

YARNUPINGS

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE OFFICE NEWSLETTER ISSUE #2 June 2020



northern
beaches
council





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Welcome to the second issue of Yarnupings for 2020

Well, It’s proving to be quite an eventful year. The theme for Reconciliation Week this year really sums it up—In this together.

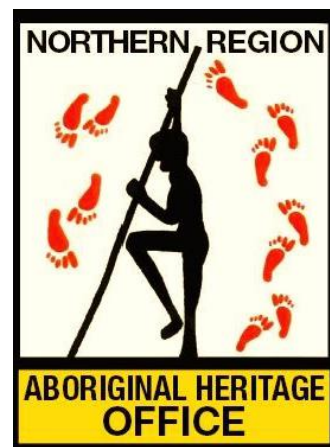
Please enjoy the second edition of Yarnupings for 2020.

This issue provides many resources and references which you can use to expand your knowledge and learnings. Or if you’re simply feel like relaxing, why not cook up a scone add some lilly pilly jam and read the great book about Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The AHO Team— Dave, Karen, Phil, Susan, and Samaka.

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NAIDOC Week is held in the first full week of July each year and celebrates the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - the first Australians and the oldest surviving culture in the world. At the end of the week, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ contribution and achievements are recognized through the annual national NAIDOC Awards ceremony.

NAIDOC stands for the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee. Its origins go back to the 1920s with groups like the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association that worked to increase awareness about the lack of citizenship rights and the poor living conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Due to the Covid –19 restrictions, events for Naidoc Week have been put on hold, but please keep checking in with the NAIDOC website for updated event information.

<https://www.naidoc.org.au/>

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/dates-significance>

**Always Was,
Always Will Be.**



National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements, and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia.

The Aboriginal Heritage Office hosted an online webinar during Reconciliation Week. The webinar was a great success with 60 screens logged in, including school groups and partner council members.

Responses to the webinar were great, that it was “interesting, engaging and informative!”

On this journey, Australians are all **In This Together**; every one of us has a role to play when it comes to reconciliation, and in playing our part we collectively build relationships and communities that value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures.

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week/>



NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY WEEK

Running in the third week of May, National Archaeology Week aims to increase public awareness of Australian archaeology and the work of Australian archaeologists both at home and abroad, and to promote the importance of protecting Australia's unique archaeological heritage.

The past couple of weeks have seen the world focus on Australia's unique archaeological heritage.

The destruction Of Juukan Gorge, a highly significant 47,000 yr old site, inflamed many. The site had genetic links dating back 4,000 years and contained thousand of artefacts and sacred objects. The Australian Archaeological Association's response to the destruction on Juukan Gorge can be found here:

<https://australianarchaeologicalassociation.com.au/news/loss-of-juukan-gorge-rockshelters-pilbara-region-western-australia/?platform=hootsuite>

An incredible discovery was made by a team of archaeologists and anthropologist from Flinders University, traditional owners and the Marra community. Tiny figures have been found at a rock shelter known as Yil-bilinji. These miniature figures of humans, boomerangs, long-necked turtles and crabs are believed to be 400-500 years old. For more information about this incredible discovery head to:

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-27/rare-rock-art-found-in-nt-park/12287914?utm_source=abc_news&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_content=mail&utm_campaign=abc_news

The limestone cliffs of the River Murray Gorge in South Australia tell of a different phase of Australia's history. Pudjinuk Rockshelter No. 1 has nearly 200 engravings from pre-contact through to the 1930s. This rock shelter captures the history of the area. To read more about the historic conflict recorded in this rockshelter head to the Flinders University news page:

<https://news.flinders.edu.au/blog/2020/05/20/signs-of-historic-conflict-in-rockshelter/>

From the Garden

Native Sarsaparilla (*Smilax glycyphylla*) is a climber that grows in littoral rainforest along the East Coast of Australia.

A littoral rainforest is a closed ecological community found within 2km of the ocean. These endangered ecological communities are species-poor with a structure that depends on their exposure to salt laden winds.

The Indigenous people used Native Sarsaparilla for medicinal purposes including relief for colds, flu, coughs, and arthritis as well as stomach pains. A lot of flu-like symptoms can be reduced using this native remedy including chest pain, sore throats and coughs. The Indigenous people have been using the plant for thousands of years by simply steaming the leaves in hot water and inhaling the fumes.

Sarsaparilla has a pretty violet coloured, pea shaped flower which appears in late winter and early spring.

For more information about the Native Sarsaparilla or other Bush Tucker plants please contact the Aboriginal Heritage Office Museum Officer, Samaka Isaacs.

Samaka.Isaacs@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au





Educational Resources

Karen Smith, the AHO Education Officer, has been writing a weekly single Yarnuping. These can be found on the Aboriginal Heritage Office website. Each Yarnuping is on a different topic and appeals to those wanting to learn more along the path of Reconciliation. They are also a good resource for those studying topics at Schools/ Tafe/ Universities.

Yarnuping Education 1 – Has Australia ever experienced pandemics before?

The first pandemic in Australia was the one that principally affected the Aboriginal population, decimating communities in the Sydney area. It was a name that brought fear across the world until only recently. Smallpox. Many Indigenous people elsewhere had been killed by this contagion: as well as people in the so-called civilised parts of the world.

Yarnuping Education 2 – Aboriginal People & Media

Digital representation of Aboriginal and Torres Islander Culture, Heritage and Art: How do people engage and respond? In this blog of Yarnuping we are looking at how Aboriginal People are represented in our Media. We have provided a few exercises for you to do, or follow up on your own.

Yarnuping Education 3 – Indigenous Military

ANZAC DAY - Lest We Forget

ANZAC Day is a day where we remember all who have fought in the wars of the world. It is also a time when we think of our families' stories and I would like to share a story from my own family.

Yarnuping Education 4 – Aboriginal People, Comics and the Virtual World

Aboriginal people are exploring the new digital world with representation of their stories, Country and lore.

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 rep-

resentation of their stories, Country and lore. There are some big changes happening and Aboriginal people are driving them.

Yarnuping Education 5 – Sorry Day 26th May

Sorry Day is a day where we remember the Stolen Generations. This blog talks about Protection & Assimilation Policies and asks the question: Have communities survived the removal of children?

Yarnuping Education 6—Reconciliation Week—27 May 2020

Reconciliation Week marks significant dates on the Aboriginal Calendar. May 27 marks the anniversary of the 1967 referendum when Australians, as a nation, voted to remove clauses in the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The 26th of May, the day before National Reconciliation Week, is National Sorry Day. June 3 is the anniversary of the historic 1992 Mabo decision in which the High Court of Australia recognised native title—the recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights over their lands did survive British colonisation.

Yarnuping Education 7— Mabo

June the 3rd is Mabo Day, and it fittingly is the last celebrated day of Reconciliation Week. Mabo day commemorates the courageous efforts of Eddie Koiki Mabo to overturn the fiction of terra nullius.

To read the full Yarnuping Education series, head to the Aboriginal Heritage Office web page:

<https://www.aboriginalheritage.org/resources/yarnuping-education/>

Australia's First Pandemic: Smallpox

This is not the first time that Australia has experienced a pandemic, a disease that hits its population who has no immunity from it. Australia's first pandemic was smallpox. The Aboriginal population had no chance against the disease. They had no immunity for it. And it ravaged the communities.

There is debate about how smallpox worked its way into the Aboriginal population. The English blamed the French. The explorer Jean-Francois de Galaup, Comte de La Perouse and his crew anchored their ships outside Botany Bay just days after the British had arrived in 1788. The ships stayed for six weeks and during that time a number of the crew died of small pox. At least one was buried on the shores of Botany Bay. The English claimed that it was the buried men that caused the spread of the disease.

The disease, however, doesn't begin to decimate the Aboriginal population until April 1789, 15 months after colonisation. 15 months after the French leave the new colony's shores. The transmission of the disease doesn't follow a 15 month incubation period. The timeline simply doesn't match up.

Smallpox itself lives for about 24 hours without a host. But once it has a host, the virus incubates from 7 to 17 days. The host can be asymptomatic through this time and is not contagious. You see, smallpox becomes contagious once the first sores appear in the mouth and throat and is contagious all the way through to the last scabs falling off. The virus is transmitted from person to person through coughing or sneezing or through contact with 'variola matter', the name for smallpox

pus. Interestingly, the virus also spreads via the clothing, blankets and bedding used by the sick.

Smallpox is first identified in Egyptian mummies from the 3rd Century. It is documented in China in the 4th Century and trade with Korea and Japan sees the virus spread to Japan in the 6th Century. Arab expansion in the 7th Century carries smallpox to Spain, Portugal and the north of Africa. From the 11th Century through the 17th Century smallpox spreads throughout the world, via European and British colonization. Civilizations such as the Incas, the Aztecs and the American Indians were all decimated from the disease, which has a mortality rate of 30%. The final historical outbreak of smallpox is in the 18th Century. This is the Australian outbreak.

Frighteningly, there is documentation from the Americas recording the use of smallpox by the colo-



The smallpox virus.
Image Source: National Museum Australia

Australia's First Pandemic: Smallpox

nists as a method of warfare. On June 23 1763 Sir Jeffrey Amherst writes in a letter,

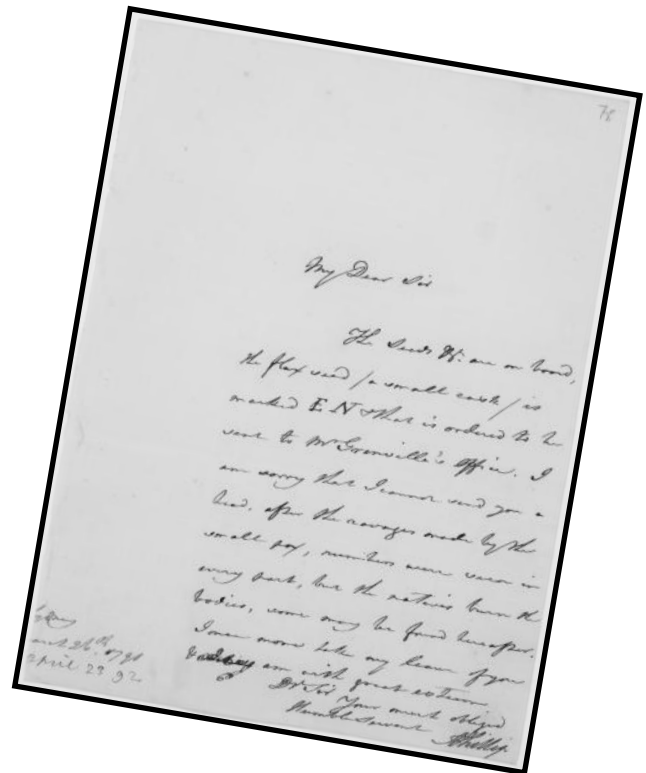
“Could it not be contrived to Send the Small Pox among those Disaffected Tribes of Indians? We must, on this occasion, Use Every Stratagem in our power to Reduce them.”

Inoculation was initiated as an attempt to control smallpox. A small amount of the variolus matter – the pus- was placed under the finger nails of children and other vulnerable populations. This created an immune response and an immunity upon exposure to the disease.

This is perhaps the reason why Surgeon John White had a vial of variolous matter with him on the First Fleet. He planned to inoculate children with it. The only thing we know for sure is that smallpox ended up in the wider community and the Aboriginal people stood no chance.

But perhaps think there is another piece to this tragic history – the health of the Aboriginal people at the time the virus was exposed to the population. From what we now know about the damaging effect that different factors (poor diet, increased stress, loss of cultural identity) have on the immune system, it is probable that the Aboriginal population were suffering from incredibly depleted immune systems making them an exceptionally vulnerable population group. Not only had they never been exposed to the disease, but their bodies were struggling to cope with the new burden of a highly inflammatory refined flour/sugar/alcohol diet and the highly inflammatory state that comes with stress and experiencing trauma. Their immune system had no ability to fight a such a ferocious disease.

Susan Whitby



Letter received by Banks from Arthur Phillip, 26 March 1791 writing about the small pox disease.

Sourced: SLNSW. SAFE/BanksPapers/Series 37.15 1004011.

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Hearth and Home



For archaeologists in Australia the hearth is more valuable than gold. Gold can only tell you about the last couple of hundred years. A hearth can take you back thousands.

For so many generations, including those in living memory, fire was a preoccupation when looking at the past. How did humans capture it? How did they learn to create it? Today fire for most of us is actually quite far from our lives. Electricity and batteries remove the need for fire as a light source (except when the black-outs come, and where were those candles?). Cooking, even when using an open flame with gas, is a fairly controlled affair where a simple spark for ignition has become the norm. Heating with wood continues to decline. Even the barbeque seems to be an increasingly flameless event.

But have we really left the hearth behind? If you live in an urban environment and step out into the dark of night, what do you see? What can you hear? Especially now, it is even more apparent. Just the sky, whatever flying foxes, possums or other night creatures are about, and the sounds made or not made by the movement of the air. And, yes, the background sound of traffic and perhaps a muffled voice from inside a building.

What are the humans doing?

We are gathered around the hearths of modern life. The stove and oven providing the food, the jug for hot drinks, the TV or other screen for storytelling, and under the lights to see each other's faces and carry out the end of day tasks. Walk down the street and look at all the camps. If you can get a view of the city you will see them all glinting out to the horizon. And there we all are. In our little camps, around the hearths, just as humans, ancient and modern, have been doing across the world for hundreds of thousands of years.

“Fireplaces are so fundamental to human experience that they invoke special feelings. It can be very moving to stand over an ancient hearth

where a family of ice age hunter-gatherers warmed themselves and cooked their meals beneath the same bright outback stars that we see today.”¹

We have already looked at fire from other perspectives in *Yarnupings* (eg [Sept 2013](#)), but the hearth has perhaps a much stronger connection to Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal people. This was recognised by the Europeans too. Take this dictionary style translation of the various meanings of fire in one south west Australian language:

Kalla – Fire; a fire; (figuratively) an individual's district; a property in land; temporary resting place. (Moore [1842] quoted in Hallam 1977a: 170)²

So why is a hearth potentially more valuable than gold for archaeologists and heritage managers? It is not just the cultural meanings and connections, but the information potential.

Firstly, charcoal found can be used for dating the hearth. C14 radio carbon dating can be used to tell us how long ago it was used. A famous rock shelter in Western Australia, Devil's Lair, was excavated and 25 hearths were found in up to 3m depth of occupation deposit, showing the arid zone site was used from the late Pleistocene.³ We are all intrigued by very old dates, but even something as young as 1000 years can add a great deal to our understanding of the past.

It is also possible to use specialised equipment to detect hearths or to confirm a feature as a hearth. The heating of rock, clay and some soil particles alters the magnetic field of those items, which can be measured. Archaeologists have been able to find hearths from Alaska to the deserts of western NSW with this method. Researchers in NSW using gradiometers have been able to locate Aboriginal earth ovens by detecting the magnetic anomalies of heat-retainer hearths that otherwise could be mistaken

Hearth and Home continued.....

for any other accumulation of broken rock.⁴ These are important archaeological sites and cultural places where families have gathered for generations.

We are familiar with the phrase ‘hearth and home’. It can bring up different and sometimes conflicting images, which may be even more tangled during a time of social distancing and physical isolation. A hearth can be identified, measured and analysed. How do we measure a home?

One may have a blazing hearth in one's soul and yet no one ever came to sit by it. Passers-by see only a wisp of smoke from the chimney and continue on their way.

Vincent Van Gogh



CBS1 showing Square E (top left), D (top centre), L (top right), and C (front centre) after excavation and removal of sediments — looking north. The central depression in the basal calcrete is filled with dark brown sands containing charcoal fragments and burnt stones. Orange-brown sands (possible palaeosol) overlie CBS1 and grade into white dune sands. Red-white scale in 10 cm units. 17 December 2012. Photograph: Ian J. McNiven.



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- 1 Visit Lake Mungo National Park <http://www.visitmungo.com.au/signs-from-the-past#fireplaces>
- 2 Sylvia Hallam. 1977
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4. Patricia Fanning, Simon Holdaway et al Macquarie University. <https://www.researchonline.mq.edu.au/vital/access/services/Download/mq:14186/DS01?view=true>
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NATIONAL 18-24 MAY 2020 VOLUNTEER WEEK

CHANGING COMMUNITIES.
CHANGING LIVES.



Mercedes

Joseph



I'm 25, and a lifelong resident of the Northern Beaches. I consider myself extremely lucky to have grown up in a landscape of such exceptional natural beauty, and as a student of history and culture I have always been fascinated by our region's Indigenous heritage. I have volunteered with the AHO for over four years as a site monitor, which I began as part of my 'History Beyond the Classroom' program at the University of Sydney as a way to participate in the preservation of local cultural heritage. I believe that northern Sydney's Indigenous heritage is part of what makes our region unique, not just at a local level, but also globally, and as such it is essential that this intangible aspect of our local identity remains accessible for future generations.

As for something you may not know about me: I am totally an explorer at heart, and have visited over thirty countries!

Hi! My name is Mercedes and I started volunteering with AHO in 2019. My background is Irish/Spanish but grew up here in the Northern Beaches, mostly. I have spent a lot of my life going between here and Europe, but I always come home. In 2016, one of my proudest moments, I finished a degree in Indigenous Studies at UNE, online. And it's one of the best things I could have done, what a learning curve. I have always been interested in both modern and ancient history and archaeology, little did I know that we have the oldest surviving culture in the world, now that's something to showcase and be very proud of. I also had no idea of how many incredible Indigenous sites we have here on the Northern Beaches, so I am very happy to be part of this volunteering program with AHO and feel like I am making a very small contribution to maintaining and preserving our amazing Indigenous history and culture that we have here on our doorstep. I also think AHO are doing an amazing job of maintaining sites, educating and encouraging people to be actively involved in learning about our Indigenous history here in Australia.

Book Review

Fire Country – How Indigenous Fire Management could help save Australia

Victor Steffensen (Published 2020 by Hardie Grant Travel)

A powerful, and timely, recent addition to the growing body of work on traditional fire management practices is the new book *Fire Country* by Victor Steffensen. Published in early 2020, but based on a lifetime of learning and practice, this is an essential read for any interested in indigenous land management using fire.

Cultural authority and practical learning are central themes of the book. Victor, is descended from the Tagalaka people from Croydon in the Gulf of Carpentaria on his grandmother's side. Like many Aboriginal people impacted by the stolen generations, he was raised with limited knowledge of his ancestors, culture and language. He grew up away from his own country in the little rainforest village of Kuranda, the home of the Djabugay people of tropical, far North East Queensland

Fire Country is not only a story about fire management. It is also a story about Victor's search for his cultural identity through the practical learning of indigenous fire and land management from two traditional Elders from Laura in the lower region of Cape York.

These Elders and brothers, George Musgrave and Tommy George, were the last generation of their Awu-Laya people with traditional knowledge, language and stories of their people. Hard stockmen, who had spent their lives working on the land, they had earned the respect of their community, black and white.

The book is about their adoption of Steffensen and his work with them to break down the barriers of traditional pastoralists and park rangers to prove the superiority and sustainability of traditional fire management practices.

It explores the broader themes of cultural protocols in passing on traditional knowledge and is dedicated *"to all of the young and upcoming generations to be the turning point of reconnecting humanity with land and culture again."*

The story of fire starts with a wonderful story about the day 'Poppy' (George Musgrave) first lights a traditional fire in a small cluster of boxwood declaring, *"I'm gonna light*

the grass now, like the old people used to do." This is no coincidence. As the old men teach us in the story, the burning of the boxwood was the traditional beginning of the cool burn fire management cycle in their country.

After this magical day, the story turns to the resistance of local pastoralists to this practice and the long battle to educate them and help them understand that this way of fire management balances all aspects of the ecosystem ensuring clean and healthy country.

Following his success in changing attitudes in his home country, Steffensen starts a community organization 'Fire Sticks' to work with indigenous communities, all over Australia, to help them rediscover the proper use of fire to manage their lands.

It is a wonderful story of persistence and positive attitude, that wins over battle hardened farmers and rural bush fire brigade captains.

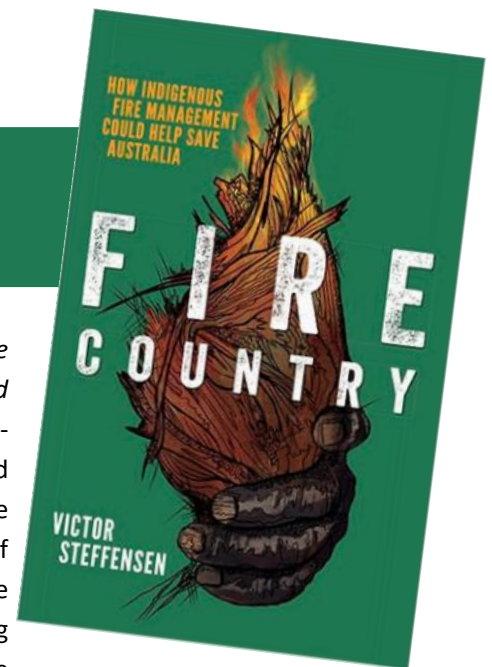
My favourite chapter covers workshops 'Fire Sticks' held on the South Coast of NSW under the leadership and cultural authority of Uncle Rodney Mason, a very senior Dharawal and Yuin elder who is well known throughout Australia. Uncle Rodney was one of the founders of the Indigenous Ranger programs, starting in the Royal National Park of Sydney (part of his home country) and then assisting communities all around Australia, including the Anangu people, traditional owners of Uluru.

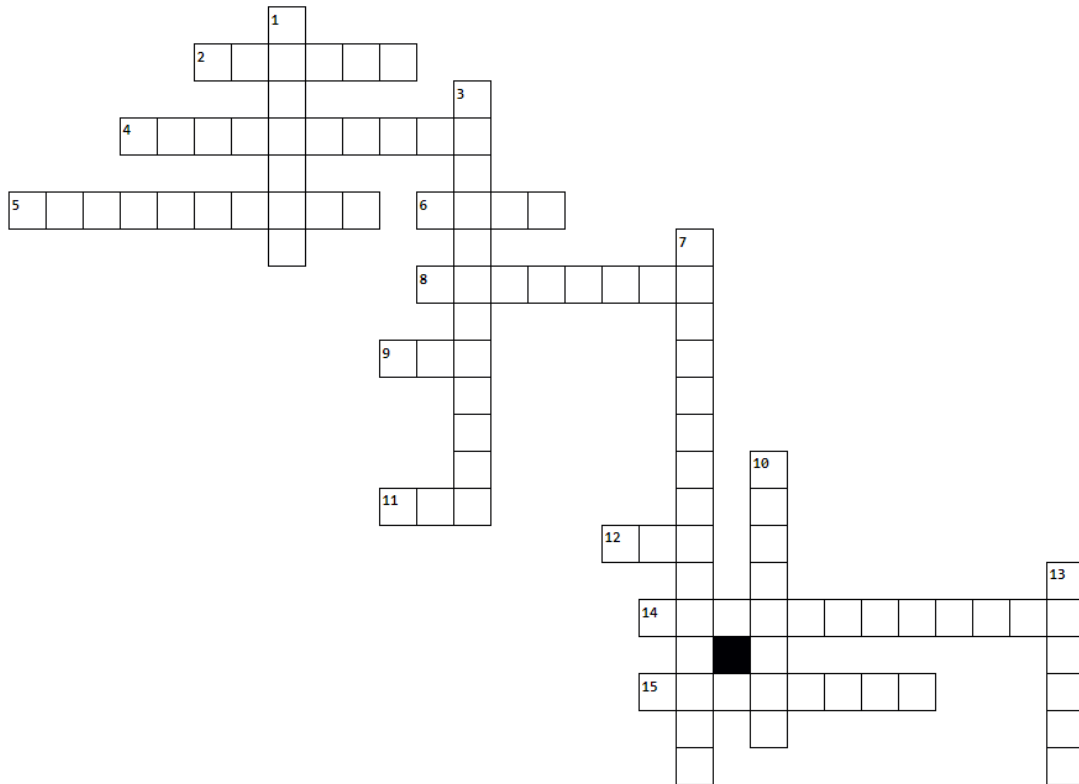
Uncle Rodney and Victor form a powerful combination that wins over the local community and has successfully started to bring back some traditional fire management practices.

If only more communities along our coast had listened to their wisdom before the tragic fires along our coast last summer!

After that terrible experience, this book is a must read for all people. Our future, and future of our children and grandchildren, is at stake.

- Paul Griffiths





Across

- 2. The Aboriginal Heritage Office is celebrating which anniversary in 2020
- 4. The name of the archaeological site is on the lower Murray River of South Australia
- 5. The name of the rock shelter where the miniature figures were discovered
- 6. The 3rd of June is ____ Day
- 8. A raw material commonly used for stone tools
- 9. Murray Island is also known as
- 11. Sorry Day is in this month
- 12. This animal migrates from Centennial Park to Botany Bay?
- 14. A native plant good for relieving flu like symptoms

Down

- 1. Charles _____ - the first Aboriginal man to graduate from the Australian National University
- 3. The analysis of the order and position of layers of archaeological remains
- 7. A week for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements, and
- 10. Hawkesbury sandstone was formed in this era

Quiz

1. Where is the Yilbilinji rock shelter? _____
2. Which plant grows in a littoral rainforest? _____
3. What is Smallpox’s scientific name? _____
4. What is a hearth? _____
5. What is the date of Australia’s oldest hearth? _____
6. What is the Title of Victor Steffensen’s book? _____
7. What is the theme for National Reconciliation Week 2020? _____
8. When is National Sorry Day? _____
9. Miniature figurines are found in how many other rock shelters around the world? _____
10. Where do Lilly Pillys grow? _____
11. What is Native Sarsaparilla traditionally used for? . _____

Volunteer Site Monitor

Help preserve the Aboriginal sites in the northern Sydney region by joining our Volunteer Site Monitor Program.

Inductions can take place in the comfort of your own home via Zoom.

For more information contact Volunteer Co-ordinator, Susan Whitby.

Susan.Whitby@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au



Issue #1 Crossword Answers

Across

4. Wattle 5. Isabel 7. Hammer 9. Gammage 10. Anu 11. Mud 12. Regenerative 15. Waterloo 16. Attenbrow

Down

1. Margaret 2. Percussion 3. Kangaroo 6. Steffensen 8. Sand 13. guwiyang 14. trowel 18. Eel

Lilly Pilly Jelly

8 Cups lilly pilly berries / 1kg green apples / Sugar / 1/2 cup lemon juice

Wash the lilly pilly berries in cold water, removing any leaves, grit or spiders' webs. Drain the berries and put them into a large saucepan or stockpot (8-litre capacity minimum).

If using store-bought apples, scald them in very hot water to remove any excess wax. Cut the apples into 1cm chunks and add them – seeds, core and all – into the pan. Add enough water to just cover the fruit and bring to the boil. Reduce to a simmer, cover the pan and continue cooking for 30–40 minutes, until fruit is very soft. Allow to cool a little.

Strain the juices from the cooked fruit into a bowl using a sieve lined with three layers of muslin (or use a new chux cloth). Reserve the juice.

Bundle the drained fruit in more muslin (a bit like a plum pudding) and secure with string. Tie the bundle of fruit to the handle of a wooden spoon and hang it over a deep bowl or pan. Allow any remaining juices to drip into the pan overnight, but don't be tempted to squeeze or apply pressure – this can result in a cloudy jelly.

<https://blogs.sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/cook/recipe/lilli-pilli-jelly/>

Lemon Myrtle and Macadamia Scones

300g self raising flour / ½ teaspoon salt / 1 teaspoon sugar / 1 tablespoon lemon myrtle / 30g cold butter, diced / ½ cup macadamias, unsalted / ¾ cup buttermilk

Preheat oven to 220°C

Sift flour and salt into a large bowl, stir in the sugar and lemon myrtle. Rub in butter with your fingertips until mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Stir through the macadamias.

Make a well in the centre and pour in the buttermilk and fold through. Turn onto a floured surface and knead lightly. Pat dough out to approximately 2cm thickness and cut into rounds with a 5cm cutter, dip the cutter into the flour each time before cutting.

Place close together on baking tray lined with non-stick baking paper. Brush tops with a little milk and bake for 10 minutes or until golden.

<https://www.australian-macadamias.org/consumer/our-nut-hub/recipes/lemon-myrtle-and-macadamia-scones>

