

RINGBALIN

DANCING THE RIVER TOUR
2019

FINAL REPORT

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1. Background

Ringbalin – Dancing The River brings together the language groups of the Murray-Darling Basin to celebrate their river cultures with ceremony and song. Indigenous dancers from Adelaide, Albury, the Snowy Mountains, Mildura, Swan Hill, Murray Bridge, Wellington and the Coorong travelled down the length of the Murray-Darling river system, sharing their cultures with communities and performing at a large public event at Goolwa where a ceremony to heal the rivers was held on Easter Sunday the 24th of April 2019.

Due to the departures of Tal-Kin-Jeri Inc. Project Manager Tony Collins and Event Manager Carmel Young mid 2018 and the associated disruptions, and with the permission of the ILA, the Dupang event was restructured to be included as the preplanning stage for the upcoming Ringbalin Tour.

The appointment of new Event Manager Nisa Schebella in December 2018 meant a new approach was to be needed to get both the projects delivered on time and on budget. With the onset of Christmas and New Year realistically nothing was going to be achieved until mid-January so it meant there was only 6 weeks to get Dupang across the line and then only another 6 weeks to prepare for Ringbalin.

The original planning group for the project included:

Major Sumner – Tal-Kin-Jeri Dance Group SA

Charlotte Sumner – Tal-Kin-Jeri Dance Group SA

Khairunnisa Schebella – Tal-Kin-Jeri Dance Group SA

Jamie Thomas – Gunditjmara Dancers Vic

Jason Dixon – The River Boys Bourke NSW

Uncle Max Harrison/Richard Swain – Ngaran Ngaran Dancers NSW

Peter Peterson – MDAS Mildura Vic

Fleur Davis – Milan Dhiyaan, Orange NSW

Glenda Nicholls – Meewi Dance Group, Swan Hill/Wood Wood Vic

Discussions with all of the above were initiated and invitations sent out to come to the Dupang Festival and participate in a Ringbalin planning meeting. The River Boys, Peter Peterson and Fleur Davis were unable to attend Dupang but phone discussions continued with them nonetheless.



2. Dupang - The Preplanning Event

In February 2019, the Dupang Cultural Camping Festival was held on Uncle Moogy Sumner's traditional lands on the Coorong as a part of the 2019 Adelaide Fringe Festival.

After some historical lukewarm response from a selection of Darling River communities it was an exciting new opportunity for Ringbalin to explore the Murray River communities in 2019. Dance Groups from the Murray River regions were invited to Dupang to participate in the event to plan for Ringbalin but also to discuss issues facing the Murray River communities.

New individuals and groups emerged including the Meewi and Swan Hill Dancers and the Ngaran Ngaran Dancers from the Yuin language group whilst some existing groups fell away like the River Boys from Bourke and the Milan Dhiyaan Group from Orange.



After discussions with, and at the invitation of, Yuin Elder Uncle Max

Harrison Uncle Moogy was invited to attend the Narjong Water Ceremony at the source of the Murray River in the Snowy Mountains on March 10th. He and two other Tal-Kin-Jeri representatives travelled to the Snowy's and participated in ceremony and it was decided that Ringbalin 2019 would travel the



length of the Murray in 2019.

Other invitations that came from Dupang discussions were from Aunties Jan Muir and Glenda Nicholls at Wood Wood who also danced for the first time at Dupang. They were extremely keen to get Tal-kin-Jeri Dance Group onto country and into community to activate and inspire their young boys and men. Glenda was very helpful in spreading the word to other Yorta Yorta and Wiradjuri communities along The Riverina about our plans and impending visit.

We charted out our course and spread the word of our dates and hopes.

As Uncle Moogy spoke to different Traditional Owners we were able to identify the correct people to connect with and get the relevant permissions to dance on country. It was not always easy identifying the correct people and it did not transpire for the whole dance group to return to the highlands of the Snowy Mountains as we hoped, but to begin the journey in Albury or Mungabareena more specifically, and work our way back via Cummeragunja and Lake Barmah, Echuca, Wood Wood and Tooleybuc, Mildura, Wentworth, Renmark, Murray Bridge, Wellington, Goolwa and the Murray Mouth.

Dupang also was the beginnings of our collaboration with UniSA and the Mobile Language Team. Students Anil Samy and Greg Lyell joined us to document the event as well as prep for Ringbalin.



ABORIGINAL MEDIA AND LANGUAGE TRAINEE PROGRAM

'Our Aboriginal Media and Language Trainee Program set about giving language and media training to a young Nukunu community member Anil Samy. Anil is studying media and filmmaking

at UniSA and we teamed up with him to make a vlog series called '10 Words 10 Days'. Using his Nukunu language Anil produced 10 vlogs over 10 days as he learnt, and then in turn shared, his Nukunu language with others around Australia and the world.'

Anil was very keen take on the Ringbalin Language Films project to add to his portfolio.



It was a pleasure to work with both Anil and Greg on Dupang, under the guiding hand of Good Morning Beautiful Films Director, Jocelyn Pedrick. This is the result.

<https://www.tal-kin-jeri.org/dupang-2019-video>

Justin McManus provided us with an amazing array of images.

<https://www.tal-kin-jeri.org/photo-gallery-1>

We were also able to include Dupang in the International Calendar of Events for the United Nation Year of Indigenous Languages and gain partner support and usage rights for the official logo.



2019 | INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
Indigenous Languages

3. The Tour

On Friday April 11, a 25-seat bus with trailer, one ute with trailer, one all-wheel drive with van, one four-wheel drive and one car set off as the Ringbalin official tour party. On the Sunday April 13 another ute and trailer with the Production Crew joined us in Wood Wood.

In 2019 tour several differences occurred including more organised and official events collaborating with local Councils and Parks Victoria, more cabin stays for the dancers, a dedicated sound and lighting crew, a dedicated film crew and the absence of a dedicated kitchen crew/bbq vehicle.

Albury, Wood Wood, Mildura, Wellington and Goolwa all had broad community engagement and significant public outcomes, whilst Cummeraganja, and Murray Bridge were more intimate and community focused. Renmark was a pop-up event just for the Easter weekend campers at the Caravan Park and a lot of fun under a full moon.

We were very keen to begin our tour up in the mountains at the source of the Murray as planned but had significant issues to seek all the correct permissions and identify all the necessary people on the ground. The distance and time constraints in the end became issues that were insurmountable.

As Uncle Moogy, Bryce Cawte and Chris Ryan, at the invitation from

Uncle Max Harrison at Dupang, had represented Tal-Kin-Jeri at the Narjong Water Ceremony at the river source in the highlands of Wiradjuri country only a few weeks prior, we decided that we had already ticked that box and that we should start in the low-lands. Still Wiradjuri Country but the Traditional Owners of that region were able to be present and begin our journey with full blessing.



<https://reclaimkosci.org.au/2019/02/25/traditional-healing-ceremony-at-birth-place-of-the-murrumbidgee/>

Bungambrawatha/Albury (Wiradjuri)

Bungambrawatha was our first event working together with the Albury City Council, the Burraja Cultural Centre and the Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation held at the Mungabareena Reserve (now known as the Mungabareena Aboriginal Place).

The Mungabareena Aboriginal Place has significant stories related to the gathering of local clans and the hunt and harvest of the Bogong Moth.

Dr Pettina Love and Ruth Davys were identified as persons of interest for our film makers as they run a Cultural Language business called Giilangyaldhaanygalang. 'We teach Wiradjuri Language and raise funds to support Wiradjuri Language Teaching.'

<https://www.giilangyaldhaanygalang.com/>



They have taken the lead in learning, teaching and utilising language in their community and daily lives. Unfortunately, Dr Love was unavailable, but we were able to talk with Ruth and our filmmakers spent time with her over two days.

We also negotiated with Teacher Annita Gifford and Aboriginal Support Worker Bec Lea from the James Fallon High School in Albury to include their young Wiradjuri Dance Group of approximately 12 dancers. We performed together to approximately 150 people, plus held a dance workshop together in the afternoon.

The group represented several different language groups from around the region but came together under the umbrella of the Wiradjuri language.



At sundown, local Wiradjuri Elder Aunty Edna Stewart gave Uncle Moogy and the dancers a warm welcome to 'Bungambrawatha' (Albury), which she explained meant 'homeland' to the local people. She later said that it was good to see ceremony back at Mungabareena. "It's nice to see ceremony here in our sacred place by the river and to see the local community involved," she said.

We also met with Greg Page, Journalist for the Koori Mail who attended the event and wrote this piece.



Cummeraganja (Yorta Yorta)

The Yorta Yorta Land Council responded at the 11th hour to our initial call out and we were invited to stop over at Lake Barmah and the Cummeraganja Community on our way to Echuca.

As our breakfast gathering at the Mungabareena Community Centre had been cancelled and no other formal reception was planned for that night we were very happy to include this in our calendar.

Our film crew stayed behind in Albury to complete filming with Ruth Davys and we all congregated at the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation in Barmah and followed Elders, led by Monica Morgan, into the Lake Barmah Reserve for a guided tour of the area. They highlighted numerous problems faced in regards to the river system and lakes, the Murray Darling Basin Plan, the issue of feral horses and other feral animals, unseasonal water releases upsetting birdlife patterns, to name just a few.



Image by Nisa Schebella

We then were able to arrange an impromptu gathering on Cummeraganja Mission for that

night on the very spot the famous Walk Off in 1939 and Walk On earlier this year was held. Under the light of only the campfire and car lights the TDG performed to about 100 members of the local community and visitors from the Echuca, Bendigo and Wangarratta areas.

This was a very special time sent



Image by Justin McManus

with the Yorta Yorta people and the appreciation for dancing and activating that space with ceremony from the Cummeraganja community was heartfelt and moving. It was a low tech event with only the light of the fire and car headlights which added an very authentic and traditional atmosphere to the night.

Wood Wood (Yorta Yorta/Latji Latji)

One of the highlight performances and outcomes of the Dupang Festival was the inclusion of the Meewi Dancers from the Swan Hill Region and our visit to Wood Wood.

Sisters Glenda and Marilyn Nichols and Janice Muir were very keen for their community to be involved in Ringbalin and put a lot of effort, resources and energy into

facilitating our visit to their country in the northern region of the Nyah Vinefa Forest. They also facilitated our introductions into the Yorta Yorta community and Land Council through Marilyn's husband Des Morgan.

Glenda and Jan were very keen to initiate and facilitate an experience for her community, especially the young men who were facing ongoing issues of under or unemployment and drug and alcohol abuse, that would spark an interest in culture and hopefully a pathway to sobriety and well-being.



Glenda is a highly skilled artist and works particularly with netting. In the lead-up to our visit they worked together with dancer Sherry Yhi Yangarra based in Mildura to workshop and learn some new dances and create new costumes and artefacts. Sherry worked prolifically in Adelaide,

around SA and internationally in the 90's and in particularly as a part of Australians for Reconciliation project with the author of this report.

After returning to country for the past two decades Sherry has had mixed fortunes and struggled with the same issues as mentioned above. It was a very fortunate and powerful opportunity for Sherry to reconnect with her cultural dance roots and share her experience and knowledge with her community after such a long time. She has also benefitted immensely by making new strong cultural relationships and the support that goes with that with Glenda and Jan.



After having spent the first couple of nights in caravan parks it was great for the group majority to set up camp and really connect with country. The walk we had through the Barmah Forest was the first real sense of being back on country and whilst some of the group

entourage camped there overnight the main core of the dancers and leaders went back to Echuca Caravan Park as planned.

Some of the dancers were hungry for country, some less so wanting access to power and internet, but as we were spending two nights in Wood Wood we took the opportunity to pull out the tents and swags and really get back to nature. We had been able to secure access to the Scout Camp onsite but on arrival were surprised to see its' state of repair. We did however have access to toilets and cold showers and one room with power which was crucial for the film crew's needs and phone charging.

At Wood Wood we also began our journey with our Dupang production partner Mulderi Productions run by Indigenous Father and Son team Owen and Eben Love. After a very successful collaboration with Mulderi at Dupang we welcomed them onto the tour to provide us with our sound and lighting requirements. One of the issues of the previous tours was the sound and lighting quality for filming live



Image by Justin McManus

performances. This was not an issue in 2019.

Ceremony on the banks of the river with our full lighting and sound was magic. Around 100 people from around the region attended including some of the Swan Hill Dance Group that performed at Dupang 2019.

Photographer Justin McManus took the opportunity to do a night shoot with the dancers and the Film Crew spent the second day interviewing Jan and Glenda, whilst we held workshops sharing stories, weaving, wood working and also played language games.



Image by Nisa Schebella

Uncle Moogy also was interviewed on the riverbank for the local paper, as well as ABC Radio.

French Documentary Maker Martin Courcier also took the opportunity to film Uncle Moogy on the riverbank.

Mildura (Latji Latji)

Our return to Mildura after previous years was a little different as we had extra drive coming from Sherry who is based in Mildura and administrative and promotional support from the Mildura Council. Along with the coverage on the ABC, River 1467 FM and local Nunga Radio station brought along a big crowd of over 150 people.

The Mallee District Aboriginal Services once again supplied fire-wood to light several large ceremonial fires on the banks of the Murray River at Apex River Beach.

Local Dancers led by Billie Brims, Sherry Yhi Yangarra (with assorted dancers from Swan Hill and Wood Wood) and Tal-Kin-Jeri all performed for over two hours, the audience able to participate by learning a few dances and taking part in the closing ceremony.

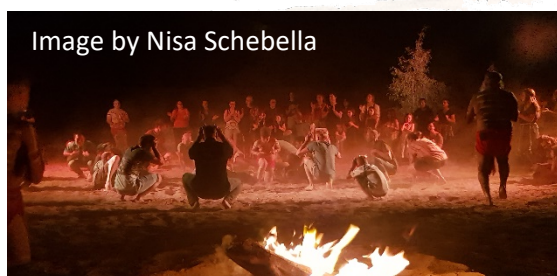


Image by Nisa Schebella



Image by Nisa Schebella

Wentworth

Wentworth was just a day stop-over this year with a talk by Uncle Moogy to us about the rivers and some lunch.

Renmark

Our performance in Renmark was to a small local audience of around 50 people at our Caravan Park on the banks of the Murray. They were very excited to have us there and asked us back in any future tours to come. The local ABC Radio staff attended and interviewed several performers and recorded and photographed some of the performances.

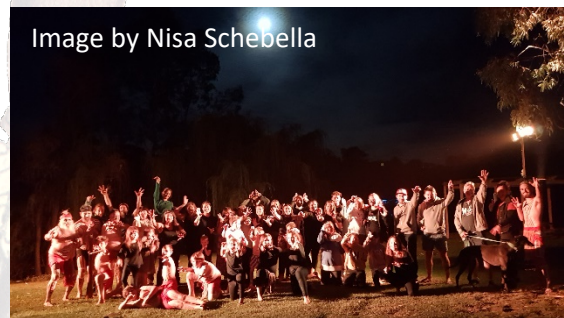


Image by Nisa Schebella

Murray Bridge (Ngarrindjeri)

At Murray Bridge, a large crowd of 150 locals gathered to celebrate the Ringbalin coming home to the heart of Ngarrindjeri Country.

Held on the dance ground at the Ninkowar Aboriginal Cultural Centre overlooking the river, a special meal of Coorong mullet

was prepared by our cooking crew travelling with the Ringbalin Tour supported by local family members.



Image by Nisa Schebella

Wellington (Ngarrindjeri)

A new addition to the event calendar, Wellington sits just south of Murray Bridge very close to Lake Alexandrina and is Ngarrindjeri country. The Mulderi Production team have land there and were very keen to host the Tal-Kin-Jeri on their country.

The Wellington Progress Association were also very enthusiastic partners in supporting our event as it fell on the Saturday night of the Easter weekend with many holiday makers in the area. They provided

us with a BBQ, lights etc and liaised with the Murray Bridge Council to manage all the requirements to use Baker Reserve and promoted it through the local media.

Around 100 people attended the night although many ignored the fact it was an alcohol and drug free event.



Image by Nisa Schebella

Goolwa (Ngarrindjeri)

On the final day of the Ringbalin Tour we stopped over in Goolwa at the Bristow Smith Reserve for some lunch and spent the afternoon working on wood carving and weaving costume belts and headbands with approximately 25 people.

After the workshop we painted up and had a smoking ceremony in the Goolwa reserve near the main roundabout before we crossed over the bridge to Kumarangk (Hindmarsh Island)



Image by Nisa Schebella

Murray Mouth (Ngarrindjeri)

To finish the tour Tal-Kin-Jeri headed back to the Murray Mouth at Sugars Beach.

Uncle Moogy was specific that we return to the mouth and be more focussed on ceremony than tourism event, as had been in 2017 for the finale in Goolwa town. He also wanted it to be an open ceremony to the public.

Approximately 4-500 people awaited us there as the sun came down. It was a cold and windy

night and we were very grateful for the 4 fires around the dance area.

As the full moon rose over the sand dunes a very magical atmosphere brought us all together in dance.

Many of the entourage joined in the dancing painted up in the Ngarrindjeri style and it was a blessing to dance with the group in the final ceremony.

Image by Liam Fletcher



Tal-Kin-Jeri Inc

208 Lady Gowrie Drive Largs Bay SA 5016

**Cultural Director: Major 'Moogy' Sumner, AM
Artistic and Video Director: Charlotte Sumner
Project/Event Manager: Nisa Schebella**

Outcomes:

Language Videos

<https://vimeo.com/351967939>

<https://vimeo.com/351966933>

<https://vimeo.com/351734710>

Language Resource:

Website - Online language tools at

<https://www.tal-kin-jeri.org/language-resources>

Yaama Ngunna Baaka Corroborees Festival

www.ngunna.com

Bruce Shillingsworth Snr. and Dr Jenny Brown have invited TDG to be part of their new festival in five places along the lower Baaka from September 28 to 3 October this year.

“Our project was inspired by your Ringbalin a few years ago and it would be great to acknowledge and build on your activity by having you involved.” Dr. Jenny Brown.

Ongoing Program

The response from Aboriginal communities visited as part of the consultation for this project points to an overwhelming need for projects such as this to continue. Every community we visited expressed a desire to revive local cultural practices and particularly to involve children in activities where they learn Aboriginal languages.

Tal-Kin-Jeri plans to apply for further funding to continue the project. The intention for 2020 is to carry out a recording and video project with, the Menindee School dance group with Beryl Carmichael, The Barkindji Dancers and The River Warriors.

In future years, the communities of Wilcannia, Mungabareena, Cummeragunja, Wood Wood, Swan Hill, Wellington, Renmark and Murra Murra station will all participate.

RINGBALIN

Dancing the River Tour

WOOD WOOD

Ngarrindjeri elder Uncle Major 'Moogy' Sumner and the Tal-Kin-Jeri Dancers, invite you to join them in celebrating the **UN Year of Indigenous Languages** as they dance down the Murray River connecting with other nations each night in a sunset ceremony.

Monday April 15th

Welcome to Country - Noon

Activities 2-4pm

Ceremony at sunset approx 6pm

Alcohol Free Family Event

For more info on workshops and program go to

www.tal-kin-jeri.org/ringbalin-2019

www.facebook.com/talkinjeri

Image by Justin McManus



2019 INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
Indigenous Languages



Healthy Parks
Healthy People!

Tal-Kin-Jeri
DANCE GROUP INC.



Sharing Culture From The Coorong



arts

Apanguku Arts and Culture
Aboriginal Corporation



Australian Government
Indigenous Languages and Arts