

Excavations, Surveys and Heritage Management in Victoria

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Heritage
Consultants



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Volume 10, 2021

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Front cover:

Participants at the zoom webinar panel discussion by Traditional Owners at the 2021 Colloquium. Top row: Darren Griffin, Liz Foley, Dave Wandin—Wurundjeri Woiwurrung; bottom row: Racquel Kerr—Dja Dja Wurrung, Tammy Gilson—Wadawurrung, Ben Muir—Wotjobaluk and Jardwadjali. (Screenshot by Caroline Spry)^e

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Editorial note

The papers included in this 10th issue of *Excavations, Surveys and Heritage Management in Victoria* were presented at the annual Victorian Archaeology Colloquium held on-line via zoom webinar between 1 and 4 February 2021. This allowed even more than our usual number of people to register as participants, including some from interstate and overseas: their commitment and involvement testifies to the importance of this fixture within the local archaeological calendar. Many were fortunate to be able to meet in person, under appropriate protocols, for an outdoor boxed lunch at La Trobe University on 5 February.

We have taken the opportunity of celebrating our 10th anniversary by looking back over the last decade, both through a more formal analysis and through a less formal panel discussion of the history of the Colloquium and this publication. Another panel discussion transcript allows space for some Traditional Owners to reflect on particular examples that they feel have been of value in the complex process of cultural revival through a form of experimental (perhaps better experiential) archaeology.

The other papers published here deal with a variety of topics and approaches that span Victoria's Aboriginal and European past. While some papers report on the results of specific research projects others focus on aspects of method, approach, education and the social context of our work and approach. These all demonstrate how our Colloquium continues to be an important opportunity for consultants, academics, managers and Aboriginal community groups to share their common interests in the archaeology and heritage of Victoria.

In addition to the more developed papers, we have continued our practice of publishing the abstracts of other papers presented at the Colloquium, illustrated by a selection of the slides taken from the PowerPoint presentations prepared by participants. These demonstrate the range of work being carried out in Victoria, and we hope that many of these will also form the basis of more complete studies in the future. Previous volumes of *Excavations, Surveys and*

Heritage Management in Victoria are freely available through La Trobe University's institutional repository, Research Online <www.arrow.latrobe.edu.au:8080/vital/access/manager/Repository/latrobe:41999> and through Open at La Trobe (OPAL) <<https://doi.org/10.26181/601a321a11c0d>>. We hope that this will encourage the dissemination of ideas and information in the broader community, both within Australia and internationally. We have also now set up a website for the Colloquium <<https://victorianarchaeologycolloquium.com>>

For the first time we have included an obituary to mark the passing of a member of our community: David Rhodes of Heritage Insight, a long-time supporter of our activities. Here we should also mention that we have also lost Ron Vanderwal who made important contributions to archaeology and the curation of heritage, although he was unable to participate in the Colloquia.

Once again we have been fortunate in the support given to the Colloquium by many sponsors: ACHM, Ochre Imprints, Heritage Insight, Biosis, ArchLink, Christine Williamson Heritage Consultants and Extent, while La Trobe University continued to provide facilities and a home for our activities, even if this year it was a virtual one. We would like to thank them, and all others involved for their generous contributions towards hosting both the event and this publication. Yafit Dahary of 12 Ovens was, as always, responsible for the catering, despite the limitations on her usual spread.

All papers were refereed by the editorial team. This year Deb Kelly managed this process and the sub-editing of this volume. Layout was again undertaken by David Frankel. Preparation of this volume was, like so much else in the last year, undertaken during the severe restrictions imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope that 2022 will be a better year for all.

The presenters, editors and authors acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and heritage discussed at the Colloquium and in this volume, and pay their respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Traditional Owner perspectives on archaeological research, cultural heritage management, and continuing cultural practice in Victoria over the past decade: A panel discussion at the 10th Victorian Archaeology Colloquium

Darren Griffin¹, Tammy Gilson², Racquel Kerr³, Ben Muir⁴, David Wandin⁵, Elizabeth Foley⁶ and Caroline Spry⁶

Abstract

A key driving force behind the success of the Victorian Archaeology Colloquium is the participation and direction of Traditional Owners in the cultural heritage, landscapes, and concepts that are presented and discussed each year. Traditional Owner involvement commenced during planning for the very first Colloquium, ten years ago, and has continued to grow since. This trend is evident in the increasing number of Traditional Owners attending the Colloquium each year; growing diversity of First Nations represented; and increasing number of Traditional Owners leading and co-authoring presentations and subsequent publications in the Colloquium proceedings, Excavations, Surveys and Heritage Management in Victoria. This paper presents the full transcript of a panel discussion by four Traditional Owners from Wurundjeri Woiwurrung, Wotjobaluk, Dja Dja Wurrung and Wadawurrung Country in Victoria on 1 February 2021, the second panel discussion of the 10th Anniversary Victorian Archaeology Colloquium. The panel discussion was recorded as a Zoom Webinar and transcribed using Otter (2021). Caroline Spry and Darren Griffin edited the transcript of the second panel discussion. Traditional Owner panellists considered their experiences in archaeological research, investigations and cultural heritage management projects, and the successes and constraints encountered over the last decade. Drawing on these experiences the panellists present their vision of the future for best-practice archaeology and land management in Victoria. Their conversation highlights that First Peoples cultural heritage is complex, dynamic and continuing, and what western scientific paradigms

class as archaeology (or experimental archaeology) is for Traditional Owners a way of continuing their traditional practices and passing knowledge onto future generations.

Introduction

The first Victorian Archaeology Colloquium in 2012 was launched by a Welcome to Country, given by Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Bill Nicholson Jnr, who also co-presented a paper on a Wurundjeri project that was underway at the time: assessing and recording the cultural values of Merri Creek. This was a large collaborative project involving State Government agencies, land and water catchment managers, heritage advisers, academics, and local friend and community groups. The project aims and research questions were firmly driven by the Traditional Owners, who simply wanted the cultural values of the waterway to be managed proactively and holistically, rather than the usual piecemeal and reactive way they felt Aboriginal cultural heritage was managed previously in Victoria (Parmington et al. 2012).

The themes introduced in this first paper co-presented by Uncle Bill Nicholson Jnr at the Colloquium set the tone for the next 10 years and point to some of the aspiring principles of the event, and the Victorian heritage industry as a whole. These include establishing collaborative projects; assisting Traditional Owners to direct projects that fulfil their cultural obligations; and reach their standard of cultural heritage protection and promotion; achieving best-practice cultural heritage management and high-quality archaeological research with real benefits to the health and wellbeing of Traditional Owners, their Community, and their Country, both now and into the future. These principles have been explored in papers co-authored by Traditional Owners and published in the Colloquium journal (e.g., Campanelli et al. 2016; Griffin et al. 2013; Smith and Kerr 2016) and are raised during the Traditional Owner Panel discussion.

Transcript

Darren Griffin:

I'd like to pay my respects to the Traditional Owner

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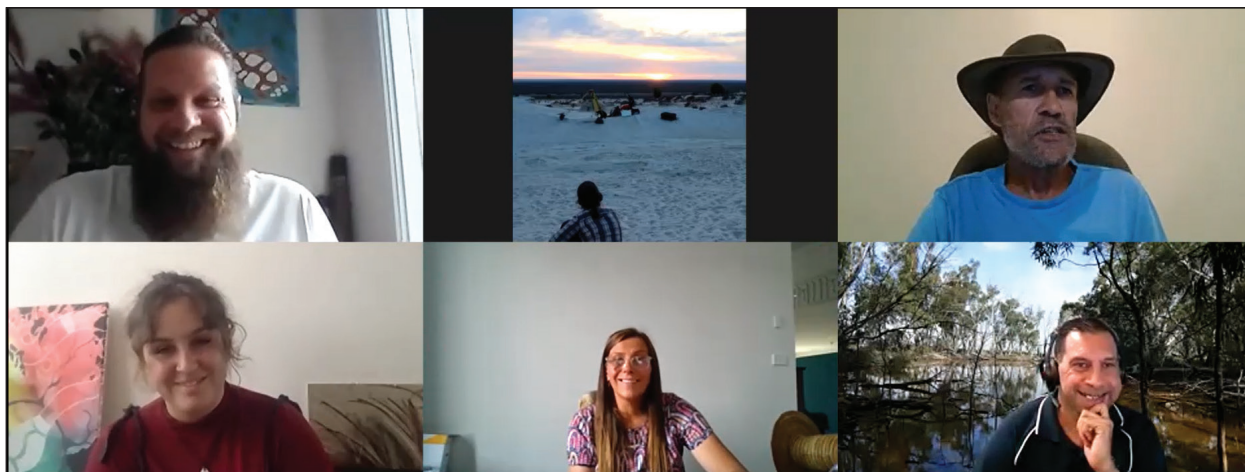
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Participants at the zoom webinar panel discussion by Traditional Owners at the 2021 Colloquium. Top row: Darren Griffin, Liz Foley, Dave Wandin—Wurundjeri Woiwurrung; bottom row: Racquel Kerr—Dja Dja Wurrung, Tammy Gilson—Wadawurrung, Ben Muir—Wotjobaluk and Jardwadjali. (Screenshot by Caroline Spry)

lands that I'm currently on, which is the [lands of the] Wadawurrung. And we've also got Tammy Gilson here from Wadawurrung. Tammy has been working for the Wadawurrung Aboriginal Corporation for a long time. And I met her first out in the field. We've worked together. And now Tammy's at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

We've also got Racquel Kerr. Thanks very much for coming along. Thanks to all the panellists. It's great that you guys said yes and thank you very much. Raquel is a Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owner. You were the Aboriginal Heritage Officer at Dja Dja Wurrung for a while, Racquel? Yeah. And [Racquel] is now at Parks Victoria [Racquel has since taken up the position of Senior Project Officer at the Ancestral Remains Unit, Office of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council].

And joining us is Benno [Ben] Muir. He's a Wotjobaluk–Jadawadjali man, and he was working for Barengi Gadjin Land Council out in the field, and has now been Aboriginal Water Officer at the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority for the last five years.

[Uncle Dave Wandin was also a panellist in this discussion. Uncle Dave is a Wurundjeri Elder and Educator. He works in the Narrap (land management) and Education units at Wurundjeri.]

So, what I'll do is I'll start off, [and] just ask you some questions. The questions that I've got are a little bit of a start, to get things going. The first question is, looking back over the last 10 years, what are some of the projects that stand out to you as highlights in Aboriginal archaeology, cultural heritage management, protection and promotion? I might mention a couple of projects that I've been involved in, which I thought were excellent examples: the *Koorong* [project], that was on the list [the top 10 most downloaded papers of the Colloquium proceedings]. That was the bark canoe project with Wurundjeri Traditional Owners, the Narrap team that

Dave was involved with [to make a] a traditionally cut bark canoe [Griffin et al. 2013]. And that [project] was presented at the 2013 [Victorian Archaeology] Colloquium.

And we've got the *Bakang Dyakata*, which was the Traditional Earth Oven Project, where we recreated a traditional earth oven [Campanelli et al. 2016; Griffin 2017]. We did that on Wotjobaluk Country from 2015 to 2018, [and] presented [it] at the 2016 Colloquium. I think both projects demonstrate the range of outcomes that can be achieved when archaeological research is driven by the Traditional Owners. And the previous panel talked about that—Mark [Eccleston] mentioned that.

Both these projects combined data from archaeological investigations, Aboriginal cultural knowledge and practices, historical information and experimental archaeology. And the results included... the community strengthening, the continuation of cultural practices and celebration of Aboriginal culture and heritage, as well as the collection of archaeological data.

The projects are organised and run by a partnership involving a wide range of organisations and individuals under the direction of the Traditional Owners. I really think these are the types of collaborative projects that are the future of archaeological research in Victoria, and the previous panel mentioned that. So, just opening up to the panellists: Dave, you were involved with the *Koorong* project? Benno, you were involved in the *Bakang Dyakata* project? Do you have any further thoughts on those?

Uncle Dave Wandin:

I have amazing memories. It's good to see you again, Darren. [Darren: "Yeah, good to see you mate."] Tammy as well. Big shout out to you. I've worked with Tammy on fire [cultural burning]. I know most of the names and I'm sorry if I don't actually recognise you. But I have met

you before.

The bark canoe project was an absolutely fascinating story, but it didn't start on Wurundjeri Country. It started up in the Barmah Forest on Yorta Yorta Country, where my fellow Educator [Uncle] Bill Nicholson [Jnr] went up to learn how to remove some bark from a tree, because we'd lost that knowledge down here in Melbourne. Wurundjeri, of course, being under probably the highest [amount of] development and it's where the archaeology industry, I guess, grew from Melbourne and it's spread out across many other nations across Victoria.

The amazing thing about that bark canoe project was the actual restrictions that were applied for us to be allowed to do that. Because it was considered... it was something that our ancestors did. And it was no longer [considered] appropriate today. Archaeology is also the study of things that happened in the past. And I guess the one thing I want to raise is that just because it happened in the past, doesn't mean we don't exist anymore. Aboriginal people do not belong in a museum. There are still Aboriginal people here today who still want to replicate what our ancestors did.

So, what happened in Barmah Forest was the removal of a [bark] canoe from a tree. But it was done with axes, with all the modern implements. And I remember Bill Nicholson coming back and saying it was a fantastic experience to see how it was done. And we sat around and talked about it. And we said, "Well, yeah, we want to do that down here on Wurundjeri Country."

But what we want to do for it, in respect of our ancestors, is we wanted to do it the way they did. So, the techniques are the same whether you use a stone axe, or a chainsaw, or crowbars, or whatever. But we actually started off the project by saying, "No, we want to do it the way our ancestors did." And that was by making stone axes.

Everyone said "Well, where are you going to get them [the stone axes] from?" We uncover them in archaeology, and they end up in museums. And they're only the axe heads, not with the handles and all that kind of thing. So, we started the project by saying, "Well, okay, let's learn how to make a stone axe." And luckily, you know, the largest stone axe quarry [*Willam-ee-moor-ing*, or Mount William Greenstone Axe Quarry] in Victoria is on Wurundjeri Country. But even that was an issue. Working with AV [Aboriginal Victoria], [and] being a registered site, you know you can't touch anything, even though it belongs to our people. So, there was a whole process of going through how are we going to take a piece of greenstone to make an axe.

Then we had the issue of working with Parks Victoria. And I think it was only Parks at that time. But I think DELWP [Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning] got involved later on: "Well, hang on, all trees are protected, you can't go chopping bark off trees." And I think it was about a three-year process to

actually get all the relevant permissions through all the relevant legislation, to be able to do it. Then, of course, we had to have a workshop and learn how to make an axe, and we got that from the museum of Victoria, and anthropological records, and some skilled people from New South Wales who were still using stone artefacts.

So, a four-day weekend of making an axe, in actual fact it took about three weeks to make the axe with all the work that was required, and as people were learning their skills. And we then removed the tree [bark]. But the amazing thing about that was that, there we are, we've marked out the tree, Parks Vic [Victoria], helped us through their Aboriginal liaison facilities, and selected a tree on Wurundjeri Country that was close to the city where people could go and see it.

We marked it all out [on the tree] as the way we were going to do it, where it should be facing, working out, "Is it on the southeastern side, is it on the northern side, is it on the westerly side?" Again, thinking about caring for Country because we didn't want to kill the tree [by removing bark incorrectly]. So, we had to work all this out through our own research. It was not a simple matter, say I'm going to knock some bark off a tree. I spent years in the timber industry, stripping bark off trees as they came in on trucks, before they went through the process of being milled into timber. So, it was a big turnaround for me.

We get there. And of course, we've done all these assessments. And on the day that we're going to do it, it's like, "Nope, that's not the right position, we're not going to get the right canoe." So, we changed it, we marked it out with ochre as to where we're going to chop it. And we had many of our people turn up in traditional dress, wearing ochre, possum skins, whatever. Under Oc [Occupational] Health and Safety rules, because it [the bark for the canoe] was higher than two metres off the ground to the top of it, we had to do it [the bark cutting] from a cherry picker with a safety harness on, over a possum skin cloak, which was quite funny in the extreme, because nobody had a license to do it except myself. So, I'd have to rig everybody up, because it wasn't just for one person to do. It needed to be a shared community process of Aboriginal people getting up there and doing their few cuts, and then somebody else having a turn so they can experience it.

The most emotional thing for me, though, was that there was myself, there was my son, there was also my daughter, and my eldest granddaughter who were [all] there at the time. So, there were three [living] generations, recreating a process that hadn't happened for three [previous] generations—bark removal from a tree. Now, my granddaughter was not involved in the removal of the tree, of the bark, but she was over there with the women, learning how to use grasses and do weaving, and she made herself a couple of bracelets. Prior to that she was not really interested in Aboriginal heritage. So,

what it did was, it united us as a family, that we have something to continue on. My youngest son now follows me in land management and fire and water. So, when we're talking about archaeology, [it's not about] the basic stones and bones, and... the paperwork, and everything of what archaeology is about. What we do forget, and I hope I conveyed that in my Welcome [to Country], is it is about the spiritual connection to Country, and the continuation of our culture, even though it was broken for quite a few generations, due to colonisation. We have not forgotten what our role is, as Aboriginal people to do... archaeology is not about the stones and bones. That's the paperwork area. It's about the story that is created from the investigations.

It's not about the destructions of the development that go ahead, although that, of course, is a bone [of contention] for all TOs [Traditional Owners]. It is about recreating the oral history that we do know about, that has continued. And how we can continue it to demonstrate to people how to actually care for Country. And me, myself on that day, having three generations [present]—that hadn't happened for three generations previously. To be able to remove that bark from the tree, [it] doesn't matter that we've never actually... sorry, we did put it [the bark canoe] on the water, but it's no longer in the water, because it was the one opportunity that we had. So, it [the bark canoe] needed to be preserved [by not being used as a bark canoe]. And it's been preserved as history [an example of a contemporary artefact, made using traditional methods, and promoting the continuation of culture].

But it's a lesson for our next generations coming through of what we actually need to do to demonstrate, not only to our own people, but to the rest of Australia, that these are [cultural] practices that happened, that protected Country, protected animals, plants and trees, very careful assessment processes, everything that we've done. It was an absolutely fascinating journey to do. But because the scientists want to get involved, and La Trobe Uni [University] was involved in it, when we created all these modern metal things, and we had to light a fire to treat the bark. Parks Victoria's regulations—again, legislation stops us from doing a lot of things—the place had to be shut down at five [pm], so it [the bark canoe] was not fired properly. So therefore, it didn't cure properly, and was not actually functional as a canoe. But the important part was that everybody got the chance to get up there and participate. Not only in [cutting and preparing] the canoe, with tents over on the side, and there was weaving going on, there was storytelling, there was singing, there was face painting, there was ochre, there was the whole thing about a cultural aspect of what Aboriginal people, what our ancestors actually did. Because it's not a simple thing to say, "I want a canoe, I'll go and knock a bit of bark off." It's about choosing and saying, "Which is the best way to do it, so that we don't

hurt the tree?" It was actually done next to a tree which is much, much older, and is why we chose the site.

And we hope that our tree will live. And we thought it was actually relatively private, and now there's houses [a new housing development] right up to there within 100 metres [of the *Koorong* tree]. You couldn't see a house anywhere, but now so many people know about it. I've gone out there and spoken to those people that are living there now, and they actually guard and protect that tree. And this is the way that we actually heal Country and heal people, that they're not Aboriginal those people that live there, but they know the Aboriginal story behind it. And that's what archaeology started: the journey of it used to happen, it no longer happened, or they thought it didn't happen, but it still continues to happen. So, we still use stone, we still use bones, we still use the materials that are provided to us by Bunjil to continue our practices to show people. We don't want to be tourist guides, but we want to be able to teach our children how [to do] the same practices, so making a stone axe in a modern-day society, that stone axe works just as good as an axe you can buy from Bunnings if it's prepared and made properly, and it will also last longer in the ground, which is why we find them in archaeology [more] than any [other] piece of stone, or any piece of steel that's been made... You put them [steel axes] in the ground for 4,000 years, you pull them out, they're not going to be any good to you. You put our stone axes in the ground and pull them out 4,000 years later, they'll still bloody work.

Darren Griffin:

That's great, thanks Dave. That's brilliant. I'm just wondering, Benno, do you reckon we had similar experiences with, not just the *Bakang Dyakata* earth oven, but you [also] had [with] the *Yunguip* (canoe), where you tried to cut a bark canoe as well on Wotjobaluk Country?

Ben Muir:

Thanks Darren, thanks for that. Hi there Tammy, Dave, Racquel. And the rest of the panellists, good to see you all.

I think it was about 2017, was it Darren? Yes, in 2017, where we brought it all together. So, we started off with our recreation of an earth oven in 2016. And bringing the culture back, and bringing the actual heritage back, was really good for our mob up here, because no one up here's ever done bark canoes or earth ovens and that. But ours was a big, big one, because it was connecting our mob back to Country, as well. So having the whole mob out there with young fellas, [and] the Elders, while Darren was over there digging a little earth pit and that. Us men were over on the other side, doing the bark canoe and that, and it was everyone involved. And it was really good community participation. Our first earth oven that we've done was very successful as well. That was in Horsham, and nothing had ever, ever been done like that around

here. Most of this stuff had been done in Dimboola, and we thought we'd do it in Horsham.

Darren and Maurizio [Campanelli] and the likes of Dan Clarke and other AV [Aboriginal Victoria] people went out to a place called Clear Lake, and found the actual surroundings of an actual earth oven, which dated back to about 11,000 years [ago] or something like that, Darren? Yeah, that was really good fun. When I was doing my survey work and that with Barengi Gadjin, I landed my job with the CMA [Catchment Management Authority]. Then Darren come to me and he said, "This [project] would have to do with Aboriginal water, cultural heritage, protection, everything." And I just said, "Yeah, I would actually [like to do it]" because you've got to get your resources from the river. You've got to get your reeds, you got to do your smoke and fire, water and fire and all that. We thought why don't we just do it in Horsham by the Wimmera River. And we're up the Yanga Track where community can come and see what we're doing, as well as Traditional Owners learning as well.

So, a lot of our knowledge and culture was lost up this way. And it was probably lost around the whole of Victoria, but to get that connection back with an earth oven creation and a bark canoe creation as well, it was something that had never been done up here before.

When I came up here, I moved up here about nine years ago, up from Ballarat. I came back home, back to my mum's Country, and as Uncle Dave said in his Welcome [to Country], Mother Earth, Mother Country, you always go back to [it] and that's what I did, I came back to my mother's Country. And I've learned a lot of things up this way, even though I had [learned] stuff from down in Ballarat. But that was just local knowledge, and taught from other mob, but I needed to get taught by my mob.

And me and Darren, and other Traditional Owners, went back on [through] a couple of old historical photos and stories and all that. And that was the main thing, or one of the aspirations and the values of the Wotjobaluk people. And we actually did that: came up with the earth oven, that was a big aspiration that they wanted to do. Creating the clay balls, that was a magnificent thing, especially for the kids to do. And it's teaching them. In 10 years' time, hopefully my kids are sitting there making clay balls. Well, that's what I imagined, but I think it was last year or the year before, I thought, "I'll just go out and do a little fire pit out the back of my yard." And here's my daughter sitting there doing the clay balls and that, and she goes "This is what you and Uncle Darren were doing, isn't it, Dad?" And I said, "Yeah." And we ended up making our own little earth oven and that. So, you know, it's that generational change as well. And teaching this next generation is going to be a big thing because I've seen it up in here, and in our community: we're losing our culture again, because a lot of the kids are going into internet, social media, all that. [If you] take them out on

Country, they're a totally different people.

When we did our bark canoes, everyone just wanted to stay out there, no one wanted to go home. We were out there cooking Myrnong, we were cooking dampers, cooking kangaroo, emu, everything traditional. And just like Uncle Dave said, we've got to go back to traditions. And that was my thought, I love going back to traditional, I love Traditional Owner stuff. And, if we don't go back to our traditions, in 10 years' time, like I just said, we'd lose them now. 10 years' time, we might even lose it again. And, it's up to us now, as you know, the next generation of Elders, to take that on, because we haven't got many Elders left. But, it's hard to tell the stories, and get the stories back. And when you've got that, that's when communities start coming together. But we're dividing and that. But when you have events like [making] bark canoes, earth ovens, even fishing comps [competitions], eeling comps or something, that's all tradition. And that's where people are going to come back and really be in their culture as well. So, yeah, up here it was a really, really successful project.

We've got two or three [projects] at the moment. Due to COVID [COVID-19], we couldn't do it last year, but hopefully, this year, we can get it back on track and get mob back out on Country. We've been looking at different places to do it. We've got our Native Title up here. It's a really big, big piece of land that we've got up here on Wotjobaluk Country. We've done it in Horsham first year. And then we went out and did it out at Dimboola, where most of our mob come from. We'd love to go further and further along the river, you know, because our river just doesn't end at Lake Hindmarsh, it goes further along to Lake Albacutya. And me and Darren, we've done surveys along there with Traditional Owners, and we found clay balls, we found oven pits and that, and they're just a sign that our people used to camp, hunt, fish, gather and all that along the waterways. So, that's my perspective on that, Darren.

Darren Griffin:

Thanks Benno, that's brilliant. Raquel, did you have another example on Dja Dja Wurrung Country that you could think of, that was a great success?

Raquel Kerr:

I think we've had a lot of successes. I think it's obviously not without head butting against legislation like Benno and Uncle Dave have referred to countless times. And I think the one thing that I've found: as we start to platform more Traditional Owner voices within this space, that isn't in the name of tokenistic self-determination, the more that we're finding incompatibility between legislation and us being able to revive our culture as a peoples who have been here for over 60,000 years.

I think, personally, a project for me, which I loved doing, was a paper which I helped to co-write with

Di[ana] Smith—who's one of my mentors who helped me greatly along my time at Dja Dja Wurrung—which was based on tachylite, the volcanic glass, which was used for ceremonial and for surgical purposes among Dja Dja Wurrung people [Smith and Kerr 2016]. And I think the really incredible thing about it was, the chemical components within the stone, we were able to trace back to an original source. I think that was a really amazing thing for me at that point in time.

It was about 2015, 2016 where I'd just come into this world of what archaeology looks like, in a written perspective. I'd spent five or so years already working in the field, and going through that awe of "Ah, I'm touching artefacts and being in places where my ancestors were". And being in my early 20s at that point in time was something that really hit home, because it wasn't something I had grown up with, or I'd been exposed to. And like Benno said, the real challenge is how do we reach out to our younger people to be like, "I want to be part of this, this is who we are."

Looking at tachylite and how it came to be, and how it was traded, and how it was used, and then having a look at how far it travelled along Country—this source of *Djaara* tachylite is down towards Kyneton along the Coliban [River], and a few other reservoirs along there, but we're finding it in the northern part of Country as you know, [at Lake] Boort, and up towards Barapa Country. And knowing that it's been traded across other areas of Country was a really incredible thing.

And finding the big tachylite core that was sitting in [the] Daylesford Historical Society [office]. It was just chilling in a chimney, in a fireplace, with a whole heap of other basalt rocks. We were recording their artefact collection, going through everything like, "Is this a tachylite core? It's just chilling in there [the fireplace]." They said it had been there for about 20 years prior. So, it hadn't moved at all.

But I think that was one of those head-turning projects for me: this is how we can continue our practice of culture, we know where these things come from, we don't have to scratch our heads and have to search so far because it's on Country, it's right in front of us. And learning from Elders and from people like my dad, and people like Tammy as well, out on Country, and being able to read it. I'll travel along the road, [and] I'm like, "Oh, look, there's a scarred tree." And my partner will be like, "What? Where?" And [to] go through that whole thing with him about, what is that physical presence on the ground and what does that mean to us? And it's just something that's become second nature for me now. And it just invites that open conversation, which I think is the most important thing.

Darren Griffin:

That's great, thanks Racquel. That's brilliant. Tammy, do you have an example that you wanted to mention that

stands out in the last 10 years of archaeology in Victoria?

Tammy Gilson:

First of all, I just want to thank Uncle Dave [Wandin] for that beautiful Welcome [to Country]. It was lovely. And I always enjoy listening to your Welcomes. It's fantastic. And hi, everybody! Benno, Raquel. I'm a bit honoured to be on this panel today. And thank you, Darren, for inviting me.

We have an experience... we did a project down at the Dog Rocks at Batesford. We were awarded a 500 megalitre fresh [water] sent down the [Moorabool] River [to protect cultural values]. But out of that we were able to weave a big eel trap, which we call a *Buniya Binak*. And that was a result of a flow study where my cousin and I walked Country, and we walked along our living waters. And we chose these places where we thought our old people might have gone to, and we did some cultural mapping. And I guess we were put onto Country into these certain places where we were meant to be, because one of the properties we actually went to, when we were doing the work... we weren't meant to be on that property. And the landowners came up and they said, "Well, if you went onto the neighbouring property that you were meant to be on... you wouldn't have gotten access to where you are". And we went down to this particular place, there was a scarred tree. And we felt like we were at the right place. And our old people, they come together at a place we call *Bai-ere*. And so that's why we chose this place down at the Dog Rocks to put this eel trap in the water.

But it was a result of working with DELWP, and the Corangamite CMA. So, it was a collaborative project that we'd all worked on, and coming together, and working with their Western science and knowledge combined with our cultural knowledge. And, through that we came up with the time that the eels would have been present in the water. Allowing the water to go into that area on the Moorabool [River] created an opportunity for us to protect those deep-water holes and fill them back up with water, protect our fish species, our platypus, and other species. So, connecting all those cultural values together is really important for us to protect the habitat, and enhance our waterways. And I'm a basket weaver... and our waterways provided the resource for our weaving plants, it's all connected.

It's great to get out on Country and do things like that. And we actually won an award for that [as a finalist for Building Knowledge in Waterway Management at the RBMS awards] ...We were highly commended. So, it just goes to prove that the work we can do as a mob, we can be right up there! We don't have to be in that category of Aboriginal people [to win]. It's always a challenge in that space for us. And we're always fighting for culture every day.

But I guess there's lots of things to learn from that. We also had a day with the Elders and the younger girls,

and we taught them how to weave. And we created a documentary as well... and we did a water ceremony. And then out of that, we created a dance that was danced at Tanderrum that's [about] the journey of the eels in our living waters. And it created this narrative of our people and putting women back onto Country. But there's other things that I could go on about... that's just one that was a real highlight for me. I've got that eel trap here, which I created, which is quite huge [Tammy shows the eel trap to the panellists and audience while she is talking]. I just thought I'd show that as it's bringing back that cultural practice and putting us back on Country, which is really, really important for all of us. Thank you.

Darren Griffin:

Thanks very much. I think all those projects that everyone's mentioned talk about [a] collaborative approach. And you mentioned some of the difficulties in getting the permits from the organisations to actually do this work on Country. Do you think those [processes] have improved over the last 10 years? Do you think it's easier now? Or do you think we still have to go through the same sort of thing?

Uncle Dave Wandin:

Oh yeah, [it's] definitely improved. As I said, the scarred tree took three years of negotiations with all the various departments, and then it eventually happened. So, we're still scarring trees on Country all the time now, wherever we find places of cultural or spiritual value, not necessarily archaeological value, but a place to tell a story that is important to us. Everybody asks for interpretive signage, which is something on a board that tells a story that's written down, whatever it might be. We actually use our lessons learned from the [Koorong] canoe tree, for our young people to just go and take a small shield, a coolamon or a *tarnuk* off a tree... we're not trying to preach to the people who don't want to understand Aboriginal history, but for other Aboriginal people that come through our Country, they know that our culture is still strong, and we are still here on the land. So, I don't have any presentations to give to you, but there are some absolutely magnificent carvings done by our young people. You know, it's not just removing the bark for them to take away and use, it's carving into the cambium layer—I'm using scientific terms here—to put a design in there, so that no matter who comes there, Aboriginal or otherwise, they know that something has happened here recently, that we are still around.

I've got to thank the archaeological colloquium [Victorian Archaeology Colloquium] because none of this could have happened without the work that you guys do. And the Victorian cultural heritage legislation. Yes, we were the first state here in Victoria, to actually say, "No, let's ask the TOs what they want." I will say that archaeology is still commercial archaeology, and

it is about destruction of sites, which pains me, which is why I went in [to land management], and I know that Tammy did as well, to get away from archaeology and look after places that aren't going to be developed, closer to our waterways, or areas that are not suitable for development. And we need to actually change that—all places are important. We're not against development of Victoria at all, or I'm not anyway. That's only my personal opinion. But it needs to get away from this "Who's the best highest bidder [or] lowest bidder from archaeological firms?" to be able to conduct their work [investigations of Aboriginal cultural heritage]. Every mob has worked with probably every other archaeological company. And we all have our different opinions on who is better and who is worse [of these companies]. There needs to be a negotiation started about who does the best, not for the developer, but does it for the Traditional Owner mob, because we all have different goals.

I don't like—and I'm not having to go at you, Ben [Muir]—but I hate that word 'aspirations'. We all have goals of what we want to achieve. And they are goals, they're not dreams. They are the recreation, the re-invigoration of our culture, and they are a goal, and we're not going to give up until we achieve them. And they are recognised not only here in Victoria, but throughout Australia, that us [we] are leading in Australia, and we will continue to lead Australia, to show that by working together, by walking Country together, we can heal ourselves as a people together both black and white, Indigenous [and] non-Indigenous. Whatever the politically correct way to say, "But, we are still here."

Our science—when we talk about basket weaving, eel traps, bark tree removal, earth ovens, they are a science. Science is actually only catching up to us. All of our oral history, we're only waiting for the science, the archaeology, the geology, the anthropology, the historical records, to show that these things actually happened, and they still apply today. Engineering and science: we were the leaders, in this Country, of how to mine, of how to extract resources out of Country. We've been doing it for thousands and thousands of years, and we had all these people come in and go, "Oh, yeah, but we can do this and we can make heaps of money". We didn't care about the money, we cared about looking after our communities, and our surrounding people or anybody who came onto Country. We were the first scientists, we will be the last scientists on this Country. Science—no offence to La Trobe Uni[versity], who have a fixed curriculum—it is about adapting to our situations as they occur, as climate change rises and falls, as COVID [COVID-19] came in. All of these things, Aboriginal people have been doing [this] successfully for thousands and thousands of years.

As we go through this latest climate change—and I haven't heard any talk about our bush foods yet, because I guess that doesn't really involve archaeology as a part of the Colloquium—but the reality is, this is what you

need to be looking at. We need to be looking at what can we grow here that grows successfully, without fertilisers, without the need for these massive irrigation project–programs. What actually does grow here that sustains people? And this is the next step. And I don't know if this is part of this process, what we're [focusing] on tonight, but this is the next step. We have a native rice, we have a native carrot, we have a native parsnip, we have a native potato. It's never been actually used. It was actually stopped by us from being used. I heard you, Ben, talking about the Myrnong. No, it was prominent all over the place. It can be prominent again [Ben Muir: "Yes, sure can"].

We can actually save our food problem, we can save our farmers from spending so many thousands of dollars on being tied to the science industry, to the chemical industry, that they can't function without it. We're going to prove it. My dad said to me in 1996, learn what you can about your culture, son. Because one day Australia is going to ask us how we survived. And it's with the support of archaeology and geology and anthropology, that now people are starting to ask the question. And it's taken [the] disasters of the floods, and the fires, and the droughts, now people are asking us, "How can we actually do it?" And we need the help of archaeology, and many other sciences to actually prove that we can act, we can return Australia to the way it was that it can support the people, but also support the ecosystems that we actually live on... we love to treasure and go out and see our parks, and our forests, and our waterways.

Darren Griffin:

It's a great point, a good point to end on. I just realised how quickly time has already gone! [Uncle Dave Wandin: "Have we finished already? I haven't even started yet. I've got heaps more to say!"] We actually only got through the first question of about 10 questions. [Panellists laughing.] But I'd just like to say thank you very much to all the panellists. Thanks, Racquel, Benno. Thanks, Tammy. And thanks, Uncle Dave, that was great. Thank you very much for joining us.

Uncle Dave Wandin:

Hang on, what about everybody else? No one else got a chance to say anything. There were four other participants on this panel! [Panellists laughing.]

Darren Griffin:

I didn't realise how quickly the time had gone. We'll have to do it again!

Uncle Dave Wandin:

Oh, you people and your timelines! [Panellists laughing.]

Caroline Spry:

Sorry! But I'm glad that we all got to hear about some things that were really interesting to you all. That was

really special [for the audience]. So, thank you very much for sharing that with us. And [for providing] some things for all of us to think about with our archaeologist and consultant hats on as well. Thank you everybody very much. [Panellists: "Thank you."]

Conclusion

A number of important themes are highlighted by the Traditional Owner panellists; formulated by their experiences with the processes and outcomes of archaeological practice in the Victorian cultural landscape:

- celebration of living culture—connectedness of people, landscape (waterways, trees, bush foods) and objects (artefacts, bark canoes, woven baskets);
- tensions between cultural practices, traditional approaches and legislation;
- sharing and improved understanding of cultural practices with the local and wider community;
- continuation of knowledge and traditions between generations—learning from Elders, teaching the children;
- collaboration between Aboriginal culture and western science—learning from Aboriginal cultural practices and worldview; and
- how Aboriginal culture can help solve contemporary problems in modern societies, including environmental sustainability and adaptability to disasters caused by such things as climate change and global pandemics.

These themes are expressed repeatedly by every panel member, and the most striking aspect of the discussion is the passion and energy that is palpable when Uncle Dave, Ben, Racquel and Tammy talk about collaborative projects that involve continuing cultural practices and connecting with Country. The panellists offer a perspective of archaeology through the lens of a Traditional Owner; providing a basis for understanding that western scientific processes, such as archaeological fieldwork and 'experimental archaeology', are an important component of Traditional Owners' ongoing practices of reconnection with their ancestors and their actions and beliefs, and with their Country. This is a valuable perspective for the discipline to consider and incorporate into future archaeological projects in Victoria.

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