

The Burrinja Pigeon Story

Photo-story Dr Laura Brearley

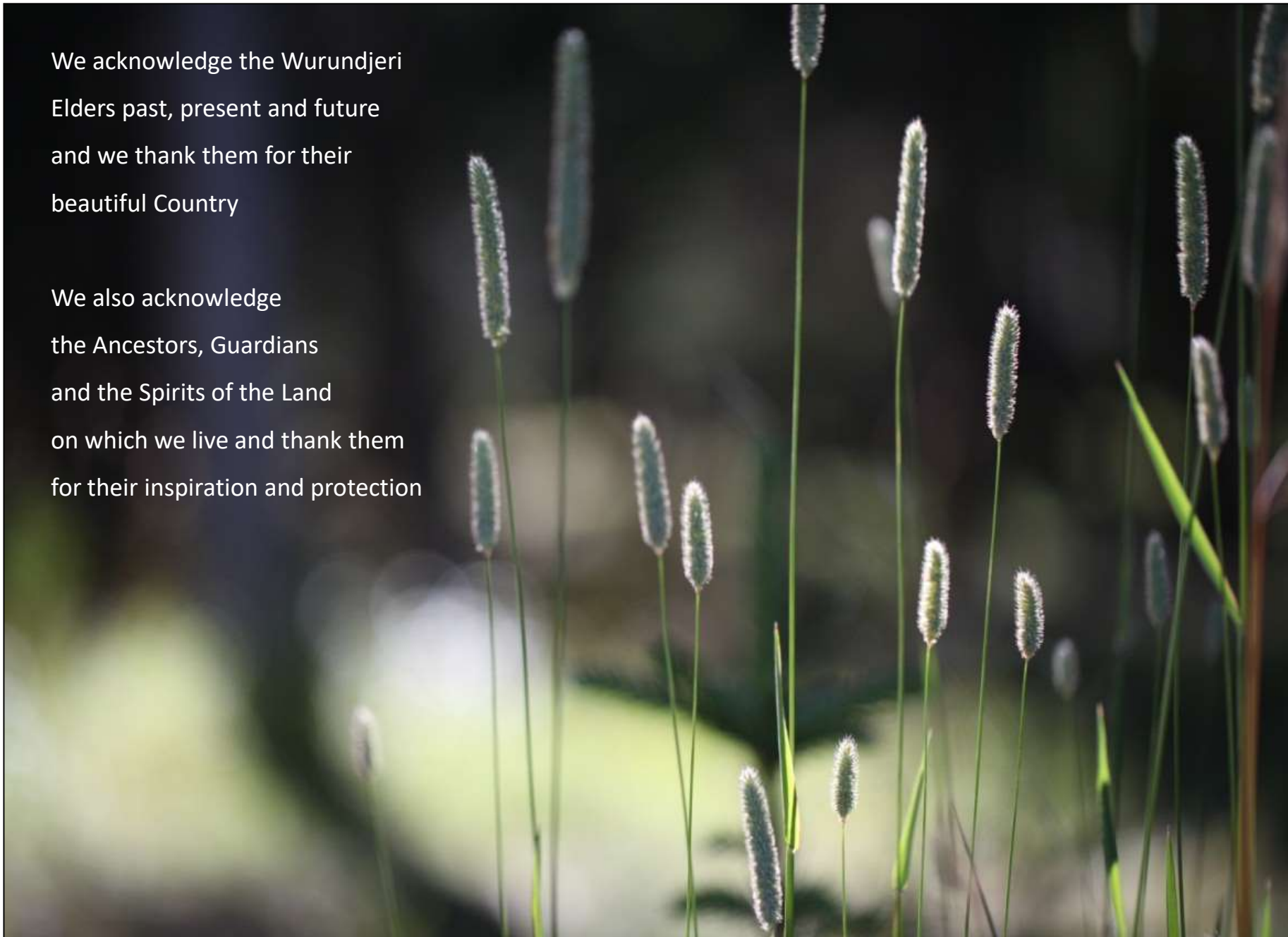
Images Barbara Oehring
Jen Angel
Terry Melvin
Ronald Edwards
Laura Brearley

Image Barbara Oehring



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri
Elders past, present and future
and we thank them for their
beautiful Country

We also acknowledge
the Ancestors, Guardians
and the Spirits of the Land
on which we live and thank them
for their inspiration and protection



Towards the end of 2016, after wild windstorms in the Dandenongs, a homing pigeon found its way to the Burrinja Cultural Centre



The pigeon stayed in the garden for a few days, watched over by staff at the Centre

The following weekend, a group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists, musicians and community members came to Burrinja for a Deep Listening Circle to honour and celebrate the spirit of creative collaboration of *Fusion 2016: The Art of Connection*





Image Jen Angel



The Deep Listening Circle was facilitated by a group of seven Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists, musicians and educators, all of whom have been involved in previous Deep Listening activities



We learned Aboriginal language and explored our relationship to Country through song, story and dance



Image Laura Brearley

Peter Chambers told the story of The Morning Star from Maningrida, Arnhem Land



Image Ronald Edwards



Images Laura Brearley



Tracy Hayllar was on duty at Burrinja that day, looking after the Centre and caring for the pigeon who had become quite weak

The pigeon was snuggled into Tracy's warm jumper

After lunch, Tracy and the pigeon visited the Deep Listening Circle

Lisa Kennedy, Trawlwoolway artist and story-teller, spoke about the significance of birds as messengers

She read out some messages from 'Living Connections', a story she had written about birds and their links to the Ancestors



Artwork Lisa Kennedy (Trawlwoolway)



Image Barbara Oehring

After the Deep Listening Circle was over, the pigeon was taken to the home of Rowena Ward, one of Burrinja's volunteers



For many years, Rowena had worked as a palliative care nurse
She cared for the pigeon, offering it bird seed and comfort



Later in the afternoon, the pigeon took a deep drink of water and peacefully died



The next day, Rowena undertook some research and spoke to people with expertise in homing pigeons

On the Burrinja Pigeon's leg was a tag that said 'UAE 2013'

Rowena was told that the pigeon had been born in the United Arab Emirates in 2013 and had been purchased for breeding purposes by someone in Australia



It had been sent to the United Kingdom to be quarantined

Rowena also learned that pigeons used for breeding purposes lose their ability to fly and their capacity to return home



Pigeons are Messenger Birds

The Burrinja Pigeon carried with it a big story of loss, dispossession and constraint



It also generated a story about compassion, community and the quality of care

On its last day, the Burrinja Pigeon heard the sound of songs, stories, tears and laughter



As we were cleaning up at the end of the Deep Listening Circle,
we found some feathers on the carpet



Image Terry Melvin



There were emu feathers from the Dilly Bags

Image Ronald Edwards

There was a feather from The Morning Star from Maningrida





And there was one was from the Burrinja Pigeon

Two weeks later, a ceremony was held to honour the life of the Burrinja Pigeon







We sang together





Image Barbara Oehring



We danced together







We shared stories about birds as messengers,
connection to Country and the cycle of life



We lay the Burrinja Pigeon to rest in the Community Garden



Special Thanks to ...

- The Burrinja Cultural Centre for its beautiful environment, atmosphere and culture
- The Fusion 2016 Team for their work leading up to the Deep Listening Circle
- Ross Farnell, Megan Meuleman, Karen Rowland and Josie Kent for their work in the lead-up to the event
- Tracy Hayllar, the Burrinja Cultural Centre Duty Manager for her care and competence
- The Facilitation Team for their generosity and creative gifts

Lisa Kennedy

Peter Corser

Laura Brearley

Mick Harding

Ronald Edwards

Ruth McKittrick Chambers

Peter Chambers



- Mandy Nicholson, Wurundjeri artist and linguist for her translation and guidance (VACL)
- Aunty Fay Stewart-Muir, Elder and linguist from Victorian Aboriginal Corporation of Languages (VACL)
- The Gunbalanya Community for their song
- Greg Champion for his song '(Listening to the) Earthbeat'
- Anthony (ToK) Norris for his generosity and inspired music-making
- Community Music Victoria and the other creative networks for spreading the word
- The Shire Councils of the Yarra Ranges, Bass Coast, Baw Baw, South Gippsland, Cardinia and Casey
- The Skylark Café Team and the Burrinja volunteers
- The team of photographers who have helped to tell the story

Barbara Oehring www.barabaraehringphotography.com

Jen Angel

Terry Melvin

Laura Brearley

Ronald Edwards



- The Burrinja Pigeon for the gift of its presence, its story and for keeping us connected