



Aboriginal Heritage Office

Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, North Sydney, Northern Beaches,
Strathfield and Willoughby Councils

www.aboriginalheritage.org

Yarnuping Education Series

© Copyright Aboriginal Heritage Office

Yarnuping 4 – Aboriginal People, Comics and the Virtual World

In the very recent past Aboriginal people had not seen themselves represented as part of the world society on T.V. or in the changing digital world around us. Now Aboriginal people are exploring the new digital world with representation of their stories, Country and lore. There are some big changes happening and Aboriginal people are driving them.

Virtual Songlines

Brett Leavy calls himself a First Nations, Digital Aboriginal and descends from the Kooma people. His work represents arts, cultural stories, heritage, traditional knowledge and histories using interactive technologies, guided by Traditional Owners, anthropologists, botanists and the interactive games industry.

Brett's studies saw him achieve a Master of Creative Industries. In this study he explored ways to represent Aboriginal people using 3D Immersive Technologies, a geo-spatial virtual environment. This led to *Virtual Songlines*.

Brett says,

“As Australia's leading First Nations Interactive Design Agency, we focus on four pillars which we integrate into our project delivery:

1. Cultural Heritage Experience Design
2. Authentic First Nations Virtual & Motion Development
3. Virtual Histories & Interactive Narrative Design
4. Virtual Heritage Experiences

Our team are a group of passionate and dedicated serious game designers, programmers and developers.”¹

Brett's, 'black, white and brindle' team use digital design to establish linkages between Indigenous and Western sciences. They work with a visualisation software tool to respectfully represent the next generation of First Nations inventors, knowledge holders and innovators using digital innovation, 3D visualisation and virtual reality technologies.

Important to *Virtual Songlines* is to align with community needs and aspirations, advocate for local cultural intellectual rights and to create projects and programs with cultural integrity. Brett seeks to engage and educate future generations about our culture and heritage by raising the profile of First Nations and their underlying science.

Brett Levy sees *Virtual Songlines* as providing real and progressive career opportunities.

Please see Brett's website to learn more about he does

1. <https://www.virtualsonglines.org/>

<https://www.sea.museum/2019/06/25/fast-five-quick-questions-with-virtual-heritage-jedi-brett-leavy>

“Please feel free to contact Virtual Songlines with your thoughts and contributions. Any advice is welcome and keeps us agile, creative and innovative,” Brett says.

NEOMAD

NEOMAD is a comic series, and not just any comic story but stories directly written by 40 young people from the community of Leramugadu (Roebourne). NEOMAD is set around Murujuga (the Burrup Peninsula). It is part of the vast Pilbara region stretching 502,000 km, which includes some of Earth's oldest rock formations.

This area is home to rock art (petroglyphs) with some said to be over 30,000 years old. There are approximately a million petroglyphs showing food sources, ceremonial sites and spirituality.

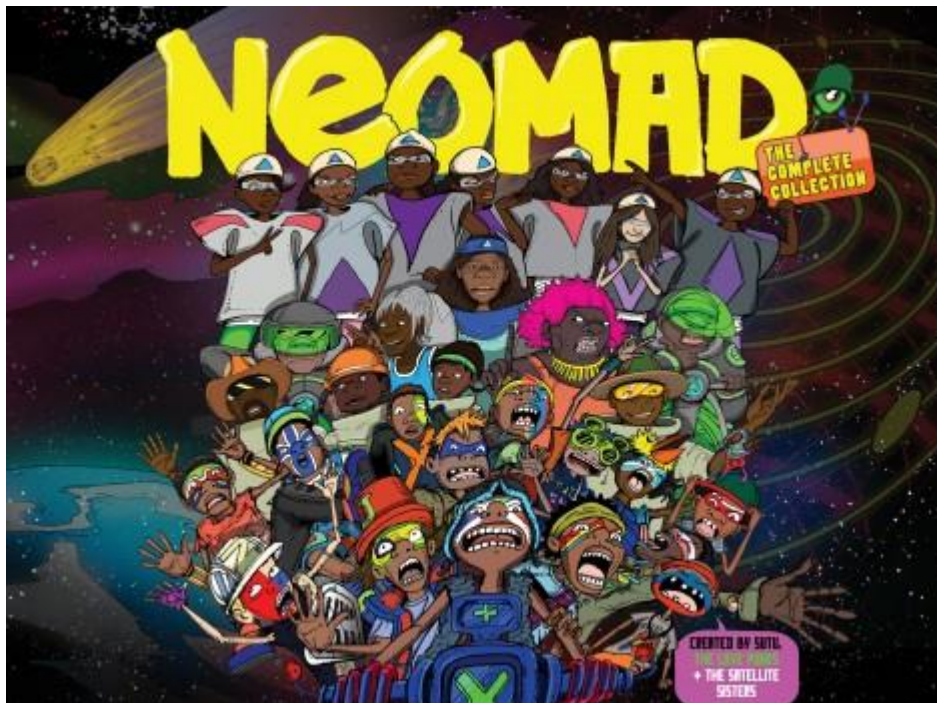
NEOMAD uses thousands of years of cultural heritage associated with Murujuga and interprets it using contemporary tools.



For 18 months, Big hART's Yijala Yala Project provided a series of workshops in scriptwriting, literacy, Photoshop, filmmaking and sound recording. For 3 weeks, Stu Campbell, an award winning illustrator and interactive designer, worked with the young people to create 600 scenes using a complex colouring system. These young people, aged between 7 and 14, star in the comic as the *Love Punks* and the *Satellite Sisters*. They assisted with the script, the dialogue and live film segments. It is set over 3 episodes, and in the year 2076, the fate of humanity rests in the hands of 21 young warriors speeding through a digitised desert and this cultural landscape.

Originally released as an interactive iPad series, it is now in 160 page full colour comic book form.
ISBN: 978-1-922023-71-1

NEOMAD also has a study guide.



NEOMAD presented at several Australian conferences, profiled through international media sites and journals and shown at the *Bucheon International Comic Festival* in South Korea in 2012. It was also a finalist in the *NEW Media Awards* in Los Angeles. The *ATOM Awards* celebrate the best of Australian and New Zealand screen content and awarded NEOMAD 'Best game/multimedia production'. The NEOMAD documentary *How Do We Get to Space?* was awarded best documentary at the 2014 *ATOM Awards*.

The *Kirkus Reviews*, looks at authors of fiction, nonfiction and young readers' literature. *Kirkus Reviews* calls NEOMAD 'dazzling' and called them 'books of exceptional merit' awarding them a 'Kirkus Star'. In 2016 NEOMAD was the winner of the *Gold Ledger Award* – acknowledging excellence in Australian comic art and publishing.

Download the interactive NEOMAD comic on the iTunes store

<https://apps.apple.com/au/app/neomad-interactive-comic-for/id549058981>

Purchase the NEOMAD books online through our Yijala Yala Project store

<https://yijalayala.bighart.org/products-page/>

A free NEOMAD study guide is now available to download

<https://yijalayala.bighart.org/neomad/neomad-study-guide/>

Join NEOMAD on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/neomadcomic?ref=hl>

For support or information please contact info@neomadcomic.com

<https://yijalayala.bighart.org/product/neomad-the-complete-collection/>

Code Name THYLACINE

An Aboriginal Female Super Hero

DC Comics created the universe of Task Force X – nicknamed the Suicide Squad. They are supervillains/ superheros with super skills, plucked from prison to perform Black ops in exchange for commutable sentences.

To make sure they obey they have explosives inserted in their neck and yes, they are expendable.

Thylacine has joined the Suicide Squad and the DC Comic universe.

She was co-created by Melbourne-based comic book writer Tom Taylor, Spanish Artist Bruno Redondo, and with much consultation with Shari Sebbens (*The Sapphires*, ABC's *The Heights* and *Black Comedy*) and *Cleverman* creator Ryan Griffen.

Shari Sebbens said the first discussions were around the Dingo but because this is an introduced species, the deadly Tasmanian Tiger, which once was found all over W.A., was seen as perfect.

Situated in the Pilbara at Burrup Peninsula the Tasmanian Tiger engravings are no longer protected or even considered a sacred site by the WA Government. The Peninsula holds carvings or petroglyphs that are up to 30,000 years old and depict the Tasmanian Tiger and other extinct megafauna.

Code Name Thylacine, Corinna in her daily life, she is a deadly Ngarluma hunter from the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Her Super Skills are night vision, heightened senses, lethal combat skills, Batman-like stealth, and a steely gaze. She is the only character that can walk into any situation get the job done and walk out again - alive.



Thylacine in Suicide Squad #5. Press Photo DC Comics

Ngarrindjeri comedian Kimberly Lovegrove, says,

*“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face so much negativity from mainstream media. I believe Thylacine is the first step to changing the negative stereotypes that currently exist. When I first heard we were going to get our first female superhero, I was so happy. Yes, we also have Cleverman. That was the first time I saw white people excited about knowing more about our people and culture.”*¹

Tom Taylor believes we want the world to be a better place and superheroes serve a role in this world.

*“I want to create a whole new set of anti-heroes for today and I want them to be completely diverse, from all over the world and from all walks of life.”*²

Bibliography

1. <https://nit.com.au/new-dc-character-gives-young-aboriginal-comic-fans-someone-to-look-up-to/>
2. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-13/aboriginal-superhero-thylacine-new-dc-comic-book-hero/12136148>

Further Reading

<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2017/01/10/wombat-kaptn-koori-aboriginal-representation-comic-books-and-capes>

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/burru-peninsula-rock-art-shows-extinct-megafauna/656178>