

Community Cultural Exchange

Warmun Community, Western Australia

VISIT TO

Wathaurong Community, Victoria



Renee Howell & Peggy Patrick

23rd February – 1st March 2004

The purpose of the visit was for Wathaurong (an urban based community) and Warmun (a very remote based community) to be able to develop their relationship and learn from each other's experiences. Both groups had specific expertise and knowledge that would benefit the other.

Next page:

- top Max Thomas, Warmun Chairman & Allan Browning, Wathaurong, share a meal
- bottom left Ammie Howell, from Wathaurong Community reconnects with the Warmun women she met last year on her visit to their community
- bottom right Men from Warmun Community (l to r) Kevin Gallagher, Quentin Ramsey and Max Thomas enjoy a meal with Thomas Field



Day 2

Warmun Members first visit to Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative. Allan Browning introduces the visitors to the Co-op and then everyone assembles outside for a cultural welcome given by Allan.

top
bottom

Allan welcomes Warmun members to the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative
Allan performs a cultural welcome to the visitors from the Kimberley, while some
of the Co-op staff watch



Day 2

Allan explains the work undertaken by the Cultural Heritage Office of Wathaurong

Max was very impressed with the various roles and offices of the Co-op staff. He begins to compare these with the way it is done in Warmun office.

top left & right Allan explains the cultural heritage office at Wathaurong to Lucilla Martin and Yvonne Martin
bottom left & right Warmun members are shown around Wathaurong offices



Day 2

Warmun members are taken to visit the Wathaurong Glass workshop. Gifts are given to each of the visitors.

top

bottom left

bottom right

Peggy and Kylie watch Renee work on a glass bowl

Kylie Edwards gives a talk to the visitors on the glass production

Kylie opens the huge kiln so the visitors can see the glass being heated



Day 3

The Warmun women visit Red Cross and the craft shop manager Kath Lancaster gives the women a gift of a bag of wool, to make gifts for Allan and the male dancers.

1 to r Mona Ramsey, Peggy Patrick, Nola Nockette (front), Yvonne Martin, and Lucilla
Mating outside the Geelong Australian Red Cross office and craft shop



Day 3

Preparing for the celebrations on Thursday. Peggy makes the males' 'belts' for the upcoming performance. Nora grinds the ochre to be used as body paint.

top left

Peggy makes the dancers' belts

below

A close-up of the method Peggy uses to make the belts
Nora grinds the white ochre into powder



DAY 5

The official welcome to Warmun Chairman, Max Thomas and members of the Warmun Community By Wathaurong CEO, Trevor Edwards.

Max Thomas responds with his own expression of appreciation of Wathaurong's invitation to Warmun Community members to visit Wathaurong Community.

top left
top right

Invited guests gather to listen to the two community leaders Trevor Edwards, CEO, formally welcoming the Warmun Community members and thanking the organising committee. Max Thomas, Chairman, responds in kind to the welcome

bottom left

(l to r) Quentin Ramsey, Jennifer Field, Max Thomas, Kevin Gallagher & John Echo, waiting for the official welcome to begin





Day 4

Cultural celebrations led by Allan Browning and the Je Be Weng dancers from Wathaurong Community who perform a welcome to country for Warmun Community members.



Above Allan Browning begins the performance with PJ, Renee and Ammie
Below Allan and his son PJ





Both women were crying as the young Koori girl gave the Elder woman from the Kimberley the Victorian ochre.
See the story told by Peggy for further understanding of this situation.



Day 4

A cultural response from the performers of Warmun Community is expressed to Allan and the Je Be Weng dancers.

top Peggy leads the Warmun dance group into the circle
bottom (l to r) Mona, John, Quentin and Kevin perform in response to Je Be Weng performance



Day 4

Allan Browning speaks to Board and Staff members of Australian Red Cross, Victoria, answering their many questions about the performances.

top (l to r) Jennifer Field, Ian Vaughan and Allan Browning
bottom (l to r) Allan Browning, Elias Lebbos, Ian Vaughan, Fran Brewster, Carol Richards, and Kerry McKendrick (concealed)



Day 5

A well earned day of rest.
Allan took the Warmun visitors
to visit Buckley Falls.

top Kevin at the Falls
bottom left Allan, Kevin and Quentin admire the Falls
bottom right Quentin at the Falls



Day 5

Remote community
female cultural leader
meets two female
Mayors.

A visit to the annual
launch of Red Cross
Calling provided an
opportunity for Peggy to
meet two local female
leaders and to also get
more wool. Peggy had



Day 6

Gift Making

Peggy wanted to do 'Winan' – the cultural practice of gift giving – and make gifts for Watharuong Members.

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| top left | Peggy painting the work which depicts the tracks of people coming into a meeting place |
| right | Peggy grinding white ochre for the painting she was to make for Wathaurong Cooperative |
| bottom right | Peggy making a gift from red wool |



Day 7

WINAN

The Warmun Women could not have said goodbye properly without passing on gifts to the Wathaurong Members.

- top The gift is covered by one of the colourful blankets given to the Warmun women as a gift from Australian Red Cross, Victoria
- middle The painting is unveiled and presented to the Wathaurong members who had come to say a farewell the night before Warmun members were to fly home
- bottom (l to r) Colleen, Renee, Faye and Ammie accept the gifts from the Warmun members



A Message from Peggy – senior law woman (Warmun)

Peggy Patrick

Geelong, 28th Feb 2004

Peggy

Well that's the story from me, but I'll talk about something else for Wathaurong. Like, when I been come here everywhere dark, country just like nobody been own that country, like he never in black law, nothing. This place - him just lost! When we come here and open this place for them just all dark this place, that young fella (Alan) been come to look at our place before and I think him been get a fright and look at people, a big mob people all just black people, no coloured people, there are some coloured people live there too but more black, more black people. Well he don't have proper black one here nothing - who talk to land. We just come to remind this place, to remind that country.

Country he lost, country was lost poor bugga. He made me cry when I been see that paint (Ochre) come to me. Sometime paint tell you story any sort of paint, red, yellow, white, black from ground we get him, and he tell you story. Sometime like a red ochre he fall to pieces, yellow one, if anyone don't own them, nobody this time, nobody using them. We still get them, we still use them, we still remind people where we come from properly - we from ground, we been born with it, Ngarringarni, Dreamtime for us he remind you where you really come from and what is mean to you (land or country).

Country sometime he come in you, he don't know you sometime, when you don't own him, he don't know you. Some other people can understand this kind of stories, but now we been come just to remind this young fella, remind this place Wathaurong, what is this place. Wathaurong, we be just come to remind this place, open their thinking, open their heart, what this country mean to them. That what we been come for, to open their heart and think where they belong to. Its not enough room for every one of us, like now everyone all over nearly town, town every way, but blackfella should be still own the country like underground, top white people, own yeh.

Jennifer

What happened when the country (ochre) came to you in girls hand?

Peggy

The paint been come, he fall to pieces you know, fall to pieces that because nobody own it, um nothing. When I been look that paint when that paint been just falling off, he made me cry. People we remind him, that's why we been come here to remind them, if nobody own it, nothing! But people have to think about that. But now there no way you can buy county, you can't get em back with money, **only culture make em country come back to you.**

They been lucky to get we (Warmun) come down here for (Wathaurong), cause sometime nothing, some money's problem maybe people can't travel long way maybe big mob can't come but people if they think about to have one here, they can ring up or get we down here to bring your country back, that's all, only culture can make him come back to you. That's all I say la Wathaurong mob, thankyou. (Peggy Patrick)

Sadly Alan passed away, and was never able to find the funding to return to Peggy and the Kimberley as he so desperately wanted to. Peggy never saw him again, although she had claimed his as her son.



Community Comments following the Cultural Exchange

Wathaurong Members available to comment

Elsie Coates - Wathaurong Elder

“When they (*Warmun*) danced I was overwhelmed, I wanted to cry, I had never seen that before (*traditional cultural performance*). More communities should be working together like this. I felt her (*Peggy’s*) power and I am drawn to that, I don’t know why. To me the visit was successful and I feel there was not enough time to be with the Warmun women. I would really like to return the visit in a thoughtful and planned way. I would like to sit down with those women and get to know each other. It would be really good for Urban and Remote communities to get together and help each other.”

Allan Browning - Cultural Leader for Je Be Wung Dancers

“This was another step, I feel, in getting culture back on track, where a visit from Warmun Community opened the eyes of a lot of (city people), Indigenous and non Indigenous. It was because of my visit to Warmun Community that I could see there is a lot that can be done. Done in a sense of bringing home cultural heritage awareness back into the Community here, sharing. But I find that Warmun Community, the people, individuals, everybody is an individual and everybody gave something. Maybe they didn’t know what they gave (the young fella’s) but it was just the talking, you know. It is like old times, if you were entitled to a gift you were given that gift. I feel Warmun Community offered that special gift to us.

“But my point is did the people around them understand what they were given and what they saw”?

“See the Warmun Community have got culture where as the Wathaurong Community have been denied their culture since settlement time. We have to live the way of Commonwealth law, but we will not forget our past.

“Warmun Community, they’re able to offer culture to us. I feel that a visit to Warmun Community would be beneficial to this Community and would assist both Communities by gaining the knowledge both ways, of the past, present and future.

“Now that we have got this ball rolling, should we not endeavour to keep our culture strong for generations to come”?

“If we are strong enough it will happen.”

Faye Muir - Boonwurrung Elder (lives Wathaurong area)

"I was deeply honoured to be able to be part of the Wathaurong community members who welcomed the Warmun community to our country.

"I found meeting with the Warmun people to be a very humbling experience for me, as they had had such a lot to give to our community, through sharing their culture, love and respect with us. They are a very caring and sharing people. I enjoyed both yarning to the women and Johnny and Max who had a lot to share with me. I felt very privileged to have had the opportunity to sit and talk with them. I hope that I was able to share something with them.

"It was the first time that I have had the opportunity to see traditional Aboriginal people do traditional dance, it simply blew me away, I felt very emotional while I watched them perform, it's something that I can't put into words but it effected me greatly.

"Jennifer, I would like to thank you very much for making this meeting of our two communities come to fruition and for being part of this very important cultural exchange for our community.

"Nyatne" Wathaurong language for "Thank-you"

Warmun Members available to comment

Peggy Patrick *see attached article and photo*

Lucilla Martin

"I felt very good about it, (*the visit*) I got to see how their community runs and it was great to see the Glass workshop. I enjoyed it and people were very good and helpful. I learnt a lot and how they stop things going wrong."

Note

Unfortunately the remoteness of Warmun and the fact that people don't have home phones made it very difficult to get further comments.

Acknowledgements

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Elsie Coates

Jennifer Field

Project Co-ordinators and Facilitators