

THE BULDAU YIOOHGEN PROGRAM PRESENTS

BIG DREAMS

EMBRACING CULTURE AT ANGLICARE VICTORIA

BULDAU YIOOHGEN NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2021



WELCOME FROM AUNTY KELLIE AND UNCLE IAN

Welcome to this season's newsletter. For the Wurundjeri, it's Buath Garru season, meaning we expect warm rains and observe the kangaroo grass flowering.

As restrictions lift, it's been healing for us to reconnect with our young people and our families and community. It's been a challenging time for us mob: so much of how we work needs time face-to-face, on Country and in community. We are delighted to be back out and about and hope all of you are enjoying the return to normal too.

We have some great stories this season. We share Kellie's story and some exciting things that we have been working on. We look forward to 2022 where we will finally be able to scale up the Buldau Yioohgen (BY) program to meet the huge demand for Cultural support to young people at AV. We hope the rest of your year is a time full of connection to loved ones.

Aunty Kellie and Uncle Ian.



AV INTERN: WELCOME, JASPER!

Jasper was a participant at this year's Lake Mungo Cultural journey. With the right mix of passion, aptitude and experience in media and communications, Jasper was selected to join the Fundraising and Communication team as an intern for six months. AV is delighted to welcome Jasper to our team. Here are a few words from Jasper:

"The only way to heal for me was to connect back to Culture – I had nothing else but a dead computer screen and hadn't left the house for months."

I've always loved capturing what's around me, getting my hands on any camera I could find when I was a kid, or jumping in front of someone recording. When I grew older, I would take up any opportunity, volunteering or just turning up to see how I could be involved. Media is my focus because documenting the world and the people I meet is something of a purpose. When Auntie Kellie approached me to join the Buldau Yioohgen (BY) program and visit Mungo National Park, I knew straight away my answer.

The moment I entered the bus and started travelling across the border, a weight fell off my shoulders; I was free and had zero burdens holding me down. As we set up for the first night, there was nothing else I wanted to do but listen to Uncle Ian yarn about Culture and to hear David's stories about the river.

Everyone was just comfortable, and any alone time I had was spent taking photos of the patterns in the fire that kept us all warm or sitting watching the river hit roots along the banks.

Within weeks of coming home, I've collected as many books on my Culture as I can, and I've never even been a reader.

I visit old book stores in the city to try and find Aboriginal literature, sometimes finding old flyers and information books about my people from 50 years ago.

The trip has ignited a journey in me. I said to Kellie on the first morning of our time on Country, "I don't know my totem." Months later, I recovered a painting my grandpa and I had done together many years ago. It had been sitting away for years, but after the trip, I found it, and to my surprise, he had written my totem name on the back of it. My totem is the creek, and I'm proud of that.



When I was a young boy, I'd sit in the creek, pick up stones, find ochre in the water, and paint myself while my friends would be rope jumping in the local dam.

I'm proud to say that I am an Aboriginal man now, and no one can take that away from me. The BY program gave me a voice I never had, to combine what I love with who I am. Only a few days into meeting David, he had already begun planning future internship opportunities for me to gain experience. I had never met him before, but David wanted to ensure I had a bright future ahead. Now I'm writing this from the Anglicare Victoria desk in a dress shirt, interning with the media team. There is a reason the program is called 'Big Dreams'; it's because it helps launch us up from where we came from. – Jasper

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Last season we told the story of Maddie, one of our TRAK Forward clients.

Maddie is a young Indigenous woman with two children. Her mother was a member of the stolen generation and her family survived generations of cultural disruption. Maddie chose to focus on building cultural confidence as part of her empowerment goals in the program. To help her reach this goal, TRAK Forward funded her family to attend the Buldau Yioohgen (BY) Cultural Camp at Lorne.

At the camp Uncle Ian and Auntie Kellie facilitated a space to share stories and cultural practices of dance, language, arts and astronomy. Program Manager David Law said it was incredible to see the participants build connections with each other, passing on and reactivating culture together.

LITTLE SISTERS' DAY OUT

The Sisters Day Out workshop celebrates Aboriginal culture and brings Aboriginal women within the community together for a day to yarn and share stories. This year the Buldau Yioohgen program piloted the first 'Little Sisters' Day Out'. Hosted at AV's Darrango Yan-Dhan Cultural centre in Melbourne, the day provided a space for women and their children to enjoy arts and crafts, with a range of activities from possum skin art to pampering. On the day, the program put on a beautiful spread for the families who enjoyed jumping from activity to activity in the space. Anglicare Victoria's CEO Paul McDonald dropped in to welcome the families at the event.

Now that restrictions have lifted, Auntie Kellie will begin to host Little Sister days across Anglicare Victoria's regional locations and continue to develop the event, including offering Aboriginal services across the board to support local families in a fun, creative space.

"The children were given a possum skin to tell their story and take home. Maddie and her children began to connect with Culture they had been longing for," said David.

Since Maddie's experience at Lorne, she told the BY team that she has continued to build on her progress. Following her excursion, Maddie reignited her connection to family and culture. Maddie's inspiration has encouraged her relatives to come together and share their stories of Culture and photos of family. When restrictions lift, they are planning a reunion including a family member travelling from overseas. The BY team are delighted to see the positive impact of the program ripple out into the community.



BY participants prepare illustrations depicting their story before engraving onto possum skin.



A FIRESIDE YARN WITH AUNTY KELLIE HUNTER

Recently Aunty Kellie Hunter was appointed as Senior Cultural Operations Lead at AV. In this role, she will lead the integration of Culture into the way we work and provide care. Today she shares her personal story of connecting to Culture and how she has been supporting the integration of Culture at AV and with our young people.

Tell us about your journey with Culture?

I was born in the Royal Women's Hospital in Carlton in 1970. I am the middle child of six kids, five girls and one boy. My father was a very proud Aboriginal man with Scottish heritage; he was a direct descendent of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people. In 2005 my father passed on to his Dreamtime. My mother is of Australian Irish heritage. Our family travelled around Australia a lot; we were never in one place for more than six months. But we would always come back to Naarm (Melbourne) and spend a lot of time with my Aboriginal Nan and my Pop mainly living on Country. This was where my siblings and I learnt a lot about our Culture.

My Nan was the last female Aboriginal baby born on Coranderrk Mission in the 1920s. Nan—also known as Tiny or Aunty Jessie—moved with her parents and three siblings to live in North Melbourne, where she grew up being told not to identify as Aboriginal for fear of being taken. She would often go back to Coranderrk to visit her grandmother Jemima Nevin and learn the ways of Culture—which back then required seeking permission and a permit from the government.

I remember we'd often go rabbiting, fishing, or hunting for eels or yabbies with Nan, and she would show us how to prepare the food and cook it.

We'd listen as she would tell us stories about family and Culture. I was too young to understand the importance of it all, but I remember her stories.

My Dad was one of five boys. As he got older, he began to recognise the importance of his Culture and wanted to learn more. He immersed himself in researching and began working at the State Library in the city while studying Culture, history and ceremonies. It was through my Nan and my Dad that I learned the most about my Cultural connection.

"I want to focus on empowering our children, and a huge part of that is healing. Our kids have much trauma in their life, and they need to be on Country to heal. The BY Program is where our children get to do this. "Country needs healing, and our children need healing from Country. It's about connecting to mother earth and our Culture."

Dad formed a group of young Aboriginal kids and taught us dance and other cultural learnings when I was young. Thus began my own journey of discovery of who I was and where I was from, empowering me to be strong and proud in Culture.



Growing up, I was constantly bullied in school: called racial names, bashed up and picked on, but I stood my ground every time because I had my Culture, and my family behind me. I knew who I was. Those bullies only empowered me to become resilient.

These childhood memories and lived experiences are what I bring to my role at BY when working with our vulnerable kids in care. Every day I learn more and more about our Culture. I'm blessed to have my cousin Mandy Nicholson teach and share language with me (Woiwurrung) and grateful to work alongside Uncle Ian and other community members and Elders. Our Culture is still here. It isn't lost. We still practice ceremony, and we still practice the old ways when we can. It's my role, not only in AV but also in the community, to share what I know to pass that knowledge on, especially to our children.

I can see things are changing in Aboriginal peoples' fight for being recognised. There is more support by the wider community. It's time for change, reconciliation and acknowledgement of First Nations people in this Country.

What drives you in your work to support young people in connecting to Culture?

My Dad always said to anyone who didn't know their mob or didn't feel they belonged anywhere, "Take my hand, come walk through Country. Together we will learn and support each other along the way." Now I use these words with the children we work with.

Children in care can be pretty weary of social supports; the average child meets dozens of workers. Uncle Ian and I focus on building meaningful connections.



When we meet a young person for the first time, there is a little apprehension at first, but as soon as we start talking about Culture the nerves give way to smiles, and their faces light up. That's the moment we start walking the path together. I know each connection we make is a lifetime friendship and connection. It might just be a slight change for someone at first, but those small changes make my role so meaningful.

Many of the kids we work with identify as Indigenous, but they don't have the personal connection to Culture and community that I had. So it's powerful to me to be able to help them on their journey. In our (Buldau Yioohgen) program, these kids come along, and it's like an introduction to Culture for them. They leave with more of a sense of who they are. It's self-empowerment with Culture as a foundation.

"We try to be that one happy space they can come to, just to put all that other stuff aside as they regain their strength; to wake up the next day and go, OK yeah, I've got this, I can do this."

What is your vision for strengthening Culture at AV?

I want to see a Cultural centre at AV that young people can come to be proud of. To embed Culture and see the young people we're working with become our future leaders, our Elders, standing strong and powerful in who they are.

Coming to AV has been amazing. Working with the generous support and vision of Program Manager David and having an open door and full support of CEO Paul McDonald is unique. There is a lot of integrity here. AV is walking the talk: the staff, teams and directors have done nothing but support me and Uncle Ian.

"I love working for AV. They've given us the flexibility to do what we need to do and to have input into policy and procedures all the way down to the programs."

ENHANCING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AT AV

During May 2021 the Southern Region Reconciliation Committee organised a guided cultural walk through beautiful bushland on the lands of the Boon Wurrung/Bunurong members of the Kulin Nation, facilitated by Uncle Lionel Lauch from the Living Culture crew.

Not only was the guided walk an opportunity to get some fresh air and walk through special land, it was also an opportunity to learn about the medicinal and everyday properties of various flora.

AV staff reflected on what they learnt, and the surprise they felt when they found out that many everyday plants or weeds actually contain powerful healing properties. At the end of the walk, participants were guided through a Yidaki meditation, during which they were encouraged to close their eyes and surrender to their surroundings. Pausing to acknowledge birdsong,

the swaying of trees, and the whistle of the wind was a calming and healing experience for many.

Cassie Hose, Southern Region's Reconciliation Action Plan Steering Committee representative, said that everyone who participated in the cultural walk spoke about the positive and healing nature of the event, and their amazement at the new information they had gathered.

"My favourite quote from Uncle Lionel that day, was about a lesson he learnt as a young fella. He reminded us that the day was about learning, about experiencing, and about getting out into nature. But most importantly, the day was about listening, about hearing the lessons from him, and from the land. It made me reflect on how often we don't actually 'listen' and how often we just continue to do. The calming environment around us that day helped us to stop and listen while we learned," Cassie reflected.

AVA GETS HOOKED ON CULTURE

On the first night of the Buldau Yioohgen program's Lake Mungo trip, Ava caught on well to fishing on the river at Moulamein for the first time. In the quiet campsite on the river, she woke up to sit on the banks and practise in the early morning. Her boyfriend had been trying to encourage her to take up fishing for a long time, so she embraced the opportunity to practise in her own time. After she caught her first fish, she was hooked! Ava said she couldn't wait to get home and tell her boyfriend.

After the trip, the isolation of the pandemic continued to impact Ava. The BY mob maintained close contact with Ava and provided her with additional support. Ava was able to find the right care and share her struggles. Recently, Aunty Kellie, support staff and Ava made Anzac biscuits online together. With professional and meaningful care, Ava is on the mend. Kellie said, "She's got us now, and we'll be there when she needs us again like that."



Ava's hooked!

If you are interested in hearing more about anything you've read in this season's newsletter, please contact the BY program via **email: by@anglicarevic.org.au**

anglicarevic.org.au



OUR FOCUS IS ON TRANSFORMING THE FUTURES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, FAMILIES AND ADULTS. OUR WORK IS BASED ON THREE GUIDING PILLARS, PREVENT, PROTECT, EMPOWER.

**BETTER
TOMORROWS**