

In Our Own Words

An Oral History Project



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**Muswellbrook Shire Council would like to respectfully
acknowledge the local Aboriginal People who are the
Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land.**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this presentation contain images, voices & names of deceased persons in photographs, film, audio recordings or printed material.

Overview



- History
- Oral History Project
- Funding & Budget
- Indigenous Cultural & Intellectual Property (ICIP)
- Project Continuation
- In Our Own Words Exhibition
- Impact on Project
- End of Project

History

In 1999, the Muswellbrook Shire Council Aboriginal Reconciliation Committee established.



wannin thanbarran

A History of Aboriginal and European Contact in Muswellbrook and the Upper Hunter Valley

History

Launched on the 19th March 2004, during the unveiling ceremony of the Reconciliation Mural at Simpson Park.

The Muswellbrook Shire Council Aboriginal Reconciliation Committee recognised that the pursuit of Reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members is an ongoing process that includes a variety of actions.

This book provides an overview of the history of contact, illustrated by some of the incidents and colourful characters, and brings the reader up to the present day.

This book does not attempt to tell all the stories of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people coming into contact. Nor does it tell all the ongoing positive and negative impacts of those contacts for local families. The book does provide an overview and examples of that contact. The Reconciliation Committee hopes that it will serve to inspire families to document their history before it is lost.





Nagapawatti Aboriginal Women's Group

2011

In 2011 the Nagapawatti Aboriginal Women's Group identified the need for a project that would allow our Aboriginal community members to tell their story from their perspective.

Our endeavour was to gather these stories without the influence of existing written history as this is often written from the perspective of non-Aboriginal people.

These stories build on the stories published in Wannin Thanbarran, A record of Aboriginal and European history in the Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Area.

Oral History Project

- The Oral History Project is a compilation of stories and life experiences of local Aboriginal people. The end product was both a digital and paper recordings. The project allowed Aboriginal people to tell their story from their perspective and not be influenced by existing written history that is often written from the perspective of non-Aboriginal people.
- Project anticipated 1800 minutes of interviews with a minimum of 20 people interviewed.
- Final videos of up to 5 minutes per participant.
- Portrait of participants and 300 word transcribed were included in the Coffee Table Book. 100 books were printed.
- Exhibition of the project, so the stories can be shared.
- Coffee Table Book shared to local schools, Libraries, NSW State Library.



Photo: 2Rivers interviewing participants

2016 & 2017

In Late 2016, Muswellbrook Shire Council was invited by MACH Energy to present an Expression of Interest to the Aboriginal Community Development Fund (ACDF). The EOI was successful, and a Partnership Agreement was signed in 2017.

Project funding was received for the project to be developed.



Funding & Budget

- Mach Energy Aboriginal Community Development Fund (ACDF).
- Participants received a payment for telling and recording their stories.
- Project management
- Coffee Table Books
- Exhibition Launch

‘Culture allows
you to always
have somewhere
to belong’

– Katie Van Vliet



Indigenous Cultural & Intellectual Property (ICIP)

- Participants were involved in all stages of the project.
- Participants remain the sole owners of their stories.
- Participants had the opportunity to change their mind at any stage of process.

Photo: From the "In Our Own Words" Exhibition Launch

Muswellbrook Shire Council respects that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to control, maintain, develop, and protect their traditional knowledge, cultural heritage, and cultural expressions. Muswellbrook Shire Council also recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to control, maintain, develop, and protect their diverse cultures, using their Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property knowledge and expression.

Project Continuation 2018

Establishment of the Aboriginal
Oral History Reference Group.



Aboriginal Oral History Reference Group

Terms of Reference

Goals

- Increase appreciation and understanding between generations and communities by sharing experiences and stories;
- Build upon the stories published in Wanni Thanbarran, a history of Aboriginal and European history in the Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter area;
- Educate and preserve Aboriginal culture and knowledge through digital recording and related publications;
- Provide a safe environment for Aboriginal community members to tell their story and ensure cultural connections are not forgotten, and preserve their stories for future generations;
- To promote MACH Energy's commitment to build capacity and contributing to employment opportunities in local Aboriginal communities;
- Demonstrate the collaborative effort of MACH Energy and the Project Proponent to contribute to the sustainability of the region; and
- Develop and promote strategic collaboration, effective leadership and positive views of Aboriginal people in local communities.



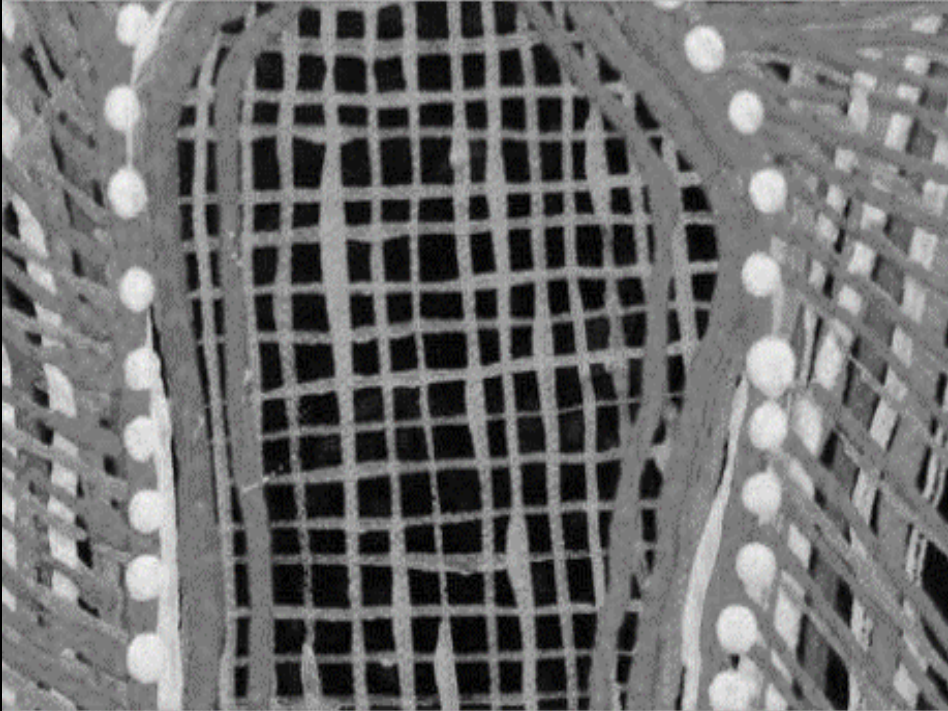
2018

- Request for quotation for the project went out: 7 consultants expressed their interest.
- 2Rivers Pty Ltd attained the quotation.
- Community consultation started and meetings were held at the Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council and other various locations.
- Late 2018 interviews started.

A black and white photograph of two women standing in a gallery. The woman on the left is wearing glasses and a patterned scarf. The woman on the right is smiling. They are both holding a book titled "In Our Own Words" which features a grid of small portraits on its cover. In the background, several framed portraits are hanging on the wall.

Photo: From the "In Our Own Words" Exhibition Launch

MUSWELLBROOK ABORIGINAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT



A Muswellbrook Shire Council Aboriginal Reconciliation Committee project in partnership with:

MACHEnergy



 muswellbrook
shire council

2019 & 2020

- Community consultation and interviews continued.
- 2020, the interviews concluded and the “In Our Own Words” Project was finalised.
- Videos and coffee table book we finalised and ready for exhibition launch.

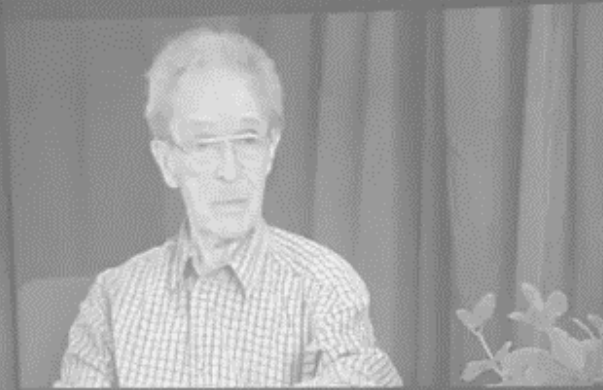
In Our Own Words Exhibition 2021

The 'In Our Own Words' exhibition launch was held at the Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre.

Due to Covid-19 restriction only 50 people were in attendance during the launch.



MAX WATTERS GALLERY



In Our Own Words Exhibition

Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre

Increase of Visitors

Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre during the time of the exhibition saw an increase of visitors.

Returning Visitors

Visitors returned to the exhibition as they wanted to spend more time watching the videos and listening to the stories.

Photo: From the "In Our Own Words" Exhibition

Impact on Project

- Participation: Some people pulled out of the project and some members were hard to contact to participate in the project.
- 3 Elders had passed throughout the completion of the project.
- Covid-19 impacted the project.
- 'In Our Own Words' Exhibition Launch postponed in 2020 due to Covid-19.
- Understanding Cultural Protocols
- Positive impact - Ongoing

'This was not only a magical project, but also incredibly healing for all involved. I will forever be indebted to the community members who participated, for the time and knowledge they Shared'

– Lorryne Fishenden



End of Project

In Our Own Words Link

<http://upperhunter.workingwithindigenoustralians.info/Index.html>

*Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
viewers are warned
that this program may
contain images and sounds
that may relate to deceased persons*

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'There are friends out there to be made'

IN OUR OWN WORDS

AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT



- Uncle Gary Wright

Thank You



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Thank You



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