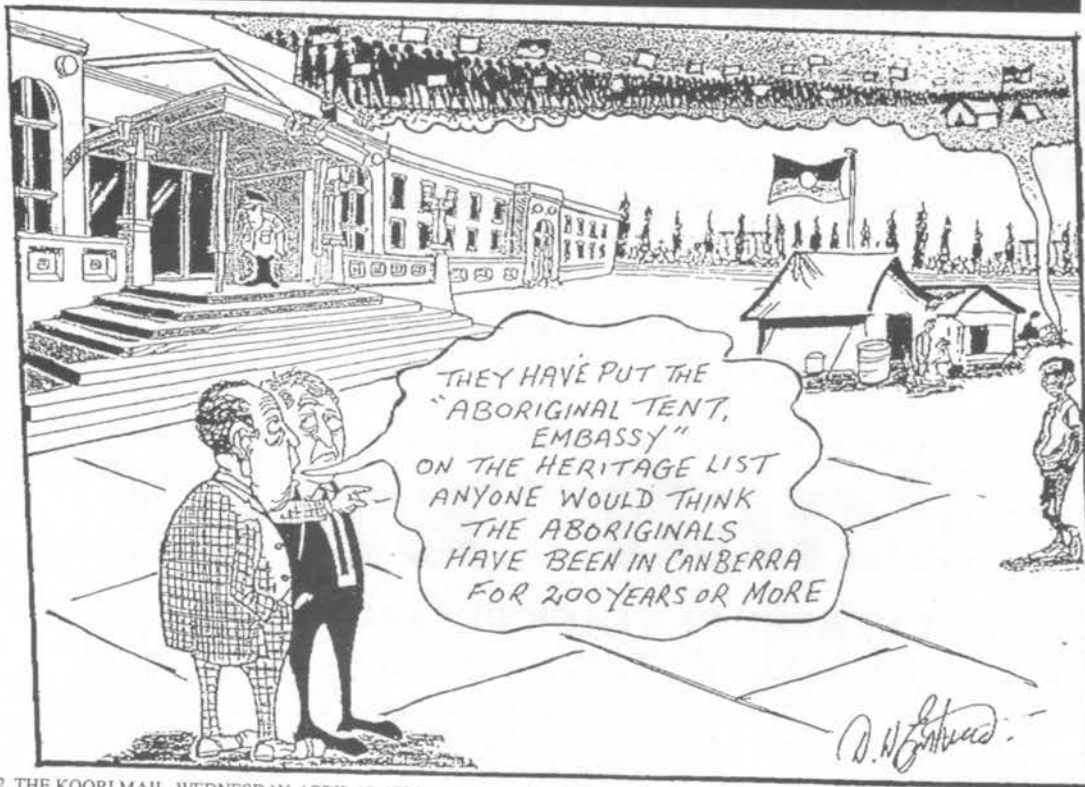
"It was bad enough that they denied our existence, it was bad enough that they denied that we had a culture, they then tried to denigrate us further..."



POPULAR BEVERAGES - GIN AND WATER
Melbourne Punch 3. 5. 1860 p. 120

...Deny the Aborigine. Deny we fought back, deny the Aborigines had a culture, deny the Aborigines had a language, deny the Aborigines had a civilisation."

EASTWOOD'S COMMENT



2. THE KOORI MAIL, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 1995.

NATIVE PRIDE NO. 2 Melbourne Punch 30. 4. 1864, p. 313.

Well-intentioned Female.- "Here's a pair of nice boots for you, old man."

Noble Savage.- "Nah! me want Wellingtons. If me wear Bluchers, folk take me for new chum."



ABORIGINE'S WELFARE BOARD

ABORIGINES PROTECTION ACT, 1909-1943

(Regulation 55)

Application for Exemption from Provisions of Aborigines Protection Act and Regulations thereunder

I,aborigine.
(Name in full) (Caste)

of
(full address)

aged.....years, pursuant to Section 18c of the Aborigines protection Act, 1909-1943, hereby make application to the Aborigines Welfare Board for the issue to myself of a certificate of Exemption from the provisions of the said Act and Regulations thereunder, the following provisions

I HEREBY FURTHER DECLARE THAT -

- (a) I have not at any time during the past two years been convicted of drunkenness.
- (b) I have not during the past two years committed any offence against the Aborigines Protection Act, Police Offences Act, or the Crimes Act, or the Regulations pertaining to these Acts.
- (c) I Understand that in the event of my being issued with a Certificate of exemption I shall not be eligible to receive any benefit, assistance or relief from the Aborigines Welfare Board, and, furthermore, I undertake to provide a proper home for myself and my family.
- (d) I understand that in the event of the Aborigines Welfare Board issuing the Certificate of Exemption herein applied for, such Certificate may be cancelled at any time by the Board if considered necessary, and in the event I undertake to return the Certificate to the Board for cancellation immediately upon notification of such cancellation.
- (e) I agree to accept the final decision of the Aborigines Welfare Board in relation to the grant of refusal of a Certificate of Exemption.

The following persons are known to me, and have provided references as to my character. These references are submitted, together with this application.

.....
.....

DATED this.....day of.....19....

Signature or Mark.....

In the presence of -

Name.....

Occupation.....

Address.....

Copy of the application form for Exemption from the Aborigines Protection Act. Completion of this document was required for permission to leave the mission for any period of time.

"It was sort of like giving a criminal parole papers, to some Aboriginal people this was called the dog's licence, the dog tags."

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES LEAGUE

Mass Meeting

To Support the Aborigines
... In Their Stand for ...

FULL CITIZEN RIGHTS

Yarra Bank

SUNDAY, 8th MAY

At 3 p.m.

The meeting will deal with the Petitions made at the
Deputations to the Prime Minister in January

Speakers:

Mr. A. BURDEU (president Australian
Aborigines' League.)

Mr. WILLIAM COOPER (Hon. Secretary)

Mr. DOUG. NICHOLS (Hon. Secretary)

Mr. J. WILKINSON (Who has knowledge
of the conditions in the "out-back") and
Others.

CHAIR:
Mr. P. LAIDLER

QUESTIONS INVITED

Songs by
Aboriginal
Choir

Issued by the Australian Aborigines League

Hon. Sec.:
Mr. W. COOPER.
73 Southampton St., Footscray.

President:
Mr. A. BURDEU
Winchester St., Moonee Ponds

Copy of the poster advertising the Australian Aborigines League's 'Mass Meeting' on the banks of the Yarra River in May 1938.

POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

This is how much of the Aboriginal world we live in today was shaped...

OBJECT: FULL CITIZEN RIGHTS FOR THE ABORIGINES

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES' LEAGUE

"A fair deal for the Dark Race"

DOUG. NICHOLS
Hon. Treasurer
Freeman St., Fitzroy
Phone JW 1618

President:
A. P. A. BURDEU
Phone FU 7875

WILLIAM COOPER
Hon. Secretary
73 Southampton St.
Footscray. W. 11

9th. May. 1938

TRADES. HALL. COUNCIL.

Mr. Stout.

Dear Sir,

The AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES LEAGUE

which is fighting for justice for the ABORIGINES of AUSTRALIA,
particularly in state of N.S.W. by pressing for a ROYAL COMMISSION
into the activities of the ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD in that
state.

Would it be arranged to hear our representative outline the
case for the ABORIGINES at the next council meeting.

Thanking you for your anticipation in this question.

YOURS FAITHFULLY.

W. COOPER. SEC.

**A copy of a letter sent by the Australian Aborigines League to the Trades Hall
Council in 1938.**

Aboriginal people such as William Cooper, Marge Tucker and Pastor Doug Nicholls and many others began a modern Aboriginal political movement called the Australian Aborigines League.

They fought together with many other Aboriginal and Islander people for Aboriginal people's rights.

"All three came originally from a Mission settlement called Cummeragunga (also spelt Cumeroogunga) which was situated in N.S.W. on the Murray River near Echuca."



Marge Tucker combined work, entertainment as a performer (singer and piano player), with being a mother and political activist. Marge Tucker lived in Seddon.

Photograph Courtesy:
Museum of Victoria

"William Cooper was born around the 1860s. This was the era of the birth of the unwritten assimilation policies and the Aboriginal Missions and Reserves Acts.

Later, Marge Tucker and Doug Nicholls both grew up living in and around the same Mission Station, "Cummera" (Cummeragunga) whilst these acts were at the height of their full power."

“William Cooper from his 20’s, would have had to carry one of those “dog tags” (the ‘Exemption from Provisions of Aborigines Protection Act and Regulations’ document). Marge Tucker was taken away from her family and was sent to what they called “a training school” which was a mission station for children (similar to an orphanage).

This Mission station was to train them to be servants of the Euro-Australian. ASSIMILATION.”



William Cooper was born in the 1800’s and died in 1941. From the thirties right up until his death he was a political activist fighting for Aboriginal rights. William Cooper lived in Footscray.

Photograph Courtesy: Museum of Victoria.

“It was not possible for Aboriginal people from around the Murray River to solve the problems their people faced from within their tribal or mission boundaries.

Melbourne was the Euro-Australians’ social, economic and political capital of Victoria and it was where you had to go to fight for your people’s rights to be Citizens.”

"Some of the rights they were fighting for were... the right to be recognised as a people who belong to a country; the right to own a home, to own land; the right to earn a decent wage and get an education; the right to get medical and legal assistance; the right to vote; and worst of all, the right to be allowed to walk the streets which were once part of their belonging."

"They became our collective voice which was speaking, but until then, not being heard. This was the 1930's."

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE MEETING ON THE YARRA BANK, SUNDAY MAY 8TH,
CONVENED BY THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES LEAGUE

Resolution to be sent to the Minister for the Interior and the Prime Minister.

A meeting of Victorian Citizens urges the Federal Government, in administration with the State Governments to establish a Department of Aborigines Affairs at Canberra under the control of an Administrator, this Administrator to be assisted by an advisory council on which the Aborigines are themselves represented.

And further urges that a Federal grant be given to Western Australia for the purpose of education and Medical work, the expenditure of this grant to be supervised by the Federal Government.

And also urges that full citizen rights be granted to all civilised Aborigines in all states, such as the right to own land, the old-age pension, the basic wage and all other social services.

And also advocates that in any scheme for the development of the out-back the welfare of the aborigines should be fully safe-guarded.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE MEETING ON THE YARRA BANK, SUNDAY MAY 8TH,
CONVENED BY THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES LEAGUE

Resolution to be sent to Secretaries of Unions and Political Parties.

This representative meeting of the citizens of Victoria having heard the injustices inflicted on the aborigines in all states calls on all Trade Unionists, and members of the A.L.P. and other political parties to give the aboriginal question careful consideration without further delay, in order that an enlightened policy may give the aborigines the rights to which they are entitled.

Resolution to be sent to the Chief Secretary, Victoria.

The meeting of Victorian citizens welcomes the action of the Government of Victoria in granting security of tenure to the aboriginal people at Framlingham, with a grant of up to 3,000 to be used for a water supply and other necessities for the people there, and trust that with the co-operation of the Warrnambool citizens a model settlement may evolve.

**Copy of the list of resolutions passed at the Australian Aborigines League's
'Mass Meeting' on the banks of the Yarra River in May 1938.**

Some people have already had their stories told, whilst others are yet to tell their stories. There is a wealth of history of the people involved in the Aboriginal struggle during this period yet to be recognised.

ADVANCEMENT

The Aboriginal political activists of the 1930's were part of the formation of many Aboriginal Advancement Movements. Movements such as The Aborigines Progressive Association, The Australian Aborigines Uplift Society and The Australian Aborigines League.

ABORIGINES' ADVANCEMENT LEAGUE (VICTORIA)

CONSTITUTION

Adopted at Aborigines' Advancement League Annual General Meeting 21st and 22nd August, 1965 and amended at Annual General Meeting on 26th August, 1967.

NAME

1. The name shall be the ABORIGINES' ADVANCEMENT LEAGUE (VICTORIA)

OBJECTS

2.
 - (a) To establish a general policy for advancement of all Australian people of Aboriginal Descent.
 - (b) To provide benevolent relief to indigent people of Aboriginal Descent.
 - (c) To provide opportunity for Aboriginal children to continue their education as far as their capabilities permit; to this end to provide assistance for Aboriginal families and/or children in necessitous circumstances. A special fund shall be set up for this purpose.
 - (d) To acquire, provide and maintain hostels for Aboriginal people who are in necessitous circumstance:

DEFINITIONS

3.
 - (a) Council; The word Council shall mean the General Council.
 - (b) Friends of the League - persons who subscribe \$1 per year, and who may or may not be members of Branches.

A copy of the Aborigines' Advancement League Constitution of 1941.

"The government defines an Aboriginal community by their traditional tribal grounds, their having formed an organisation or by the missions and reserve grounds that they lived on.

Here, in the western suburbs, the local community was not registered as an organisation and cannot be defined by any one particular tribal or mission area. The authorities of the times, past and present, didn't recognise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the western suburbs as being a community in government acts and constitutions."

"It's sometimes difficult to define an Aboriginal community just as it's sometimes difficult to define an Aboriginal person.

For example, It is often hard for a non Aboriginal to accept a blond haired blue eyed person as an Aborigine. But let's apply the criteria that is used to define an Aboriginal person and use that as a guide to understand what an Aboriginal community is.

To be recognised as an Aboriginal person one must identify as an Aboriginal, whether blond or dark and also be recognised by other Aboriginal people as an Aboriginal person.

The same could be said for a community. Except a member of a community will identify themselves more with an area. For example, I live and am part of the western suburbs and I identify with other Aboriginal people who live in my area.

If other Aboriginal people and/or groupings identify you as a people/ grouping then you are an Aboriginal community.

Furthermore as an Aboriginal person you will also be associated with the area you come from through either family and/or tribal clan belonging. For example, I am a Yorta-Yorta person of Taung-whurrung decendency. Therefore I am associated with two communities, Yorta-Yorta (territory in Northern Victoria) and the western suburbs where I live."

"Here in the west we were involved with the Aboriginal organisations and their communities, as a community, whilst not being recognised by the state and federal authorities as an Aboriginal community."

REFERENDUM

In a referendum in 1967 over 90% of the people of Australia voted for the Aboriginal people to have citizenship.

It took until 1971 to change all the state's and federal government's legislation, to put into practice the full reality of this citizenship.

While Aboriginal people were supposedly citizens from 1967 children were still being taken away until 1971 when all the changes had been made to all the legislation relating to Aboriginal issues.

'A spokeswoman for Aboriginal Affairs Minister Mr. Gerry Hand, Ms Sharon O'Neil said the practice of taking Aboriginal children from their parents and putting them in foster homes or with adoptive parents was officially abolished in the late 1960s.

She added that the practice was abolished nationwide in the late '60s and in the early 1970s in Victoria.'

**Essendon Gazette
Wednesday, March 7, 1990.**

Copy of the 1967 Referendum which granted citizenship to Aboriginal people...

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Referendum (Constitution Alteration) Act 1906-1966

REFERENDUMS

to be held on Saturday, 27th May, 1967
on the Proposed Laws for the alteration of the
Constitution entitled--

CONSTITUTION ALTERATION (PARLIAMENT) 1967
and
CONSTITUTION ALTERATION (ABORIGINALS) 1967

The Arguments FOR and AGAINST

THE PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TOGETHER WITH A
STATEMENT SHOWING THE PROPOSED ALTERATIONS

In respect of each of the proposed laws, this pamphlet contains the **ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF** the Proposed Law authorised by a majority of the Members of the Parliament who voted for the Proposed Law and desire to forward such an argument; and

In respect of the proposed law entitled *Constitution Alteration (Parliament) 1967*, this pamphlet contains the **ARGUMENT AGAINST** the Proposed Law authorised by a majority of the Members of the Parliament who voted against the Proposed Law and desire to forward such an argument.

Constitution Alteration (Parliament) 1967

The Argument in favour of the proposed law .. page 2
The Argument against the proposed law .. page 6

Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) 1967

The Argument in favour of the proposed law .. page 11

STATEMENT showing the proposed alterations to
the Constitution page 13

Canberra,
6 April 1967

F. L. LEY
Chief Electoral Officer for the Commonwealth

STOLEN GENERATIONS

"In October 1995 the Federal Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs announced a Human Rights Commission into the taking away of Aboriginal children past and present and what can be done to end this."

"This Human Rights Commission came to Melbourne in January 1996. Its terms of reference were: to look at five issues that relate to Aboriginal children who have been taken away. These issues are:

How many Aboriginal children these policies and practices removed from their families.

The past and continuing effects the separation has had on the individuals it has happened to, their families and the Aboriginal communities.

What should and/or can be done to change the laws, policies and practices, and what assistance is needed to help locate and reunite Aboriginal families and communities as a result of these past practices.

The current laws, policies and practices affecting the care, protection and placement of indigenous children outside their family and/or community environment.

The justification for, and the nature of, compensation, if any, for those affected by these separations."

SHATTERED LIVES

Lynn Austin, Neville Austin and Larry Walsh: The horror of being stolen from their mothers has continued to reverberate through their lives. Says Neville: "the pain doesn't go. Someone needs to tell us why this happened."



Courtesy: *THE AGE*, 29 January 1996.

"From the early 1900s up until the early 1970s Aboriginal people were either taken from their families, kin and friends, or their children were taken from them.

Usually no reason was given, neither to the children nor their families. The standard claim was that their parents were not 'fit and proper to care for their children' or 'the children were in need of care and protection' which could cover a number of categories.

Categories such as: no food in the cupboards, no new clothing, no running water, no proper amenities, right down to 'the mother was too sick to look after her children', no proper supervision. They would even use the argument that they were at risk because of the families' use of alcohol or risk of loose morals because some one decided the family had loose morals. But they never asked the parents, family or friends, let alone asked the children whether they were being looked after or cared for by both the parents and the local Aboriginal communities from whom they had removed the children by force."

"One underlying theme which was not recorded by governments or churches was the belief that the 'full blooded' Aborigine was a dying race and that the 'caste child' was better off learning to be the same as the white man. ASSIMILATION."

For some of the 1000 Kooris taken from their parents by post-war Government policy the wounds are too deep to talk about. But three are prepared to tell their stories to the national inquiry into Australia's 'stolen children', which begins hearings in Melbourne today. They spoke to **Tim Pegler**.

NEVILLE AUSTIN used Freedom of Information laws to find out about himself. When his file came through there was a distinct theme. "Will pass as European descent; black hair, dark skin, but otherwise quite appealing."



"I was the most institutionalised kid in the orphanage," Neville said. "No one wanted me. They would all say 'He's a bit dark'."

Neville was five months old when taken from his mother and made a state ward. When his mother took him to hospital for treatment, medical staff opined the Aboriginal woman couldn't care for her son. No consent necessary. No right of appeal.

Several orphanages and five years later, a foster family took him away.

School children made him aware of his color. "I would ask: 'Why am I different?'," Neville said. "(The foster family) would say: 'You're not different; drink more milk, scrub harder in the bath'. I didn't even know what an Aboriginal was until I was 17."

At 17, Neville was called in to see welfare officers and told: "You are Aboriginal. You have got a mother and a father alive and three brothers and a sister."

"I was a very confused teenager," Neville said. "When I turned 18, my foster family threw me out. I guess they felt: 'Go and see your own mother if you want'."

"I got in a car, drove to Bairnsdale one Saturday, knocked on the door, Mum answered it and that was it. We embraced and cried a lot."

"Me and Mum, we couldn't reminisce on the past ... we put all that hurt aside and started over again ..."

"She gave me culture, she gave me identity, she gave me everything in five years ... she knew if she didn't I wouldn't survive."

"When she died ... it was a slow death. Mum sat and talked to me for days on end in hospital. She said: 'This is what I want for you boy, and I need to tell you, you were born from love. I loved you then and I love you now'."

"Even on her death bed she felt the need to reassure me. She felt guilty. She felt shame ... When she died I held her hand and said 'This is the second time I've lost you Mum'."

Neville said he decided to talk to the inquiry "to put Mum at peace — and myself. The pain doesn't go. Someone needs to tell us why this happened."

LYN AUSTIN, Neville's cousin, remembers her mother, head in hands, crying at the kitchen table.



"I was only 10," she said. "I just assumed I was going for a little break then coming back to Mum, but that never happened. I never returned."

Lyn was taken to join a family known for its philanthropic practice of adopting children. Growing up with "the family", Lyn was fed a diet of: "Your mother is a bad woman."

"They had me believing that stuff about living in poverty, living on river banks, not being able to cope," Lyn said. "When my mother died ... I wasn't allowed to go to the funeral because they said: 'What was she? What did she do to look after you?' She was my own mother, for God's sake."

When she severed links from her adoptive family, a taunt that she would "end up like the rest of them" turbo-charged her resolve. Lyn qualified as a nurse and has extensive experience at hospitals and in Aboriginal health.

Contact is infrequent with her 10 natural brothers and sisters as there is "no bond there".

Lyn, 40, said she hoped the inquiry would ensure the stories of the "stolen children" were never swept from sight and give relief to "people who have been through a lot of pain, suffering and heartache".

"Whether people get compensation or not, it won't change what happened," she said. "If you get offered \$20,000 or \$30,000 that will never rebuild or repay a life ... There are things you can't make up for; all those lost years."

LARRY WALSH recalls the passing parade of potential parents — and its toll.



When yet another mother fronted for inspection, eight-year-old Larry — already accustomed to rejection — was unimpressed.

"Some woman came up to me and asked if I wanted to go live with them," he said. "And I said no. Nobody told me, but it turned out to be my real mother."

The unadoptable Aboriginal child, too old for most households, was eventually taken in by an older couple. In his troubled teen years he was able to pierce the mists of ignorance about his origins.

During a stint in a juvenile justice centre, Larry read his own file. At 15 he suddenly had a family — but the years were too wide to cross.

Larry said his mother was reserved about a reunion. Relations deteriorated from the start and they rarely talk.

He said the inquiry could help to soothe the scars of separation. "It's not going to heal the wounds between my mother and myself, but I don't want my younger brothers and sisters caught in the centre," he said.

"I want them to know what happened so they can say Mum's not to blame ... If the younger ones can understand why we don't see eye to eye, and why we can't talk to each other ... maybe they won't think the fight between Mum and me is of her making or mine."

An enduring reminder of life as a "stolen child" was the lack of context. "I missed out on knowing my brothers and sisters," he said. "They joke about incidents at school, things they've seen. My cousins tell me stories from growing up as if I was there ... I'm standing back. I'm not part of it."

Larry, 43, is reluctant to tell his story, but believes "the more people know, the less likely this is to happen again". Mostly he hopes someone will have an explanation about why Aboriginal children were removed from their parents, and an apology.

Courtesy: *THE AGE*, Monday 29 January 1996.

"There was never (and in some places still never has been) an acceptance of the diversity and richness of the Aboriginal lifestyle and culture. There has also never been (up until recently) an acceptance of the extended family and the support and care it provided and still provides within Aboriginal communities.

The major problem has been loss of cultural identity.

Loss of blood relationships, never seeing your brothers and sisters as they grew up. They too were affected through this same loss, which has created on all sides rage, an unfocussed anger at what has happened, with no way of knowing why or how. Some of these feelings are also felt by the parents and other family members who lost their nieces and nephews because of these policies.

These are some of the problems that these people and the local Aboriginal communities throughout Australia are having to deal with. But deal with them we will.

It will take between four and ten years for there to be a result of a court case. It will be difficult to prove as in 1968 up to 1,000 files were placed in a furnace and destroyed, these were files of Aboriginal people who were wards of the state.

In the meantime there will continue to be fights, dysfunctional families, deaths in custodies, loss of respect for family and traditional structures, distrust of non Aboriginal people and their structures, continued loss of identity, and lastly but most importantly still hate, suspicion and.....RAGE!!!"

Larry Walsh, March 1996.

HOME & WORK



The woman in this picture is making an emu feather apron.

MATERIAL CULTURE - CLOTHING

Illustrated London News 16 March 1889 Scenes in Victoria: No.1 Aboriginal skirt making, Courtesy; La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

Aboriginal people continued to live and work in the Western Suburbs...

Although Aboriginal people were not thought to live in the western suburbs of Melbourne, from the 1930's until the present day many people both known and unknown worked in a variety of industries in the region

Aboriginal people worked at the munitions factories, at Kinnears' rope factory, Angliss' meatworks, the railways, and they taught at local schools.

Aboriginal activist Marge Tucker worked at the munitions factory during the second world war. Other Aboriginal women who worked at the munitions and the ropeworks were Sally Russell, Connie Alberts, Eileen Watson and Mary King.

Harold Blair who in the 1950's taught at Sunshine Technical School.



Harold Blair

Aboriginal singer, Harold Blair, was the first of his race to be employed by the Victorian Education Department as a teacher. He taught at Sunshine Technical College.

Many Aboriginal people worked in the meat industry in this region in the fifties, sixties and seventies. These include Jim Berg, Terry Garwood and Larry Walsh.

Aboriginal people still work in the region in a variety of jobs. They are working as teachers, cultural officers, gardeners, social workers, administrators, they are raising their families and are working in many other occupations.

Many of those living and working in this region in the 1930s and 1940s made a significant contribution to the establishment of the constitution of the Aborigines Advancement League. Many of those working then and at other times in this region have also contributed to political activism on a range of Aboriginal issues.

From the 1940s up until the 1970s some Aboriginal people also ran boarding houses within this region and still lived in extended family situations.

When the Second World War started many Aboriginal people moved to this area to work and needed places to stay. Many people came to stay with Sally Russel, William Coopers daughter, who lived in Footscray. "Auntie Sally's House" continued as a boarding house for Aboriginal people in this area through to the 1970s. Whilst Sally Russel's house was a well-known home for Aboriginal people, there were many Aboriginal people who had people boarding at their homes including Marg Tucker.

"Whenever I go to a school these days one of the questions I inevitably get asked is - where do we the Aboriginal people of the western suburbs live? I always reply in a house... just like them."

"There are lots of other people who either have lived or do live in homes in the western suburbs... The Derrimuts, the Brookes's, the James, the Russels, the Billibilleris, the Coopers, the Dyers, the Tuckers, the Freemans, the Walshs, the Hansens, the Jowetts, the Hunters, the Jones, the Briggs's and many others."

Wirramina a place boys can call home

By PRAKASH NAIR

SITUATED in a quiet and leafy street of Essendon is the Wirramina Aboriginal Youth Crisis Centre, a refuge for homeless and displaced Aboriginal boys in Melbourne and country Victoria.

The centre, housed in a beautiful period home in Wright St, was established in August last year to provide support and accommodation for homeless Aboriginal boys between the ages of 9 and 15 years.

The assistant manager of the centre, Mrs Cheryl Chapman, said most of the boys who come to the centre, or who are referred to the centre by the Community Services Department, the Children's Court or the police department, are street kids.

"We also have boys referred to the centre who come from broken homes and those that have run away from foster homes," Mrs Chapman said.

Mrs Chapman, who is also a social worker and counsellor at the centre, said the biggest problem facing Aboriginal youth today is family breakup, changing lifestyles and disenchantment of the youths with their life.

"Rapid changes in living styles has caused a lot of family tensions, which in turn has driven young boys and girls to leave their homes in the hope of finding refuge and peace elsewhere," she said.

"Boys referred to the centre also come from foster homes, where they are no longer wanted by their 'families' because they cannot cope with their behavior or attitude.

"This problem is mainly associated with Aboriginal children who were taken away from their parents and placed in foster homes or with white adoptive families," she said.

Mrs Chapman said that although this practice was officially abolished, it is still practiced in some parts of Australia.

A spokeswoman for Aboriginal Affairs Minister Mr Gerry Hand, Ms Sharon O'Neil, said the practice of taking Aboriginal children from their parents and putting them in foster homes or with adoptive parents was officially abolished in the late 1960s.

She added that the practice was abolished nationwide in the late '60s and in the early 1970s in Victoria.



MRS Cheryl Chapman, the assistant manager at Wirramina, with one of the residents, "Adrian", playing table tennis.

Mrs Chapman said the centre caters for long-term and short-term rehabilitation needs of the boys.

"We try and create a family atmosphere at the centre, so that the boys who live here can feel needed and be part of the community rather than outcasts," she said.

The centre is run by a team of Aboriginal workers — the centre manager, Mr Budda Bux, a cook, Mr Tom Kelly and two other youth workers.

Mr Bux said the centre has provisions to house eight boys at any one time for long and short-term accommodation and rehabilitation programs.

"At present we have six boys

living here on a full-time basis," he said, "and all of them go to the Essendon Technical School as full-time students."

Mr Bux, who was appointed manager of the centre only last week, said the centre was in need of three to four more youth workers in view of the heavy load borne by the present workers.

Early last month the centre received a grant of \$229,000, which will go towards the centre's operating costs and the employment of four more youth workers.

Mr Bux, who plays at the centre on a 24-hour basis, said he sees his role at the centre more as a "father figure" for the boys than as a manager.

"The support staff stay at the centre for daytime programs only," he said.

"We are trying to create a family atmosphere so that the kids living here can readjust to some family life which they have missed out on.

"So far we have been successful, although we did find some opposition from the boys initially.

"Whenever possible, I supervise and help the boys with their daily school work and also take part in the other activities with them," he said.

"The boys have set chores to do each day — like washing up after meals, gardening, tidying up their rooms and any other activities that are necessary in the smooth running of the place."

Mr Bux said the boys are taken on camping trips where they are taught bush survival techniques, hunting and fishing.

"We try and instill in the boys some of their culture, which a number of them seem to have forgotten.

"The boys have also been taken back to Aboriginal settlements to give them a chance to see how their fellow men and women live and to see if they can also fit in their ways," Mr Bux said.

He said the boys who have been on such trips have shown a keen interest in learning more about their culture and people, and some have expressed an interest in going back to the land.

"Apart from this, the boys are given a free hand at choosing the type of sports they would like to play and are encouraged to do so.

They are also given a chance to attend church services with the Koorie community in Richmond, he said, but they are not forced to attend church services and are taken only at their request.

The care and love shown by the resident cook at Wirramina, Mr Kelly, a wiry old character with a smile as broad as his face, really puts the boys at ease and gives them the feeling that they are wanted.

"I'm no professional cook and never went to school to learn the trade.

"I learnt all my cooking in the shearing sheds and on cattle paddocks back home in the bush," Mr Kelly said.

"I love cooking and children. That's why I like working here and so far the boys have not complained about my cooking."

WIRRAMINA ABORIGINAL YOUTH CRISIS CENTRE

Wirramina was originally set up in the 1970s to help Aborigines without families and the Aboriginal youth who ran away from foster homes. Wirramina is still running today.

Courtesy: *Essendon Gazette*, 7 March 1990.

EDUCATION

In the nineties efforts are being made in a range of ways and by a range of organisations and individuals to research and teach Aboriginal heritage and history in the western region of Melbourne.



Larry Walsh, Melbourne's Living Museum's Aboriginal Program Officer, talking to Islamic students.

In conjunction with this research are moves to educate both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal presence and culture both from the past and in the present.

Part of the impetus for these moves came from recommendations made in the Miller Report in 1984 and the Deaths in Custody Report in 1993. Part of the recommendations from these reports was that Aboriginal people should be educated in Aboriginal culture.

There have been several major problems with educating both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people about Aboriginal presence and culture in this region.

Most of the indigenous local culture of the western region of Melbourne was wiped out with the people who were killed. Much of the rest was destroyed by the assimilation practices of the missions. Most Aboriginal people from this region know very little of their own culture.

What little is known has been inaccessible, in academic documents and expressed through European forms. The traditional methods of passing on culture have been obliterated or discredited.

Despite the recent recommendations of several reports and policies to redress this situation the resources have been limited in putting such policies into action.

On top of all this an issue for Melbourne's Western Region is that until recently neither white nor black organisations considered the western suburbs was an area with an Aboriginal community of any nature so what little resources have been available have been slow to reach this region.



Two local Aboriginal children.

It is scandalous that Aboriginal culture is not a basic curriculum item in education today.

While there are many support programs available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people it would appear that within the western suburbs these programs are under-utilised. There is a lack of information about these resources and many Aboriginal and Islander People do not know who to contact about bringing these programs into their schools or how to utilise them for their children.

A major problem of introducing Aboriginal Studies into a school curriculum in this State today is both faced by the schools and placed in the hands of the schools themselves. Many schools are having great difficulty deciphering the current 'guidelines' and 'information' implemented by the State Government that are set out to explain; how a school can gain access to the resources and people that are available to their school, and how a school can introduce an Aboriginal Studies program efficiently within their schools over-all administration policies and budget.

The Catholic Aboriginal Education Unit has successfully introduced Aboriginal Studies programs into many primary schools in the western suburbs. Apparently these programs are working cost effectively for these schools. and at the same time are enriching the students education, lives and the students relationship to their country.

"One question that I nearly always get asked when giving talks at schools is;- where do Aboriginal people come from?"

- Larry Walsh.

Before the 1970s very little Aboriginal history and culture was being taught, especially local culture, within schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

However there were a few Aboriginal people who did go to the schools in this region. They taught not so much about the history of the Aboriginal and Islander people (these subjects were not a part of school curriculum at the time) they tried to let people know that Aboriginal people were still alive and living in Victoria and still maintaining their identity and culture.

Aboriginal organisations such as the Advancement League, and people such as Eric Onus, Harold Blair, Wally Cooper and many others, came here to talk about and demonstrate their culture. These were the first instances of Aboriginal culture entering schools. Today schools in the west (if they want, and if they can decipher how to) have access to people such as Robert Mate-Mate, Melissa Brickell, Kim Jowett, Paul Richardson, Stan Dryden and a host of Aboriginal organisations including; the Catholic Aboriginal Education Unit, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Ass. Inc., the Koori Education Co-ordination Unit, the Koori Development and Support Unit of the V.U.T., the Werribee Local Aboriginal Education Co-ordinating Group, and the Council of Adult and Further Education's Koori Studies and Support Unit.

Larry Walsh and many others are going into schools to talk with students and share their histories and cultures. Aboriginal people are available to help schools develop and incorporate Aboriginal studies and local Aboriginal History into their schools curriculum.



Robert Mate Mate

Robert is originally from the Berigaba tribe in Queensland. One time cultural officer for the Wurrundjerri and the first Aboriginal Project Officer for Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, Robert spends most of his working time researching Aboriginal history and culture and teaching this history to a wide range of groups and individuals.

All these groups and people are not only working with the schools to help with Aboriginal Education, they also lobby for more resources, programs and courses to assist local Aboriginal and Islander people in helping to improve their education as a means of helping to empower people themselves.

They are also involved in cross cultural workshops with non-Aboriginal people so that teachers and educators can begin to understand local Aboriginal and Islander people and their cultures and ways of life.

For further information or program assistance contact K.E.C.U or V.A.E.A.I on (03) 9669 1118 or Paul Richardson at Melbourne's Living Museum of the West on (03) 9318 3544.

ENTERTAINERS

Entertainers are high profile people. Aboriginal entertainers who live and work in this region are the high profile members of a much larger community that can be seen through its entertainers. Entertainers include dancers, musicians, singers, songwriters, story tellers, writers, poets, actors, footballers and other sports people. Entertainers are also part of the fabric of a living culture. Entertainers like the story tellers of Aboriginal culture confirm and reinforce the culture. Others, like footballers who participate in mainstream culture, act as role models for assertion and self esteem in the mainstream culture. We are still here and having fun.



Joe Geia

Joe Geia songwriter and singer is one of the foremost Aboriginal performers in modern and traditional Aboriginal music. Joe used to perform in the band 'No Fixed Address' and lives in Williamstown.

Today Aboriginal entertainment is a very large industry. It includes, dancers, musicians, singers, songwriters, story tellers, writers, poets, actors and footballers.



Home

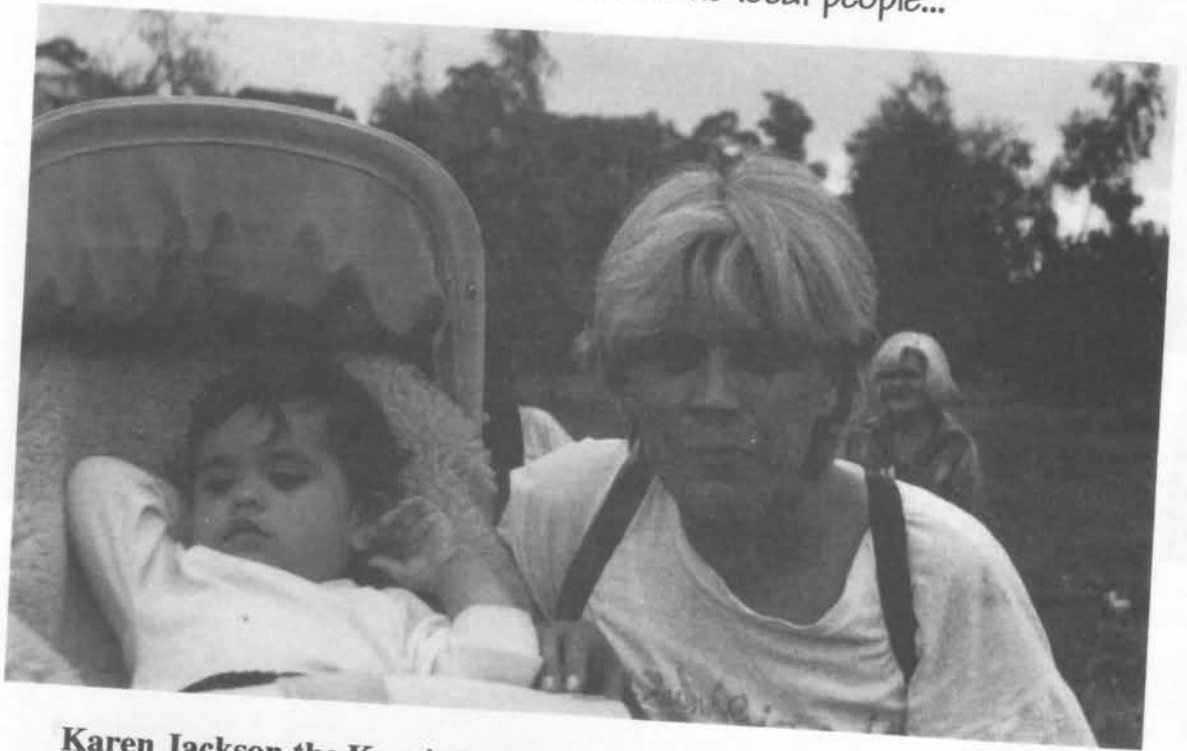
Home is a wirely shanty housing commission
Home is a river, mountain, swamp or rock
Home is not just housing
Home is your identity
Home is a sense of belonging
Home relates to both family and land
Home and the elders is the basis of family and identity
and home is what we are dispossessed from
Home is a place I want to call my own
Home is Koori Kingdom
Home is Australia
I belong and come from my home
where do you fella come from

**A Melissa Brickel poem read by Melissa at
the Aboriginal festival 'Nutbroki Ilbijerri' at Melbourne's
Living Museum of the West in April 1995.**

STILL HERE

LOCALS

We'd like you to meet some local people...



Karen Jackson the Koorie Programs Co-ordinator at V.U.T. and son.



Cathy Adams, artist.



Artist Lisa Kennedy's son, Nicholas.



Gary Hansen the Director of 'Galiamble' is of the third generation of his family to live in Melbourne's West.

STILL HERE

HERITAGE

Local Aboriginal heritage contains the details that connect Aboriginal people to particular places.



William Cooper's house at 73 Southampton Street Footscray was one of the early headquarters of the Aborigines Advancement League.

Most of the indigenous culture in this area was wiped out with those killed in the early stages of the European invasion of this area. The Aboriginal people and communities living in this area today collectively have connections to many other places in Victoria and other places in Australia.

"Although our roots may be in another area we are the custodians of the local Aboriginal heritage of this area. From the time of European invasion the local heritage of this area has a special significance to us all no matter where we are from. It is this period of our heritage that this exhibition is focusing on retrieving."

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"The 1984 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act, if read, really seems to say that something, whether it be an artefact, a midden, a language story, a painting or a significant site, must be over 200 years old or of pre-European times to be worth saving.

If one looks at the places where Aboriginal people worked and lived within cities since European invasion they seem to have no value under the national legislation as it stands at the moment.

There is no recognition within this state for the meeting places of the Aboriginal people who started the modern Aboriginal political movement in the 1930s. Which in 100 years from now will feature in Australia's History.

There is still little recognition of the Aboriginal resistance fighters of the 1800's or those since then.

In the 200 years since European invasion there have been events, places and people that have made significant contributions to both the Aboriginal people's history and culture and to Australia's history and culture.

Many examples exist throughout Australia, examples such as the headquarters where people such as William Cooper (Melbourne (Footscray) Victoria), William Ferguson (Sydney N.S.W.), Faith Bandler (Queensland) began the call for Aboriginal people to be accepted as citizens of this country.

Another political and historical event was when they took all the "mixed blood" Aboriginal people they could find, and put them into Orphanages. There are however many significant stories of the Aboriginal people who were put through this system. Seldom have the sites relating to this history of these people been recorded or adequately acknowledged or even identified.

This is all part of Australia's heritage and history that has been denied for so long. Still not enough people in Australia can and will discuss this history, it is in fact the 'Dark Ages' of Australia's history.

Most of the National and State Aboriginal Culture and Heritage acts do not include Aboriginal sites, culture and history since the coming of the European Invaders.

A major difficulty in defining what is Aboriginal heritage has to do with who controls, owns, identifies and most importantly protects what is Aboriginal heritage. This also applies to the communities in the west of Melbourne today when trying to reclaim our local Aboriginal heritage.

Because Aboriginal history has been either forgotten or denied for so long by the rest of Australia, the Aboriginal people have little faith in trusting non Aboriginal people to be in some way, responsible for or involved, in their history and heritage.

It is time to be asking Aboriginal people "what, and how" this site work development should/could be done in their locality and what type of safeguard they want to see put in place, This is a way of building trust between the non Aboriginal people and Aboriginal communities.

Ownership and control and distribution of Aboriginal Heritage must be primarily placed in the hands of Aboriginal people.

These are the area's that the present and future generations of Aboriginal people must and will lobby for.

Until these discussions and recognition of Aboriginal history is done, it will be impossible for Aboriginal people to accept that the riches of their heritage is also a part of Australia's Heritage."

Larry Walsh 1996

"The role that European Animals have played in Australia's History has received recognition under Euro Australian history. There is no recognition under the cultural heritage acts of the important role that plants, animals, birds and reptiles have and continue to play in Aboriginal culture.

Within every Aboriginal grouping, animal totems were a part of our law making, they played an important part in teaching, food gathering, implement making, ceremony, and creation.

Aboriginal heritage is very complex and cannot be divided into separate categories. For example, plants were not just utilised as food, medicine or implements. The seasonal changes in a plant's development were read as indicators; to the best time for hunting, and to determine when particular animals were breeding. For example, when the wattle flowers fall it is time to fish for eels. Eels feed on a particular grub that lives in the wattle flowers, if there are no eels around it is possible that something is wrong or affecting the wattles and therefore the eel population.



MURNONG

Yam Daisy

A tiny dandelion-like flower the tubers of this plant were the staple food of the people in Melbourne's West. The township Myrniong is thought to be named after this plant which once grew profusely in the area. The Murnong Daisy was greatly reduced by the introduction of sheep and cattle to the region thus causing a major food shortage and crisis for the Aboriginal population in this area. Today the Murnong daisy is being planted as a part of the revegetation program in this area by the Koorie Gardening Team.

Aboriginal people have no control at present, within the Federal and State government's heritage and environmental legislation over these important parts of our local histories and cultures.

Through our employment and development of the Koorie Gardening Team out here in the Western suburbs, together we are telling our stories of and maintaining our culture whilst preserving our history."



Koorie Gardening Team 1996

Foreground left to right: Team co-ordinator, Neil Wherrett and Darren Braybon
 Background left to right: Jacquie Moore, Wayne Cooper, Adam McDermott, Mathew Gristwood,, Hayden Vandenberg, Darren Witzand, Tammy Hunter and Odetta Webb.

The Koorie Gardening Team regularly receives additional training from Koorie people in Koorie cultural development and in areas such as Koorie plant uses. The apprentices are also involved in the design and interpretation of gardens using Koorie plants.

The Shire of Melton have engaged the team to complete maintenance work including planting at the newly completed "Waves" leisure centre and revegetation work along Toolern Creek. The team has recently worked on an innovative project constructing an Aboriginal stone shelter with an associated indigenous garden, this work is ongoing. More recently the team has completed large scale planting projects for the Abi group, R.J. Kirwan, Muirfields Horticulture, and Ecodynamics, planting some 150,000 tubes over winter/spring 1995. The Team has other projects in Deer Park relating to grassland revegetation and interpretation. This project is being funded federally by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency. This relates to a number of sites on Kororoit Creek and includes management of rare and endangered plant species and sensitive grassland remnants.

The apprentices are undertaking off the job training at Northern Metropolitan College of TAFE in the apprenticeship of Gardening, with a curriculum that has been extended to focus more on indigenous plants and the indigenous landscape. The interest in this area has led to a major curriculum project which will result in a new apprenticeship stream - Land Management.

The Koorie Gardening Team is an outstanding success and has an enviable retention rate of apprentices. The concept as a business has become a role model across Australia and is monitored by a range of organisations.

STILL HERE

In the past Aboriginal people lived, worked, played sport, had meetings and performed in Melbourne's west.

Today this is still happening and we are still here...

EDUCATION



Robert Mate Mate at the concert 'Nutbroki Ilbijerri' 1993.
Robert Mate Mate organised this concert as a part of his extensive program of interpreting Aboriginal culture to the people of the western suburbs of Melbourne. Advertisements for the concert were printed in ten different languages including; Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese, Greek and Italian. Robert was Melbourne's Living Museum of the West's first Aboriginal cultural officer.

POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

An Aboriginal community becomes involved in the decision making processes in this state through the representative of the Aboriginal organisation that it has formed. The community in the west has never formed an official organisation and no funding is available to establish or support any new Aboriginal organisations.

In Autumn 1995, Melbourne's Living Museum of the West was the venue for a meeting of Aboriginal representatives from both the State and Federal Governments and representatives from local and statewide Aboriginal communities and organisations.

This meeting was held to determine ways of including representation of the local Aboriginal community of the western suburbs in decision making processes of this state.

This was the first meeting of the
'Western Suburbs Koorie Working Group'.

"There is certainly a lack of resources in the Western Suburbs and looking at the documents circulated that identify the number of people living in the Western Suburbs, we need to give some thought to the services that need to be provided..."



"I think it's the first time that such a meeting has been held. We've heard the rumours, we've heard the murmurs, we've heard the grievances for a number of years from the Western Suburbs...the population is certainly on the increase...a lot more Koories are coming into this area simply adding to the numbers already existing here."

Comments transcribed from the first meeting of the Western Suburbs Koorie Working Group.

HOME



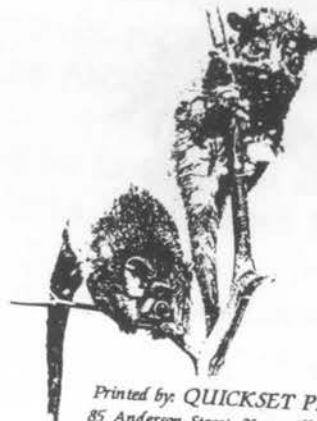
"Lou Seal" on the banks of the Maribyrnong outside Melbourne's Living Museum of the West in 1995. He is a member of one of the many species of fauna that are beginning to return to this area.



Blue Devil

FURTHER READING

- Victims or Victors? The Story of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League.*
If Everyone Cared - Autobiography of Margaret Tucker.
Blood from a Stone - William Cooper and the Australian Aborigine's League.
Pastor Doug . The Story of Sir Douglas Nicholls: Aboriginal Leader, by M. Thorpe Clark.
Koorie; A History of the Victorian Aboriginal People, by the Koorie Heritage Trust at the Museum of Victoria.
Koorie Education Kit, by the Koorie Heritage Trust.
Living Aboriginal History of Victoria, by Alec Jackomos and Derek Fowell.
Forgotten Heroes; Aborigines at war from Somme to Vietnam, by Alec Jackomos and Derek Fowell.
The First Residents of Melbourne's West, by Gary Presland.
Land of The Kulin; by Gary Presland.
My Heart is Breaking, A Joint Guide to Records about Aboriginal People in the Public Record Office of Victoria and the Australian Archives, Victorian Regional Office.
Mapping the Past: An Atlas of Aboriginal Clans 'Original History', by Dianne Barwick.
Aboriginal History Volumes 1 - 20 , by P.J.F.Coutts,Victoria Archeological Survey.
Baal Belbora; The End of Dancing, by Geoffrey Blomfield.
John Batman and the Aborigines; by Alistair H. Cambell.
Aboriginal Mission Stations in Victoria, by Aldo Massola.
Aboriginal Languages and Clans; by Ian D. Clark: Aboriginal Clan Maps and Languages of the Western District and Central Victoria.
Letters from Victorian Pioneers; by Thomas Francis Bride.
Writing Aboriginal History, Published by the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, 1991.
Aboriginal Reserves and Missions in Victoria, by D.B. Caldere And D.J. Goff.
Koorie Plants Koorie People, by Beth Gott.
Koories, by Gary Presland, Chapter Four of Landscapes Recycled, by Melbourne's Living Museum of the West.



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"This exhibition gives a brief history of the early struggles of the Aborigines in this area but grows to include Aborigines from other areas as we move to present times. Because now Aborigines from all over the country live in these western suburbs of Melbourne and all of them have a story of survival. Until recently the several hundred Aborigines in the western suburbs have been virtually 'invisible', even to other Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organisations. However we were always here and we are still here..."

