

Highlights from Wed Dec 8, 2021 (online)

Talking Merri Birrarung:

Caring for Country where the Merri flows into Birrarung (Yarra River) (Part 1)



Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

&

Merri Creek Management Committee

Supported by Yarra City Council *Investing in Community Partnership Grants.*



Photo: Birrarung (Yarra River) near the
confluence with Merri Creek (2021)

(A. Foley)

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People as the Traditional Custodians of the un-ceded land and waters of the Merri Merri

December 8, 2021: Conversation Highlights

In 2018 Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) and Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) received an *Investing in Community Partnerships* Grant from Yarra City Council. The goal was to promote the cultural and ecological values and stories face-to-face where the Merri runs into Birrarung around Abbotsford, in Melbourne.

In December 2021 as part of our COVID-19 response, we reconsidered our original goals and went online on 8th December. An online conversation is not the same as a walk, so the following material is based on the framework of our conversation.

Indigenous rights to their stories and cultural information is important to respect. MCMC won't be posting the recorded conversation until we reach such an agreement. In the meantime, please think of the following slides as stepping-stones: They take you towards some cultural and ecological connections on Wurundjeri Country where the Merri runs into Birrarung.

In conversation

Uncle Dave Wandin is a Wurundjeri Elder, educator and spokesperson. He led Wurundjeri Council's first Narrap (Country) Conservation & Land Management Team. He is the first Wurundjeri Fire Elder, currently the Birrarung Council Member for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC), & he is the Chairperson of Wandoon Estate, Coranderrk.

Angela Foley is a non-Indigenous educator and geographer for Merri Creek Management Committee. MCMC is a 30 year old not-for-profit organisation focused on Caring for Country by advocating for the protection of indigenous biodiversity. She contributes to the coordination of MCMC's community engagement and education program across school, community and Industry sectors.

Together, Uncle Dave Wandin and Angela Foley have worked on a variety of projects for 12 years, addressed conferences, spoken on 3KnD Radio and recently published a collaborative paper for an archaeological journal:

https://opal.latrobe.edu.au/articles/conference_contribution/In_the_fine_grain_Intimate_materials_and_experimental_archaeology_on_Wurundjeri_Country_today/17046161



Photo A Foley

Welcome to Country: From Uncle Dave Wandin



Photo: Tom Crawshaw (Nov 2021)

Caring for Country Together at Merri Birrarung

Partnership Grant from Yarra Council 2016: *Merri Yarra Biik: Strengthening the Merri Yarra Confluence area environmentally & culturally* (MCMC & WWCHAC) led to a new project in 2017.



Auntie Alice Kolasa, Uncle Colin Hunter and Uncle Dave Wandin around Merri Birrarung May 2016

(Photo: A Foley)



Bark removal site selected and DELWP permit 2017

(Photo: A Foley)

At Merri Birrarung: Ceremonies and partnerships



At Merri Birrarung: Darren Wandin and Uncle Bill Nicholson (left); Community Partnership event (centre); Uncle Dave Wandin (right) (Photos: A Foley)

Encountering Merri Birrarung: Indigenous culture & biodiversity, urban stormwater, geology, engineering, freshwater ecology, history, and more.



Planting indigenous grasses at Merri Birrarung and sharing stories

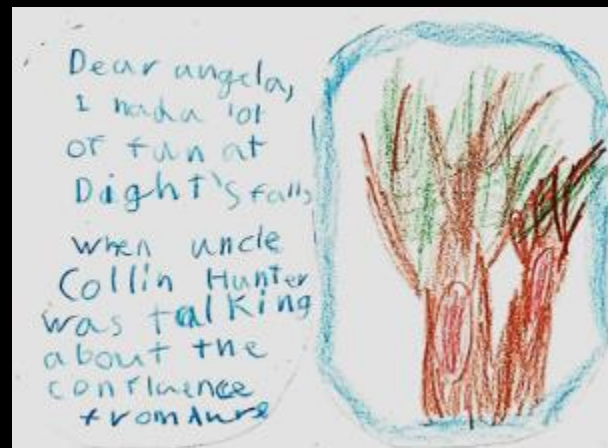


Planting with newly scarred trees (Photo: A Foley 2016)



Uncle Colin Hunter at Merri Birrarung with students from Richmond West Primary School (Photo: J Cirillo 2017)

Merri Birrarung: A confluence of learning



Far left: Intercultural Art Studio 2015

Top right: Uncle Colin Hunter with students March 2017

Bottom right: Student letter of thanks 2017

(Photos: A Foley)

Caring for Country

Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Bill 2017:

Aunty Alice Kolasa addressed Victorian Parliament with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung elders in Woi-wurrung language and English to explain their connection with the Yarra River and the importance of protecting it for generations to come prior to the introduction of the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Bill 2017.

NAIDOC Week 2021 theme:

‘Heal Country’ <https://www.naidoc.org.au/get-involved/2021-theme>

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK 2021:

“ ‘More than a word. Reconciliation takes action’, asks people to take awareness and knowledge, and use it as springboard to be more substantive, be actively brave. And to be effective, it must involve truth-telling.”

<https://nrw.reconciliation.org.au/more-than-a-word-reconciliation-takes-action/>

Yarra City Council’s Yana Ngargna Plan 2020-23 refers to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung’s continuing connection to culture, country and identity. www.yarracity.vic.gov.au



<https://www.wurundjeri.com.au/our-story/recent-history-present/>

<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/news/3780-aboriginal-elders-address-legislative-assembly>

Six layers of Country* at Merri Birrarung

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country in six layers:

1. Biik-ut (English: Below Country)
2. Biik-dui (English: On Country)
3. Baanj/baan Biik (English: Water Country)
4. Murnmut Biik (English: Wind Country)
5. Wurru wurru Biik (English: Sky Country)
6. Tharangalk Biik (English: Forest Country)

*From: Mandy Nicholson (2021). Baban darrang: The mother tree. In *Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women of the Yarra Ranges* (p. 7). Yarra Shire Ranges Council.

Ngoon godjin (thank you)

