

Yarning Time

Issue 19: August 2023



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



Welcome to the nineteenth issue of *Yarning Time* for the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).

Yarning is a term used by Aboriginal people that means talking and sharing stories.

We are pleased to bring you a special issue showcasing the department's commitment to two significant cultural events, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

Thank you to everyone involved in putting together activities and events throughout the State and those who participated.

Please have a read and enjoy.

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Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions respectfully acknowledges all Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters it manages, and recognises their continuing connection to land, water and community.

Reconciliation Week

Saturday 27 May marked the start of National Reconciliation Week 2023.

This year's theme, **Be a voice for generations**, urged all Australians to use their power, their words and their actions to create a better, more just Australia for all of us.

Reconciliation Week also reminds us we can each learn more and do more when it comes to engagement with Aboriginal people and their cultures.

DBCA has long been committed to partnering with Aboriginal people, which has significantly strengthened our abilities in land and sea conservation and allowed us to better protect Aboriginal cultural heritage values. The department currently has 18 formal joint management partnerships with Traditional Owner groups across Western Australia.

As these relationships grow and develop, and as we continue on our journey of mutual learning, our ability to care for and conserve our natural environment will only increase.



Opening ceremony and launch of the DBCA internal Aboriginal engagement hub – Kensington

To celebrate Reconciliation Week at DBCA, the Aboriginal Engagement and Heritage Unit (AEHU) hosted a screening of Reconciliation Australia's WA Reconciliation Week Virtual Breakfast (BYO breakfast) in the Kensington central atrium on Thursday 25 May.

Following the screening, Luke Bentley (Manager Aboriginal Engagement, Planning and Lands branch) acting as the MC, introduced Elder Vaughan McGuire who delivered a beautifully moving Welcome to Country.

A/Deputy Director General Fran Stanley proceeded to address staff to officially open Reconciliation Week and launch a new internal resource to help staff with cultural learning.

The [Aboriginal engagement hub](#) offers resources and information on how DBCA partners with Aboriginal Traditional Owners, provides employment and training opportunities, and manages relevant strategies and legislation.



Kensington display

DBCA RAP champions put together a display for staff to enjoy during Reconciliation Week, showcasing some of the new Aboriginal engagement resources available to staff and important cultural books provided by the DBCA Library.

Articles by AEHU



Reconciliation Week street banner project

DBCA sponsored a banner in the Reconciliation Week street banner project.

For 12 years, the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries has coordinated the street banner project, displaying hundreds of banners sponsored by organisations, in prominent locations across Western Australia.

This year the DBCA banner was located at Yagan Square.



Article by AEHU

Wadjemup Museum exhibition opening – Rottneest Island Authority

In honour of National Reconciliation Week 2023, the Rottneest Island Authority (RIA) hosted a documentary screening and panel discussion focusing on acknowledgment of Wadjemup/Rottneest Island and its significant connections to Aboriginal peoples. The event began with a Welcome to Country by Noongar Elder Walter McGuire, before RIA Executive Director Jason Banks addressed the gathering and reinforced the Authority's commitment to reconciliation.

Dr Glen Stasiuk was invited to introduce his film **Dandjoo: Be a Voice for Generations**, which follows the Wadjemup Aboriginal Reference Group (WARG) as they talk about the island's history as an Aboriginal prison between 1838 and 1931. The group generously shared deeply personal stories of what the island's past means to them today and how acknowledgment is an integral part of healing and reconciliation.

The documentary features part of the exhibition **Dandjoo: Be a Voice for Generations**, displayed at the Wadjemup Museum until December 2023.

Meaning 'together' in the Whadjuk Noongar language, **Dandjoo: Be a Voice for Generations** presents stories and reflections from the WARG. The exhibition includes interviews, striking photography and special artefacts shared by the six members—Pamela Thorley, Walter McGuire, Kathleen Musulin, Lindsay Dean, Casey Kickett and Brendan Moore.



Walter McGuire delivering a Welcome to Country



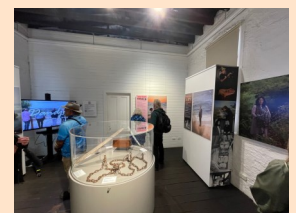
Dr Glen Stasiuk introduces his film



Left to right Walter McGuire, Brendan Moore, Pamela Thorley, Lindsay Dean and Kathleen Musulin from the Wadjemup Aboriginal Reference Group (WARG).



WARG members, Smoking Ceremony, Wadjemup



Exhibition – Photo by Rottneest Island Authority



Article by Helen Priestley, Reconciliation and Heritage Project Officer

Rivers and Estuaries' culturally inspired morning tea

During Reconciliation Week, Rivers and Estuaries scientists and managers joined forces to host a special morning tea in recognition of reconciliation.

An array of delights included bush meatballs and hot dogs, croc sausage rolls, damper and a selection of dips, cakes and condiments sporting native herbs of lemon myrtle, pepperberry, wattleseed and much, much more.

The feasting was accompanied by a short presentation celebrating our journey and pointing staff to available resources at their fingertips to go one step further.



Article by Kerry Trayler, Principal Scientist

Cultural education session, Wellington district – South West region

To celebrate Reconciliation Week, the Wellington district engaged with the Harvey Aboriginal Corporation to conduct a cultural education session and walk with staff at Korijekup Conservation Park in Harvey. The area has both registered and unregistered sites, including a historic battleground that is located just behind the Harvey work centre. Around 20 district staff participated, with Aboriginal Tour Operator Leslie Ugle leading the one hour cultural walk. The event finished with light refreshments.



Article by Robbie Jordan, Parks and Visitor Services Coordinator

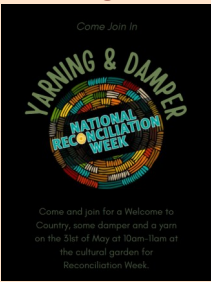
Bush themed morning tea, Blackwood district – South West region

To celebrate Reconciliation Week, the Blackwood district held a bush food themed morning tea, including a fire to sit around for a yarn and damper on a stick to celebrate Reconciliation Week. Held at the Margaret River work centre and Busselton office, it was an opportunity for staff to share a cuppa with colleagues and celebrate the reconciliation journey as individuals, a community and a department.



Article by Michelle Keppel, Ranger

Yarning in the cultural garden, Bunbury office – South West region



The Bunbury office celebrated Reconciliation Week starting with a Welcome to Country, sharing damper and yarning in the cultural garden.

Article by Ryley Clarke, Ranger

Collaborative painting – South Coast region

To recognise Reconciliation Week 2023, the South Coast region arranged for local Menang artist, Donna Williams, to facilitate a collaborative painting with our Albany based staff and share her lived experience, so that we could better understand our local history and the misjustices that occurred therein.

Following her presentation, Donna taught us how to create vibrant landscapes using just red, yellow and black paint and our fingers. The results were amazing! Feeling more confident, we began to tackle our major piece.

Donna pre-painted the stunning coloured background, but we were responsible for designing and applying the white symbols underneath; the theme was the six seasons. We split into six small groups and each group was assigned a season. We undertook research to understand what flora and fauna were around and which customary activities were traditionally undertaken during that time; then we put together a story using symbols.

Our staff were a bit trepidatious and lacked confidence—worried that they would deface an otherwise beautiful piece of art. Donna was kind and patient and built their confidence; many people were shocked at how well they did. She then shared the key lesson of the day—as we move into joint management with Noongar peoples, we need to treat people with kindness, diligently building their capacity and their confidence and they too, will do wonderful things.

Overall, this day was a lot of fun, but more than that, it gave us a reminder of the strength and resilience of First Nations peoples.



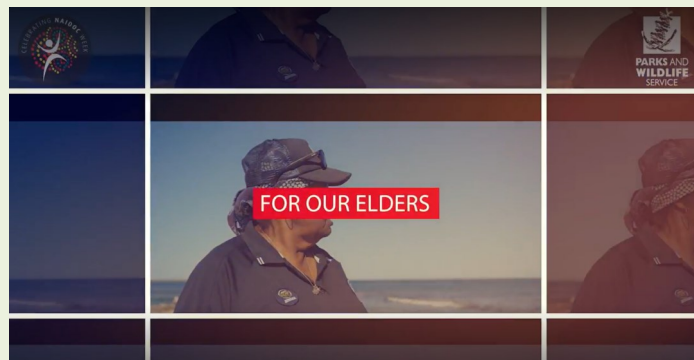
Article by Jade Malanczak, Aboriginal Engagement Coordinator

NAIDOC Week

National NAIDOC Week was held from 1–7 July 2023. NAIDOC Week is an opportunity to celebrate and recognise the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It's also a time to celebrate the many who have driven and led change in our communities over generations—they have been the heroes and champions of change, of equal rights and even basic human rights.

This year's theme is **For our Elders**, which celebrates the important role that Elders have played and continue to play in communities and families across every generation.

DBCA is committed to celebrating NAIDOC Week and acknowledges Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters it manages. DBCA also recognises the unique role and expertise Aboriginal people have and are committed to working in partnership to conserve Western Australia's biodiversity, culture, and natural values.



NAIDOC Week email signature

DBCA's Public Information and Corporate Affairs branch developed an email signature for staff to use during NAIDOC Week. The signature was developed using the NAIDOC Week approved resources and DBCA branding.



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



Parks and Wildlife Service display

The Parks and Wildlife Service held a weeklong display in the Kensington Atrium focused on this year's theme.



Articles by AEHU

Parks and Visitor Services' NAIDOC Week presentation and culturally inspired morning tea

To celebrate NAIDOC Week, Parks and Visitor Services invited staff to attend a presentation of a NAIDOC Week video developed by the department's Public Information and Corporate Affairs branch and Aboriginal Engagement and Heritage Unit: [DBCAs NAIDOC Week video: For our Elders](#).

DBCAs staff from across various regions and backgrounds were asked what an Elder means to them and about the influence they have had on their lives both professional and personally. Elders have contributed significantly to the work we do at DBCA, which has significantly strengthened our abilities in land and sea conservation and allowed us to better protect Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

The event began with a Welcome to Country performed by Whadjuk-Ballardong Noongar man Jack Collard on behalf of Whadjuk Elder Vaughn McGuire.

After viewing the NAIDOC video, staff enjoyed a culturally inspired morning tea prepared by Stephanie's Catering. Morning tea included kangaroo stew with pepper berry damper, kangaroo chorizo, lemon myrtle scones and lemon myrtle slice.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ben Ansell (A/Senior Policy Officer) who acted as MC for Peter Sharp (Executive Director, Parks and Visitor Services) for the event.



Article by AEHU

Tiahsha Hill – For Our Elders Painting

My name is Tiahsha Hill and I am a Public Sector Commission Trainee in the Aboriginal Engagement and Heritage Unit at DBCA. I am a young Yamatji/Noongar woman who was born in Perth, however, my grandmother is originally from Mullewa.

What an Elder means to me:

My Elder is my Nana.

My Nan is the rock of my family and the strongest woman I know. She grew up in a home away from her family and land but still managed to thrive in this world.

My Nan taught me how to paint when I was young, along with many other things.

My art based on this year’s NAIDOC Week theme – For our Elders

My inspiration for this painting is my grandmother, as she was a part of the Stolen Generation. My Grandmother was taken from Mullewa WA when she was a baby and brought to Perth and placed in Sister Kate’s home.

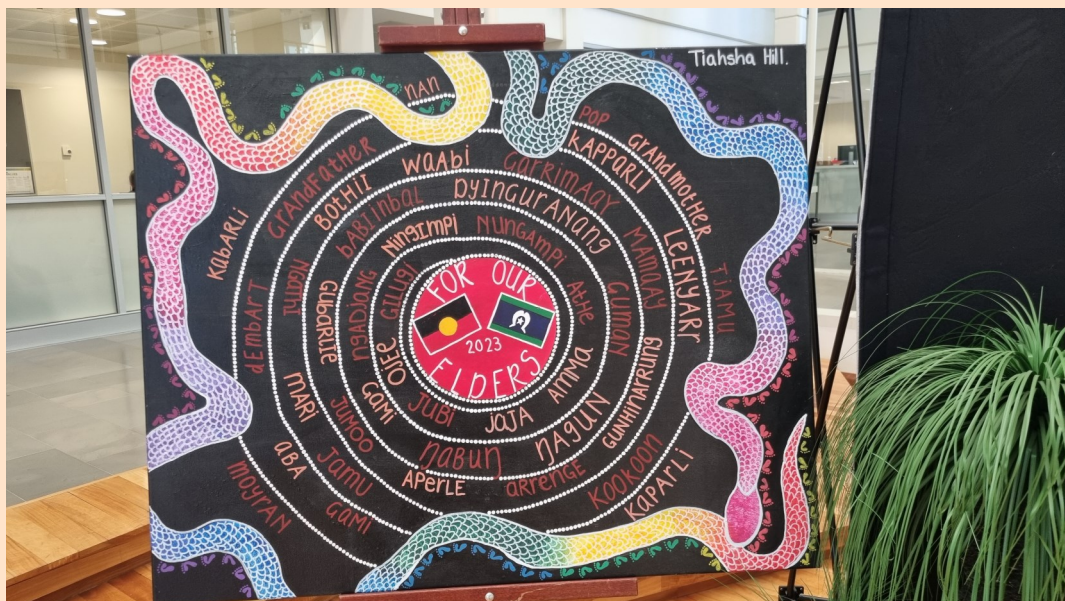
I later found out my great grandmother spoke the Wadjari language so therefore my grandmother was not given the chance to learn it and then pass down the language.

My grandmother’s story gave me the inspiration to research the words grandmother and grandfather in the big Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups across Australia.

All the words on my artwork are from different language groups, meaning grandmother (light orange) and grandfather (brown).

I put the Rainbow Serpent in the painting as I was taught that the Rainbow Snake is our creator.

The footprints around the snake represent my journey to find all those language groups and my personal journey trying to learn my culture and traditions.



For our Elders painting by Tiahsha Hill

Article by Tiahsha Hill, PSC Aboriginal Trainee

DBCA cultural walk with Rickeeta Walley – Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (BGPA)

On Wednesday 12 July DBCA staff and their families met at Ilyarrie shelter in Naturescape for a cultural walk hosted by Aboriginal Education Officer Rickeeta Walley. It was a great opportunity to learn more about Noongar culture by listening to the voices of Elders on an interactive trail around Naturescape. Children also participated in creative activities using natural materials to tell stories, draw symbols and create story creatures using sticks and wool.



Rickeeta Walley (Aboriginal Education Officer)



Article by BGPA

Rottnest Island Authority

Rottnest Island Authority invited the general public to join free Welcome to Country ceremonies at Wadjemup/Rottnest Island from 1 to 16 July. Participants were guided by a Whadjuk Noongar Traditional Owner, providing a special opportunity to connect with Aboriginal culture.

On display from June to December, the [Dandjoo: Be a Voice for Generations](#) exhibition at Wadjemup/Rottnest Island presents stories shared by six members of the Wadjemup Aboriginal Reference Group (WARG). Encounter interviews, striking photography and special artefacts are on display, as well as a special documentary featuring their personal histories, thoughts on truth-telling about Wadjemup's dark prison history and reflections on reconciliation for future generations.



Exhibition - Photo by Rottnest Island Authority

You can also see seven new art installations at the Wadjemup Museum sculpture garden, each exploring personal stories and connections, inspired by the cultural landscapes of Wadjemup. The [Yoowarl Koorl Djinang/Come Look See](#) sculpture exhibition opened June 2023. In addition, Rottnest Island Authority will coordinate a NAIDOC program on Wadjemup/Rottnest Island, scheduled for November 2023.

Article by Helen Priestley, Reconciliation and Heritage Project Officer

Forum on water resource management



On 10 July 2023, DBCA, other government agencies and natural resource management (NRM) organisations met with members of the Whadjuk Aboriginal Corporation to present information on the work we do around water resource management. The event was organised by Perth NRM and provides an important mechanism towards future engagement.

Forum on water resource management held with Whadjuk Aboriginal Corporation. Hosted by Perth NRM.

Article by Kerry Trayler, Principal Scientist

Wudjari opening ceremony – South Coast region

Acting District Manager Katherine Hope and Joint Management Coordinator Emma Rigby from the Esperance office attended the local opening ceremony of NAIDOC Week on Monday 3 July. The Wudjari people, Traditional Owners for Esperance, facilitated a flag raising ceremony along with the creation of a community sand picture at the Shire of Esperance grounds.



The gathering of community members then marched from the Shire grounds to the foreshore following a large Walich (wedge-tailed eagle) puppet created and operated by the Tjaltjraak (Wudjari) rangers. The Walich is an important animal for the Wudjari people and forms part of the Dreamtime story for the Cape Le Grand area.



Foreshore activities such as face painting, kaarp knife making demonstrations, and information about Tjaltjraak’s seed collection program all made for an interactive morning topped off with kangaroo kebabs and emu sausages for lunch.

Article by Emma Rigby, Joint Management Coordinator

South Coast region

NAIDOC Week is an opportunity for all Australians to learn about First Nations cultures and histories and participate in celebrations of the oldest continuous living cultures on earth. This year’s theme, For our Elders, is particularly special, and provides an opportunity to celebrate these most learned and respected people in our communities and recognise their importance as knowledge holders, trailblazers, nurturers, advocates, teachers, survivors and leaders.

For NAIDOC this year, DBCA South Coast supported three events across Wagyl Kaip Southern Noongar: one in Kojonup, one in Katanning and one in Albany.

Kojonup and Katanning

We invited Aunty Iris Woods to facilitate Noongar language lessons exclusively for Elders to enable them to deliver Welcome to Country in Noongar in Kojonup on 4 July and in Katanning on 6 July 2023. Thirteen Elders participated across the two sessions.



Colin Clinch, Susan Riley and Jade Malanczak at Kodja place with bespoke Welcome to Country following language lesson.

Following each session, Elders enjoyed a hot lunch and a yarn. In Kojonup this was a warming bowl of chicken and sweetcorn soup from the Black Cockatoo Café, and in Katanning Elders were treated to kangaroo stew, duck, rice and damper from local Aboriginal business, Jeert Mia. Both meals were sponsored by the local Shire.



Jeff Farmer, Craig McVee, Iris Woods (top row L-R), Robyn Farmer and Susan Riley (bottom row L-R) at Kodja place.

Article by Jade Malanczak, Aboriginal Engagement Coordinator

South Coast region

Albany

NAIDOC is often a very busy week in regional hubs, with community members and Elders being pulled hither and thither, having to manage conflicting events and ultimately feeling exhausted by the end of it. To try and counteract this, a number of government agencies came together this year to hold a collaborative event at the Albany Entertainment Centre. Members of the organisational committee included the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, the Great Southern Development Commission, the Forest Products Commission, Southern Ports, the Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service, the Albany Entertainment Centre (Perth Theatre Trust), the Water Corporation and the Department of Transport. Members of the community were also invited to attend each meeting and provided valuable ideas and insights which helped make it a fantastic day. Auspicing services were provided by local Aboriginal business, Impact Services.



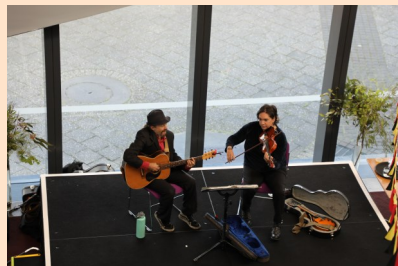
On Wednesday 5 July, the Albany Entertainment Centre was decorated with native flora, large photos of Elders were hung from the ceiling, and paintings, created specifically for the event by students engaged with the Follow the Dream Program at Albany Senior High School, were displayed on the walls. A business exhibition was located in the foyer and included local Aboriginal businesses, ranger groups, relevant service providers and state government agencies. DBCA used this opportunity to share customary activity guides, Culture in the Parks information, Aboriginal engagement brochures and maps for local national parks. In addition to three sets of musicians, activities with the Yorga Weavers and a rolling series of videos, there were a number of talks in the main theatre. This included a wonderful Welcome to Country by Aunty Averil Dean, a description of Albany's famous canvas by Elder Lester Coyne, a discussion on core values with Aunty Eliza Woods and a reading of Aunty Winnie Larsen's poetry. Aunty Winnie is 90 years old and the oldest Elder in Albany—a special effort was made to celebrate her on the day.

Because Albany is notoriously cold at this time of year, we also made sure to arrange free hot drinks and soups for Elders and a sausage sizzle, managed by the Kinjarling Basketball team, that was free for everyone.

Initial feedback shows that the event was a success and people appreciated the collaborative approach to the day. It is hoped that the event can be even better next year, and a government funded community day can become a standing feature of the Albany NAIDOC calendar.



Southern Aboriginal Corporation (SAC) Rangers Daniel, Henry and Ji



Bilya Beats



Aunty Eliza

Article by Jade Malanczak, Aboriginal Engagement Coordinator

NAIDOC celebrations in Broome – Kimberley region

This year the joint management team decided to take a different approach to celebrating NAIDOC by embracing the theme 'For our Elders' through sharing cultural knowledge and awareness within our staff.

They engaged Nyamba Buru Yawuru (Di Appleby) to deliver two sessions of Yawuru cultural awareness training to our staff in the West Kimberley district over the month of July.

This training involved a half day theory session and a full day cultural immersion field day where Di and Yawuru Lore men take staff on Yawuru Country for a Smoking and Welcome to Country ceremony.

In addition, on Friday 23 July DBCA staff alongside the Yawuru rangers participated in the annual NAIDOC Festival reconciliation walk through Broome town. There was a great turn out this year with approximately 30 staff walking together and staying for the NAIDOC Festival opening ceremony afterwards.

Next year the region plans to make the walk even bigger and better, with ideas to make up banners and teardrop flags with the logos from all joint management partners in the region for DBCA staff to walk with in the parade.



DBCA staff at NAIDOC opening celebrations in Broome



Yawuru cultural induction

Article by Aimee Gomm, Project Officer Joint Management Bunuba and Gooniyandi

Goldfields region

Staff in the Goldfields celebrated NAIDOC week in-house with a Welcome to Country by Traditional Owner Wyvern.

Aboriginal staff brought their parents and Elders along to yarn about what Elders mean to them, what being an Elder is about and their importance to Aboriginal culture. Staff participated in a hand print and artwork mural for the day.

Staff enjoyed an array of activities including:

- morning tea with damper
- Aboriginal art displays
- emu egg carving demonstrations
- jewellery making using sandalwood and quandong nuts
- food tastings of:
 - kangaroo tail cooked the Arby traditional way in the fire and coals
 - kangaroo rissoles
 - kangaroo kebabs
 - kalkurlas
 - seeds and other traditional food.

Staff were also encouraged to participate in community NAIDOC week events in the Kalgoorlie–Boulder area.



Goldfields DBCA staff celebrating NAIDOC Week

Article by Peter Batt, Joint Management Coordinator

NAIDOC 2023 For our Elders – Turquoise Coast district, Midwest region

A great day was enjoyed by all who attended, a day to acknowledge and honour our Elders. Various Turquoise Coast DBCA staff from all departments attended and happily assisted with arrangements.

Due to severe cold weather our plan required minor alterations. We all met at the Yorgas Yarning art group venue at Gardiner Street arts studio in Moora, where it was nice and warm with the heating on. We had introductions with hot drinks, scones with quandong jam and cream and other sweet treats. We all mingled and yarned while checking out the amazing Aboriginal artwork displayed in the studio. After morning tea, we transferred to the Moora Reserve where many of our Elders lived back in the day. They have fond memories of growing up on the reserve and many stories to share.

It was great to see Traditional Owners and DBCA staff engaging so naturally and becoming friends. I loved hearing the stories of life on the reserve. Elders walked around with DBCA staff explaining the past layout of the reserve, housing structures, amenities, shared space structures and temporary camps. You can still see some of the foundations and the interpretative signage that has been installed is informative and displays some impressive artworks. Another favourite part of the day was walking around exploring with Elders, who were teaching us how to find bush tucker.

After our excursion we returned to the cosy warm art studio to enjoy hot kangaroo stew and damper, and continued mingling, with great conversations and storytelling.

We wrapped up the day by thanking our Elders and handing out gifts. Each Elder received a custom-made calendar made from photos taken by DBCA staff of Turquoise Coast sites, pendants made by DBCA staff from quandong seeds and eco-friendly sourced craft wood, native plants that have ethnobotanical aspects and stunning flowers.

With friendships made and all the information we learnt this day, it really does reiterate how valuable and knowledgeable our Elders are and the acknowledgement and respect they deserve.

Thank you for your stories and wisdom.



Fred teaching DBCA staff about life on the reserve back in the day.

Kelly and Naomi happily yarning away.

Yued Elders and DBCA staff wrapping up after a big marantj.

Christine and Aunty Mary having a yarn and a laugh.



Tom and Uncle Colin catching up after many years.



Local Yued artist Madeline sharing her art and workshops creations.

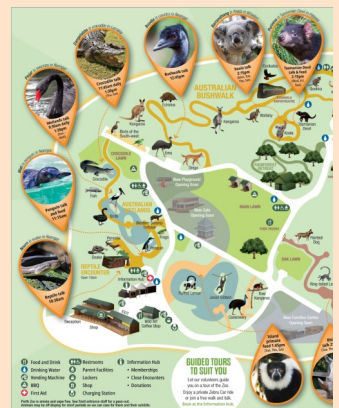
Articles by Jen Steadman, Aboriginal Engagement Coordinator

Celebrating Barna Boodja at Perth Zoo – Zoological Parks Authority

Over the July school holidays Perth Zoo celebrated Aboriginal culture through dance and storytelling. Aboriginal traditional dancers from Ngalak Nidja brought the main lawn to life, with interactive dance performances. Zoo visitors learnt about the significance of each dance and were encouraged to get up on the dance floor and join in.

The Zoo also hosted a series of special daily talks where visitors learnt all about some of our amazing native Australian animals. These special talks included a wander through the Australian wetlands to discover what happens with the beautiful barna across the Noongar six seasons, roaming through the Reptile Encounter to learn how to tell a Wadjemup yooran from a Beeloo yooran, a jaunt through the Australian Bushwalk to learn more about barna on boodja and discovering how Danggalabba got his name.

All of the special talks were on the Zoo's map which showcased beautiful artwork from Kyooya designs.



Zoo map showcasing artwork and special talks



Children from the Keeper Kids school holiday program doing the weitj dance.

Article by Joselyn Juraszek, Discovery and Learning Manager

We hope you have enjoyed reading *Yarning Time*.



Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions



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