

AUNTY FAY AN INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEY

AS TOLD TO JERCHANA WILLIAMS, SARAH PARKER,
MELODIE WARNER AND GEORGIA HAMPTON



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, cooperative activities that encourage students to learn about and respond to, natural resource management and the importance of agricultural production.

wirraminna.org.au/petaurus/creative-catchment-kids/

PETAURUS EDUCATION GROUP

Petaurus Education Group identifies, develops and delivers a range of learning and curriculum experiences, resources and initiatives for schools and community groups to connect with land, water, productive farming, sustainability and cultural issues at the local level. The group was established by Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre in late-2014 to support its operations and education activities.

wirraminna.org.au/petaurus

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.

envirostories.com.au

AUNTY FAY

AN INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEY

Authors: Sarah Parker, Melodie Warner,
Georgia Hampton and Jerchana Williams

School: Ashmont Public School

Teacher Support: Annette Apps, Aunty Louise
Niki (AEO) and Danielle Grey (SLSO)

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OUR CULTURE

In 2018, students from Ashmont Public School were involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program. They researched and wrote this book about a local Aboriginal Elder in their community. The program was generously funded by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

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

TRADITIONAL 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.



INTRODUCTION

Four students from Ashmont Public School in Wagga Wagga, NSW, met and had a yarn to Aunty Fay Clayton Moseley, Wiradjuri Elder. Aunty Fay is the inspiration for their school's celebration of NAIDOC Week in 2018, as the theme is: 'Because of Her, We Can.'

WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT AUNTY FAY

We got to meet and talk with this incredible lady, Aunty Fay Clayton Moseley, who told us a touching but motivational story about her life, from early memories of her childhood to where she is today.



TODAY

Aunty Fay is a strong, independent Wiradjuri woman, who has had a very challenging but compelling journey from her childhood to where she is today. Currently, she is an Elder, a sister, a mother of four, a grandmother of nineteen, a great grandmother of six and an aunty. She is also a member of various committees including the Coota Girls Corporation and the Stolen Generations Advisory Committee, as well as being an amazing artist!

During her adult life she has had a career in nursing, worked in Juvenile Justice and for DOCS (Department of Community Services) and was the 'boss' (CEO) of the Liverpool Local Aboriginal Lands Council. Over her adult life she told us that she has been involved in many "mad and wonderful things."



Aunty Fay is now a strong voice for the Stolen Generation and for all the generations that have been affected by what she calls “inter-generational trauma”. Her paintings tell us about her life and she paints to record the stories of her experiences of being a part of the Stolen Generation.



Confusion (2012) Fay Clayton

“This painting depicts my confused state of mind as a result of being a member of the Stolen Generation – being black I was told to act white, Christianity not spirituality, British not tribal law, city not the bush and go left not right. All the while, Spirits of my ancestors were calling me back home.”

- AUNTY FAY CLAYTON

THEN

Aunty Fay was born in Leeton, NSW, on the 25th of June 1946, one of nine children to Cecil Robert Clayton and Lillian Clayton. She tells us that she had a really happy childhood, growing up in a large extended family that was always loving and supportive.



Home before the homes (2012) Fay Clayton

“This was my happy, safe, loving and carefree home before the nightmare.”

- AUNTY FAY CLAYTON

All that changed in 1956. When walking to school, Aunty Fay and five of her siblings were taken away from their family by the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board.

This removal came as a great shock, as her father was a returned serviceman with four years of service during World War 2, “a war hero”. He had been one of the Rats of Tobruk with the 2/13th battalion, nicknamed the ‘Devils Own,’ as there were more Kooris in it than non-Aboriginal soldiers. They were the only unit to see out the 241 day siege of Tobruk, in North Africa, during 1941 and the last to return to Australia at the end of the war.



Aunty Fay points to her father, who served his country in World War 2.

Also, both her mum and dad were working at the local cannery and they were living in a home owned by Nan (her grandmother). Local authorities had stated that the children were well cared for and had signed off on a certificate of exemption for them.

B

ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD

PS.NG.

SUBJECT: CECIL ROBERT CLAYTON, HALF CASTE, 41 YEARS, of
AMESEBURY, LEETON - APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE
OF EXEMPTION.

This man resides with his wife and eight young children in a cleanly kept, though poorly built iron and weatherboard home. The children are well cared for.

His conduct is good, he is a moderate drinker and non-gambler. He is employed at a Cannery at Leeton. During the War he served with the Armed Forces overseas.

Both the Police and the Welfare Officer recommend the issue. I concur and recommend accordingly.

M. H. Saiby
M. H. SAIBY.
Superintendent of
Aborigines Welfare.
22.6.55

The Chairman.

Appd

Copy of original Certificate of Exemption from Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare Board.

But they were taken anyway. Aunty Fay recalls that her father went to war to protect all Australians, adults and children, but he “couldn’t protect his own kids – they just took his children away”.

From Leeton railway station they were sent to Sydney, where they were separated, with Aunty Fay and her two sisters and youngest brother travelling by train to Cootamundra. Here they were placed in the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls, while their two brothers were sent to Kinchela.



One Way Ticket to Hell (2012) Fay Clayton

This painting shows Aunty Fay's mum with the policeman, and Aunty Fay with her five siblings ready to board the train to 'hell.'

During her time at the Cootamundra Girls Home, Aunty Fay told us that she was made to feel like she wasn't good enough and, at times, was treated really badly. Also, she said that she was constantly lied to about her parents, that her parents didn't want anything to do with her, that they couldn't look after them all and that she was "nothing but a nuisance" to them. It wasn't until later in her life that she knew that these were lies and was told that her mum and dad often visited but were constantly turned away.

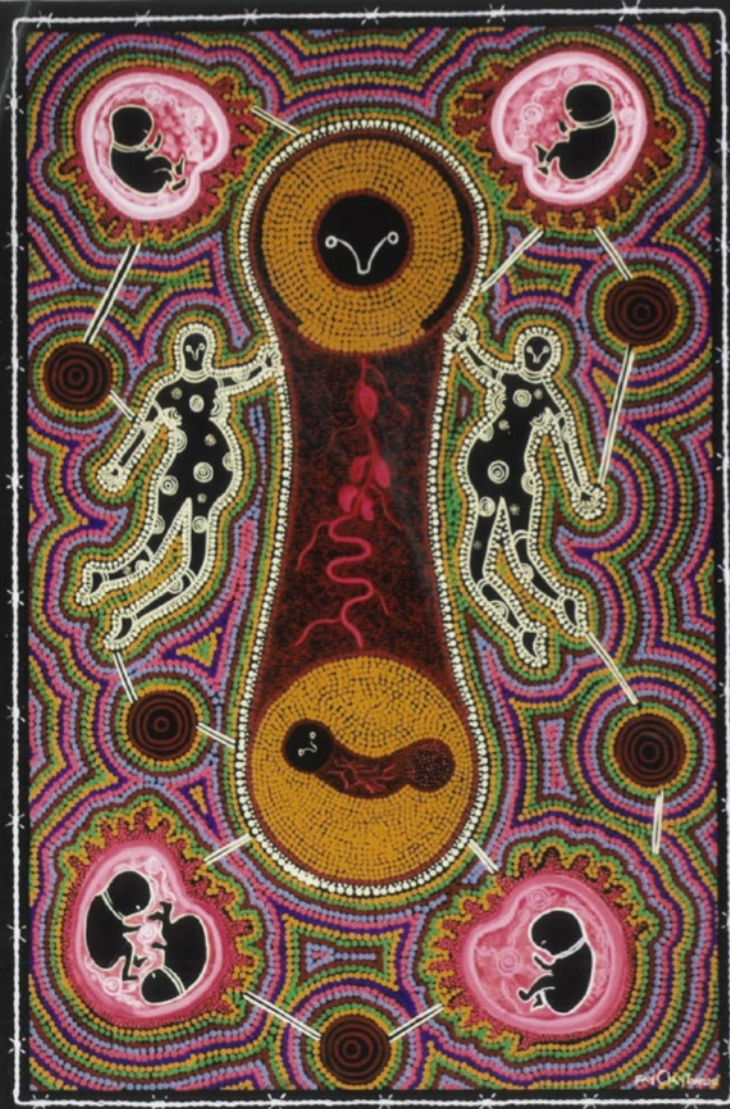


Cootamundra Girls Home, 2017

After four years and nine months of training at the home and going to Cootamundra High School, where she was enrolled in 1D, the "lowest" class, Aunty Fay was placed as a domestic on several farms. She ran away from them all, finally ending up in a doctor's residence in Sydney.

With the encouragement of Aunty Val Weldon, Aunty Fay decided to train as a nurse and, after passing an entrance exam, began her training in 1963 at Prince Alfred Hospital, Newtown. She went on to have 20 years, on and off, in hospitals and nursing homes.

It was during this time in Sydney that Aunty Fay's brother, Cecil, visited her at the hospital and told her that their mum, Lily, lived just down the road and to come for a visit. Aunty Fay told us she was very reluctant to go as she felt disconnected with her family, especially after all the lies that were told to her and the fact that they had been separated for so long.



Disconnection (2012) Fay Clayton

“Being a member of the Stolen Generation not only means disconnection from family but also disconnection from Mother Earth, Country and Culture.”

- AUNTY FAY CLAYTON

She was eventually made to go by her brother and his mate who “chucked me over his shoulder” and took her to see her mum. Finally, after nine years of separation, Aunty Fay got to meet her mother.

Aunty Fay and her mum, who was very sick at the time, would talk about memories of home - of her mum being driven to Wagga Wagga to sing on a request program on the local radio station, of swimming in the channels on the way to and from school if it was hot, of her mum working in the cannery and that they always had a “smorgasbord of fruit” from the cans that were dented.

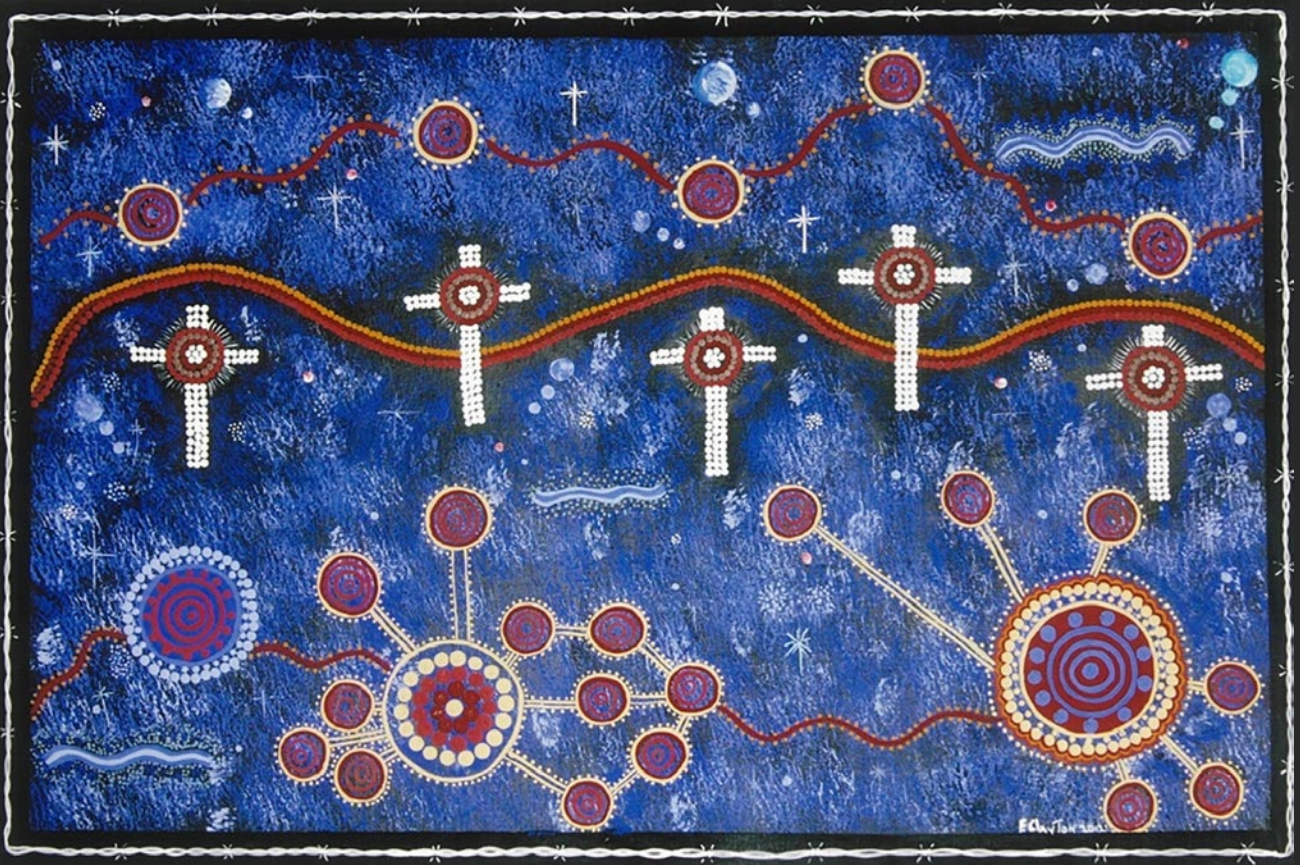


Precious Memories (2012) Fay Clayton

“Fond memories of a loving and nurturing mother before we were taken.”

- AUNTY FAY CLAYTON

Aunty Fay's mum and dad had separated a couple of years after their children's removal as her mother was so depressed and traumatised by the event. Her mum passed two years after their first meeting and, after having a reunion with her dad at her mum's funeral, he passed the following year. Aunty Fay said that she had married by that time and had her first child, Michelle. She told us that "all six siblings got to see and meet our parents before they passed away".



Hills of Remembrance (2012) Fay Clayton

"A lot of my precious memories are surrounded by hills. As a child I learned about the Hills of Gallilee in church, I lived at Wattle Hill in Leeton and for a time at the Sand Hills in Narrandera. The Coota Girls Home is also situated on a hill in Cootamundra. The painting depicts my family and our journey through life, with the crosses representing my loved ones who have passed, mum and dad, brothers and sister, now at rest on the hill in the sky."

- AUNTY FAY CLAYTON



SARAH YARNS WITH AUNTY FAY

I asked Aunty Fay what it was like to be part of the Stolen Generation and how it had impacted on her family, then and now.

Aunty Fay said that, of the six children taken, four are now deceased, one older and three younger than her. She said that in the Cootamundra Girls Home, all her family were “not allowed to talk to each other and were kept separate from each other”. Her two brothers were sent to Kinchela Boys Home when they turned five and that it was worse than being in jail. Aunty Fay said that “they did some terrible things to her brothers” and she feels that both died at an early age as a result of the trauma they experienced at Kinchela.

Aunty Fay told me that she was taken away from her family when she was only ten years old and, when aged fourteen years and nine months, she got her first job as a domestic on a farm. However, she ran away after three months and was then placed at a farm in Cooma. She ran away again, through the snow, after only one month. Her next placement was in Young, but again she ran away after twelve months before being sent to Sydney to work in a doctor's residence. In Sydney she started nursing, aged eighteen, but was only allowed to "move around and leave the home when she turned twenty one."

Aunty Fay told me she also had jobs in Juvenile Justice and with DOCS (Department of Community Services). In one instance, she was asked to remove some children from a family. She told those in charge at DOCS that "I can't take a child because of what happened to me". Because of her insistence that this wasn't the best thing to do for the children, the family was given an opportunity to mend their ways.





Mother Proof Fence (2012) Fay Clayton

“This was the fence on the hill at Coota Girls Home that separated us from our loved ones. At every opportunity I would take my younger sisters to the fence and gaze out across the township and the hills beyond, hoping and praying that our mother would come and take us home.”

- AUNTY FAY CLAYTON

Aunty Fay said that being taken away created “inter-generational trauma,” as it not only affected her and her immediate family at that time, but also influenced her own children and grandchildren. “What I went through impacted on my children” and had a “rolling effect across generations” that needed to be addressed by on-going counselling.

When she got married and had children of her own, she worked “seven days a week to give my children everything I did not have, but I never gave them me.” To help address this trauma, Aunty Fay said that they have recently opened up the Coota Girls Corporation so that their daughters and granddaughters can become members. The Corporation runs mother daughter care programs with counsellors present.



Aunty Fay said that she only went home to Leeton fourteen years ago to meet her family but most had passed over. She said separation was “really sad” but added, “If we as Australians all formed one group and spoke up loud together, we would get the parliament to address all our needs. But because they’ve separated us so much, it’s very hard to get together and talk to government and get them to listen to us, because they always say they know what’s best for us, but they don’t.”

“We’re trying to change that now by saying (to the government) that you’ve got to give us our own legs to stand on.”



Aunty Fay told me about a series of paintings she did in 2012 for the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Home Centenary Exhibition that showed the impact of what had happened to her. All the paintings are framed in barbed wire. One of the paintings was of Kevin Rudd, then Prime Minister of Australia, flying over Cootamundra Girls Home with barbed wire-cutters to set them free.



Aunty Fay showed us a print of the painting signed by Kevin Rudd

SARAH REFLECTS

After talking with Aunty Fay, Sarah said, “Aunty Fay is an incredibly strong Wiradjuri woman who cares for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous kids. She is very respectful and considerate to all people but especially to those who went through the same experiences as her. She really inspires me, especially her advice that ‘education, education, education’ is the most important thing and ‘no boys until you know what you want.’ I really admire her!”





MELODIE YARNS WITH AUNTY FAY

I asked Aunty Fay about her childhood memories and what impact did her and her five sisters and brothers' removal have on the rest of her family.

Aunty Fay recalled that she had a happy childhood “swimming, catching fish and yabbies in the channels and canals” around her home and on the weekends “we would pick fruit, tomatoes, veggies for pocket money”. She was surrounded by family – mum and dad, grandparents, uncles and aunts – and was always guided by Elders. “We had a very good life growing up in Leeton.”

Aunty Fay said that the police and welfare officers took them away as they were walking to school, even though the local authorities had requested an exemption for them. “Nan owned the house we lived in” and her parents both worked, so it was a totally unexpected event as they had “no reason to take us”.

She said her mum went into a deep depression after their removal and that she didn’t get to see her mum again until she was eighteen or nineteen. “My parents weren’t allowed to see us in the home,” she said. Even though she wrote letters, she never received a reply as they weren’t allowed to receive any mail at the home.



Aunty Fay points to a print of her painting, “Home before the homes” that she painted to show her happy and supportive childhood.

At the Cootamundra Girls Home (which was previously a hospital) if anyone mucked up they were locked up in the morgue and not given any food, only bread and water. Aunty Fay said that her Christian belief gave her strength during these times and she attributes this to the Grant family and attending church in Leeton as a youngster. Other girls, however, suffered as they were scared of “ghosts and spirits”. Aunty Fay emphasised, “There was no happiness there.”

However, Aunty Fay explained that she has broken away from her earlier traumatic experiences and pays tribute to Lorraine Peters, who gave her the means and motivation to do this – ‘Because of Her We Can’. With Lorraine and five other ‘strong women’, Aunty Fay helped start the Coota Girls Corporation. It is now a fully-funded independent organisation.



**“Because of her, We can.”
Lorraine Peters.
Aunty Fay (2012)**

“Lorraine empowered us with her strength, courage and knowledge, so that we could be what we wanted to be.” Surrounding the painting are these words – be caring, be wealthy, be healthy, be good parents, be hard working, be loyal, be winners, be teachers, be empathetic, be proud, be strong, be leaders, be forgiving, be kind, be generous.

MELODIE REFLECTS

Aunty Fay told me that she has undertaken study in computers and public speaking so that she can “voice my own opinions and tell our stories and become a voice for all the Stolen Generation.”

After having a yarn with Aunty Fay, Melodie said, “Aunty Fay is a strong but calm women who told us this very sad story of her young life. She really inspires me to do my best and never give up on my work like they made her do.”





GEORGIA YARNS WITH AUNTY FAY

I was amazed by Aunty Fay's art work and asked her what inspired her when she was painting.

Aunty Fay explained that her "mum was a good artist and taught us all to paint, including my brothers". She added that her Indian great grandfather, who came from Madras, was also an artist but in a different style.



Aunt Fay said, "All my paintings tell a story. Whether they are about traditional stuff or faces or mermaids, they all tell a story."

She has paintings all over Australia and the world, including some in the National Museum of Australia. Baz Luhrmann owns one and she has had several successful exhibitions in various galleries.

Aunty Fay told me she is currently working on pieces for an exhibition in Albury about “the rivers and how they have been destroyed.”

Aunty Fay showed me some of her artwork and explained their meanings.



Mud map of Coota Homes (2012) Fay Clayton

Aunty Fay points out how she used traditional dots and explained the ‘mud map’ to all of us.

GEORGIA REFLECTS

After yarning with Aunty Fay, Georgia comments, “It’s inspiring how Aunty Fay is such a great artist but it is also sad that she was taken away from her mum and dad. She is a wonderful person to all young Indigenous and non-Indigenous kids and is a loving and caring person to everyone, despite what she has been through. An amazing person!”



Aunty Fay with one of her artworks. (Tim Hancock, ABC News)

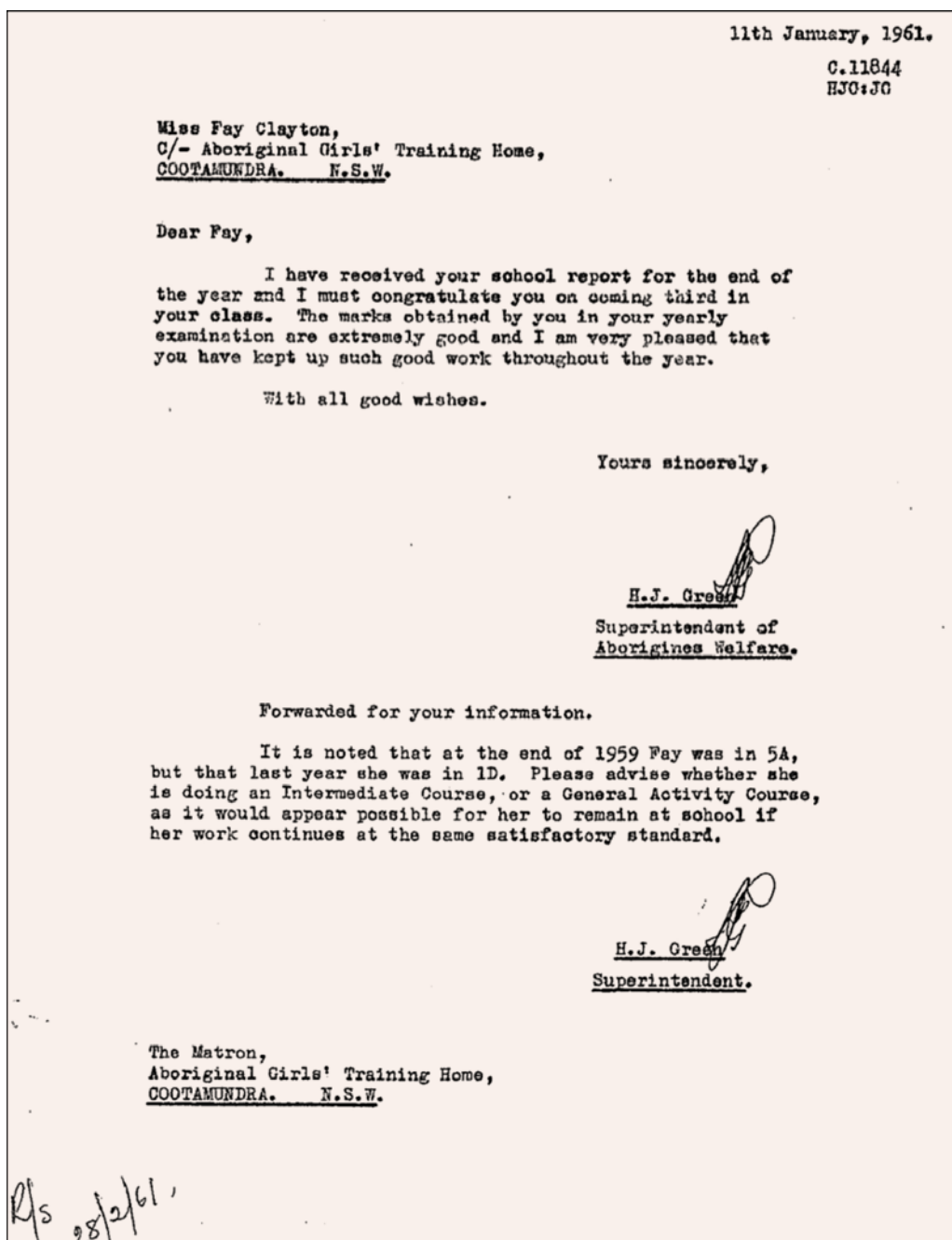


JERCHANA YARNS WITH AUNTY FAY

I asked Aunty Fay about her nursing career and how she became an Elder. I was also interested in her family's achievements and whether she had any advice to give us.

Aunty Fay told me that, with Aunty Val Weldon's encouragement, the Welfare included her in a training program that led to her passing the Nurses Entrance Exam. She was trained for 12 months on-site at Prince Alfred Hospital Sydney and it was all "hands on". She told me that she thought it was sad that nurses were trained at universities now, as she felt that they "forgot that patient-nurse relationship." So, for twenty years, on or off, Aunty Fay nursed as well as being involved in other areas, including Juvenile Justice and DOCS.

Aunty Fay told me that she was denied an education at Cootamundra and was placed in 1D, the lowest class at high school, despite having good grades in primary school. She said that “Matron decided if you were allowed to sit for the Intermediate Certificate” and, as Aunty Fay was known as a “trouble maker” because she protected her younger sisters, she wasn’t allowed to continue her education. However, Aunty Fay said you learn most by “caring and sharing”.



In later years, Aunty Fay researched her educational records and found this letter addressed to her.

Aunty Fay is proud of her children's achievements and also those of her grandchildren. She told me about one of her grandchildren who is training as a doctor and another who is going into nursing.

Aunty Fay's advice was summed up in three words – "Education! Education! Education! With an education you can do anything and go anywhere." She also told us all to finish high school and be independent people before we get boyfriends! Aunty Fay told us to "think about what you want and where you want to go".

Aunty Fay said that being an Elder came with age and knowledge and it was this knowledge that you had to pass on to children.



JERCHANA REFLECTS

Jerchana said, “Aunty Fay loved being a nurse but also loved working in the community. She had great advice for the future – that ‘education’ is the key. Aunty Fay is proud of her children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews and is a loving and caring person to all she meets. She has overcome many bad moments in her life and is an inspiration!”



End of the Line (2012) Fay Clayton

“This painting depicts Cootamundra as the end of the line for us girls who travelled by rail from various parts of NSW. We were told we were going to the circus, to the shops for lollies etc. But we all ended up at Cootamundra Girls Home.”

- AUNTY FAY CLAYTON



A MESSAGE FROM AUNTY FAY

“I am a Wiradjuri woman who now lives in Wagga Wagga after coming back from Sydney to reconnect with my family. My love of art has been a constant part of my life and I still paint and exhibit both locally and internationally. My art helps me deal with the traumas of the past and helps me to continue moving on each day. My art heals my past hurts.”



**BECAUSE OF HER,
We Can!**

8-15 JULY 2018



Jerchana Williams, Sarah Parker, Melodie Warner and Georgia Hampton

BECAUSE OF HER, WE CAN!

This booklet was developed as part of the Petaurus Education Group's cultural program with funding from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. Design and layout was provided by PeekDesigns.

