

# Gnokan Danna Murra Kor-Ki: Give Me Your Hand My Friend

*This is a reproduction of the first edition of the Koorie Heritage Trust Newsletter, No.1, July 1993, which is to be published each quarter. The newsletter will help Friends, Sponsors and Interested People keep in touch with the latest news of the Koorie Heritage Trust.*

**T**he Koorie Heritage Trust Inc. was established in 1985 to preserve Koorie Culture both traditional and contemporary. This is achieved by collecting Victorian Aboriginal cultural items of historical or sacred significance. These items are acquired through donation or are purchased from auction houses and private collectors worldwide.

In addition, the Trust supports and encourages Koorie artists and craftspeople by commissioning them to make cultural and contemporary material for our exhibitions.

Our collection of historical and contemporary material is displayed at the Museum of Victoria Keeping Place, as well as at Aboriginal Keeping Places throughout Victoria. We believe that by making Koorie culture accessible to the wider community via exhibitions, outreach educational programs and publications, it will create a greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of our way of life, fostering mutual respect and understanding between all Australians.

Trustees of the Koorie Heritage Trust consist of both Koories and non-Koories from a wide range of backgrounds. They are Ron Merkel QC, member of the Victorian Council of Civil Liberties; Ron Castan QC AO, Member of the Victorian Council of Civil Liberties; Hartog Berkley QC; David Parsons, Barrister; Sandy Atkinson OA; Glennis Hansen; Beth Charles; Nellie Moore; Rob Gerrand; Larry Walsh; Wally Cooper; Brian Stegley; John Evans; Iris Lovett; Jan Muir; and Jim Berg.

As with the Trustees, the Koorie Heritage Trust staff consists of both Koories and non-Koories with varied backgrounds. Overseeing operations are Trust Chairperson, Jim Berg, part time office administrator, Beth Charles and bookkeeper Shar Richards.

Research-writers are Trevor Pearce and Terry Springford. Trevor is a Koorie from NSW who is studying for a Bachelor of Arts at Deakin University, while Terry comes to the Trust with experience as a journalist and screenwriter.

Educational officers are Wally Cooper and Jon Conte. Wally, from the Yorta Yorta tribe Victoria, has been teaching children about traditional Koorie culture for many years while Jon has experience in both the educational and audio-visual fields.

Terri-Anne MacKenzie is the Trust librarian, overseeing our collection of more than 2000 books. Melanie Raberts, who is the Museum of Victoria's Collection Manager, acts in the same role for the Trust. Terry, Jon and Terri-Anne are non-Koories who have come to the Trust on a six-month DEET training program as a means of helping people back into the workforce.

So, that's the team. We're all excited about the projects we're working on and hope you'll share our enthusiasm as you read about them in this and future editions of our Newsletter.

## **One million see 'Koorie'!**

Approximately one million people have seen the 'Koorie' exhibition at the Museum of Victoria since it was opened in 1988. That figure continues to grow as each day many school groups and individuals continue to be attracted to the permanent 'Koorie' exhibition. Melbournians aren't the only ones learning about Koorie culture and history as a result of the exhibition. Recently, Koorie Heritage Trust Educational Officer, Wally Cooper, showed an Afghani film crew around the exhibition. The crew was making a documentary about Koories for screening on Afghani television.

Publications on Koorie people and culture, exhibitions, and a resource kit are just some of the projects the Koorie Heritage Trust is working on for the last half of this year.

Researcher Trevor Pearce has been gathering information for a Koorie Who's Who In Victoria, expected to be published in December. The book will feature photographs and biographies of 200 Victorian Koories, from prominent community Elders to young achievers in areas such as sport, education and community involvement. All tribal areas of Victoria will be

represented in the publication which will prove to be a valuable resource for Koorie communities, libraries and educational institutions.

Research is also underway for an end-of-year release of Educational Resource Kits to be made available to Primary and Secondary schools. An exhibition featuring 400 photographic portraits of Koorie people will open in Melbourne in December.

The 'KOORIE' travelling exhibition has been touring Victoria for the past two and a half years and was included in the Great Aussie Science Show at the Exhibition Building in June 1993.

#### KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST INC.



GNOKAN DANNA MURRA KOR-KI  
AND BRIDGE THE CULTURAL GAP

Historical drama is being considered by the Trust as a means of helping bridge the cultural gap between Koorie and non-Koorie people. It's likely that live stage productions of a series of plays will be filmed and made available to schools on video.

Other ways in which the Trust is fostering a greater understanding of Koorie Heritage is through university and CAE lectures, on-going out-reach schools programs and continuing travelling exhibitions. During May the Trust had four other major exhibitions throughout Victoria (Ballarat Gold Museum, Echuca, Brumbuk and Deakin University, Gippsland), including 'KOORIE' in the Museum of Victoria.

Since 1989 the Trust has been very active throughout Victoria in a number of areas, not the least being the acquisition of cultural material. More than 100 Koorie artists and craftspeople - from painters, weavers, feather flower makers and emu egg carvers to T-shirt printers, screen printers, flag makers, dress makers, basket makers, jewelers and potters have had their work included in the Trust collection. Among them are artists Tommy McCrae, Darlene Cunningham; basket makers Grace Sailor, Ivan Edwards; jewellery Margaret Handy, Daryl Rose; emu egg carver Bill Muir, Ivy Bell, and weaver Val Heap.

The Trust has purchased many Koorie artefacts and cultural materials, from auctions in London, the Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Amongst our

purchases from private sales was a 140-year-old basket and a club from the Western District which is more than 200 years old. In addition, 10 stone axes have been donated to the Trust collection.

Since 1989 the Trust has visited more than 100 schools throughout Victoria for talks and exhibitions and has taken part in 60 other exhibitions and festivals held at venues throughout Australia, including the University of Queensland, St. Paul's Cathedral, the Melbourne Hyatt Hotel, Pentridge and Turana jails. These exhibitions have ranged in duration from one day to two years.

As a symbol of respect to a great leader of our Koorie people, the Trust has established the Stewart Murray Scholarship, which has assisted Koorie students at Monash and Deakin Universities to continue their studies.

We also have the Stephen Kellner Aboriginal Art Awards. Stephen Kellner had no family when he came to Australia after the Second World War. When he passed away, he left money to assist Koories. His bequest has been used to hold an annual painting competition, to contribute to three Heritage Weeks and to sponsor an artist-in-residence for two weeks at the Lower Melbourne Town Hall.

#### Culture preservation

*by Johne (Sandy) Atkinson AM*

The Koorie Heritage Trust, of Victoria has been established for approximately six and a half years, and in that time it has proved itself to be a force in the field of cultural preservation, and maintenance of Aboriginal culture.

This organisation has moved at a breath-taking pace, so much so that it has taken a long time for people to realise all of its achievements, which I do not have the space to cover. However, I will tell you that it has a collection that is very unique, simply because of its variety, that comes in the form of boomerangs, clubs, shields and stone axes etc. that were beautifully made and carved hundreds of years ago.

The Trust has also been involved in developing local contemporary artists, which has in turn given its collection an exciting flavour, that from an Aboriginal point of view is just what is needed to educate the wider community of the richness of this culture that has so much to offer.

In 1990 the Trust put together an exhibition of some of its materials, plus two small dioramas, which depicted Aboriginal life before European contact. This mobile exhibition (which at times also featured artists and craftspeople) travelled to most parts of Victoria and was seen by thousands of school students, adults and tourists. It was an enormous success.

At the start of this short story I said there was a limit to the space I was allotted to tell you about the Trust, however we invite you to come to the Museum of Victoria, where you will see an exhibition of Victorian Aboriginals, that will not only be of educational value but will also be a personal experience, that you will never forget.

### **Melanie discovers her own cultural pride**

Melanie Raberts, Collection Manager of the Victorian Museum Aboriginal and Koorie Heritage Trust collections, says that 'Working alongside Aboriginal people had a very strong impact on her own cultural identity as a non-Anglo Saxon', which has made her become more aware and to take pride in their own culture.

Melanie also believes that one of the strengths of the Trust is its ability to respond to community needs. 'It can instantly act to requests for artefacts, exhibitions, talks, tours. It has wonderful resources and often people go direct to the Trust because they can deliver in a flexible manner'.

### **Shar passing on her knowledge**

Shar Richards knew very little of Koorie culture and never had any contact with Koorie people until she joined the staff of the Koorie Heritage Trust as its book-keeper two years ago. 'That's what drew me to the Trust in the first place', says Shar. 'I wanted the personal experience of working with Koorie people'.

She started with the Trust during a period of intense activity. 'There were four employees, the mobile exhibition was hitting the road and Nelly Zola, the research officer, was working on the publication of *Koorie Plants Koorie People* with Beth Gott', said Shar. 'There were also a number of smaller exhibitions at shopping centres and galleries'.

Two years later, the Trust's offices are again a hive of activity following the recent additions of two educational officers, two researchers and a librarian. 'There are a lot of projects on the boil and it's again a really exciting time. That's really good to see'.

Shar is delighted with the recent growth of the Trust and the support it's receiving from 'Friends', Foundations, Melbourne City Council, Corporate Sponsors and the [Victorian] State Government. 'It's been interesting to see a cultural organisation like this get off the ground and it's been great to have played some part in helping it bridge the cultural gap'.

'I think it's really important to give non-Koories access to more information about Koorie culture', says Shar, a former secondary school economics

teacher. 'In my two years with the Trust, I have learnt and have an understanding of some aspects of Koorie culture and I am proud to pass on my knowledge to my family, which is very satisfying to me on a personal basis'.

### **New Koorie art uses traditional themes**

Outstanding works of contemporary Koorie art are featured in a new series of postcards and posters available from the Koorie Heritage Trust.

The prints are from a series of paintings which are the most recent items added to the Trust's fast growing contemporary art collection by young artists, Marilyn Peiris, of The Wamba-Wamba Tribe, Victoria and Lisa Kennedy of the Trawlwoolway Tribe, Tasmania. Both Marilyn and Lisa use traditional themes and images within a contemporary context.

The prints are the latest in a number of items available from the Trust which also include newly-issued Koorie Heritage Trust badges, key-rings, bumper stickers and sew-on patches.

Other previously released items are still available, including postcards and posters featuring the Three civilised Evils and the Halfcaste Dreaming, the work of artist Les Griggs; the book, *Koorie Plants Koorie People*; a cassette by respected Koorie singer-songwriter Archie Roach; a video based on Bush Tucker, Healing Plants, Sea Foods and Koorie Health issues; and the book 'KOORIE', based on the 'KOORIE' exhibition at the Museum of Victoria.

Discounts on all items purchased at our office, which is located in the 'KOORIE' exhibition, are available to Friends of the Trust.

All revenues raised go to the Trust's on-going educational programs, and to supplement acquisitional funds. Recently this resulted in the Trust being able to purchase a collection of spear throwers, shields, clubs and a shield more than 200 years old. These historical artefacts were brought from a Barossa Valley family who purchased the material over 40 year, throughout Europe and England.

The Koorie Heritage Trust is proud of its achievements, but it acknowledges that we would not have been able to achieve most of these without the generous support of many interested people. We offer our sincere thanks and hope that with your continued support we will be able to expand our programs to 'Brige the Cultural Gap'.

For further information about the Koorie Heritage Trust contact our office at 328 Swanston Walk Melbourne 3000. Phone: (03) 669 9058/9061; Fax: (03) 669 9872.