

SWAN Supporting First Nations Group Newsletter, February 2021

SWAN's Supporting First Nations group has been most active since the last newsletter! Our social justice work in relation to Indigenous people comprised both local engagement and broader advocacy. Please contact us if you would like to know more about any of the items below or are interested in joining the group.

Engagement with local First Nations People:

- SFN members supported the events held by *Willum Warrain, Aboriginal Gathering Place* at Hastings over 25th and 26th January by attending, liaising with organisers and catering for the morning tea. Thanks to all those who helped and supported Willum Warrain members mourning of colonial invasion and taking pride in survival and openness to reconciliation, across the themes of 'Change the Heart' and 'Change the Date'.
- Also on 26th January, SWAN supported *Nairm Marr Djambana, Aboriginal Gathering Place* at Frankston by attending / volunteering at the Briar's 'Our Survival' Event, co-organised by *Our Songlines*. One of the highlights was the powerful lyrics of Indigenous musician, Mitch Tambo, in condemnation of violence against women.
- Just before the end of 2020, SFN made a submission, in support of *Willum Warrain's* expansion, to the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council Master Plan process.
- We have recently sought and received *Bunurong Land Council's* approval of our draft *Truth-Telling Resource* which will aid SWAN members to further challenge ignorance and racism in respect of First Nations people.
- Liaison with MPSC *Warringinee Group Team* Leader, Deb Mellett continues in response to specific requests for support, and will no doubt be heightened as we begin to respond to the Shire's Reconciliation Action Plan.

Advocacy supporting broader Indigenous issues:

- Following SWAN's NAIDOC week event with speaker, Teela Reid, on The Uluru Statement From the Heart, we have written letters lobbying politicians at all levels, including letters to all local councillors in support of the three pillars of The Statement: Voice, Treaty and Truth-telling. We have also been busy building alliances with new Mornington Peninsula women councillors. We plan to build the momentum this year in many practical ways, particularly involving SWAN members in the truth-telling action mentioned above.
- Letters from SWAN members in support of truth-telling about our colonial past and respect for the ancient culture first occupying this land, certainly dominated the local *Letters to the Editor* page of the Mornington News in the two weeks late January to early February!
- What does the word 'Sorrento' evoke to you? Historic buildings, beautiful beach, the ferry to Queenscliff...? Signage below provides some indication of how, from the end of the 18th C. the way of life of the Bunurong / Boon Wurrung was affected by the arrival of Europeans.

From the end of the eighteenth century, this way of life was threatened by the arrival of Europeans. Boonwurrung people came into contact with sealers and they saw ships and sailors from the explorations of Murray, Flinders and Robbins.

Violence soon followed. The sealers abducted Boonwurrung women from the coastline and introduced diseases with such shocking results that populations began to fall. The first recorded frontier clash in Victoria between Aboriginal people and the British occurred close to this place on 14 February 1802. Men from John Murray's *Lady Nelson* fired on and killed Boonwurrung men who tried to resist their landing.

Relations between the 1803-4 settlers at this site and the local people were marked by suspicion. Boonwurrung men and women were wary. Collins made little attempt to treat the people with kindness and friendship. He was concerned that they might threaten his settlement.

The Collins settlement is of great importance to Boonwurrung people as a symbol of the British invasion of Victoria. In this way, it is also a symbol of the tragic consequences - population decline, the loss of the land and damage to an ancient heritage - suffered by the people in the years that followed.

Still at the broader level - but especially relevant to SWAN as a women's group - a new report, *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices)*, was released in December 2020 by the United Nations Human Rights Commission. It can be reached online by searching by the name of the report, or: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/wiyi-yani-u-thangani>

Upcoming Events and activities of interest:

- March 13th: Womin Djeka Event at Balnarring Beach
<https://balnarringfestival.com.au/>
- March 27th: Willum Warrain's 7th Birthday Event at Hastings.
- Currently screening at Rosebud Cinema: *High Country*

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SWAN Supporting First Nations Group Newsletter, April 2021

Since our last newsletter, when we were moved to stand up for our local Aboriginal community who want the date of 'Australia Day' changed, there has been plenty of celebrating in terms of First Nations culture. In March, there was the Womin Djeka Festival event at Balnarring where people from all walks of life enjoyed Indigenous culture, art, and music. On the day, a number of SWAN members were lucky enough to catch the inspiring address by Boon Wurrung Elder, Carolyn Briggs. There was also the fascinating evening under the stars at Willum Warrain Aboriginal Gathering Place, learning about traditional plants (see below) and their uses, often by the women; then Willum Warrain's 7th Birthday party where we met many local First Nations people, listened to the words of Bunurong Elders and shared a meal. Thank you to the SWAN members who took along salads (to accompany the barbecued kangaroo tails!). Both events were well-attended too by Mornington Shire Councillors with a good number of councillors now recognising the value of such events in promoting reconciliation. SWAN women may have caught Taneisha

Webster, Executive Officer of Women's Business at Willum Warrain, speaking on the Mornington Peninsula Shire's International Women's Day panel.

Just when you think things are changing, you learn of another 5 deaths in custody or you are at a social event, as I was recently, when one of the guests announced in a derogatory tone 'Aboriginals are all half-castes'! Aside from being untrue, what about acknowledging the causal factor -systemic sexual abuse of Aboriginal women by colonisers? No doubt SWAN members sometimes encounter similar untruths of a racist nature and likewise do their best to confront them. We are very keen to support members in this kind of advocacy and will, in May, launch a Truth-Telling Resource incorporating information that helps dispel such misconceptions and untruths. Reconciliation Victoria have recommended this type of localised truth-telling focusing on historical injustices perpetrated on the local Country where one lives.

Look out for this resource, and for a range of activities we have planned for the next few months, like a Guided Cultural Walk conducted by Living Culture at the Briars. With Reconciliation Week approaching (27/5 to 3/6), then NAIDOC week in July and, of course, the recent announcement of the Victorian Truth and Justice Commission process, *Yoo-rrook*, we believe the time is right for us all to be aware of past and present injustices against First Nations people. *Yoo-rrook* means 'truth'.

In April, a number of group members made sure that SWAN took the opportunity to add our voice to submissions calling on the national co-design process to respect First Nations people's call for Truth, Treaty and Voice.

Thank you too to the SWAN members who participated in our call to add their names to the petition / pledge demanding equality in Indigenous health as part of the Close the Gap Campaign in March. A further thank you to those who voted in the Mornington Peninsula Council renaming of Black Camp pre-school, now *Tilerkite* Preschool meaning 'play' and Black Camp Reserve now *Beek Beek* meaning 'earth -many lands'.

For all those members keen to increase their knowledge of culture and truth in relation to First Nations people, look out for the release of the Truth-Telling Resource in May and the dates for the first Guided Walk with Living Culture. You may be interested in the book, *Truth-telling* by Henry Reynolds, available at the Mornington Peninsula library.

And check out the beautiful MPSC Aboriginal street artwork nearest to you, at:

<https://artsandculture.mornpen.vic.gov.au/nbn-aboriginal-artwork-project/>

Lastly, on Anzac Day, spare a thought also for the First Nations Anzacs who lost their lives, and the returned Anzacs who were denied the benefits that accrued to non-Indigenous soldiers. <https://www.deadlystory.com/page/culture/articles/anzac-day-2018>

Artwork from Aboriginal Gathering Place, Willum Warrain's, fantastic new t-shirts.



SWAN Supporting First Nations Group Newsletter, June 2021

SWAN warmly congratulates Kayla Cartledge, a proud Gurindji Woman and Founder of 'Our Songlines' on winning the 2021 HART Award. This annual Award was launched in 2014 by Reconciliation Victoria in partnership with the Victorian Local Governance Association. It recognises local governments and community organisations that are 'Helping Achieve Reconciliation Together'. The focus is on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians peoples working together to build relationships, respect and understanding and demonstrate a commitment to Aboriginal self-determination.

'Our Songlines' won the Community Organisation category for initiating the 'Our Survival' event at 'The Briars' that was held on 26 January. The event, co-sponsored by Nairm Marr Djambana Aboriginal Association, provided an opportunity for First Nations communities and non-Indigenous peoples to celebrate together after being separated for many months due to COVID restrictions. It was attended by a number of SWAN members.

'Our Songlines' was founded to educate people on Indigenous Australian history, current events and culture. It is an educational platform that aims to build understanding of Indigenous culture, help non-Indigenous people learn about Indigenous teachings and build reconciliation within Australia. <https://oursonglines.com/>

Mabo – the movie

If you have not yet seen 'Mabo' the full length movie that recounts the story of one of Australia's national heroes – Eddie Koiki Mabo you can find it now on iview. This is an inspirational story of the Torres Strait Islander who left school at age 15 and spearheaded what became a 10 year battle with High Court to overturn the concept of *terra nullius* and recognise native title. Directed by Rachel Perkins. Starring Jimi Bani and Deborah Mailman.

<https://iview.abc.net.au/show/mabo>

SWAN Supporting First Nations Group Newsletter, July 2021

Thanks to all those who braved the cold to attend our NAIDOC week meeting on Sunday. We were indeed fortunate to have Aunty Helen Bnads as our guest speaker. She is a highly respected First Nations Elder on the Mornington Peninsula, who has dedicated her life's work to enhancing the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and advocating for justice.

Aunty Helen's moving address centred on the Uluru Statement From the Heart, integrating the eloquent words of this historic statement with the harsh realities of life experienced by First Nations people today. In conclusion, she humbly asked for our support to ensure that the Federal Government **calls a referendum** to allow the Australian people to vote on the **constitutional enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament**.

Some resources

1. A **video of Aunty Helen's presentation** will be uploaded onto the SWAN YouTube channel in the coming days and we will send you the link.
2. The **reading material** that Aunty Helen recommended is as follows:
 - *'Radical Heart'* by Shireen Morris. Three stories make us one. "An individual pilgrimage by a non-Aboriginal Australian into the heart of Aboriginal hope". Thomas Keneally.
 - *'The Forgotten People'* by Damien Freeman and Shireen Morris. Liberal and Conservative approaches to recognising Indigenous peoples. "*The Forgotten People* fills me with great pride and immense hope". Noel Pearson.
 - *'Finding Our Heart'* by Thomas Mayor. Illustrated by Blak Douglas. A Story about the Uluru Statement for Young Australians. A book about understanding Australia's past, so we can have a shared future.
3. A link to the poem entitled 'Standing on the Shoulders by Joyce Johnson Rouse, that Aunty Helen shared with us is below: https://www.songsforteaching.com/earthmama-joycerouse/love_s/09standingontheshoulders.pdf
4. Aunty Helen also mentioned the **video that she made for Peninsula Health entitled "An Introduction to Australian Indigenous History"**. In 35 minutes this video covers many Indigenous topics including Traditional Australia, the European Perspective, Missions, Political events and Peninsula Health and the local community. A great way to improve your knowledge in just half an hour.
<https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiGpqje1ITxAhV8xTgGHRyhD18QwqsBMAB6BAgJEAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DI-fWSNxOmfk&usg=AOvVaw0Y0XRiiPM4TTct8WY2bFIj>

Proposed actions from the NAIDOC meeting

Following this very moving address, Erica invited the audience to share ideas about how we might respond to Aunty Helen's request. We discussed the Government's Indigenous Voice Co-design process and the fact that 90% of the submissions from more than 3000 individuals, community organisations, corporations, universities, as well as First Nations people, supported constitutional recognition. An excellent **update on the co-design process** and a summary analysis of the Interim Report submissions can be accessed here: "Expert

Analysis of Indigenous Voice Co-design: What did the public say?"

<https://www.indigenous.unsw.edu.au/expert-analysis-indigenous-voice-co-design-what-did-public-say>

We considered this in relation to recent **articles in 'The Age' and 'Sydney Morning Herald'** that Ken Wyatt, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, 'claims that there is not yet enough support to move towards constitutional recognition'. A statement that is simply not true.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/half-measures-won-t-do-on-the-voice-minister-australians-have-spoken-20210707-p587on.html>

In light of this discussion the following actions were proposed that:

1. **SWAN write to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Indigenous Australians** refuting the Minister's claim as reported by the media on 8 July, and including a copy of SWAN's submission in response to the Indigenous Voice Co-design Interim Report. [Motion proposed by Diane McDonald and seconded by Val Campbell].
2. **SWAN send copies of the above letter and submission** to parliamentary committees (eg. the Senate Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs; the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights) with copies to selected parliamentarians in all major parties and the cross benches. (Eg. The Member for Flinders Greg Hunt (MP); The Member for Dunkley, Peta Murphy (MHR); The Leader of the Greens Party Leader, Adam Bandt (MHR); Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians, Lynda Burney (MHR) and Senator Pat Dodson).
3. **SWAN contact community radio** seeking an interview to report on our NAIDOC week event and the matters outlined above.
4. **SWAN members write letters to the media** including 'The Mornington Peninsula News' and 'The Age', 'The Herald Sun' and 'The Australian' expressing support for a Referendum to enable the Australian people to vote on the constitutional enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

The attached video from The Australian Conservation Foundation provides some useful tips on 'Writing Letters to the Editor'.

https://www.acf.org.au/letters_to_the_editor_training_resources?utm_campaign=2101_e_pbcreportletters&utm_medium=email&utm_source=auscon

Suggestions include:

- Keep it short and simple (KISS).
 - Make it personal and/or local
 - Don't defame anyone
 - Feel free to try humour, but avoid sarcasm
 - Check spelling, grammar and clarity before you send
 - Include your name, address and daytime phone number in case the editor wants to follow up.
5. **SWAN members talk with family, friends and in personal networks** about the Uluru Statement From the Heart and the importance of enshrining an Indigenous Voice in the

Australian Constitution. Ask them to add their names to the From the Heart Canvas:
<https://fromtheheart.com.au/signtheulurustatementcanvas/>

6. **SWAN members continue to engage in Truth-Telling**, spreading information about past and current day injustices experienced by First Nations peoples. One example is to donate children's books about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to primary schools in our area. SWAN's Truth-Telling Resource provides some other suggestions that may be of interest.
7. SWAN members are encouraged to respond to the request from respected First Nations Elder, Aunty Patsy Smith to **support local Aboriginal businesses**. Contact details for some of these businesses can be found via the following link:
<https://www.livingculture.org.au/network/>

And finally

a) For those who might not have seen it a copy of the **SWAN response to the Interim Report of the Indigenous Voice Co-design process** is available at:

<https://swanwomen.org.au/info/first-nations-people/>

b) If you are looking for inspiration on what to say in your letters to parliamentarians and/or in your discussions with friends and family about constitutional recognition listen to the **2021 Mabo Oration given by Professor Megan Davis: Voice is the last step in the Mabo settlement**. <https://www.indigenous.unsw.edu.au/2021-mabo-oration-professor-megan-davis>

Addressing the legacy of Mabo and the failure to deliver a full social justice package in response, Professor Davis outlined why the Uluru Statement is our opportunity to make good on the promise of the Mabo High Court decision. ^[1]~~[5]~~ This is a powerful reminder of the opportunity before us and what we must do now to realise the promise of a First Nations Voice to Parliament protected by the Constitution.

We will keep you updated on SWAN's progress on the above actions. In the meantime, if you have any comments or questions please let us know via this email address.

Thanks to everyone who contributed suggestions for this action.

Erica Churchill (Facilitator) and Diane McDonald (Supporting First Nations group)