

ISSUE #1



**FIRST PEOPLE
OF THE MILLEWA-MALLEE
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
Newsletter**



**FIRST PEOPLE
OF THE MILLEWA-MALLEE
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION**

The First people of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation represent the nations of the Latji Latji and Ngintait and as such we would like us all to acknowledge these nations as the traditional Custodians as we move around this district.

While doing so we ask that we acknowledge Aboriginal people as the first peoples and Traditional Owners and custodian of the land and waterways on which we live.

We honour and pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

Welcome

Welcome to FPMMAC second issue Newsletter!

This communication newsletter will be produced every second month by Community Engagement Officer (Ebony Lawson) to keep all involved parties up to date on what is happening in FPMMAC.

First a bit of background

The First People of the Millewa-Mallee are a community of family groups.

Individuals within First People of Millewa Mallee identify as Ngintait and Latji Latji. The First Peoples of the Millewa Mallee group is not formed on the basis of language group identity. We are the custodians of our Country.

- First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation was registered 2015 and granted Registered Aboriginal Party status in December 2018.
- First People of Millewa Mallee are in the process of seeking Native Title determination and Traditional Owner Settlement.

We are the oldest living Indigenous culture within the Australian community.

What FPMMAC do

To expand cultural activity we will:

- Develop employment & economic opportunity On-Country.
- Develop & support cultural activities.
- Expand traditional languages knowledge and use.
- Expand our Aboriginal community.

The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee people have maintained continuous connection to our Traditional Country from the initial period of colonisation up to the present.



FIRST PEOPLES
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Neds Corner Station is set to be returned



The iconic Neds Corner Station conservation reserve is set to be returned to the ownership of the First People of the Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (FPMMAC), in a process committed to by Victorian conservation organisation Trust for Nature and State Government.

Once completed, it will be the largest parcel of private land to be returned to Traditional Owners in Victoria.

The 30,000-hectare Neds Corner Station is an important cultural landscape on Ngintait Country. It was run as a grazing station from the 1840s and was purchased by Trust for Nature - with help from donors and the Federal Government - in 2002.

Continuing funding from the State Government, the degraded land since the purchase has seen ongoing restoration of revegetation by TFN across the area.

The land had degraded over time, however since the purchase, Trust for Nature has restored the native vegetation and habitat in the area. The land has now recovered enough to see the return of some threatened species including the Australian Bustard and Growling Grass Frog.

Further conservation works are planned with the help of \$2 million in funding from the Victorian government, including a fenced-off area to protect wildlife from predators like foxes and cats and the reintroduction of regionally extinct plants and animals.

FPMMAC has recently been working with Trust for Nature to locate and protect the significant cultural heritage sites at Neds Corner, including ancestral burial sites, scar trees and shell middens.

Before the land transfer is completed, FPMMAC and Trust for Nature will work together to create an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) for the land to protect its conservation values in perpetuity.

It's expected that the land transfer will be completed in two years.

Chair of FPMMAC Norman (Tinawin) Wilson said the handback was a "historic occasion."

"Our lands were stolen, and our people killed, but we are still here today. Having our land back will allow us to restore our cultural practices, and care for the land and river properly," he continued.

Chair of Trust for Nature Gayle Austen said the organisation was honoured to play its part in self-determination for the First People of the Millewa Mallee.



LITTLE DESERT DJAKITJAK DJANGA COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FIELD TRIP

In November Zamin, Gregory, Sheridan and Kayla scored some sublime weather to drive to Wotjabuluk country, Little Desert to participate in the final 'Community of Practice' Djakitjak Djanga program.

Djakitjak Djanga means 'Country's Food' in Dja Dja Warrung language. Our first stop was the Barendji Gadjin native nursery. We were welcomed on to their country with a smoking ceremony from TO Brian - also the Barengi Gadjin nursery horticulture trainee.

We were shown around their nursery and some of their growing techniques and processes were shared with us. The nursery is substantially bigger than our Belar Nursery. Barengi Gadjin nursery grow a lot of Bush Tucker including Kangaroo Grass, native mints and oregano's, pigweed and Muntries for both revegetation and farmers - we got to taste test a few.

PHOTOS FROM LITTLE DESERT DJAKITJAK DJANGA COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FIELD TRIP



We continued the journey arriving at the digs - Little Desert Lodge - a fully fenced vermin proof property with resident Emu George. We settled into our rooms and met the other Djakitjak Djanga recipients from across Victoria.

We gathered in the kitchen barn and everyone helped prepare salads, a native grain damper and cooked a bbq with some of the native produce born out of the program. The meal was phenomenal to say the least - Kangaroo sauso's, Wallaby sauso's and emu steaks were on offer. Salads incorporated saltbush and native oregano and mints. Yam daisies were in short supply but we all had a taste nonetheless thanks to Zamin bringing them along. The yam daisy is truly a delicacy - it was delicious roasted on the bbq. We need to grow more of this tasty morsel. Hopefully we can dedicate a spot in the Seed production Area to grow this local species sustainably in large quantities.



Day 2

We spent at Matthew Coops Quandong and Muntries farms. He was very generous to share with us his successes and failures over 20 years of trial and error. The main takeaway was that Quandongs need multiple hosts for survival - they are known to kill their hosts if the parasitic load is too much - the greater the diversity of plantings on a Quandong farm, the better the survivability as can be seen 'on country' in Quandong stands. He has also done a lot of work on Muntries - *Kunzea pomifera* - a delicious small and sweet tasting native berry that is normally prostrate but can be grown on a trellis for ease of harvesting. CSIRO have done a lot of work on this species to select the highest yielding plants and you could really see the difference in the abundance of flowers on the selections. We got to sample some Muntries muffins and a cake incorporating Wattle seed for afternoon tea. Matthew also has a large planting of trial Acacia species. The layout gave us insight into what our Seed Production Area could look like - specifically the row spacings so that crops can be machine harvested.







Viewing planting layout on Acacia block



Muntries - *Kunzea pomifera* just about to finish flowering



Matthews Commercial Muntries plantings on trellis



Muntries in flower



That evening before a group dinner in the dining room, a few of us wandered through the surrounding vegetation on the Little Desert lodge property, looking at Muntries in their natural environment and other species typically grown in that area - some familiar, some not.

On the last day, Kayla and Sheridan were interviewed for a podcast that celebrates Aboriginal stories with Uncle Charles Pakana who is the editor and journalist for Victorian Aboriginal News. He plans to visit First People in the new year to talk about Ned's Corner and other activities and programs we have operating.

We then headed to Dyuritte aka Mt Arapiles - of course we stopped along the way to look at the beautiful roadside vegetation abundant with Grass Trees and the very bright pink Common Fringe Myrtle. We were welcomed onto Wotjobuluk country at the foot of the rock by resident senior Parks Victoria ranger Damien Scurrie and his chief Barengi Gadjin Cultural Fire ranger Laurie.



Us with Kevin who runs the GLAWAC (Gunaikurnai) café based in Orbost.



Entering Matthew Koop's first Quandong farm

They shared with us some of the rich cultural history of the area and talked about how they are using part of that site to demonstrate the effectiveness of cultural burns with the aim to reinstate them using traditional mosaic style burns. As you all know that was a way of life for aboriginal people for thousands of years to regenerate the country and ensure a reliable food source as well as preventing uncontrollable fires and much more. The Kangaroo grass which is indigenous to their landscape was in abundance and Chocolate Lilies had made a comeback after the cultural burns and rain. They talked about the rock being world renowned to rock climbing communities and how they are working with them to designate climb sites and restrict movement on other parts of the rock to preserve what is left of significant cultural art and gathering places.



George the resident Emu at Little Desert Lodge



Quandong cutting machine. It cuts the flesh in half. The halves are then graded by hand into 1sts and 2nds and then bagged and frozen for sale to restaurants and boutique industries.

We finished the trip with a visit to Matthew Coops property where we learnt how to process quandongs for market by cutting them into halves with a special piece of machinery, then grading them into 1sts and 2nds to be sent to restaurants. Of course we taste tested the fruit and the fresh nuts. Matthew also shared with us his propagation methods and how best to plant them in the field.

The program was funded by the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporation and Agriculture Victoria. The funding received was shared by the Nursery and Seed teams and for this we collected the seed to grow native species such as *Acacia Victoriae* and *Acacia pycnantha* for our soon to be established Seed production Area on the Birdwoodton property. We also purchased materials and equipment that helped us to do this successfully and set us up for success going forward.





FPMMAC Belar Nursery was proud to be apart of this project working with Fiona & Phil Murdoch from the Mallee Conservation. Who's a lovely couple who are passionate about restoring our land and working with school kids to pass on their knowledge. They own a property in Hattah called "Raakajlim" which mean dry lake in Barkindji language, it's a 490—hectare property. Belar nursery provided Fiona & Phil with 50 varies of plants that we've grown from seed. Here's some information that Fiona has wrote on her website page about working with the kids from the Carey Baptist

Track my tree

In July and August, more than 250 students visit Raakajlim from Carey Baptist Grammar School in Melbourne. We love hosting the students for one of their six nights visiting Hattah-Kulkyne National Park. The Outdoor Education program provides an opportunity for students to give back and restore the land they visit. The students planted trees to revegetate areas of the rare Semi-arid Woodland vegetation community. One of the students had the great idea of a webpage so they could Track My Tree as it grows.

Where do the trees come from?

A local indigenous-owned and run nursery grows the trees and shrubs for us. The First People of the Millewa Mallee Belar Nursery grows plants to regenerate Country, as well as food plants like Murnong (Yam Daisies). Not only that, they collect the seed and propagate the plants.





Fiona Murdoch

I'm the planner and writer.

This website and blog is all about the things in our backyard that I think are awesome. I hope you think so too! This is me, trying to save the world one little patch of habitat at a time. To be honest, this blog is my motivator to keep learning and doing, and a way to connect with you, share, and hopefully inspire. Good news only, promise!

I'm a plant nerd and have a PhD in Restoration Ecology. This means I know I don't have the answers, but I've got an endless list of things I want to try!



Phil

Phil is the bloke who gets stuff done.

Without Phil, all my ideas would come to nothing. He is the one who can turn seven bits of metal, a wheel and a pipe into a direct seeder for revegetation. Phil is the practical one who drives the tractor, the excavator, builds fences and manages pest plants and animals.

Phil has 40 years of experience managing national parks. He's now "retired" to work on Raakajlim. He says "I'm not retired, I'm very tired"



Belar Nursery plants we provided *Callitris gracilis* 50, *Alectryon oleifolius* 100, *Olearia pimelioides* 45, *Olearia muelleri* 30, *Eucalyptus leptophylla* 100, *Eucalyptus socialis* 5, *Eucalyptus incrassata* (*Euc costata* subs *murrayana*) 5, *Leptospermum coriaceum* 5, *Templetonia eugena* 10.



Kayla Carter & Ebony Lawson standing next to the plants they proudly grew to hand over to Fiona & Phil Murdoch for their Raakajlim property.



Alectryon oleifolius seedlings we provided for the Mallee Conservation.



Seed collecting team drying off Eucalyptus Mallee at Cureton Ave.



Carl Kirby, Greg Laurie & Zarmin Safdari out collecting grass seeds.



Zarmin Safdari, Greg Laurie & Carl Kirby collecting saltbush seeds.

RIVER RANGERS

Fish motels being developed to protect small-bodied native fish in the Murray River

ABC Mildura-Swan Hill/ By Tamara Clark Posted
Mon 10 Oct 2022 at 9:43am



Derek Payne (Left), Kyle Payne and Tyreece Kelly (right) construct the fish motels from wood and natural rope. (ABC Mildura-Swan Hill. Peter Sanders)

Sixty purpose-built fish motels are being constructed in the Murray River to protect native wildlife, thanks to a partnership between water and land authorities.

First People of Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation, Sunraysia Institute of TAFE and OzFish are working together to protect Murray hardy head fish and a range of other small-bodied and threatened native species.

The corporation's River Ranges team leader Derek Payne said the wooden columns gave small-bodied native fish a place to hide from larger predators.

"We're just looking after our land. We grew up on land and looking after it and giving back to it," he said.

"There's a small population of fish in the water, so it's giving them a bit more chance to populate and grow more."

Key points:

- Land and water authorities are developing fish motels to protect native small-bodied fish in the Murray River
- Three groups are working together to create and place the structures
- Fish motels are constructed of wood and natural rope to protect smaller fish from larger predators



First People of Millewa Mallee are constructing the fish motels. (ABC Mildura-Swan Hill: Peter Sanders)

First Nations knowledge invaluable

The wooden structures are built from natural rope and timber from dead river red gums from Hattah Lakes.

Mr Payne said the rollout of the fish motels had been delayed while groups searched for wood.

"It can be challenging finding already-fallen wood these days, but you can't use country for country," he said.

"Those trees were cut down at Hattah by Parks, to keep the view."



Sixty fish motels will soon be in the Murray River. (ABC Mildura-Swan Hill: Peter Sanders)

OzFish program manager for the Murray-Darling Basin, Braeden Lampard, said local Indigenous people were critical in managing the environment.

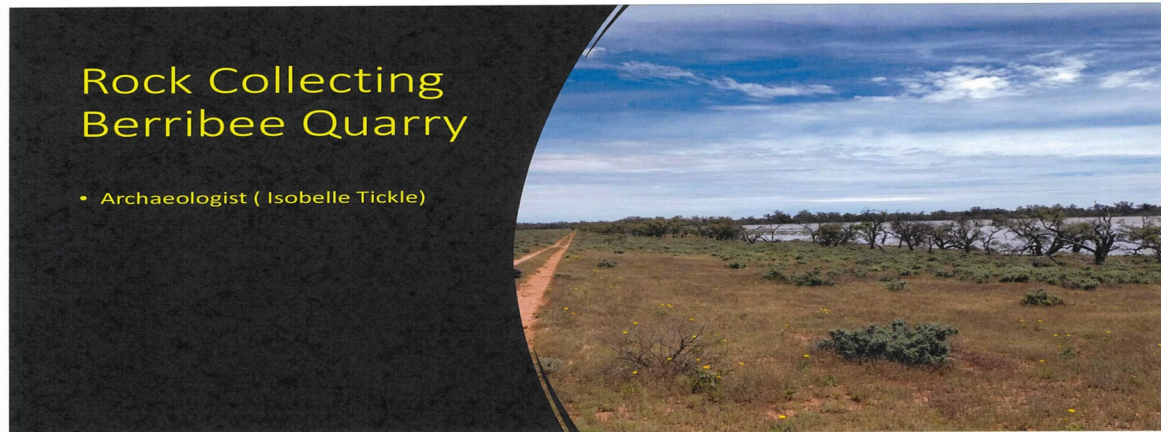
"We're out on lands working together, we're talking about future collaboration opportunities," he said.

"And we're also talking about what can be done better and what other projects we can be doing in the area.

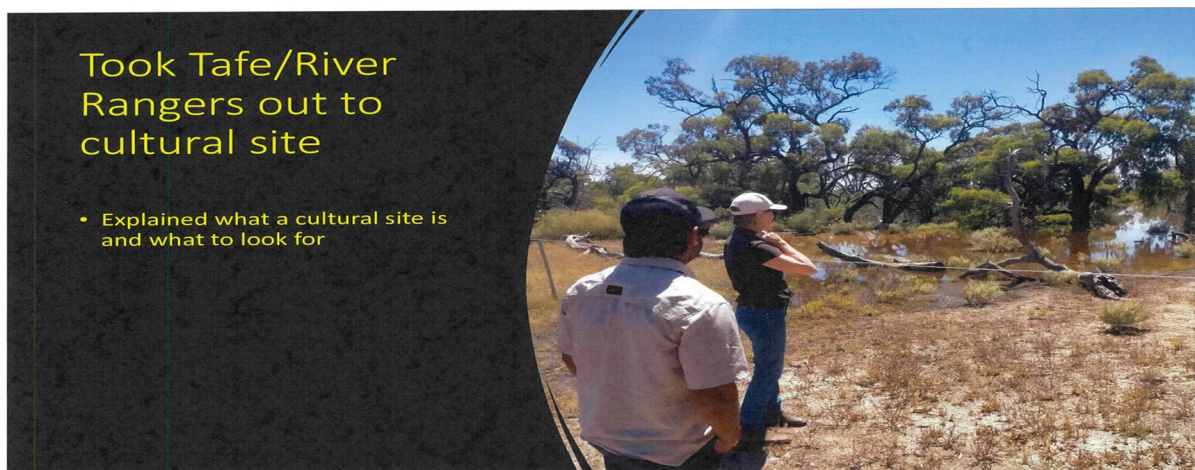
"Efforts across the Murray-Darling Basin are being undertaken by Indigenous nations, community groups and natural resource managers to protect and conserve this threatened species."

CULTURAL HERITAGE TEAM

- **BURIAL RECOVERING** with Parks Victoria & T.O



ROCK COLLECTING BERRIBEE QUARRY



Took Tafe/ River Rangers out to cultural site and explained what a cultural site is and what to look for.

If you'd like to become a member of FPMMAC
please see the form or visit our website
<https://fpmmac.com.au/about-fpmm/#membership>
to download the form.



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