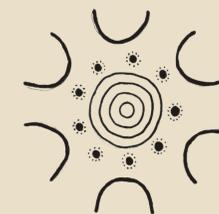


Murrup Barak
Melbourne Institute for
Indigenous Development

Billibellary's Walk

A cultural interpretation of the landscape that provides an experience of connection to country which Wurundjeri people continue to have, both physically and spiritually.

Lying within the University of Melbourne's built environment are the whispers and songs of the Wurundjeri people. As one of the clans of the Kulin Nation, the Wurundjeri people of the Woiwurrung language group walked the grounds upon which the University now stands since time immemorial.





This Possum Skin Cloak was gifted to the University of Melbourne by Wurundjeri artist Mandy Nicholson, using traditional symbology to respect the fact that Parkville is on Wurundjeri Country and as a sign of respect to ancestors. It is used primarily for ceremonial purposes to demonstrate this respect and acknowledge traditional Country.

Take a walk through Billibellary's Country. Feel. Know. imagine Melbourne's six seasons as they are subtly reconstructed as the context for understanding place and belonging for the Wurundjeri people. Ponder the landscape that was both shaped by its custodians through the management and protection of important resources and the defining facet of daily life.

STOP 1 – BILLIBELLARY'S COUNTRY

Imagine the time is 1830 and the place is Wurundjeri Country. Born in 1799, Billibellary is the Ngurungaeta, or clan head, of the Wurundjeri Willam whose diplomacy, intellect, courtesy and skills in negotiation would, in time to come, be put to the test.

STOP 2 – SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY, FARMING AND LAND MANAGEMENT

As you walk in Billibellary's time you would find yourself in a grassy woodland dominated by River Red Gum and Yellow Box trees. If it's late summer you might smell the smoke from ancient fire burning practices, sanctioned by Elders, as it hangs in the air.

STOP 3 – TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Four River Red Gums, predating the University, speak of the ancestors of Billibellary. The Wurundjeri people honour such trees as an essential source of shelter, bark for canoes and tools. The wood for making such items was harvested using axes, some of which were quarried from Mt William, a greenstone quarry.

STOP 4 – ABORIGINAL KNOWLEDGE

Aboriginal knowledge, bestowed through an oral tradition, is ever-evolving, enabling it to reflect its context. Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer, the University's foundation professor of Biology in 1887, was highly esteemed for his anthropological and ethnographic work in Aboriginal communities but the Aboriginal community today regards this work as a misappropriation of Aboriginal culture and knowledge.

STOP 5 – SELF-DETERMINATION AND COMMUNITY CONTROL

Murrup Barak, Melbourne Indigenous Development Institute represents the fight that Billibellary, the Wurundjeri people, and indeed the whole Kulin Nation were to face. The Institute's name uses Woiwurrung language to speak of the spirit of William Barak, Billibellary's nephew and successor as Ngurungaeta to the Wurundjeri Willam.

STOP 6 – PLACE

Stepping back to 1830 once again, the seasons change and so too does Billibellary's expectation of his environment ... as late summer moves into early winter the Wurundjeri people prepare to move to higher ground for shelter.

STOP 7 – A FIGHT FOR IDENTITY

Whilst the relationship between the Aboriginal community and the University of Melbourne is improving, its history has been problematic. With significant influence in politics, public opinion and public policy, the University has, at times, supported and contributed to the construction of prevailing attitudes towards Aboriginal people.

STOP 8 – BELONGING TO COUNTRY

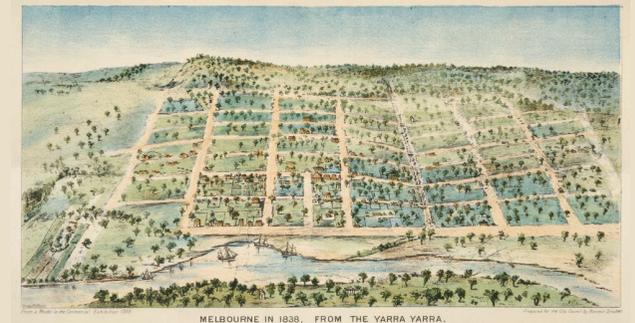
The Wurundjeri people take their name from the wurun, the Manna Gum, within which is found djeri, a grub, symbolising the close interrelationship with the cultural landscape that Billibellary's people have.

STOP 9 – A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE NOT LOST

The Townend creek originated from somewhere near the current Melbourne Cemetery, it flowed through the University site and down a shallow valley, along which Bouverie Street now runs. Take yourself back to 1830 once again – to Billibellary's time – and here you would have been standing on the bank of the creek watching short-finned eel that have migrated upstream.

STOP 10 – BILLIBELLARY'S COUNTRY

What would Billibellary think if he were to walk with you now? The landscape has changed but while it looks different on the surface Billibellary might remind you it still holds the story of the Wurundjeri connection to Country and our continuing traditions.



Melbourne in 1838 from the Yarra Yarra / Clarence Woodhouse, prepared for the City Council by Monsieur Drouhet; Melbourne in 1888 from Fitzroy Gardens / A.C. [print] Image shows Townend Creek flowing down Elizabeth Street. Author/Creator: Clarence Woodhouse 1852?-1931, Source: State Library of Victoria

The pamphlet, map and narrative as well as other resources, are available for download from the Murrup Barak Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development website: www.murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au

Billibellary's Walk is available between the hours of 9am – 5pm.

The walk is self-guided and provides a narrative, from an Aboriginal perspective, for participants to explore and imagine the university landscape across time and seasons whilst considering the social and cultural constructions of 'place'.



Billibellary's Walk was made possible with support from Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit