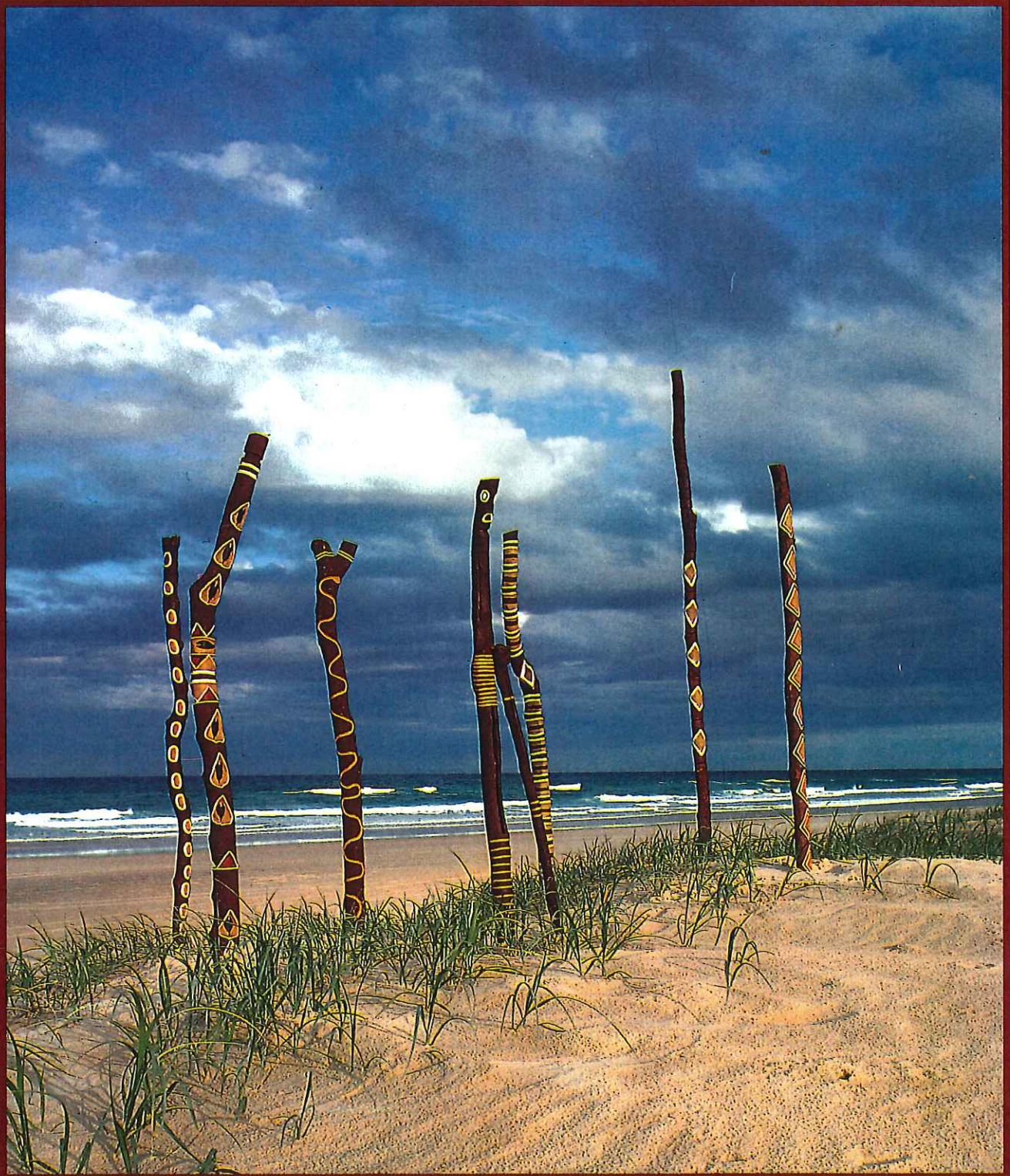


# The Badtjala People



A Cultural and Environmental Interpretation of Fraser Island  
A unique land and seascape to which we belong

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Project Co-ordinator: Shawn Foley  
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Aboriginal Cultural Consultant: Shirley Foley  
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Editors Note: *Living on the Island and in the Bay* is an edited version of tape recorded personal interviews with Mrs Shirley Foley, Mr James Currie and Aunty (Mrs) Olga Miller over a six month period. Repetitious and inconclusive comments and conventional salutations have been omitted for reasons of clarity and presentation.

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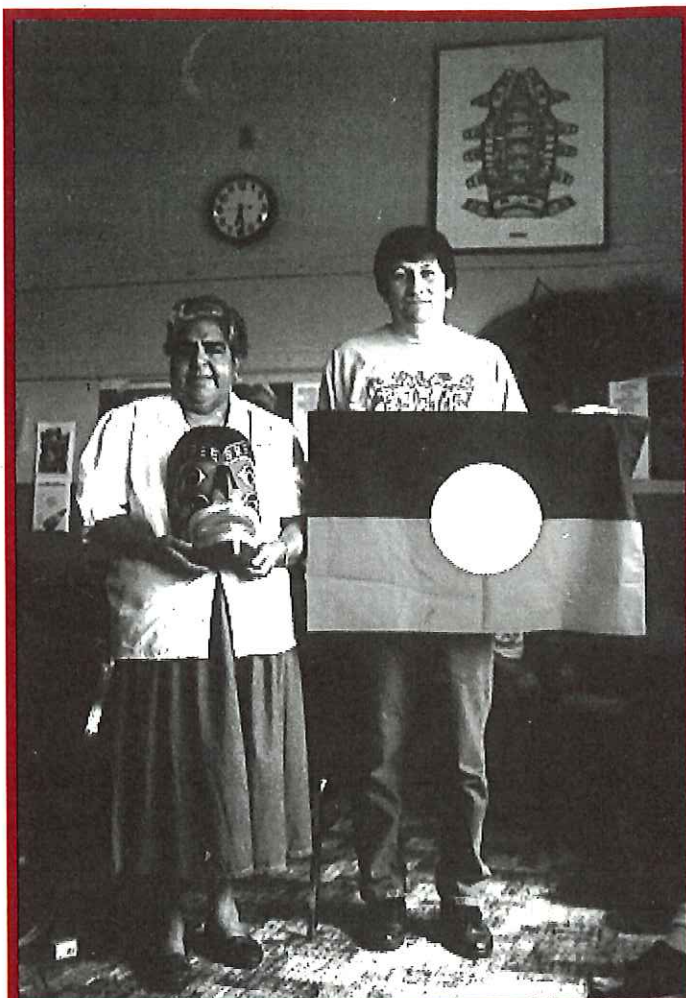
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This Thoorgine Corporation publication is part of our Cultural Education, Aboriginal Interpretation and Information Services.

All proceeds from the sale of this publication go to the Thoorgine Centre Cultural Trust Fund.

*With the coming of the mathard, commenced the end of living and the beginning of survival for our people.*

Shawn Foley



*International Cultural Exchange between Badtjala Aboriginal People of Australia and the Sechelt Indian Band of Canada. Shirley Foley, President of the Thoorgine Educational and Culture Centre exchanging gifts with Garry Feschuk, Chief of the Sechelt Indian Band.*

## The Thoorgine Centre

The Thoorgine Educational & Culture Centre Aboriginal Corporation (TECCAC) was incorporated in 1986 under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976. The organisation is executive managed by the Badtjala people.

### Corporate Purpose

"Is to fulfil educational, cultural, social and economic needs of the Badtjala people".

### Corporate Mission

"Is to assist Australians to experience, appreciate and support Badtjala people's culture and relationships to traditional homelands through cross-cultural educational interpretive activities, programs and information packages".

# DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to a positive co-operative, environmentally sustainable future and to the many Badtjala people who lost their lives in the fight to preserve cultural identity, integrity and cultural continuity.

We want this book to stand as a beacon to other indigenous people, especially to the Aboriginal youth of Fraser Island and Hervey Bay and the rest of Australia. We want this book to be like a gentle wind, blowing away the sands of ignorance that obscure the past, present and future relationships among Badtjala people themselves, between Badtjala people and non-Aboriginal people, Badtjala people and their indigenous estate.

This book exposes our tangible and intangible cultural heritage to the bright sunshine of enquiring minds. Opportunities are badly needed to develop understanding of the cultural differences between Aboriginal First Nations people and non-indigenous people. This book creates opportunities for greater understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture. We believe new understanding will engender greater respect, admiration and support for Badtjala people.

Even though the colonial wars of the 1850s in the Great Sandy Region have passed, the path of acceptance for cultural diversity, especially of Aboriginal culture in Australian Society has been, and still remains, a long hard difficult one. It is a path fraught with mis-information, lack of understanding, prejudice and a one-eyed view of social adjustment, expressed dramatically through government policies of extermination, forced segregation and assimilation. As a result of these government actions, Aboriginal people died and were killed in the process of trying to maintain their extremely high quality of life. A small number of Badtjala people survived using their knowledge of the natural environment and living on the fringes of colonialist settlement.

Under the shadow of colonialist oppression, Badtjala and other Aboriginal people have begun the long cultural reassertive walk back to the future upon our traditional homelands. A place which we have never left, a place which we continue to belong to.

Although this journey has been difficult, the struggle will continue for many decades yet. It does not reduce the commitment by Aboriginal Australians towards non-indigenous people and the unique environment in which we all live.

It is Aboriginal youth we invest our hope in, for it is the young who will carry the lantern of our cultural heritage in their minds and spirits, sharing its light with others. Our love, thoughts and presence will continue to live in our children long after our footprints in the sand have been washed away by the tide of time.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This book is the result of collective efforts and an Aboriginal initiative to fulfil a vision that rises above the ordinary.

Through this book we create an unlimited opportunity and extend our hand in friendship.

Two major commitments motivated the production of this book. The first is the commitment of Badtjala people to the continuity of their culture, which they regard with such respect and value so highly. The second is a commitment to sharing the richness and depth of their culture by educating non-indigenous people about it. Badtjala know that their Aboriginal culture has the potential to significantly enhance the lives of others, no matter what their age or background.

I wish to thank the many people who assisted in the preparation of this book. They fall into two main groups: those who provided the detailed cultural data, often from first-hand experience, and those from government agencies who provided support.

I am proud of the many Badtjala people who continue to make a stand on our traditional homelands in Hervey Bay and Maryborough, Queensland. I encourage everyone to make peace and action a positiveness which is the tradition of our ancestors.

I am also grateful for the individual contributions made by Shirley Foley, Aunty Olga Miller, James Currie, Heather Dollar, Glenese Blackman, Cheryl Currie, Rowan Foley, Darren Dollar and Fiona Foley.

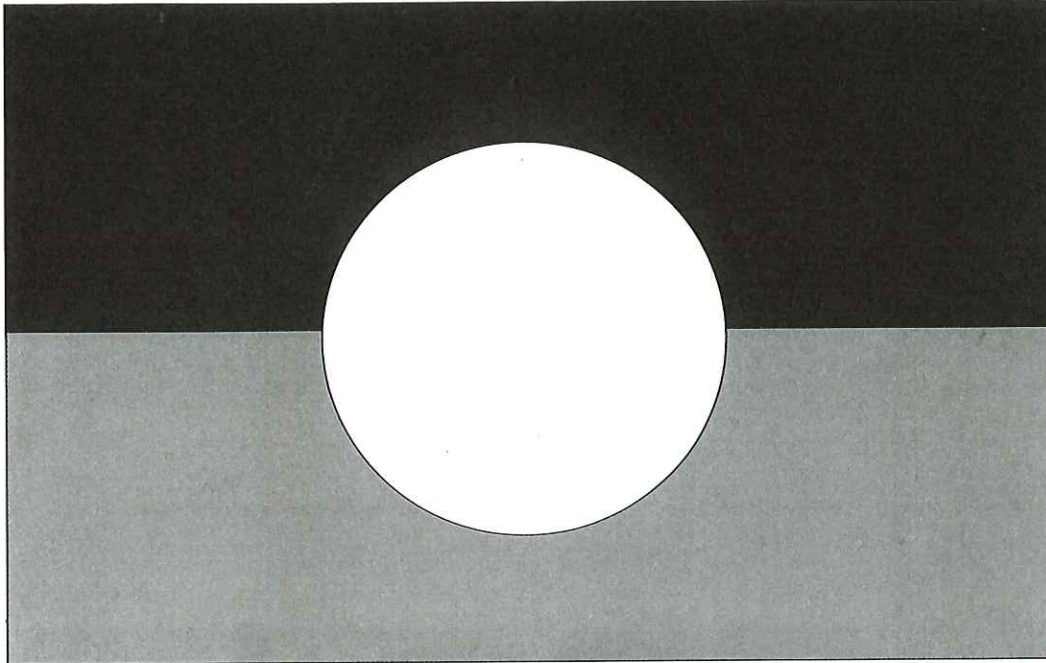
Special thanks are extended to Ms Hilary Boscott for her valuable input, substantial contribution and distinction in effort, and Mrs Tiffany Peters for her patience, perseverance and persistent excellent effort.

Time and effort would have counted for little without the support of the Australian Nature Conservation Agency's (ANCA) Aboriginal Programs Section and the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawn Foley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shawn Foley

# PREFACE



*Aboriginal Flag:*

*Black represents the Aboriginal people, past, present and future (top)  
Red represents the earth, red ochre and our spiritual relationship to the land (bottom)  
Yellow represents the sun the giver of life (centre)*

As an elder of the Badtjala people, this book for the very first time gives our story in our words.

For the past, the present and the future my hope is that it will bring a new understanding and with that a deep respect for the depth of our culture.

*Shirley J. Foley*  
Shirley J. Foley

President / Director  
Thoorgine Educational and Culture Centre Aboriginal Corporation



*A significant Aboriginal midden site on Fraser Island, a physical testimony to Badtjala People's resource gathering and family occupation within the coastal landscape.*

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- Chapter 4.*            **Living on the Island and in the Bay**

### **Glossary**

### **Photographic Credits**

# INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal people have a fundamentally different perception of themselves and everything in the environment when compared with most non-Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal culture is about the interconnections of everything, about being an active participant in relationships with every single other thing. The cultural philosophy of Aboriginal peoples makes them an integral part of the ecosystem, part of the balance in its night and day rhythms over long stretches of time.

To be spiritually part of the universe and all that surrounds you is to acknowledge, respect and abide by the natural forces that flow and govern all that is. Aboriginal people have long recognized that to be in harmony with the natural order of the land and, to be a part of the integral fabric of the universe itself, is to be at peace.

Aboriginal spirituality is about being in tune with the natural order of balance, time and moments. It is about accepting, recognizing and using a universal pathway connecting all living things and beings. It is something that you feel inside, a gut feeling of knowing that you are at one with everything.

The first step to connecting with this Aboriginal spirituality is through active participation with Aboriginal people, being a part of our world, our actions, our thoughts and our relationships. Aboriginal culture is about learning through participation and hands-on experience. It's about connecting the physical world that we perceive through our senses with the non-physical world and using this knowledge in everyday ways within a specific cultural context.

Many stories have been handed down through successive generations of the Badtjala people, creating a special perception of why things are the way they are. This oral tradition is a safety guide to the landscape, as well as a reaffirmation of places of special significance. It explains the creation of the landscape, ancestral beings and all living things.

It is important you realise that you can only get wet if you touch the water. You'll never really know about all this if you don't make real, meaningful contact with Aboriginal people.

We suggest that non-Aboriginal people find a great mentor/s, elder/s with dignity, pride and a lineage of truth and cultural continuity. Shadow in their knowledge and give depth to their wisdom. *Giviid* wisdom is long tested with credentials that stand the test of time and planetary evolution.



*Badtjala Aboriginal woman with shell necklace*

Patience is the virtue that will bring you respect and reward. Look, learn and listen, for life is short and messages sometimes have a meaning all of their own.

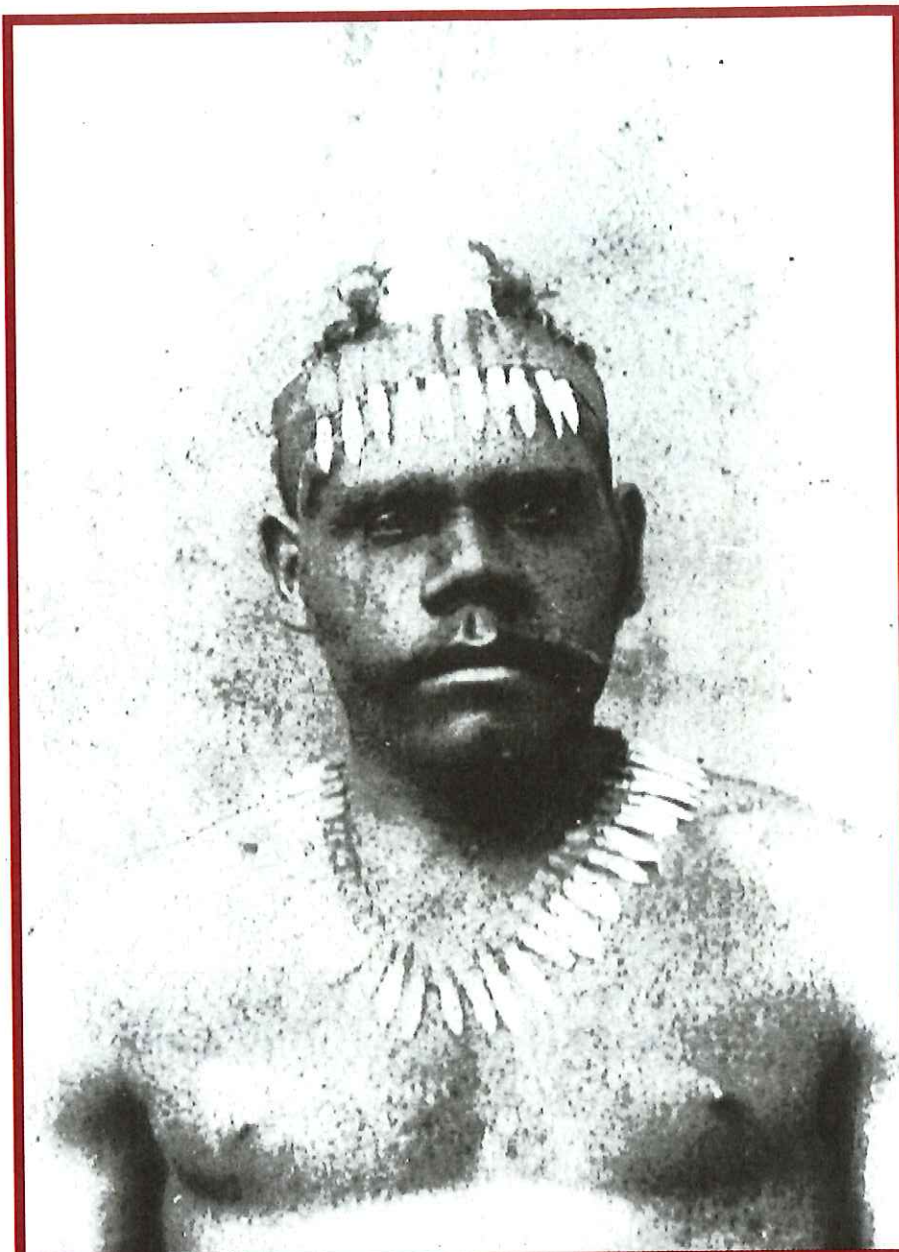
The way to succeed is to provide yourself with the opportunity to learn, to understand, to come to terms with something new, something that you may not quite understand.

Remember, you who holds the key to the future, your choice can be lost in the sand pit of ignorance or unlock the wealth within you so that all can live in peace.

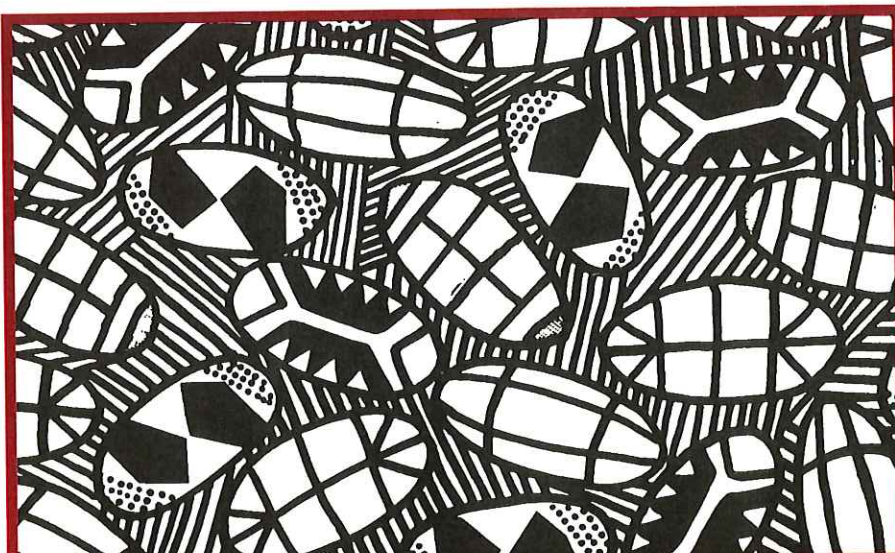
Aboriginal people view their indigenous estate in many ways, but our most profound awareness comes from knowing that we ourselves are part of this estate. This is the final reality of our outlook.

What we do affects all that surrounds us. The old people and *janjari / gan* (spirit guardians) watch over us. Our deeds have life. They light the way for others, they echo through time, they are shared in our collective heart, mind and soul. What we do today will become the traditions for our people. Language is the depth of culture and its sound is music on the wind of life.

This book interprets Badtjala cultural activities and belief system, which continue into present day interests and practices. It also shares some personal thoughts, feelings and moments that are part of the lives of Badtjala people, our past, our present, our future.



*Karbunya (meaning mullet) otherwise known as Great or Willy Wondunna wearing kangaroo necklace and headband. He was a Badtjala man renowned for his deeds and significance in the community.*



*Badtjala shield designs - Shawn Foley 1988*

# BADTJALA TRADITIONAL HOMELANDS

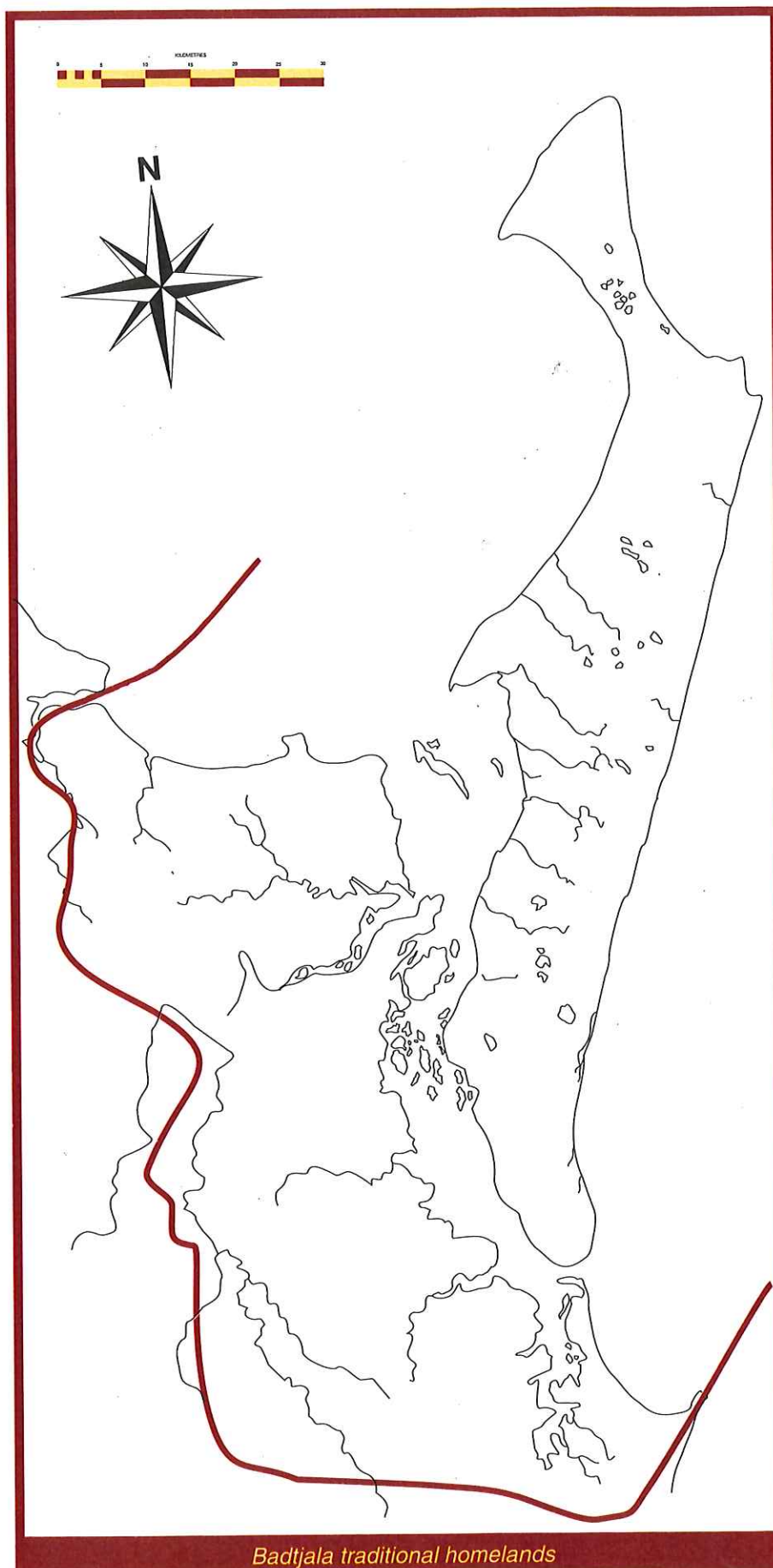
We Badtjala People, as an Aboriginal First Nations People within the Great Sandy Region, continue to assert our identity and connection with our traditional homelands. It is with pride, dignity and a respect for the environment and our old people that we continue to defend our indigenous rights against the oppressive doctrine of a society that does not understand Aboriginal culture or care for the richness that is contained within its philosophical and social parameters.

The boundaries of our traditional homelands are geographically located in the landscape. They have always been there, ever since the time this land was created and shaped by our ancestral beings.

Badtjala traditional homelands lie almost entirely within the Great Sandy Region, encompassing all of Fraser Island. On the mainland this traditional area is from Double Island Point in the south, west to Bauple Mountain and north to the mouth of the Burrum River. This land and sea is very important to the future well-being and fabric of Badtjala society.

There has only ever been one collective indigenous people who belong to this place now known as Fraser Island and the adjacent mainland: the Badtjala people.

A statement by Mr Issac Garry Owens: "Contrary to a number of opinions, there was only one tribe on Fraser Island - the one batch of Badtjala - ran right through from Hook Point to Sandy Cape. They all used the same language. It was the one tribe right through."



*Badtjala traditional homelands*

Prior to Badtjala people having contact with non Aboriginal people in the early 1840s, a unique, rewarding and plentiful lifestyle was enjoyed by all.

Richness was to be found in all aspects of Badtjala culture. Individual lives were governed by environmental conditions, the moon, the sun, the seasons, the availability of natural resources and a complex social structure and belief system. There existed a complete intact fabric of Aboriginal society, a people in balance with the surrounding landscape. This well-developed Aboriginal First Nations People maintained long-established laws and customs and a clear boundary encompassing its territories.

While contemporary development continues to take place on Badtjala traditional homelands, many Australians are starting to come to terms with the reality that our indigenous estate can sustain only a limited population. Water is the key ingredient to survival. It is fundamental to the preservation of all biological species in the area, including human beings. An effective over - the - horizon management system needs to be incorporated into our daily lives. Aboriginal culture itself is a perfect example of a forward thinking, long term planning system that provides sustenance for all entities in the environment. Badtjala traditional boundaries encompass a focus for life, wealth of meaning in our indigenous estate and a co-operative modern future for all Australians.

***Never doubt that a small group of dedicated people can change the world, because it is the only thing that ever has.***



*A canoe tree on Fraser Island. The size of the scar on this living tree indicates that the bark canoe would have held approximately eight people.*



*Bauple Mountain, which is culturally significant for three major reasons: it is the home of an Ancestral being; the traditional geographical western boundary marker; part of the Yindinji Dreaming Track.*

## CULTURAL CONTINUITY

Badtjala culture survives through families and our law survives in an unbroken lineage within the indigenous estate of our traditional homelands. Adapting to change is an integral part of Aboriginal culture, but our law remains unchanged. Culture and law have continuity down to the present.

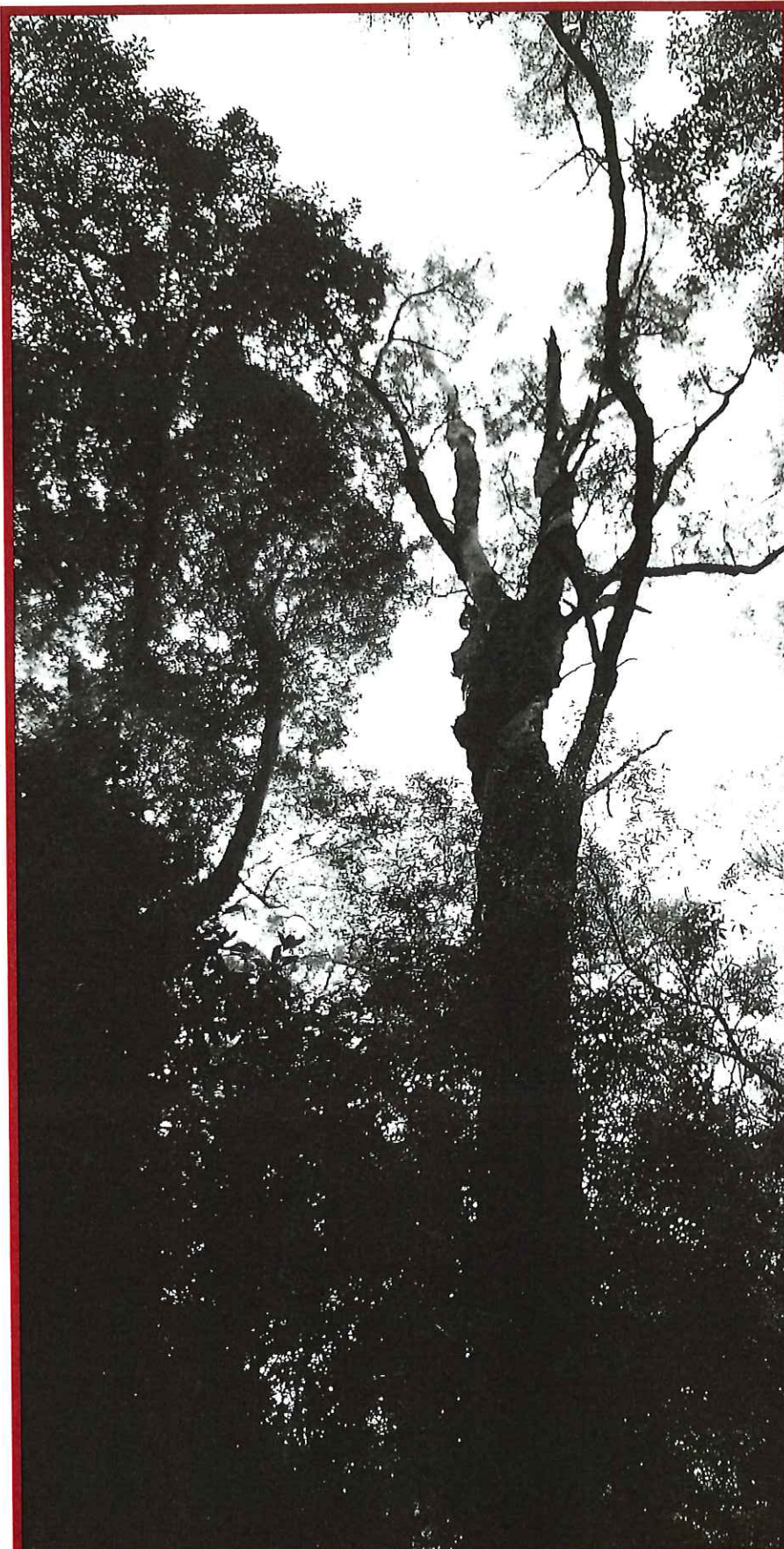
We learn how to live from our supreme ancestral being, and from our old people. Their way of life and beliefs are given to us through their stories and memories. In these ways our contemporary community is linked to the communities of the past. Our outlook is in basic ways the same as theirs.

Badtjala respect, connection and responsibility for our indigenous estate is of great importance to us. Ever since it was created and shaped by ancestral beings in the first time, we have been custodians of this landscape. Our law has always been there, as we have.

This special interest, belongingness and active love for our indigenous estate is the essence of our true cultural continuity. We still struggle for what we believe in and know to be true, as an integral part of the fabric of Aboriginal society. In Australia today we continue to stand and fight for our beliefs, rights and indigenous estate.

Our relationship with the land and sea is perfect. Our law is embodied in our culture and vested in our people since time immemorial.

Australian youth can learn much from the continuity of Badtjala culture as it exists in its present form. Although aspects of Aboriginal cultural continuity may change over time, the fundamental elements of our law will remain true to this place and our ancestral beings.



*Sacred ancestral tree: near Burrawedi Lake, Fraser Island. Part of the Yindinji Dreaming Track.*

## Wah Wung Creation Belief

*Wah Wung* was a spirit that lived deep in the *narang* (forest).

*Wah Wung's* life had been entirely spent in the *narang*, but many stories had been heard about another kind of country where the *yarang* (sand) was wide and long. It was a place where tall trees did not grow, the *tirum* (sun) was bright and the *buran* (wind) was swift and strong.

As *Wah Wung* could not imagine such a place existing there seemed only one way to confirm the stories, a journey to this strange country.

Travelling from the *narang*, *Wah Wung* eventually reached this new place. *Wah Wung* liked this place so much so that a request was made to *Yindinji* (the carpet snake) for *Wah Wung* to be allowed to stay. *Yindinji* is the spiritual messenger to *Biral*, the supreme ancestral being.

*Yindinji's* reply after carefully considering the request was 'Yes, but if you want to stay in this new place, you will have to change to suit this country.' *Yindinji* then changed *Wah Wung's* form into a shellfish. What we know today as *wung*, *pipi* or *ugari*.

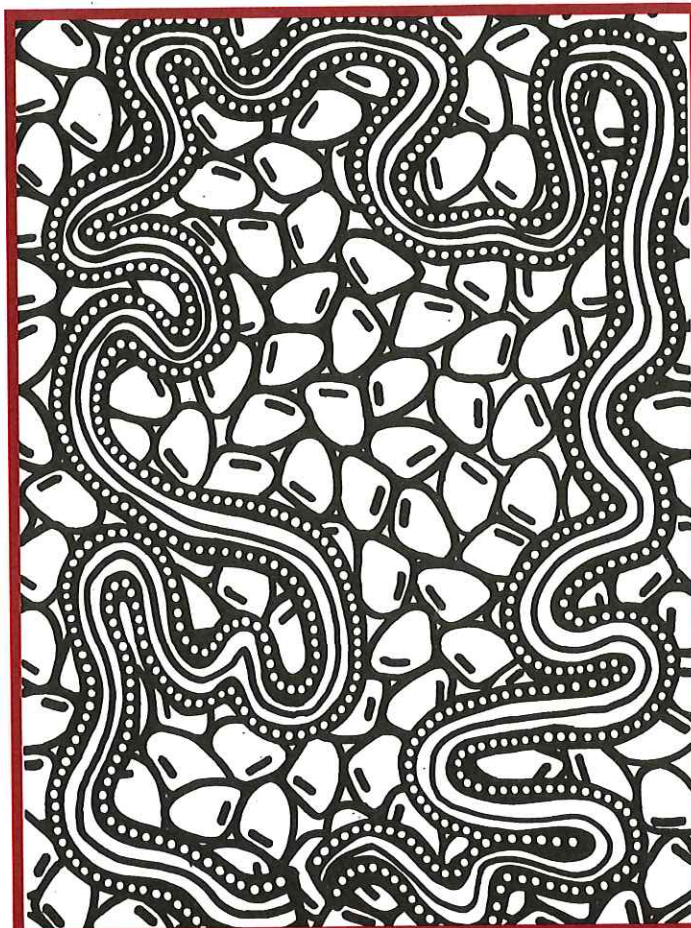
The only thing that remains of *Wah Wung's* former self is a thread that can be found in the *wung*.

There are many Badtjala creation beliefs which explain and answer many fundamental questions about the landscape, the birds, the animals and how things came to be. These creation beliefs also embody Badtjala law, an explanation of right and wrong expressed through oral traditions.

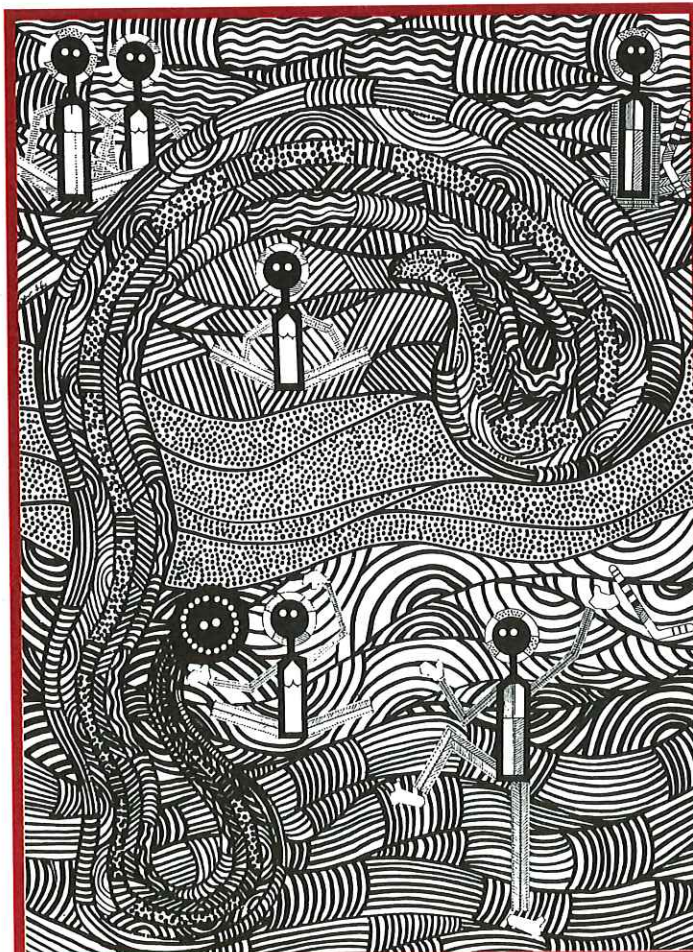
The *Wah Wung* creation belief above is only one of many Badtjala explanations that have been handed down over successive generations.

Other creation beliefs are associated with the *girraman* (flying fox), *burrakun* (boomerang) and *buallum* (pelican).

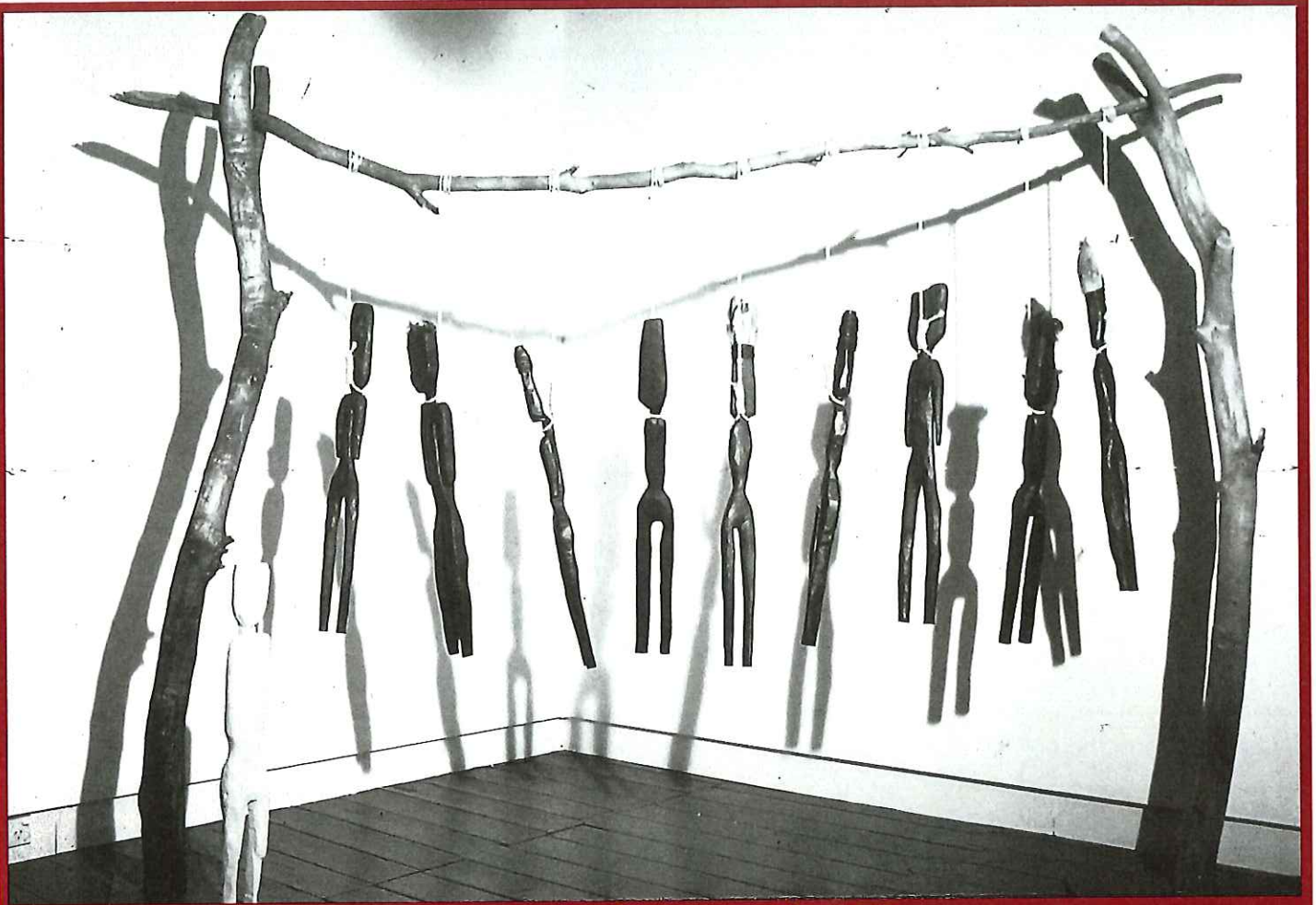
These creation beliefs are the collective intellectual property of the Badtjala Aboriginal community. This material, both intangible and tangible, is under collective copyright and all rights are reserved.



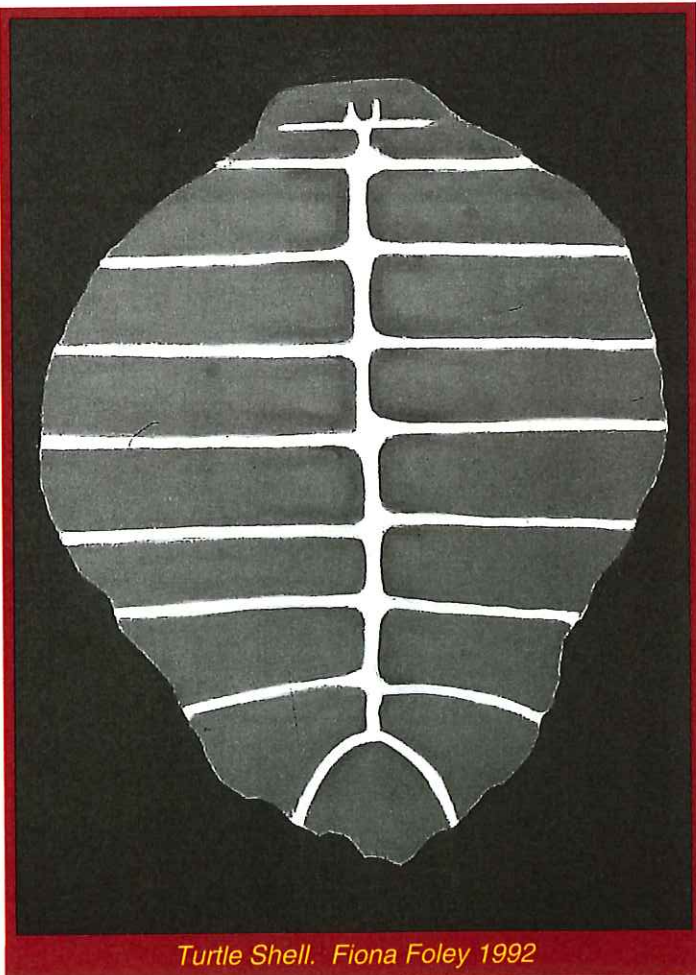
Wah Wung. Shawn Foley 1988



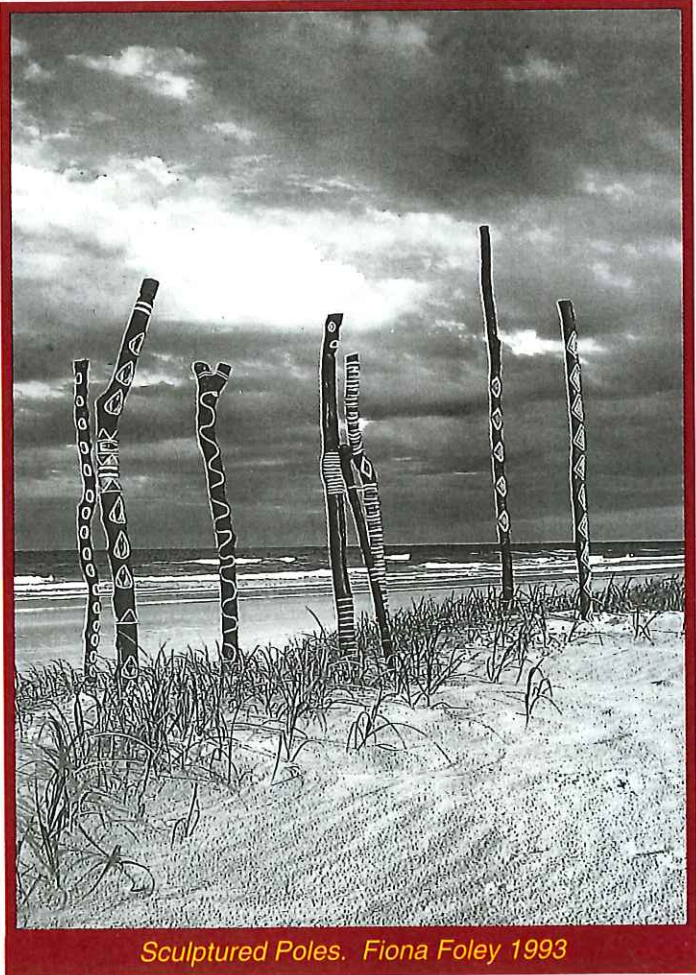
Coloured Sands. Shawn Foley 1988



*Annihilation of the Blacks. Fiona Foley 1986*



*Turtle Shell. Fiona Foley 1992*



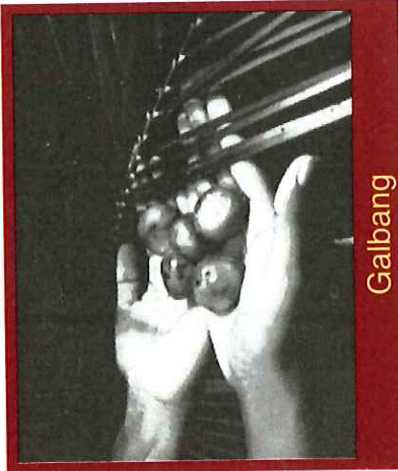
*Sculptured Poles. Fiona Foley 1993*

# BADTJALA CULTURAL MAP

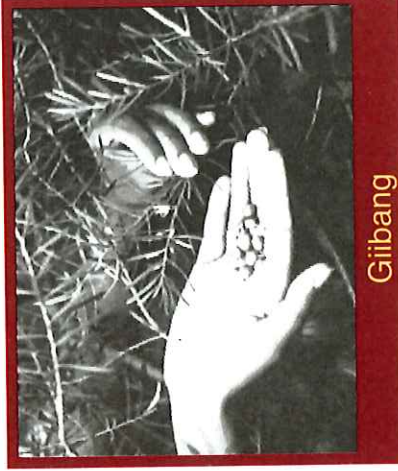
This cultural map provides an indigenous reference guide to Badtjala traditional homelands.

This is a selected summary only. It shows places of importance to the Badtjala people.

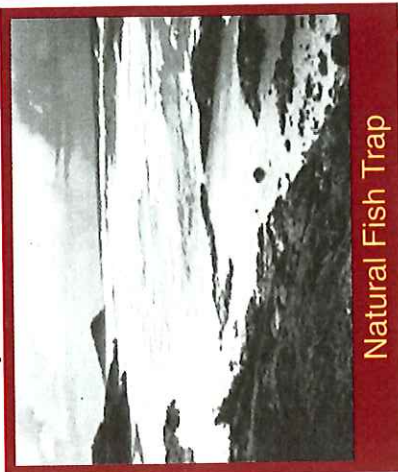
These places are an integral part of the fabric of Badtjala Aboriginal Culture.



Galbang



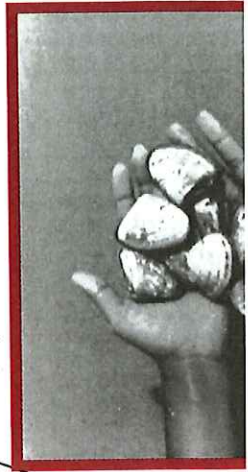
Gii bang



Natural Fish Trap

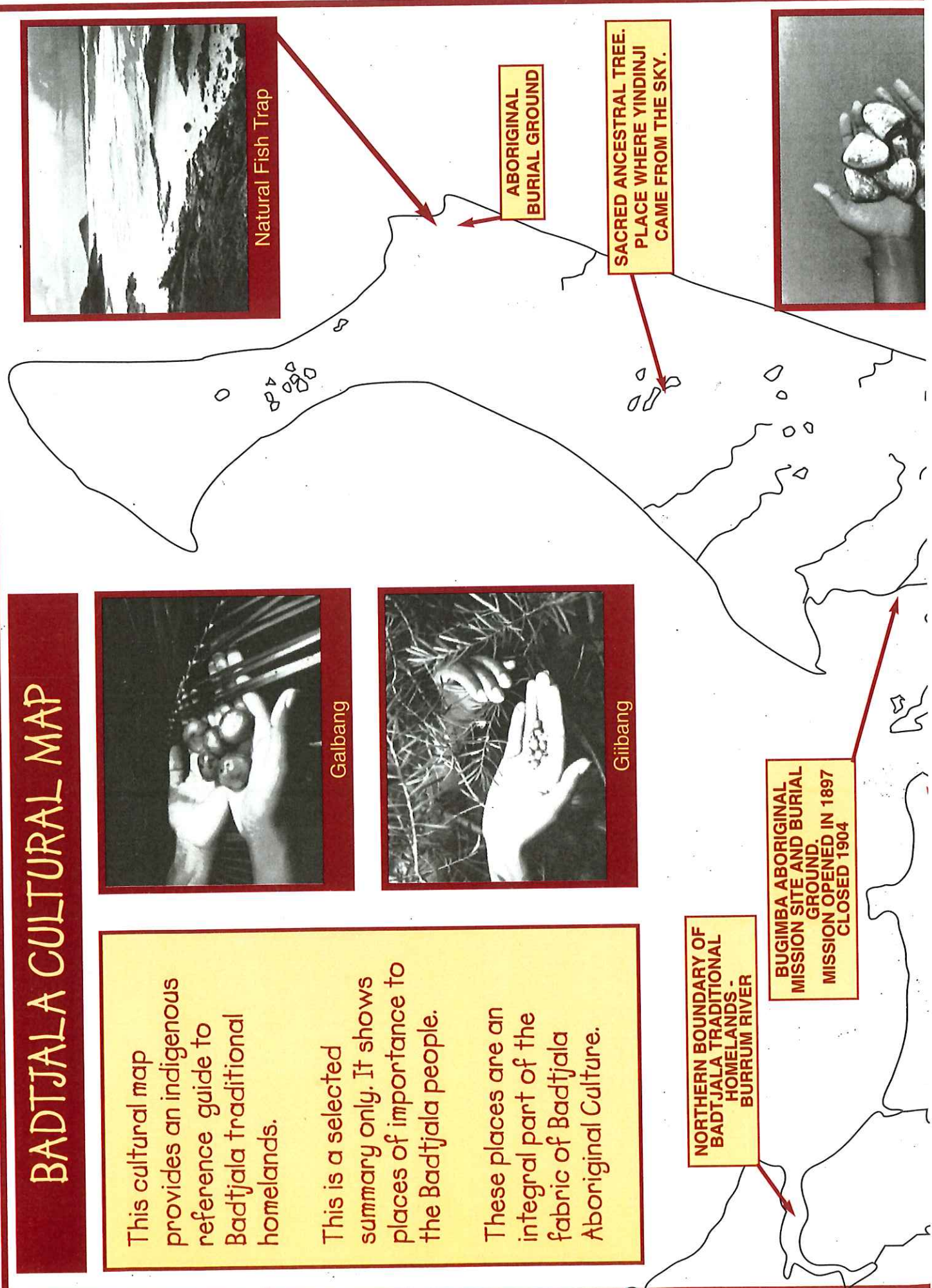
ABORIGINAL BURIAL GROUND

SACRED ANCESTRAL TREE. PLACE WHERE YINDINJI CAME FROM THE SKY.



NORTHERN BOUNDARY OF BADTJALA TRADITIONAL HOMELANDS - BURRUM RIVER

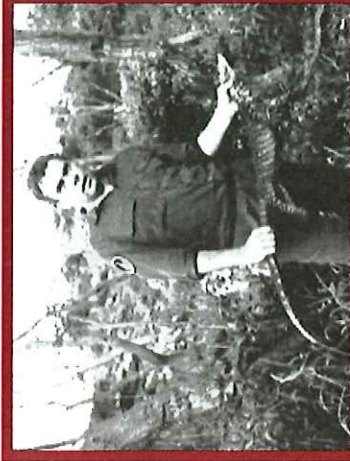
BUGIMBA ABORIGINAL MISSION SITE AND BURIAL GROUND. MISSION OPENED IN 1897 CLOSED 1904



Wung



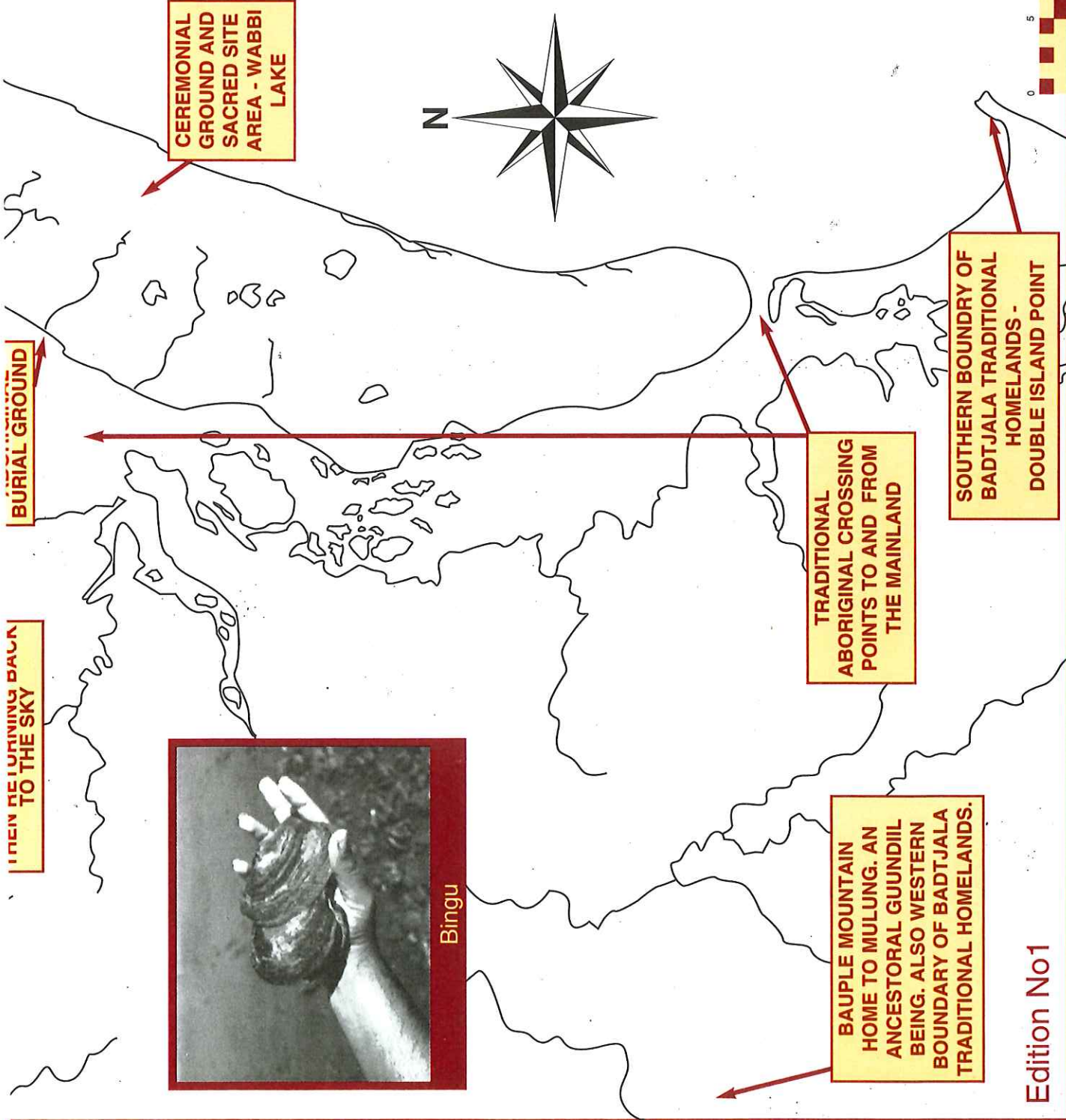
Mirdjim



Sand Goanna



BushString



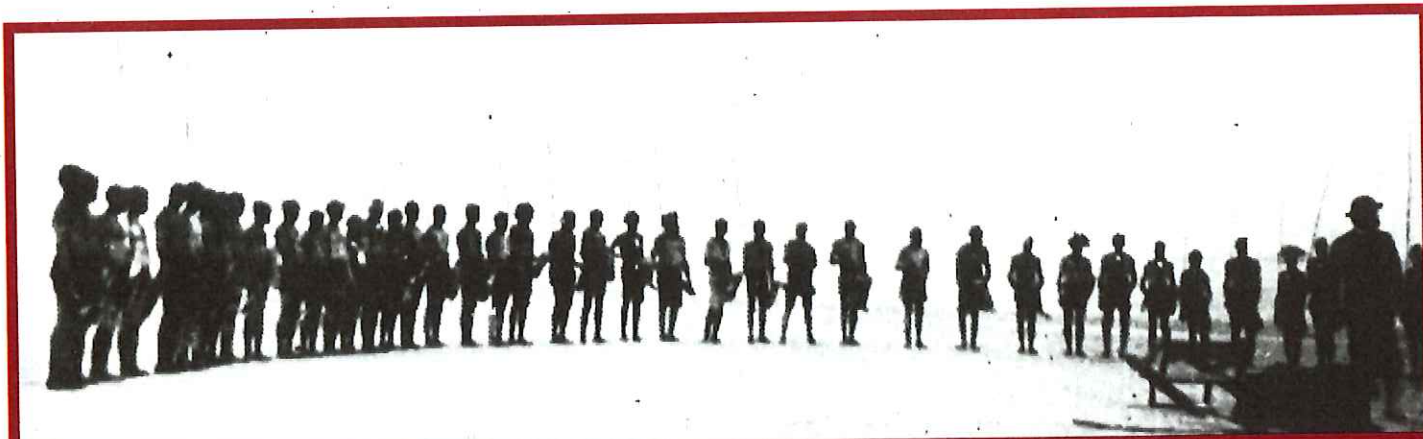
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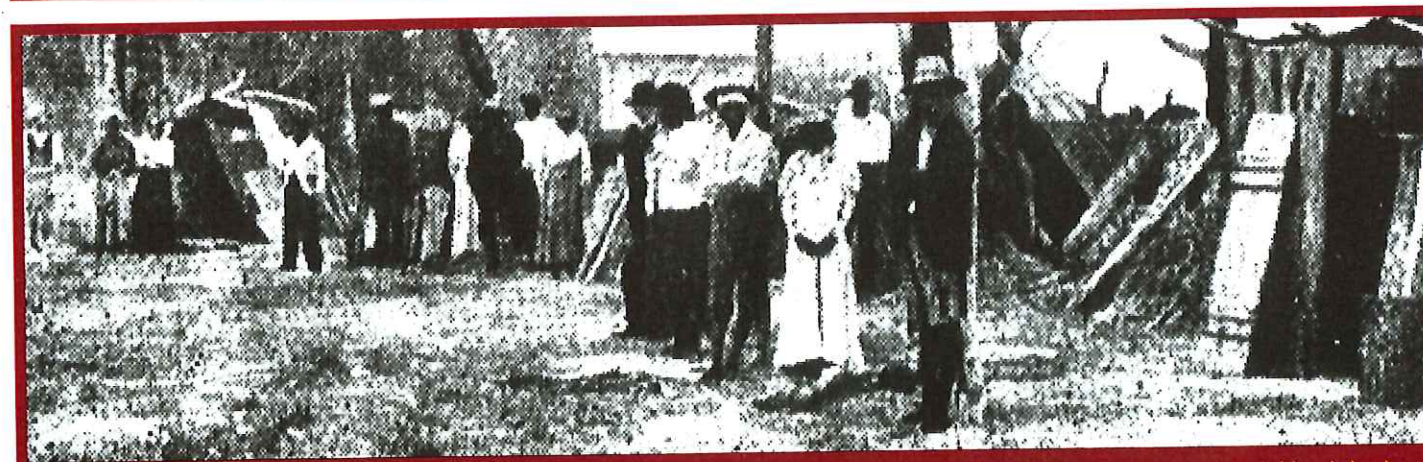
*Badtjala people witnessing first-hand the destruction of their native forests on Fraser Island in 1869.*



*Badtjala family groups Fraser Island, men in ceremonial body paint. 1870s*



*Badtjala men in body paint, holding spears and shields, Fraser Island 1899*



*Oppressive Aboriginal family life at Bugimba Creek Mission whilst incarcerated under the Queensland Aboriginal Protection Act 1889*

## BADTJALA RESISTANCE AND CULTURAL ASSERTION

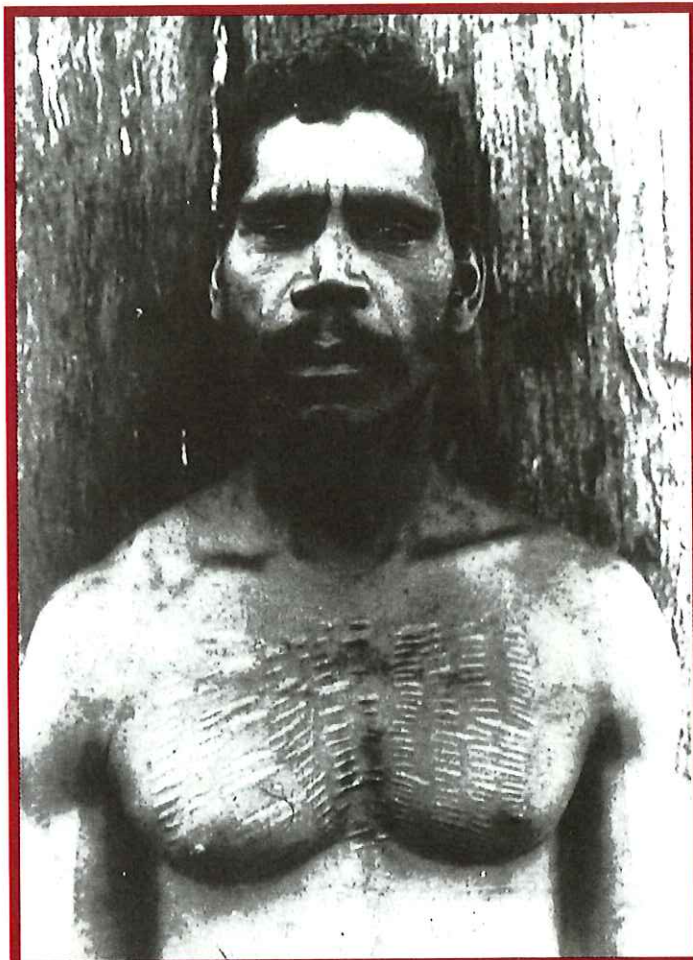
Badtjala ancestors' contact with non-Aboriginals began with the visits of the Portuguese in about 1600. Captain Cook followed in 1770, and then in 1802, Matthew Flinders landed at what is now called Sandy Cape on Fraser Island. Visitors became more frequent - and more violent. 1842 marked the beginning of the occupation of Badtjala land and the organised destruction of land and people. This occupation has taken place for only the last 150 years, a short time given the long traditional life of Badtjala in the homelands.

By the late 1840s a colonial frontier war raged. In 1850 it was so fierce that the Native Mounted Police Force was formed under the command of Commandant Frederick Walker. By this time brutalities included open and indiscriminate massacres and an early form of chemical warfare in which flour was laced with arsenic. Badtjala resistance continued into the 1850s, as did further land seizures by the settlers, with massive clearances for township, agriculture and pasture. All this had a devastating impact on the life cycles of the indigenous plants and animals upon which Badtjala relied for maintaining their way of life.

By the early 1860s, the hard attitudes of the settlers had not softened. They stood by as alcohol, opium, and disease decimated the Badtjala. Little assistance was offered as the people died of such diseases as measles, influenza, and mumps. Sexually transmitted diseases were a deadly result of contact between the settlers and Badtjala.

Into the mid-1860s the Native Mounted Police had continued to plague Badtjala survivors, watching their movements and brutally subduing any real or imputed acts of bravado. Native Police were gradually phased out of the region, so that by 1867 only two Aboriginal recruits remained stationed in Maryborough, Queensland.

The Badtjala people, having fought a war they did not provoke and been forced to confront a race of greedy individuals with superior technology and battle hardened troops, were now left to pick up the pieces and patch together some sort of normality in a now shattered life. There was no treaty, no reconciliation, no prisoners of war, no compromise and no compassion for the defeated Aboriginal First Nations People within the Great Sandy Region.



*Wattamadta, a Badtjala cleverman well known for his special skills*

However, the Badtjala people survived to be again set upon by self-righteous, soul saving Christians. The first Mission Station was established in 1870 by Reverend Edward Fuller, a Primitive Methodist preacher, with the help of R.B. Sheridan, near White Cliffs on Fraser Island. The Mission of Fuller and Winstone was largely an individual effort. Early in December 1873, the Queensland Government gazetted one square mile of land at White Cliffs for a Quarantine Station to serve an expected flood of British migrants. Consequently, Fuller's mission was forced to close.

It was another twenty years before significant attention would be paid to Badtjala people, again because they posed a perceived threat to non-Aboriginal society. During this period, some Badtjala people had been totally dependent on a fringe town existence, while others were able to live by drawing upon traditional hunting and gathering skills on and about Fraser Island.

In June 1892, Maryborough's Police Magistrate G. L. Lukin called attention to 'the abject and miserable state to which many Aboriginals are reduced'. He suggested 'a refuge home' at White Cliffs, to which the Colonial Secretary Horace Tozer replied he could not 'go to the extent of providing a home on Fraser Island'.

The beginnings of the second mission on Fraser Island came about when on the 10th February 1897, Archibald Meston impressed upon the Home Secretary, Horace Tozer 'the very urgent necessity of removing the blacks from Maryborough'. This action was taken, not for the betterment of Badtjala people, but to remove the eyesore of Aboriginal people in town. Separation and exclusion was paramount in the minds of non-Aboriginal townsfolk.

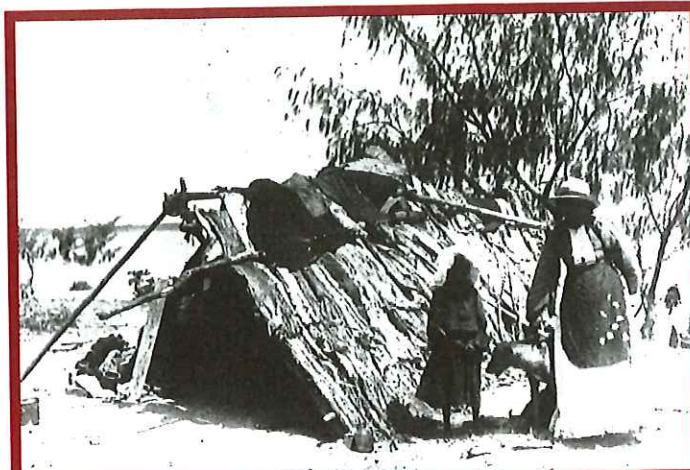
Thirteen days later, 51 survivors of the Badtjala people were forcibly mustered in Maryborough and shipped next day by steamer to the deserted buildings of the old Quarantine Station at White Cliffs on Fraser Island.

The Quarantine Station had been re-gazetted as a recreational reserve in 1804, apparently without Meston or the Home Secretary being aware of it. Further confrontations took place in Maryborough. After legal actions, public petitions and a mass meeting, still more Badtjala people were rounded up and deported to Fraser Island. With earlier deportees, they now formed a group of about 73 souls. This group was relocated on a 1,280 acre, sandfly infested containment area at Bugimba Creek Mission on the west coast of Fraser Island.

Soon the group was joined by others from 25 different localities, speaking 19 different dialects. The Anglican Mission was run along strict military lines. The death rate was abnormally high, even for those times. The inmates suffered from malnutrition, there was no sanitation and general debilitation meant that they were already weakened, easy victims to prevalent diseases, especially tuberculosis.

The Mission was disbanded in 1904. 117 Aboriginal people were shipped to Yarrabah, 1,500 kilometres away near Cairns. 20 Badtjala remained behind on Fraser Island. Fifty years earlier there had been a population of 2,000 Badtjala on the Island. You could say that the rate of genocide over that fifty years was 99%. Despite this terrible loss of life, the Badtjala bloodline continues and the culture lives on.

Time moves on and Badtjala people move with the times. We have learned to adapt to change while maintaining our special culture. After 1904, Badtjala families struggled on without support or recognition,



*Aboriginal family living at Torquay Beach, Hervey Bay 1910*

surviving by virtue of their traditional skills and hard work. They participated in the timber, fishing and tourist industries as they came along, but their contribution did not stop there. Badtjala men saw service in World War II and the Korean War. They were there on the Kokoda trail. But they were non-citizens in the eyes of the Commonwealth of Australia, as if to be a part of an Indigenous First Nation was a crime.

There were many difficulties faced by Badtjala people, right through from the 1920s to 1990s. We continue to see these difficulties today despite government do-good policies and campaigns. Important issues requiring immediate attention include:

- protection of our cultural heritage sites, for example the Booral Middens;
- recognition of our Aboriginal First Nation status;
- cessation of land clearance and habitat destruction;
- reversal of pollution of land and sea;
- re-stocking regional waters with *wung* fish, dugong and turtles;
- provision of real and meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal economic and social development.

The most important and urgent issue is the current lack of understanding about Aboriginal culture.

Continued low socio-economic levels, bad health, minimal education standards in the Aboriginal community is a testimony to past practice and institutional structural mechanisms which push Aboriginal people to the margins of society. This process must be changed.

They *can* be changed by encouraging institutions and agencies to change *their* process. These changes will be most effective when services are delivered in ways that are mutually agreed upon and co-operative management arrangements are made. Including Aboriginal people in developing better processes will serve to maintain, promote and enhance Aboriginal First Nation cultures. Their inclusion in planning and responsibility will also improve Australia's image as a tolerant, modern and cohesive nation.

As First Nations Peoples, the indigenous peoples of Australia have a unique identity. That identity as distinct peoples is a source of distinct rights; primarily the right to choose the direction and form of our development, the right to preserve and develop our cultures, the right to replace 'yes please' with 'yes' or 'no', or 'yes' under conditions which we have a say in determining.

Australia needs an effective negotiation process that enables both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to come together at a local level to work on issues jointly and develop sustainable solutions. This process would encourage better relations, heal bitterness,

reconcile differences and allow a workable, fair dinkum future.

A process is needed that rights the wrongs of history, provides genuine opportunities for Aboriginal economic and social development and secures continuity of expression for Badtjala Aboriginal culture within a wider regional framework.

While social change is taking place and the current attitude is moving towards a more tolerant, modern and progressive Australia, there remains an awakening of an Australian consciousness to embrace Aboriginal people and our culture as part of a greater Australian nationhood.

There is great reluctance to provide the opportunities to affirm Aboriginal culture in its rightful place within the fabric of Australian society.

All Australians need to develop a culture that celebrates Aboriginal culture, excellence in achievement, integrity of spirit and courage through commitment.



*Badtjala mens ceremonial presentation Dayman Point, Hervey Bay 1925*



*Ross Family fishing at Urangan*



*Giviid people near Bora Ring, Urangan*



*Urangan Point State School picnic 1938*



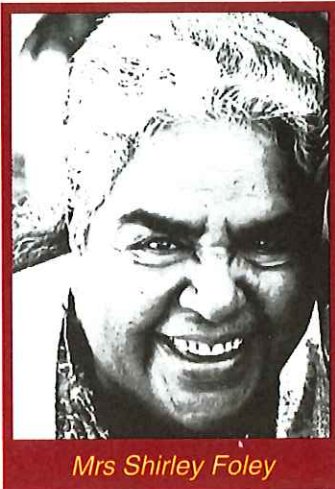
*Cherbourg Primary School giviid students during a cultural camp based at the Thoorgine Centre Fraser Island.*



*Participants of a cultural camp and community service work program return from the Thoorgine Centre on Fraser Island*

## LIVING ON THE ISLAND AND IN THE BAY

I was born in a house at Urangan, on the corner of Pulgul and Miller Street, and my mum had to wait until the fishermen came in with a truck, because they were the only ones with transport, so we had to wait until they came in, then her and I went up to the Maryborough Hospital, but I was born in Urangan. The house is still standing where I was born in, in Miller Street. ..I lost my dad when I was 13 months old, so I didn't know my dad, but my mum, she didn't talk much about her culture, but where I got my learning was from my uncle, Uncle Wilfie, and my grandmother, Old Nanna, she used to talk to us a lot; and Uncle Wilfie a lot of my learning from, Wilfie Reeves. He had learnt that from his father, Fred Wondunna, and he lived on the Island too, with his mother and father, and he learnt a lot about tracking. He was a good carver as well, he could carve, very good. He was a good man, Uncle Wilfie, you know, very knowledgeable.



Mrs Shirley Foley

'My family are the ones coming from the Wondunna clan. And that's my clan, and then the ones coming from the Owens clan. They're the only two here that can trace it right back, really right back, you know. Because the one I talk about is Old Banjo. We used to call him Buthung. He's of the Owens clan, you know. Well, he was well liked and well respected, he was, very well respected. We learnt a lot from him too as well. He was good, Old Banjo.

'Because we grew up with the old people, we spoke broken dialect, and that's where we picked it up, you know. We all spoke that same dialect but it was all broken, and we all understood each other, like the Badtjala people, you know; but then the others picked it up, the other ones coming in. But they'd lived here with us for along time and they speak the broken dialect too as well, but we never spoke the full dialect, only the broken dialect, which we still speak today, it's still carrying on today. This is where we live, this is our homelands, you know, this is our traditional area. See, with ours, our traditional area stretches

from all of Fraser Island, Double Island Point, up to this side of Bauple Mountain and to a point this side of Burrum Heads. Now, that's the Badtjala's and that was told to me by Uncle Wilfie. It was told to me by Old Banjo, you know, their areas and everything like that; it was told to me by Old Nanna, and some other people.

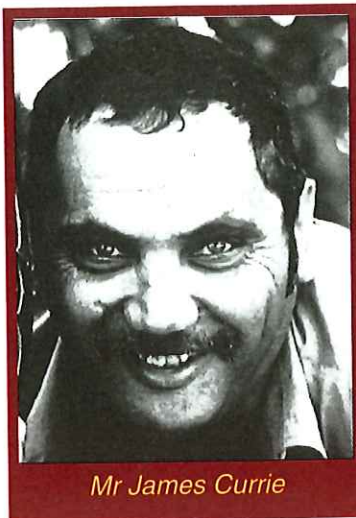
'For too long people have abused our culture. They have raped our culture, and they've used it to their best advantage, so I think it's about time now that we turned the clock around saying, well, we're the indigenous people; we'll tell our story the way it was told to us. You learn our culture from us, not from anyone. So this is what I'm hoping the Culture Centre will achieve in the long run on the Island, to educate the broader community about Aboriginal culture and about the indigenous people on Fraser Island rather than hearing it from lip service from somebody else or something like that. This is what I hope the Culture Centre will achieve once we get going.

'There's nothing like that now. They only do a little bit about the Aboriginal culture there, but they're frightened to bring out the real story because they don't want to offend the Europeans, how they took the land, how they raped it in the name of religion and what they did to our people, so they keep that hidden so it doesn't come out, so they didn't have to accept that was there before and how it happened and everything like that. As soon as people start accepting that, then, they become better people, better human beings.

'The true history of the Island hasn't come out. It's been well hidden. It's been well documented to hide the real truth. They're frightened of upsetting the people. They've got to learn the truth, and that's it. I think so, if they want to understand, to listen and to look and learn more and don't have a guilt complex. Don't turn round and say, well, it's not my fault, you know, I wasn't here at that time. They can learn from those mistakes from the past even today, we still only take what we want, you know. But I've seen people over the Island take that much tailor they could not possibly eat in one day. But we still only take what we want, you know. And the *wungs* over the Island, if they keep digging them up like they're going, we'll have no *wungs* over there soon'.

'I am from the Island family. The Badtjala. My grandmother come from Fraser Island.

'What I remember about my childhood at the Mango Tree it was a close family. The things we were taught, the way them old people looked after us. It was - I think it's totally different than the lifestyle today. It's changed. I think that's gone. There was my nanna, my great-grandmother, my aunty, my two uncles and my great-uncle, but he was working on Fraser Island at the time. He was with the forest department.



Mr James Currie

'With my uncles we used to go fishing everything nearly in the Bay, virtually. I never went as far north as Bundaberg. I fished all the ocean side of Fraser Island, beside the Island, south, north. We camped at Moon Point. All the time thinking about Oh, just the stories they told us, cooking the fish. We always used to have a good time. Well, mostly it was winter, but we didn't really care because different areas of water had different temperatures and we used to get red emperor and trout. I can remember one time we had about 780 pound of red emperor on board. You would never get that sort of fish today. Not today; no. I haven't even chucked a line in for about 10 years. I don't bother going fishing no more. We used to see dugong plenty, everywhere. Round Island was just smothered in them. Turtles we saw, everywhere. Every time we'd go fishing, if we went worm digging - it was used as bait for fishing, or selling it to get a bit of money, we always used to grab a turtle, and they was plentiful, and you wouldn't have to dive or spear for them. You walked up a narrow gutter creek and it's just laying there, so you pick up the one you want. We used to eat it before we'd come back. We would chuck a bit on the fire, on the coals, and chew it on the way home, because we had no money for lunch to go out, so we used to eat the oysters, the *bingus* and the catch we used to bring home. There were mud crabs everywhere. You walk in the little gutters through the mangroves and they would just be laying there. You'd probably get half-a-dozen, you know, in an hour.

'Today there's nothing, absolutely nothing. I even walk up the channels - when I do go over, on the rare occasions, I walk up the channels and not even a turtle.

You can't even see where a turtle is, you know, and even the old fish-traps out there, there is some old fish-traps out there, and you'd always, about 8 times out of 10, there would always be a turtle caught in that fish-trap, because them old people would always say, go up there and have a look at the traps and see if there's anything in there. And usually - even in the fish one, you might even get a flathead in there, not a big fellow but you'd get a feed out of him.

'When I was growing up in the early 60s it was an era where it wasn't condoned even to speak your own language. It was sort of like the dominance of the white society. Even at school they wouldn't let us - because all of our uncles used to tell us about Fraser Island and our people over there, and we had to do an essay on Hervey Bay or our area, and want to do about people and the island or something about Aboriginality, we'd always get low marks and told, no, that's not the right thing to do, you know. Eliza Fraser sort of discovered Fraser Island and that's the sort of aspect we want to go on.

'Today my children are really encouraged to recognise their culture people like to hear about things like that now, and I think there's a bit of pride involved with it, but they seem to be very much into it now. The education system seems to be accepting it, which is good. The non Aboriginal kids at our schools seem to be very much into it. They seem to be doing projects on it. We've had projects at the school with Aboriginal artefacts and stories and the attendance of the school was overwhelming, so it's changed, and the kids are really into it now. They're proud of who they are and what they are.

'For the future what I really hope from a cultural point of view is to bring everything back, what we've lost, and that's self-respect, every aspect of our culture should be, you know, broadcast more widely and accepted from the non-Aboriginal people, that's what I hope. Well, we are a proud race, and it's just that people won't give us a chance to express that, and when we do, we sort of get it knocked back out of us, as though it's a joke, sort of thing, but I don't believe it is. I've lived in a traditional way, with tribal people, and it's a good life, you know. I think it's done wonders for me, made me a different person.

'So now we're trying to get some of our heritage back. I think non Aboriginal people could learn something from all Aboriginal people of the world, because they would have to one of the best conservationists in the world. Their life and culture depended on it'.

'I would like to tell you something about the importance of trees to our people, especially on the Island. Trees were very, very important to these people, and each clan had its own group of trees where the spirits of their ancestors stayed. I was lucky to have seen our



*Mrs Olga Miller*

particular group of trees because when Horace and Alma and Nola and Boysie were still living there on the island, I used to spend all my school holidays there, when I was going to grammar school. We were backwards and forwards all the time, and on this particular holiday period, we were walking behind the wagon and the children were on the back of the empty wagon and we come to a hairpin bend.

'Horace stopped the team and he walked back and he said to me if you walk up through the bush here, the track goes right around, you will find our trees, and you can meet me on the other side. "So I walked through the wallum, up these steep sandhills, and I could hear the bullock wagon and the cracking of the whip, and I came to this beautiful carrol scrub. It was like a parkland. There was no undergrowth, just all fallen leaves from the carrol trees, and all these ground orchids. But then I could see the bases of these huge, huge trees, and when I looked up, I couldn't see their tips because of the canopy, and Horace has said, "These are our trees. This is where our ancestors are." My father said, "It's our law that you do not touch those trees with the spirits of other peoples ancestors." And so this belief that the spirits of our ancestors are in our trees was very, very strong.

So I continued on and walked across and I could hear the wagon getting closer, so I stood just near the edge of the carrol scrub above the roadway, and I was standing there, looking back. I was suddenly aware of this awful smell. It was horrible. It was putrid. And I look around, and I just looked to the left, and right beside me near my shoulder on top of a broken-off carrol tree, was the biggest python I had ever seen. He was all curled on top of this tree, broken-off tree, fast asleep, and by the bulge in his stomach he had just eaten. So I started screaming and yelling and

running out, and Horace came racing up, "What's the matter? What's the matter?" I was pointing, "Go and see. Go and have a look." He went in and he came back and he said, "Don't be silly," he said. He said " You know, you're lucky. You've seen *Yindinji*."

'In the old days my grandfather used to spend his time going all around his boundaries, checking the land and seeing that everything was okay, even though there were white people on the land. It was his duty to look after the land and check it every so often.

'So, every couple of months, he would come over to the island, and it was a funny thing, but my father would always know - there were no telephones or radios in those days - but he would say to my mother, "Ethel, I think Dad will be here tomorrow." And so, early in the morning the boys would go down and stand on the cliff and keep a lookout for our grandfather, because he used to row his dinghy from Urangan, and they would watch his progress. He would go from what we call the Test House, over to the Picnics, and to Little Woody, and then he'd get the coming in tide and come from Little Woody and come with the tide up to McKenzie's.

'And then he would stay for a few days, while he checked out just the land there, and then later on my mother would give him a sugar bag full of food, and he would leave his dinghy and then he would walk up around Sandy Cape, round Indian Head, down to Eurong, through Central Station, and then back again. And then after a few days he would do the southern end of the island.

'There is a member of the Wondunna family living on Fraser from the beginning of time. That is continuous living'.

## GIVIID FAMILIES - OWEN



*Maidie (Owen) Ross, a well respected Badtjala woman*



*Banjo Henry Owen, a Badtjala man whose familiarity with the Fraser Island landscape was beyond compare*

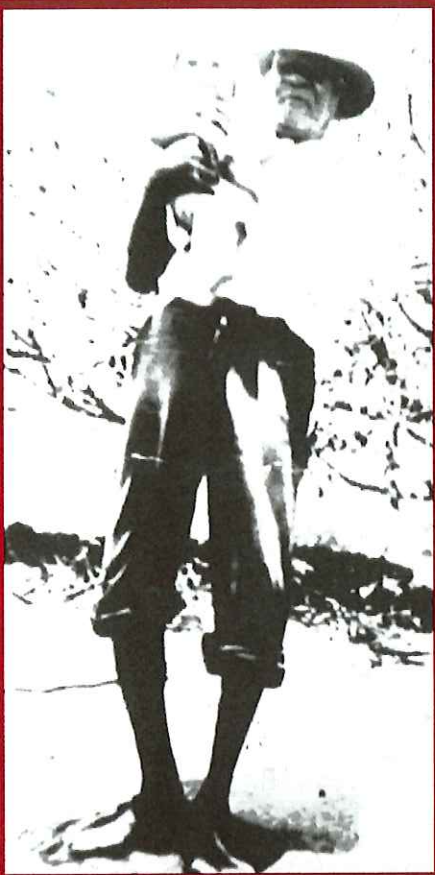


*Isaac Owen, brother to Banjo and Maidie*



*James Currie, growing up at Urangan*

## GIVID FAMILIES - WONDUNNA



*Great Willie Wondunna nursing Rene McBride at Urangan*



*Wilf Reeves (Uncle Wilfie) demonstrating his hunting skills at Urangan*



*Fiona Foley with the scarf presented to her on behalf of the Australian Prime Minister*



*Horace Wondunna (left) with the giant cod he caught by handline at Urangan*

# GLOSSARY

## Vowels

<b>a</b>	as in	but
<b>e</b>	as in	pet
<b>i</b>	as in	pin (in the middle of a word)
<b>u</b>	as in	do
<b>aa</b>	as in	far
<b>ii</b>	as in	bee (in the middle of a word)
<b>uu</b>	as in	food

## Consonants

<b>tj</b>	is a sound similar to <i>ch</i>	
<b>th,dh</b>	is like the English <i>th</i> in the, but without a puff of air	
<b>p,b</b>	these sounds vary between the English <i>p</i> and <i>b</i> , without a puff of air	
<b>t,d</b>	these sounds vary between the English <i>t</i> and <i>d</i> , without a puff of air	
<b>k,g</b>	these sounds vary between the English <i>k</i> and <i>g</i> , without a puff of air	
<b>j</b>	is the sound in jam	
<b>ng</b>	is the sound in sing	
<b>ly</b>	is the sound in William	
<b>ny</b>	is the sound in news	
<b>rr</b>	is a sound of rolling	

## Badtjala

bingu
bualum
bukan
buran
burrakkun
gandu
ganya
girraman
giviid
guundiil
mathard
midjim
narang
tirum
wenmarri
wah wung
wung
yindinji
yarang

indigenous people/language group
flat oyster
pelican
coast
wind
boomerang
child
Aboriginal dwelling
flying fox
Aboriginal person
evil spirit
non Aboriginal persons / man
native berry
forest
sun
non Aboriginal woman
ancestral spirit vine
ocean surf beach shellfish
carpet snake (ancestral spiritual messenger)
sand

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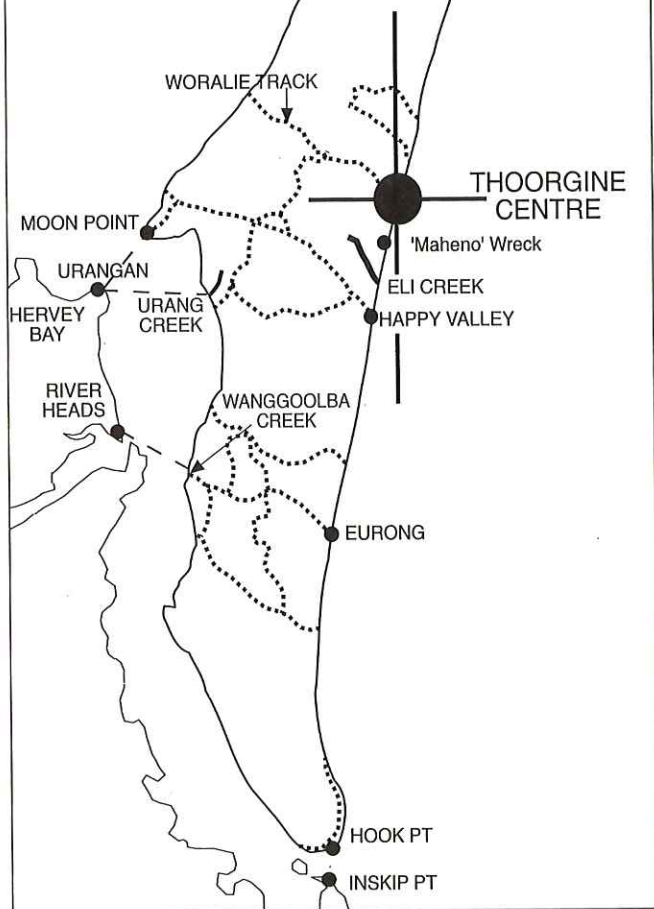
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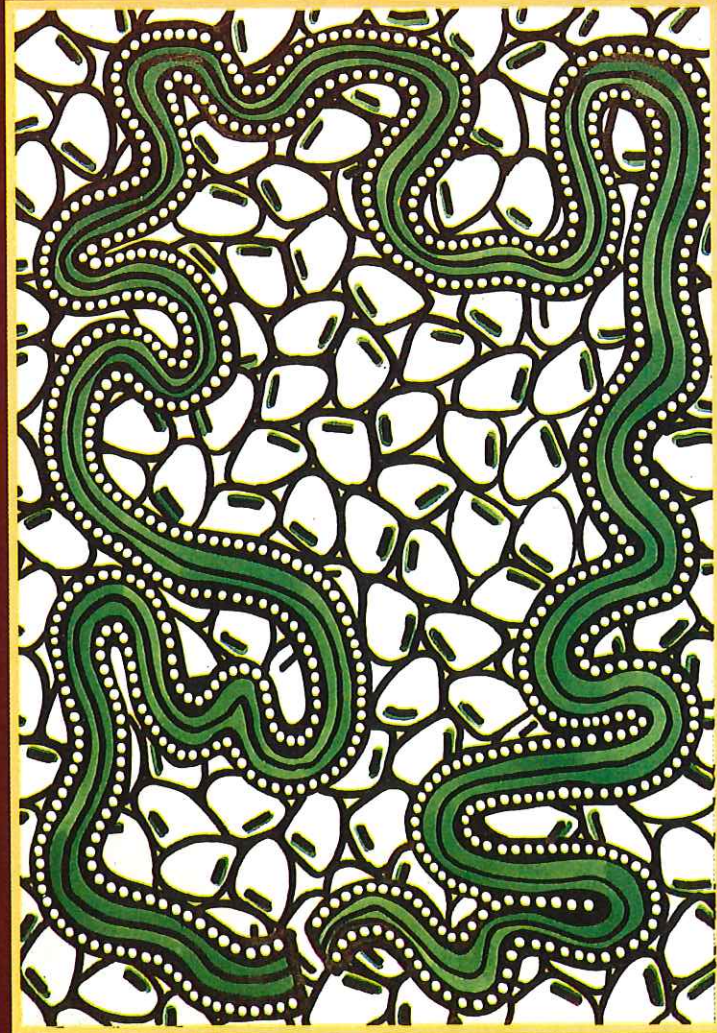
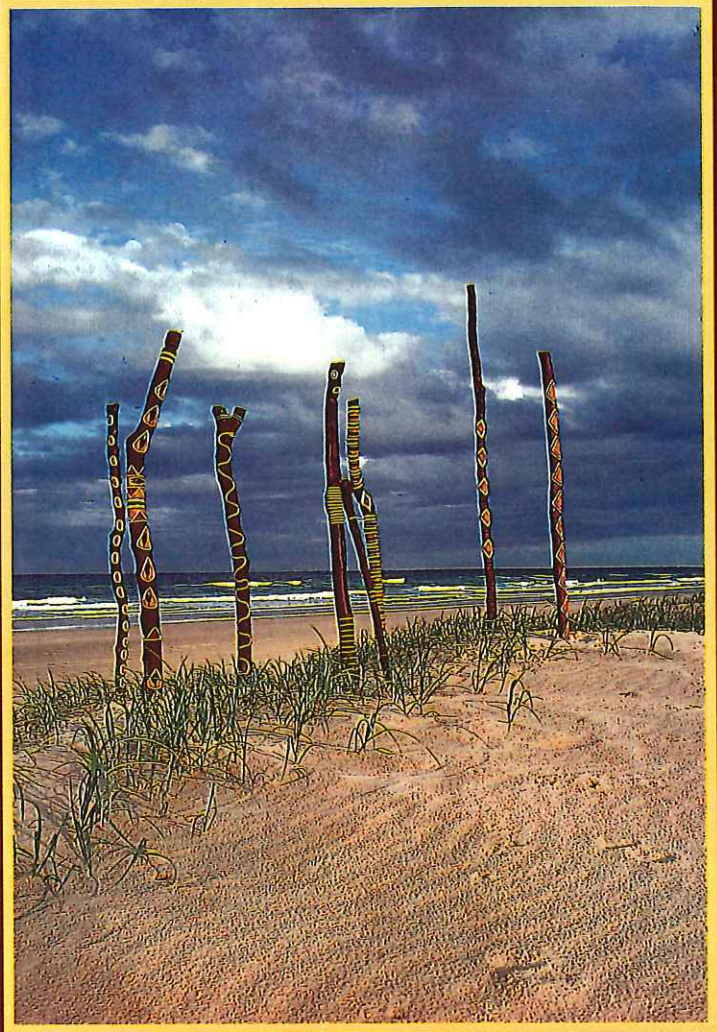
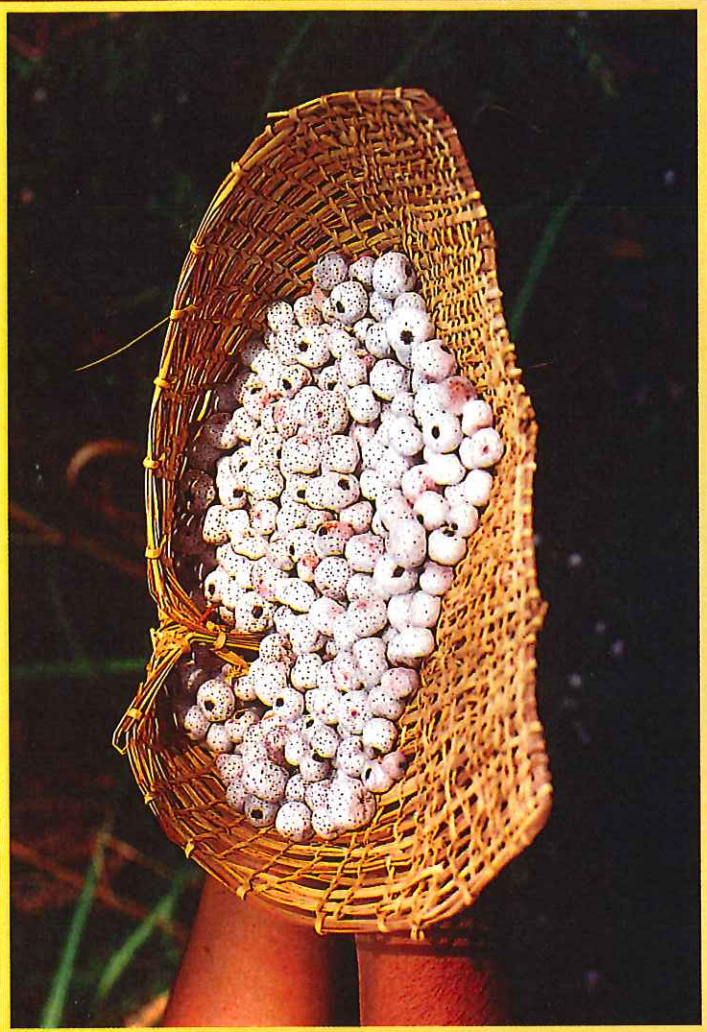
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[T = top, C = centre, R = right, L = left, B = bottom]

# AUSTRALIA

QUEENSLAND







THOORGINE CENTRE, FRASER ISLAND - P.O.BOX 363 HERVEY BAY, QLD. 4655 AUSTRALIA

Midjim Berries - A native bush food. Part of the natural resources used by Badtjala Aboriginal people on Fraser Island.

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THOORGINE CENTRE, FRASER ISLAND - P.O.BOX 363 HERVEY BAY, QLD. 4655 AUSTRALIA

Pig Face - A fore dune native bush food. Part of the natural resources used by Badtjala Aboriginal People on Fraser Island.

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THOORGINE CENTRE, FRASER ISLAND - P.O.BOX 363 HERVEY BAY, QLD. 4655 AUSTRALIA

Sculptured Poles - Fiona Foley © 1993 Badtjala Aboriginal Artist.

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Wah Wung - Shawn Foley © 1988 Badtjala Aboriginal Artist.

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Indigenous people have always been and will  
always be an integral part of the universes'  
spiritual consciousness.

A continuity of balance and harmony with all life  
forms, entities and ancestral beings embodied  
within a living culture, ever present, ever  
meaningful.

By Badtjala Aboriginal writer:-  
Shawn Foley, 1994.