

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES OF THE GUDHAMANGDHURAY WIRADJURI



Bayley Derrick, Alicia Harland,
Brodie Jenkins and Blake Sloan

Cootamundra Public School



Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between our funding partners and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

www.wirraminna.org/creative-catchment-kids/

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants.

www.wirraminna.org

Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

www.envirostories.com.au

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Authors: Bayley Derrick, Alicia Harland, Brodie Jenkins and Blake Sloan

Teacher support: Bill Godman

Parental support: Alice Crawford

School: Cootamundra Public School

Our Culture

In 2016, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about Aboriginal culture in their local communities. The program was generously funded by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and Riverina Local Land Services.

Creative Catchment Kids is part of Enviro-Stories, a Peekdesigns education program.

Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land and thank them for sharing their knowledge and culture with us.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document may contain images and/or names of people who have since passed away.





Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Mirriyula - Ghost Dog



'The Longest Night' by Bernie Ryan

The stained glass windows in the Cootamundra Town Hall tell a children's story about the Longest Night. The story has travelled along the story line from South Australia, Victoria and all the way to Cootamundra and is many thousands of years old. There are six windows. They were created by glass artist Dianne Berkrey, from a concept by Bernie Ryan. Each window tells part of the story about Mirriyula the Ghost Dog as told by Melinda "Mum" Bell to her family.

In the Bethungra Hills there was an old, wise Bagiiny (Clever Man) who could turn into anything possible! One night he turned into a black and white striped ghost dog named Mirriyula. He needed someone as his apprentice.

On the Longest Night, there was a small camp with a blazing campfire and some boys were playing around it. Mirriyula struck out and dragged one of the boys away. The boy's friend luckily grabbed a stick from the fire and threw it at Mirriyula. He was blinded by the fire stick. All the parents were scared and stayed with their children. Mirriyula wasn't successful in locating any children to steal away.



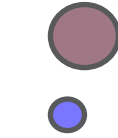
The Longest Night

The first of three windows pictures the cosmos exploding and the stars, planets, constellations and spirits awakening¹.

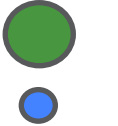
Gudhamang (the Snake-necked turtle) and Mirriyula prowl around the campfire whilst the children were silenced in their Gunyahs (bark shelter)².

Guriban (the Curlew) cried a warning signal and all the animals left. Bugbug (the Owl) prepared for the battle³.

3



2



1





During the battle Ngarradan (the Bat) and his friends darken the moon. Bugbug tries to kill the bats but the darkness covers the land⁴.

4

The Ghost Dog appears and the children huddle. The fire is blazing. Gudhamang prepares for a fight with Mirriyula. But the first of dawn appears and Mirriyula howls and is frustrated and now has to wait for the next longest night⁵.



The people celebrate in the morning light. Gugubarra (the Kookaburra) sings and all creatures return home. Gudhamang disappears back to the spirit land. Peace and happiness come again⁶.



5

The tale of Mirriyula reminded Aboriginal children to do what they were told, to listen to their parents and to obey their Elders. Our interpretation of this story has the approval of Wiradjuri Elder Uncle Bob Glanville.



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Chapter 2: Uncle Bob Glanville



Uncle Bob at the entrance to the Girls' Home

Uncle Bob Glanville is a Wiradjuri Elder who has lived in Cootamundra all of his life. He fondly remembers visiting his grandmothers' (Mum Bell) humble house in Cowcumbra Street as a little boy. His extended family would often gather there and that meant there were plenty of cousins with which to get into mischief. Space was at a premium and beds were crowded at night time. There was always plenty of food to feed the mob. One day he got into trouble for trapping ducks in the swamp nearby. This has since been drained and EA Southee Public School and houses cover the site.



Uncle Bob as a young man



Vonnie and Bob Glanville

Uncle Bob went to school at Cootamundra Public School. There was an expectation that Aboriginal students couldn't achieve and often in class Aboriginal children with an answer were overlooked. As a child Uncle Bob was looked down upon because he was Aboriginal. His family warned him about the dangers of speaking Wiradjuri in public. If they didn't want others to understand their conversation they sometimes did! It was dangerous to do so as authorities took children taken away from their families for being Aboriginal and speaking language.

Uncle Bob played many games growing up as a child. These included marbles and red rover. He enjoyed playing Rugby League and swimming. His favourite NRL team is St. George. One of his football memories was watching Cootamundra play St. George. After St. George won the game, one of the players gave Uncle Bob his socks which he treasured for many years.



Uncle Bob told a wonderful story about the boys who defied their Elder's. Uncle Bob and his cousins went to a forbidden living sacred mountain place called Mujung*. The boys climbed to the peak of Mujung and saw scar trees representing Wiradjuri warriors who were resting in the Dreamtime. The boys were frightened as they attempted to camp out overnight. They heard fearful noises and ran home. The Elders were angry because the boys had disobeyed them. The boys never climbed Mujung again.

*Mujung is located near Brungle



Uncle Bob and grandson Peter Beath

Uncle Bob had many jobs growing up.

One day Uncle Bob had an argument with his dad and he ran away from home. The show was in town and he joined the boxing troupe made up of Aboriginal boys. He was quickly nicknamed the Dancing Darkie from the Darling Downs. That was shortly changed to the Choir Boy as in the eyes of the audience he was just that! His stint in the boxing troupe only lasted a few days and he was very glad to get home.

He then got a job at the local butcher shop and then had a number other jobs. He finally became an Aboriginal Welfare Officer and rose to the position of Regional Manager with the Department of Community Services. He worked in a region that included Temora, Harden, Tumut and Deniliquin. Uncle Bob is currently retired.

Chapter 3: The Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home



The original Girls' Home as it stands today.

Back in the early 1900s, the NSW Aborigines Protection Board bought the old Cootamundra Hospital for Aboriginal girls to train as domestic servants. 'The Home' was opened in 1912.

The girls were taken away from their families by the authorities such as the police or welfare. A government policy called assimilation allowed this to happen.

The Girls' Home was a hard place for the girls to live because it was often too hot or too cold and they had many chores to complete.

The girls at the home were not allowed to talk in language or see their families. The girls sat on the well at the entrance to 'The Home' waiting for their mothers to come and get them. Some girls never got to see their families again for the rest of their lives. This experience changed the girls' lives forever. Most of the girls were taken away when they were little. Some girls were so little they couldn't even remember their families.



Older girls used to sleep on this Verandah. Inset: Wishing well memorial.

At fourteen years of age the girls were sent out to work as domestic servants on district farms. For some girls this was not a good experience.

The girls were inspected and then chosen by families as they lined up in front of the home. Some girls rubbed their skin with charcoal to make themselves less appealing. The girls from the Cootamundra Girls' Home belong to 'The Stolen Generations'.

The girls went to school at 'The Home' until 1946 and then came to Cootamundra Public School. For many of the girls coming to school made their lives a little more normal. At school they got to mix with other boys and girls. Many of the girls did very well at school.



Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home 1912~1969



~Girls On The Well 1950'S ~
Officially unveiled on October 20th 2006

"This well cap became a quiet place where in solitude or with a sister we would sit and gaze down the driveway to see if family visitors were coming."

During the "Journey to Reclaim our Childhood" reunion in 2004, it was found that the original well cap had been destroyed in spite of the building's heritage listing. This replica well cap was built in it's place.

"Standing on our wishing wellwishing for family to come and take us home"



'Home Girls' at the centenary in 2012.

In August 2012, a centenary commemoration of the Girls' Home was held in Cootamundra. A community breakfast was held at Cootamundra Public School for the home girls. The girls were photographed in front of the old school bell. At school, the home girls had to line up at this bell at the end of recess and lunch and were then allowed to use the toilets. On this day the girls joyfully rang the old school bell without the principal's permission, something that would have been forbidden in their time at school. In winter the girls would press their backs against the brick wall to get warm.

When the girls went to the Cootamundra Pool they had to line up at the pool edge and wait until the lifeguard blew the whistle. Other children got straight into the water.

At the local picture theatre the girls had to sit in an area by themselves which was roped off.

Chapter 4: Connections to land



Students are shown bush foods and medicines, Stockinbingal Cemetery.

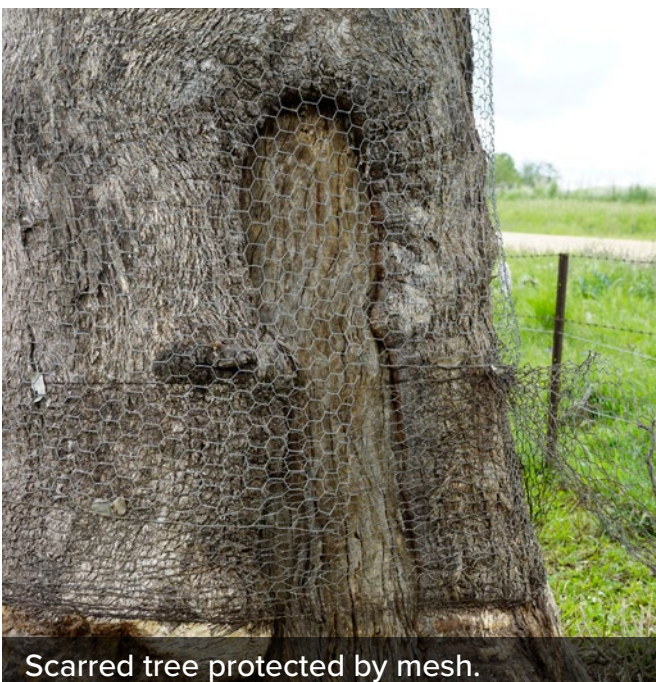
In Gudhamangdhuray country there is still evidence of how traditional Aboriginal people used the natural landscape.

Native plants were used for food and medicines and for weaving baskets and making string. Trees provided bark to make coolamons and canoes.

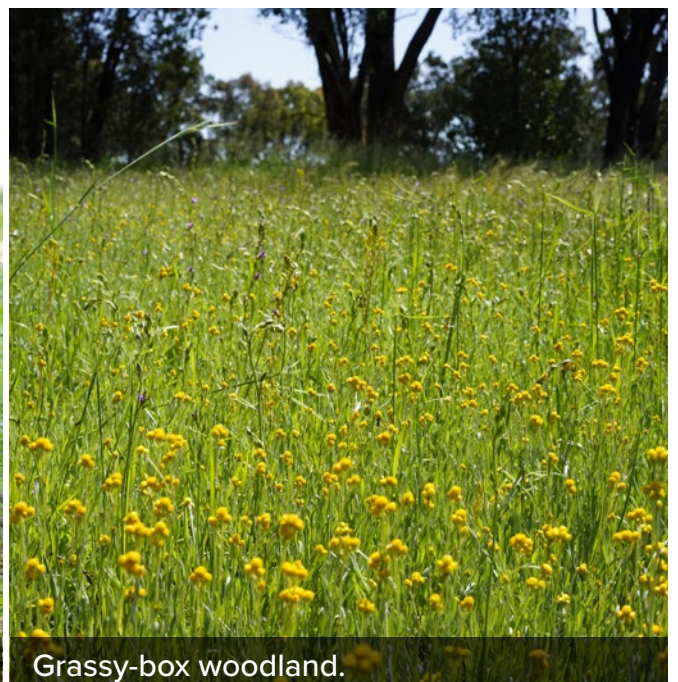
In local cemeteries there are examples of grassy-box woodlands that have remained almost undisturbed. In these places plant species important to Aboriginal people grow.



Exploring the Wallendbeen Cemetery grounds.



Scarred tree protected by mesh.



Grassy-box woodland.



Ngarridyu - yam daisy.



Chocolate lily flower.



Milkmaids.

Ngarridyu or yam daisy has large underground tubers that can be eaten for food. Aboriginal people knew how to cultivate this plant food and store the potato-like tubers as a future food supply. It has a sweet coconut flavour and was roasted on campfires. Ngarridyu is only found in places that are not cultivated or grazed by livestock.

Chocolate lilies and milkmaids are dirramaay that have tasty tuberous roots and are also cooked in the coals of a campfire. The purple chocolate lily flower produces a strong scent of chocolate.



Nibdul - flax lily.



Flax lily berries.



Kangaroo grass.

Nibdul or flax lily has many uses. The roots were roasted, purple berries were eaten and strong fibres from the leaves were used to weave baskets.

Kangaroo grass stems and leaves were used to make string for fishing nets and small baskets. Seeds were crushed to make flour for damper that was baked.

Trees in the district carry scars where Aboriginal people removed the bark. The trees would heal over the scar like a scab. The actual scar would have been a lot bigger. The bark was fashioned into canoes and coolamons that were used to carry water, fruits and babies.

Ring trees were formed when two branches of a sapling were tied together to form a ring. As the tree grew, the branches fused together. The exact purpose of the trees is not clear. Perhaps they were used as boundary markers, as sign posts or to mark places of special significance.



Tree scar close-up.



Tree ring close-up.



Scarred tree.



Ring tree.



Ngarridyu (yam daisy) has edible tubers.



Bulbine lily has edible tubers.



Austral bugle is a medicinal plant.



Purplish beard orchid has edible tubers.



Woodland wildflowers.



Alicia Harland, Brodie Jenkins, Blake Sloan and Bayley Derrick.

2016 Year 5/6, Cootamundra Public School

Congratulations!

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre and
the Creative Catchment Kids Program won the
National 2016 Yates Junior Landcare Team Award.

