



REDFERN ORAL HISTORY

COMMUNITY STORIES FROM REDFERN AND SURROUNDS

Early Redfern families

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last updated 3 June 2009

TIMELINE Part I – rough draft only

The lands (wetlands and dunes) of the Gadigal people were part of the coastal Dharug.

1788 Dispossession of the Gadigal people began. Resistance led by Pemulwuy resulted in many deaths. Loss was intensified by introduced diseases, and the soiling of fresh water sources.

1817 - 1825 British land 'grants' eg William [Chippendale](#), William Hutchinson, (former convict 1799) '[Waterloo Mills](#)' and James Chisholm (NSW Corps), William Redfern (a Canadian immigrant to England). AHD

1840s Hutchinson's third daughter, Mary married John Rose Holden in 1834. He had arrived in 1831 as an ensign. They built 'Everleigh House' on Hutchinson's Paddock, naming it after his mother's maiden name, Betty Everleigh. It showed in the [maps](#) from 1850; in the vicinity of Louis St, just north of Vine. It was later spelt Eveleigh. Two sons; George and Henry Augustus. 1849 Mary died, 1853 Holden returned to England.

1850 [Watercolour](#) shows the turning of the turf for the first railway. Aboriginal family / group on the right.

1855 The railway line to Parramatta Junction opened, cutting through Hutchinson's Paddock, and Chisholm's grant. The Government established repair shops at Redfern [now known as Central].

1875 The site too small, recommendations were made to move the workshops to land occupied by Chisholm.

1878 Chisholm's Grant was resumed. Eveleigh Railway Station opened (now known as Redfern.)

1880 Chisholm's compensation price was approximately [100 000 pounds](#). Clearance began.

1881 Hutchinson's grant was subdivided for the Golden Grove estate, where houses were built for workers.

1980s Residential dwellings were constructed in Darlington, housing Eveleigh Railway Workshops workers.
1889 Most of the Darlington area was subdivided and most of the buildings were constructed.

1890 11,827 people worked for the NSW Department of Railways. The railway workshops at Eveleigh were the biggest employer of Aboriginal people, particularly during the late nineteenth / early twentieth century.

1900 La Perouse was declared an Aboriginal reserve.

1906 Eveleigh Station was renamed Redfern Station. Redfern Station was renamed Sydney Terminal (Central).

1914 The Department of Railways was one of Australia's largest employers; 1/10 of them were employed at Eveleigh. Many local Aboriginal people from Redfern were employed in the foundry, boiler room and workshops.

1920s Aboriginal people from all around NSW migrated to Redfern drawn by the possibility of regular work.

1930s During the Great Depression, many Aboriginal people sought refuge with relatives in Redfern as work in rural areas became scarce. ^{AHD} 'Eveleigh employees were involved in the advocacy of improved living and working conditions for Aboriginal people, and their citizenship rights, from the early 1930s until 1967.'^{LT}

1940s Many travelled from northern and western NSW for the work opportunities after the outbreak of WWII.

1944 Bill Onus and Ted Duncan began organising support for the Redfern All Blacks.

After WWII, residents who had bought nearby freehold land pressed Randwick Council to move squatters from La Perouse. Many moved to Redfern and sought refuge with relatives. A large Aboriginal population had now re-established itself in Redfern, which became the location of civil rights protest meetings and rallies. AHC

1965 Redfern accommodated over 12,000 Aboriginal people; many were employed in local factories. AHC

1967 National Referendum. Many rural workers were laid off when wages equalised. At the same time Aboriginal people were freed up to move around, for the first time. As racism in the country was bad, many migrated to Sydney for better opportunities for jobs, housing and education. Off the train at Central, into the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs (FAA), next stop Redfern.

Gadigal clan of the coastal Darug

Tribute in progress



About this site

The Redfern Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) was set up as the first urban Aboriginal community housing provider, using grant money to purchase the houses on the Block. This site documents stories and photographs about the Block, and surrounding Redfern that are not often known to the community at large. You will find varying 'voices' and experiences under **Oral history**, and there are photos and videos that display the vibrant community spirit in Redfern and showcase achievements that do not necessarily make headlines. Some of the people you will encounter are quiet achievers, unsung heroes or simply ordinary members of the community. The Redfern Oral History website was started with a grant from Australia Council for the Arts.

Who are we?

Redfern Residents for Reconciliation [RRR] is a small group dedicated to Aboriginal rights, recognition, healing and reducing racism. We are a mixture of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. We started interviewing people in 2002, so that information about this vital, dynamic and diverse community could reach the general public. We meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 7.30 at the Redfern Community Centre. Feel free to drop in any time. Check first, as we often meet at other places.

Message to the Redfern community

Our goal is to hand this website over to you. We were happy to help get it started, but it is your history, your story. Please get in touch with us and tell us what you think. If there is a problem tell us. We are happy to have kicked it off, but we look forward to the day when appropriate people can take it over.

Please note this is incomplete – it's a work in progress.

We are trying to name all the people in photos. If you know any names, or have photos or stories you would like to share, please contact us.

- Contact: Lyn Turnbull **9699 3105**
- **mail at redfernoralhistory.org**

Volunteers are welcome. Help is needed interviewing, transcribing, editing, scanning ...

Thank you to all in the community who have been generous and gracious giving their time & stories.

WARNING: This website has images of people who have passed away.

Early Redfern families

Sonya Brindle

Sonya was born at 27 Caroline Street, to parents Ken and Mavis Brindle. She lived her early years there and has returned to Redfern from Kempsey.

'All roads lead to Redfern, if you're black.'



Sonya's DVD is available for private use purchase for \$19.95 and rights can be negotiated for other purposes. For orders and further information contact sonyaredfern@yahoo.com.au



View a clip from the film Sonya produced in 2007 on the website



Also in 2007 Wai Yuen Chong won a University of Sydney prize for his 3 minute documentary about Sonya, including the sadness of the death of her brother in custody. *The real neighbours*.

Watch this space for the next instalment !!!
Transcript to come.

Sharon Hickey

Sharon Hickey has many childhood memories of the Block. As an adult, she worked for thirty years in government departments and in the community sector, and completed a Master's degree in Social Ecology. She has returned home.



12 February 2007

My family originally comes from Redfern, and as far as I can trace, my blood line goes directly to Sarah Waters. Her mother was Madoo. I am fifth generation from this area, originally from Botany. Botany is linked to my spirituality and history. Sarah Waters was registered with Native Title. She never spoke English and practised the old ways until she passed away at 161 Lawson Street in 1945. My mother has a five generation photo taken in Caroline Street in 1945. There is concrete information about my family that dates back to 1870 in Redfern. It is in my blood.

My early memories of the Block go back to when I was about five years old in 1959. In Louis Street. I had many aunties that I used to visit in Eveleigh Street and Vine Street, and my grandmothers used to all live in Caroline and Hugo Streets. My sister also lived there, she was seventeen when she had her first son in 1969, and I went to live with her. My father did as well. My mother was born in Abercrombie Street in 1928. She lived in a house with her mother, my Granny. I am the niece of Athol Lester who was involved in the 1967 Referendum, while he was still living in Redfern.

It was called 'Community'. It was a gathering place. If people came to the city, they would go down and visit my Aunty Joyce. They knew the spot to go to, it was like a gathering place, a meeting place. That is all it ever was. People walked through and out all the time and that is what you loved. I went to school with most of the kids who used to live down in Eveleigh Street - Arncliffe Girls' High.

This word, 'the Block' is only a new beginning. I tell you when I was a child and the original people were running this place, it was beautiful. You could walk the streets at night and go for long walks because they brought harmony and they demanded it. We had strong uncles in this community.

The thing with Aunty Joyce is, she is eighty-four now and she is exhausted but she hasn't lost the fire in her belly and she knows she has to keep fighting. Aunty Joyce has been trying to stop this deterioration, this cyclone I call it, a cyclone that has come through this beautiful community. Do you know we used to be friends with all different nationalities here? Even the shops around here, they are so disrespectful to me, but now their experience of the behaviour of others confuses them.

I have two elders from my blood line remaining in Redfern and they are also elderly. I am concerned that they may have to leave the area because there are not sufficient resources that will enable them to stay here. There are no resources for my Aunty Joyce, there are no resources for my Aunty Pat. Peace is elusive.

Aunty Joyce Ingram

Joyce Ingram was born on 28 December 1922 in Bateman's Bay. The family moved to Redfern in 1923. She moved around different streets but it was at 78 Eveleigh Street where she stayed the longest –25 years. She is a community elder regarded as a stalwart defender of the Aboriginal residents of The Block. She finally left her The Block in 2004 to move to Waterloo, an adjacent suburb.

14 April 2002



Joyce spent some time in Narrandera and Leeton, then returned to Redfern in 1942, marrying Charlie Morgan and starting a family with first-born Norma. They lived in 32 Caroline St Redfern between 1943 and 1945. James was born in 138 Lawson Street. She returned to Leeton, living there for nine years in total. Ruth and Donald (Donee) were born in Leeton. Joyce remarried, to George Lockyer Ingram. In 1949, she settled in Redfern, living at 23 Louis St, 41 Louis St, 29 Louis St, 92 Eveleigh St and for 25 years, she lived at 78 Eveleigh St.

I first arrived here on The Block in 1923. When I came back I squatted in 23 Louis Street because my house was overcrowded. I lived in 23 Louis Street for nearly twelve months. I left there because the police were pretty solid around here at the time. The people who lived on The Block at that time were real community people, they helped one another and they shared with one another. I left here and I went away to Tumut for a week or two. When I came back I lived in Wells Street. I got a house, 41 Louis Street. They moved me to 29 Louis Street and I lived there for quite a few years. I had two great-grandchildren with me then. I went and I lived in Waterloo for a while. I finished up in Douglas Street. I put in then for another house and I was moved in to 92 Eveleigh Street. Now I've got four great-grandchildren with me, besides the grandchild. I exchanged houses with another person because the house was too large where she was. I moved into 78 Eveleigh Street and the lady who was living there, she came from Moree, she moved into 92. From then on, I've been living in 78 Eveleigh Street for the past twenty-three years and I don't intend leaving there at the present time. At my age, I'm seventy-nine, I think it is a little bit too old to pick up stakes, pull up roots, go and plant myself in another place. It would be rather ridiculous.

When we first moved on to Louis Street, the houses were done up, the people pitched in, they were being paid. They renovated houses, they painted them. We had three painters, I think they were new Australians, Asians or whatever, and they went around painting the houses on the outside to keep them clean and respectable looking. It was really a pride and joy to have a look at these places.

Yes it was really a community affair. It was a Koori place and we felt really at home. I don't know what happened then, but they were stopped from doing that. People used to keep their places clean. It was a real pleasure to live there then because we had houses right around The Block.

It was a gathering place for the Aboriginal people back in them bygone days. It is still a gathering place because it is like Mother Earth calling us back on to this land, if it is only just to sit and reminisce. I just sit still, for what reason I don't know, but it is a gathering place for Kooris.

We call ourselves Kooris because we are not full-blooded and we are not white people, we are in between. We

are a Koori people. We are indigenous Aborigines. We have got no song, we've got no dance, we've got no language. This is the first piece of land that was ever given back to us, from what I can gather, and it was given back by Gough Whitlam. It would be a great shame for us to lose this place now to another lot of people. Once this little bit of land, no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, once this land is gone, the rest of the Aborigines around New South Wales and maybe all over Australia would lose a little bit of something that was already given back to them. We can thank Gough Whitlam from the bottom of our hearts for this little bit of land.

But I really believe that if this place was given new blood, as a person's body would be given new blood, it would come to life again. I believe by having houses here, homes for the people, not apartments but homes that they can be proud, our children, future generations [will] be happy and walk with a little bit of pride and dignity that at least they have got a home they can be proud of. I am living for that day to see these houses be built here for our people.

We can thank the people who fought for this little bit of land. We've been raided by police over and over again for the least little thing. They even use this little bit of The Block here to do a little bit of training here at times. I can say this for a fact because I stood and watched one of the sergeants. He had a stop watch in his hand to see how long it took his younger police to catch a young Aboriginal person, a young boy about seventeen, bailed him up and dragged him up the back of the lane in what time. As he stopped the clock he said, "Good on you boys. You did that in good time." I can swear on the Bible for that. I stood there and I listened to him. They belted this young Aboriginal boy up and it was a great shame.

We've always had the police here raiding the place, but it's only lately that they've backed off because since Mundine has taken over The Block, or taken over the office, we've lost a lot of houses. A lot of people have been put off the land and we don't get the police so much now. Only when they want to practise or train. If they want to come on to the land, they go and ask Mickey Mundine and he tells them to go in. So I hope I don't get my neck cut off for this, but these are facts. They raid the houses for drugs, but they don't hit the right houses.

I lived around here from the age of nine months, I can't remember but I was told this by my mother, I really belong to this land here. My sister was born here, I am fifteen months older than her. We lived all around Redfern, touch of Waterloo, tip of Surry Hills and Chippendale. I met my first husband in Redfern, got married in Redfern. I had my eldest son in Redfern. I had four children. I've got three great-grandchildren now. My eldest son and his children are here, live in Eveleigh Street. My eldest daughter, she had two sets of twins, they was in Eveleigh Street. I lived all around Eveleigh Street, Louis Street, Caroline Street. I lost my grandmother at 106 in Lawson Street, Redfern. I lost my cousin in Thomas Street, Chippendale. Also my mother. She was ninety-six when she passed away. She preferred to go to the old people's home where she passed the rest of her life away. So I really belong to Redfern. It has a special meaning to me because of the way we lived around here.

We see the people change, we see the place has changed. It was really a good place once upon a time. Well I really believe the caring and the sharing is still here but it is not so strong because there's not enough people. Like I said before, if you get new blood into a dying body it has got to come to life. When it comes to life there has got to be flowers and trees to grow around. That's what I really believe in. It has got to have new blood in it.

Auntie Joyces' grandchildren (draft):

Norma: Kerry, Tangerine, April, Kim, Clarice, Max, Shona

James: Tracy, Darren, Joanne, James

Ruth: Donna (Amanda, Loana, Adam, Tillisha) - great grandchildren Lynette, Joseph, William, Jasmine

Donald (Donee): Donald, Matthew, Geraldine, Natasha, Paul (Paul, Jordan, Brittany)

Beginnings of the The Block



Evictees formed a mop and bucket brigade to clean up the houses in December 1972

? ? ? Henry Wallace ? ? Bobbie Perry ?

Does anyone know the names of these people?

One is Donald Solomon, other people at that time were Cyril Boney, Jasper McGregor Grey, Kenny Fraser, Joe Mick, Frank Kyle, John Kyle, Patricia Kyle, Wilfred Morton, Rodney Connors, Gladys McAvoy, George Villafior. [names from Kaye Bellear]

JUDGE BOB BELLEAR

Judge Bob Bellear, one of nine children, rose from a working class background to become Australia's first Aboriginal judge. He was the founder of the Aboriginal Housing Company in 1972, a Director of the Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service through most of the 1970s, and Chairman of Tranby College. He died in 2005 of an asbestos-related condition. His loss was mourned by many.

THE ABORIGINAL HOUSING COMPANY WAS BORN

Source: Black Housing Book, edited by Robert W. Bellear, pp.4-5; printed by Amber Press, May 1976

The initial commencement of Aboriginal Housing Companies in New South Wales was set up in Redfern, a Sydney inner city suburb in November 1972.

The breakthrough arose after a series of conflicts had occurred between the local police and the blacks. The police highlighted their oppressive attitudes when they arrested a number of *Goomies* [Blacks who are not necessarily alcoholics but who consume alcohol in excess of the norm set up by the dominant culture. Excessive alcohol consumption is often a trait of an oppressed minority group] for *trespassing in empty houses* owned by absentee landlords. Those empty houses were the only shelter available in the Sydney area where this group of people could have peace of mind and be able to do their own thing without interruptions from the so-called normalcy of the dominant culture to which so many other blacks have conformed.

The 15 blacks arrested were represented in court by the *Aboriginal Legal Service* and were discharged into the care of the three priests from the Redfern Presbytery, and Kaye Bellear who at the time was a nurse at Rachael Forster Hospital [Kaye, not long after the abovementioned incident, terminated employment with this hospital because of its racist and oppressive attitudes towards black patients. Kaye is also the wife of the author].

Kaye and the priests then set up House in the church hall for the fifteen people which almost immediately rose to about 50 people as news spread to the occupiers of other *empties*.

The blacks collected beer and wine bottles on garbage nights starting late in the evening and finishing in the early hours of the morning, and in the daylight hours the bottles were separated into the various colours and then broken into respective drums to be sold. The money collected was

shared amongst the residents who gave most back to the priests to purchase food for the gang and to go towards gas and electricity.

The South Sydney Council, who showed complete ignorance and lack of understanding in respect of anything done towards the betterment of those people, regarded by society as derelicts, served an eviction notice on the Archdiocese of Sydney to rid the hall of other people it contained, due to *health reasons*. (I really felt it was because of the complaints the Council received from the so-called Christians who attended the various Masses and who could not miss seeing blacks at the back of the Church before they entered. There was also a significant drop in attendance whilst the *residents* remained on the premises.) It is significantly obvious that the Council was not concerned about the health of the people because they certainly had not tried to do anything healthwise to help the blacks before they moved into the premises.

Through a lot of correspondence and negotiations with the Council they were forced to hold off eviction for about a month, but being completely dissatisfied with this arrangement, the Council then served an eviction notice on the Cardinal who forwarded it on to Redfern Presbytery to dispose of in a way Redfern thought fit. This eviction contained a fine of \$200 and a penalty of \$10 for every day the people remained on the premises, and was to take effect after the expiration of 21 days.

Prior to the eviction notice taking effect, the three priests, Kaye and myself selected a number of houses to purchase, including those from which the people had been originally arrested. (The proposed houses are now houses included in the Redfern Aboriginal Housing Project under construction.) These were in Louis Street, Chippendale and were leased to predominantly Aboriginal families for the past 60 years by absentee landlords until a major development company, IBK Constructions, moved in and purchased most of the houses in the area, removing all the residents, shoring up the doors and windows to maintain their emptiness with the help of the police and a very sad, but very racist security officer. A lot of the people had to move out into the western suburbs for cheaper rentals, whilst others had to live in *empty houses* in the area just to exist. (This was the situation when the fifteen were arrested, as stated earlier.)

The outcome of considerable negotiations with IBK was the use of the empty premises pending the commencement of their capitalist development which was due to begin in the very near future. The houses which they allowed us to use were dilapidated, burned out and absolutely unfit to live in, but we took the initiative and selected more suitable accommodation on the site. The development company had also placed some very stringent rules and conditions upon us which we were to abide by in order to obtain the premises but as soon as we moved in those conditions were waived by us.

In the early hours of a morning in December, 1972, a mop-and bucket brigade (see picture above) was formed by the inhabitants of the hall and armed with the various utensils a full-scale assault was made on the various houses to be used.

The now exiled State Builders' Labourers, through Bob Pringle, were called in to erect doors, fix windows etc., while some members of the Plumbers Union fixed taps, toilets and other plumbing facilities required for a more liveable habitation. The electricians turned on the power and the Gas Company put on the gas rent free as soon as they were aware of our situation. On completion of the clean-up a Health Department officer from the controversial South Sydney Council just *happened* to be on the scene and to our surprise passed all houses concerned as liveable.

Several unions showed interest but the mainstay was the State Builders' Labourers who assisted in every possible aspect.

Soon after the move occurred from the church Hall to the newly acquired premises, IBK requested that we vacate as their development was due to commence but we had regarded ourselves as *squatters* now and were not prepared to move at any cost. We tried to keep out the police but on several occasions they got under our guard and forced their way in.

We were able to stave off any arrests, as we successfully (but not legitimately) poked the *contract* in their faces pointing out our claim. As mentioned earlier this piece of paper showed that we could inhabit the premises. If we complied with the conditions – the police did not know that we had broken all the conditions put to us. From this point on we knew we would be under constant threat from all authoritative elements to get us out and everyone involved was aware that he or she could be arrested.

KAYE BELLEAR

Kaye Belleair, with her late husband, Bob Belleair, was involved with the early struggle to obtain housing for poor Aboriginal people in Redfern in the early 1970s.



27 January 2007

Bob and I got married in 1966. Bob was in the Navy and they were hard times for a white woman to be married to an Aboriginal man, and we suffered a lot of racism. Bob left the Navy in 1969. People in 1969, 1970, were starting to get together and look at shop front legal services and health services like the blacks had set up in America. So Bob and I just became involved with that group of so-called 'black power', 'black radicals' or whatever in Redfern. The legal service was set up, the medical service was set up and then the housing company.

Ted Kennedy, John Butcher and Fergus Breslin, three Catholic priests, moved into the church at Redfern. They established an open-door policy where Aboriginal people could come there and other homeless people, any one who needed help. I don't remember how I got involved with Ted, but Ted and I became really good friends. I helped there a lot with people who were sick, because of my nursing background, I was working at Rachel Foster at the time.

There were a couple of houses in Louis Street that were in reasonable condition, so Bob decided that he would take a mob from the presbytery down, clean up these houses, and they'd squat. In the meantime he is trying to do a Law degree ... he's got a houseful of kids ... So they went down there, they cleaned the houses and Bob contacted Bobby Pringle from the Builders Labourers Union. Bob Pringle played a really major role. They put a green ban on The Block so that IBK couldn't develop it. I suppose Ian Kiernan could see the gentrification happening. Bobby Pringle got the Plumbers Union in, the Electrical Trades Union in, they fixed up the plumbing, they fixed up the electricity, and people started to live in these couple of houses.

Then Bob formed a committee of people. That would have been early 1973. The Whitlam Government was in. Gordon Bryant was the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. So Bob wrote a submission for a grant to buy some of the houses, and that submission was successful. By this time I think IBK had decided they were going to have to sell because the blacks weren't moving. So Bob and Col James went to the auction and I think, if my memory serves me correctly, they bought three houses, maybe it was only two, Then the housing company was formed and was registered ... in July 1973 and directors were elected. They then employed Doug Hill, who was a builder, and Richard Pacey. Richard was the first sort of CEO of the place. Aub Phillips was the first company secretary. Then they employed a lot, a really large number, of Aboriginal men to start stripping the houses and doing them up. That process went on - those houses were really beautiful, the ones in Louis Street

particularly, they were the first ones. Rita Smith moved into the first one, Edna Craigie into the second one, 17 Louis Street I think it was. ...

But during all of that time there was constant harassment from South Sydney Council, and they were a Labor council. Jim Cope, who was the local Labor Member, was the Speaker of the House of Reps, he tried to get Whitlam to support the South Sydney Council to stop the project. Bill Hartrup was the mayor and I know they talked to Whitlam on many occasions, and to Gordon Bryant, trying to get it stopped. At an ALP conference Bob Pringle got up and supported the concept of the housing. So there was a lot of political stuff to'ing and fro'ing and fortunately Gordon Bryant stood his ground and said no they were going to continue to support the housing company.

The whole principle of it was that the Aboriginal community own freehold land. This was Bob's principle, that they owned land in the middle of the biggest city in the country because traditionally Aboriginal people had always been pushed to the outskirts of towns; had never lived in towns, they were always on the rubbish dump or whatever. He wanted to secure a fairly substantial piece of land that would house Aboriginal people in the middle of Sydney, so that Aboriginal people would always be there and the rest of the community had to acknowledge that this land was freehold land, owned by the Aboriginal community. It was the first land owned freehold in Australia, owned by an Aboriginal community organisation. They still own it and that to me is a really, really important thing.

One of the things that Col James and Bob worked out when they were nutting out plans was that ... hopefully they were going to buy all the houses in The Block ... in the centre it was going to be open and was going to be an area to put in playground equipment, outdoor fires, all that sort of stuff, a communal living area. But the thing that Bob really pushed the hardest was that there had to be really good accommodation for homeless people.

Now that original group of Goomies that went down there with Bob - they stopped drinking and they worked so hard to keep those houses, it was absolutely their project. That group of people were people who had been really damaged by the Queensland act, had been damaged by Child Welfare in various states but had still survived, against all bloody odds had still survived. ... there was Cyril Boney from Walgett, Jasper McGregor Grey from Queensland. God love him, he was wonderful. Who else went down? There was another guy there, Kenny Fraser. But the interesting thing was that when they went down to squat in those houses they all got off the grog and they really protected those houses. Joe Mick from Queensland was another one of them. It became a real focus for them and even though the police harassed them and harassed them and harassed them, they still stayed very strong and held those houses against all odds until the money came through. I think that was what really, really upset Bob. Once the houses started to be bought and started to be repaired and renovated, the fact that this group of people that had gone down there with him and had fought the cops, had squatted, had really done the hard yards, they were the people that were first out. I know Bob wanted, and Ted Kennedy ... they were the people to be housed first and it didn't happen. I think that was one of the things that really upset Bob, in fact I know it was.

COL JAMES

Col James AM is an architect who had been in the development on the Block since its inception. He is currently a member of the Pemulwuy Vision Taskforce which endorses the housing project development plan of the Aboriginal Housing Company.



3 April 2002

I got involved through Dick Blair. I was on the board of South Sydney Community Aid and I had been variously providing some sort of support from an architectural point of view for most of the Aboriginal organisations around Redfern, with the blessing of Mum Shirl. She actually was the one who decided what white fellas could do for black fellas. Dick asked me to go up and see Shirley and Father Ted Kennedy and they said that they really needed someone to draw some plans which could be given to government to help further the case for having an Aboriginal presence in that part of Redfern, which is what we ultimately did. A student called Richard Jermyon and I measured the drawings up and we also negotiated with Dick Blair and then later on with Robert and Kay Bellear and with a sort of a steering committee.

What actually happened then there was a developer called Ian Kiernan, now known as the 'Clean Up Australia', he was a developer who actually had acquired about almost half The Block. Where the Goomies were squatting and making their presence felt on his property, he was systematically trying to kick them out and there was a big police presence there and it was very confrontational especially in Louis Street.

Largely through Ted Kennedy and Bob and Kay Bellear, who had very good connections to the Labor Party through the union movement, specifically in Victoria, they were able to put a case for an Aboriginal presence in Redfern, which was Gadigal country and a traditional place for a small Aboriginal mob. Plus there were a lot of Aboriginal workers at Eveleigh Goods Yards, they used to be called 'boys' and they were paid appalling rates of pay, half of what everyone else got paid. But there was a connection between Aboriginal people who wanted to live in Redfern who had jobs, or wanted jobs, on the railways but who also had this association with the high ground of that part of South Sydney.

Anyway, Kiernan was persuaded to sell his property. Waddy Creek was the first rural land rights and that preceded Redfern, but Redfern was the first urban land rights, that's why it is a really important site in historical terms and one which I hope never gets extinguished by government or anybody else. So Kiernan was bought out. His firm was called Tierra del Fuego. I can recall walking around with him and he was saying, "I don't know why I can't keep the property. I'd be very happy to let it to Aboriginal people. I will paint it ochre colours, just what they want." It was very patronising sort of stuff and it had nothing to do with a sense of ownership and a sense of determining your own future or anything like that. He missed the boat by a mile. I have got some fond memories of when property did come up for sale going to the auctions along with Bob Bellear and Solly Bellear. We used to go and bid at auctions and as soon as all these big black people walked in the bidding dropped substantially, so we picked up property really very cheaply.

There was concern expressed at the time about looking after the Goomies because they in fact had been the people who preempted all the political action and the publicity. There was a strong feeling, particularly coming from Mum Shirl and Ted, that a special place should be found on The Block to house the Goomies and give them some sense of security. Of all the people that ultimately ended up there the Goomies were the ones who were into sharing in a big way. Like some of their members used to go to Paddy's Market and they would come back and they would all sit round in a circle and they would share all their food. What happened at the end of the day was that when the housing was being fixed up and people were being selected by the board to go into the first lot of housing, and priority was given to women and women with kids, they said these were the people in need who had a stake in their kids futures, that priority prevailed over the Goomies.

But what came of that and was the great thrill of owning and controlling the housing, there was a great wave of co-operation. I mean we implemented a scheme whereby the builders, which was the Aboriginal Housing Company acting as their own builders, they recruited a sort of a work force. With the help of the Builders Labourers Federation, by the way, they were very, very supportive and they were quite crucial to the political wave of support which convinced Whitlam to launch into this. What we did was have a quantity surveyor who was an expert in measuring the value of buildings. He and I used to go around every Friday afternoon and the quantity surveyor would award a point system for recording progress on all of the renovation work, like preparing and painting and roofing and things like that. Then on the basis of the points that were scored then the cheques were handed out to the labourers and then they all had a big party Friday night. There was a lot of enthusiasm, people liked that sort of system. This guy, this quantity surveyor, he is still around and his name is Bruce Davies, he is a really good bloke. I used to enjoy that actually, going around and seeing progress.

Richard Pacey was the director of the Housing Company at that time, he was a very nice guy. They had a very small board, very lean organisation, sort of committed to self-help. For the first ten years I think that sort of flourished. A lot of people were housed, a lot of people went from there into public housing. There were not big rent arrears or any sort of typical tenancy problems.

At the end of that first wave things did start to go down hill when rents weren't being paid and not enough money started to come in to pay for maintenance and rates and stuff. We got rid of the rates later on because that was one of the burdens. But the houses started to become a maintenance burden. I think one of the fundamental problems at that time there was a rent set for each house regardless of how many people were in there. A two-bed house was \$55 a week, and a three-bed was \$65 a week, it might have been even lower when it started. That led to a lot of overcrowding and more overcrowding led to more maintenance problems. It was the householder who was trying to collect the dough and people scarpered off.

It generally led to a conclusion that it wasn't working. No more capital funds were available, it was supposed to be self-sufficient and the rents were supposed to pay for wages and rates, because they were paying rates then, and repairs. It did start to go downhill then and there was a lot of hue and cry going about the buildings falling apart and it wasn't working. Anyway the government was then approached to back it up and that the housing was inappropriate.

I mean what was seen to be appropriate at the time proved to be little two bedroom English terrace houses which were not really appropriate for Aboriginal housing anyway. Funds were made available to start turning two houses into one house, so a two bedroom terrace house became a four bedroom house. There was more money made available for dressing it up and painting it and the enthusiasm started to build up again. I think the rents still stayed at a fixed rent, but the houses were bigger and the bigger the houses the more rent, it went up to \$75 or \$85 for a four bedroom house. Some three-bedders went to six beds.

Just looking at it back from now, like 2002, and its thirty year history, every ten years there seems to have been a nose-dive and then something had to happen to pick it up again. That second ten year phase was all right. The company did secure some funds to build new housing which was going to be a redevelopment of The Block and we wanted to do it slowly and carefully, not knock everything down and displace people. Those houses on the corner of Caroline and Louis Street were the first of that lot.

But while it was going on the white residents were getting quite upset that The Block was attracting a lot of people from country areas. There were a lot of people acting out. The coppers were getting involved. Alcohol was the big drug of the time then. But there was an incident that actually inflamed everybody and that was where some young kids were caught tunnelling underneath a house on the corner of Caroline and Eveleigh Street actually, it is not there any longer. The white residents doxed them in and the police picked them up, because the kids were in this tunnel, and the kids went to gaol I think, repeat offenders or something. Anyway the kids' mates threw fire crackers through the window of the house and the curtains caught and the house got burnt down. That really got the white residents inflamed and it was a Liberal government at the time and there was a big move to close it down. This was towards the end of the second phase.

So the redevelopment didn't go any further than that and there was this move to close the Company down. I remember the Director of Aboriginal Affairs, New South Wales at the time was Pat O'Shane and she commissioned a study which involved a woman called Leoni Sandercock, who was Professor of Planning at Macquarie University. She in turn thought there were better people to do it than she and she hired Wendy Sarkissian, who is a Canadian social planner. She got myself and a black American called Ivor Lloyd to form a team to look at what the issues and the problems were and to recommend some remedies.

My time line is a bit out there, because when that dysfunction all happened we did this report which basically said there were some fundamental problems but there was no point in closing down The Block - the same problems would emerge somewhere else. This problem could be fixed and new accommodation would be a good start. That's when we did the redevelopment scheme, of which three houses were built. That was the end of the second phase actually.

I was very keen to get rid of that old housing. It was English style housing which doesn't respect the climate, the environment, and is also very vulnerable. It is made out of sandstock bricks and any kid can go straight through a brick wall in a terrace house. The houses are facing the wrong way, most of the houses are facing east and west, whereas that sloping land has a fantastic prospect of getting north-easterly breezes and the sun all day. The sun is health, a life force.

In the original plan, there was a big garden in the middle of all these terraced houses all around. That was quite good. That reflected what the Goomies were doing, meeting in a circle in the middle of this sort of Redfern area. Then gradually people asked for private back yards and that's when dealing happened to take off because there were these secure sort of enclaves that could help privacy, I suppose. Anyway, the people I am working with are very optimistic about their chance, this third chance as it were, to create a new environment which is more respectful of Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal needs and which is affordable and sustainable and adaptable and which is very good housing. Much better than the two bedroom English model.

TED KENNEDY

30 April 2002



Fr Ted Kennedy was a social justice advocate and parish priest of St Vincent's Church in Redfern for thirty years. Father Kennedy was inspired by the reformist Vatican II movement of the early 1960s and played a part in establishing Aboriginal ownership of the Block. He worked closely with Aboriginal activist Mum Shirl [Shirley Smith] to support the Aboriginal Medical Service, to which he donated a hall formerly owned by St Vincent's. He died on May 17, 2005 aged 74, after a long period of illness.

We arrived in December 1971 and it took many, many months to cajole Aboriginal people to come and accept accommodation. It had already been bought by the famous fellow now, Ian Kiernan. This company called IBK had bought up a lot of the houses so by and large my first experience was that there was no one around. If there were Aboriginal people camping there, this was done very surreptitiously. I wasn't focusing on the Block but I was focusing on the people who were teeming in both from places like Moree, but also well beyond – from Queensland.

I first got to know people like Nancy Duncan, who was a fifty-odd year old woman who came all the way from Woorabinda. There were some famous people like Aunty Martha Beckett who turned up from Queensland and she had a sister who was a pretty famous woman, I can't think of her name right now. She actually settled in a house in The Block and she drew a lot of people around her. She was an older woman and very capable of running a household.

What was happening initially was John Butcher and I, we tried to encourage, cajole the Aboriginal people to come and take food. So in those very, very early days we were inviting people after mass to come and have lunch. Some people did come. I always remember Chris Tilly coming with her husband, Phil. There were a few starting to come to have lunch in the kitchen. 'Juke Box' was one who just was too retiring to come out and join us at lunch. People who were obviously well-heeled white people were coming as well and I remember Juke Box tapping his tummy and saying, 'We can't eat with white people.' So there was that phase when we were finding it very hard to introduce Aboriginal people into the home of the church. But gradually, just by sheer numbers, we did and so that is when a sort of second phase occurred.

But the first phase really was something to do with just providing warmth and accommodation, not only in the presbytery but also down at the hall, where the present medical service is working. That was once just an old parish hall, you know.

The racism from the St Vincent de Paul Society was absolutely enormous. Even though most of them weren't parishioners, nevertheless they came in. There was one bloke who was the president of the St Vincent de Paul Society and he had a house around in Pitt Street. The habit of the parish priest was if an Aborigine turned up at the door, he or she was sent round to the house with a chit or something. That man's name I can't think of, but his wife was so bitter. The former curate told me once that she had been so racist that she would not allow an Aboriginal person to be even at a home mass. So there was that sort of dichotomy between forms of religion. There was a parish that was functioning on the lines of there being home masses, but the moment that Aboriginal people were thought to be anywhere near it, they were excluded. Then they had a meeting.

There was a very strong existing community and God knows how they lived because by and large, Nancy Duncan for instance, it took me days just to get her on to the pension. It required a lot of work on our part to drive her to town to go to a certain office and we'd have to get the interview and come back and after lunch we would have to go back again. So Nancy got on the pension just by dint of sheer energy on our part.

Anyhow that phenomenon was extraordinary. There were the isolated persons, like Aunty Helen.

Aunty Helen must have been the first person I remember coming to knock on the front door and wanting a sandwich. She was so bloody timid and very unsure of herself altogether, but she arrived. So the people who were coming, were coming quite sporadically. That group that was coming began, but then there were hordes of groups. I can't quite remember when it was that Abbè Pierre came, and Mark Raper had a good friend in the person of Ingrid Sandberg, who was a Swedish young woman who came and helped out.

I do remember when Abbè Pierre came, I felt confident enough to bring him down. He was in his cassock. He came out from France and I just wanted him to meet up with people like 'Juke Box'. Now there was no way in which I would have been confident enough, to bring him— a stranger — into one of the houses in Louis Street, but we did, and he enjoyed talking to them.

He came back with the suggestion that there should be something to do. The government should require something like doing up old cars, for instance, was the prerogative of Aboriginal people so there should be an industry that was handed over to Aboriginal people. He had that sort of insight that comes from the knowledge of poor people everywhere. I think we should really have tried to work on that in those days. The theory is something that still ought to be recommended.

Anyhow I suppose as time went on, it was more and more learning the ways of the Aboriginal people and they were filling up the Block. It was just tragedy because the moment that they started building up numbers, then the forces against them started operating.

I remember when we had something like eighteen paddy wagons that would be operating outside the Empress Hotel every Thursday and Friday night ... and they would be just shoved into the paddy wagons. I always remember Glady. Glady was a young mother then, Glady Haynes, and she was being pushed into the paddy wagon and she would go in on a Friday night until Monday morning. Then she would come out and she'd have to go up before the Magistrate. Sally and Brenda and the older kids were home screaming waiting for their mother to come home on Friday night. It was just extraordinary. I mean, it wasn't organised so that the kids would be informed, so it was a most extraordinary experience.

First of all, there is this period in which they were all 'empties'. 21 Division would come in and there would be a small group of Aborigines in the houses in, say, Louis Street, and all these huge policemen would come in and go upstairs and just drag them down. So Alby Kyle, from Bundaberg, was being dragged down by the hair of his head, out of his bed. I think Kit can tell you all that. You see, Kit was only a little kid in short pants and he was there. He was absconding from one of the homes. So it was always a question of, no one having an entitlement. Everyone was just so scared just even to be around, you know. We were trying to find occupation for people and at the same time give them confidence, I suppose.

Aunty Martha Beckett lived in Caroline Street, across the road in one of the low numbers. She was an extraordinary woman. Alby Kyle, the Kyle family is a famous family. I mean they are very reputable fighters for justice in Queensland. Those sort of people are quite extraordinary. That is when the Watsons turned up and would often come and stay, the whole family --- Lenny, Maureen and Lilla. They were very encouraging. Polly was there, I think, in those early days.

We got a group together at the Presbytery to decide what we should do about the Block. Bob Bellair led the whole the story. He led this group marching down to the Block with brooms and buckets. So we were having vast numbers living in the Presbytery and suddenly, we asked them all to move down to the Block, so that was a political act. Jimmy Freeman [the archbishop] was getting very scared because there were these Council regulations coming through every week, and I was standing with them. I did assure Freeman that as soon as we could, we'd organise all the people from the hall to take over the Block by way of a political act.

Whitlam right from the start was pretty good. It was right at the very start before he'd even allocated ministers, when Barnard was his off-sider, you know. It was part of the very start of the Whitlam government. The first Minister for Aboriginal Affairs was quite good. Vic Hall was instrumental in organising the Aboriginal Housing Company, so they took on the role of doing up the Block. There was an attempt by the government to take back the deeds but Bob kept the deeds. By 1981, when that ABC program was shown, Broken Covenant, it showed all the houses quite neat. They were maintained quite well for the next few years.

MICHAEL MUNDINE

November 2006



Michael Mundine is the CEO of the Aboriginal Housing Company and has worked on the Block for 31 years.

I started in 1975 and my brother was working in 1974. I came here and I got a job and I started as a painter. Now at the time there were about six houses was getting renovated, as you know, the company was registered in 1973 and the reason why the company was set up was a lot of Aboriginal people found it very hard to get in private real estate. It was very racist in them day. So a group of 'goomies' [heavy drinkers] squatted in these three houses. Now at the time, Father Ted Kennedy used to help a lot of people up at the Catholic church in Redfern in conjunction with Bob Bellear and his wife, Kaye. They were the ones who really got together, got a good mob of people from the community and got the company registered and it carried on from there. I have been working for thirty-one years now in 2006, and it has been a very hard role.

I really feel that the company went through a vicious cycle and obviously that vicious cycle is a vicious cycle of learning for our people. In the early 1980s, this place was so beautiful, it was the caring and sharing. Our people used to sit around together of a night time, go to sleep with their doors open. It was a beautiful community. But as you know since the 1990s, the drugs started creeping into the community and we ended up with this vicious cycle of drug-related issues, crime-related issues. I suppose in some sort of way too, a lot to blame for this falls back to the government because of lack of funding and as you know, we have been struggling for thirty-three years for this company. But when you come to look at it, the reason why I think the government wasn't giving funding to us is, they want this company to fail. They don't want to see people prosper, they don't want to see people move towards self-determination, I think they always want to keep our people down in the gutter, in the welfare mentality. I think that is why our people have done a lot of suffering in the past and I think a lot of our people lived on that hate and hope.

But I think now, a lot of people are starting to feel and realise that their hope is coming to a reality of what we are trying to do now with this new project. It has been a hard battle but as you know, ministers come and go ...

We have got asset at the present moment of \$45 million but cash-flow is like, *nothing*, so at the present moment we [are] surviving like [picking up] the crumbs from the table. But as you know, we've got a strong belief that the loaf of bread is coming. So we've gone through a very vicious cycle over the last few years but I really feel it is a cycle of learning and I really feel if you don't experience the bad side of life, you are never ever going to experience the good side of life. I think we have to suffer, like we have to really crawl, before we stand up and walk. That is why we had to go through that vicious cycle.

The last house we bought was 1994, and that is when we owned The Block. We had to buy every individual house and now the government start to realise, 'Oh gee, we bought all the houses and what they done, they handed us the title deeds.' So we've got a private organisation, we are a private company, right? This land is

private, it belongs to the Aboriginal Housing Company and the members. That is why the government cannot do nothing at the moment. We are standing very strong because... Frank Sartor done a bad thing of cutting our funding. We used to get \$77,000 off of ATSIIC and when ATSIIC closed down, all the housing funding went over to Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO). All the funding went over to AHO, we was given administration fund there until Frank Sartor came along. When he became the minister for Redfern-Waterloo, he stopped our funding. He thought by stopping our funding, we will fail....

Now that he has stopped the funding, it has made us more stronger and the company itself. We went right back to the filing and really looked up right to the financial side of the company, and we are in a more better position than we was when we get funding from the government. At the present moment, when you [are] funded by the government, they pull strings. Now they can't say nothing. We are pulling our own strings at the moment so we are in a very powerful position of dictating back to the government, and I think that is a blessing— that an Aboriginal organisation can stand up on their own, sock it to them and say, 'Hey you can't come and tell us what to do. We are going to tell us what to do, we are going to tell you what to do.' So I think that is a blessing for all Aboriginals to see a black organisation stand up, and by themselves.

The Federal government were the first government [that] gave funding towards this project, this is in the Gough Whitlam days, and over the last three decades, the state government never ever put any money into this community, now they want to come in and try and take control of us. The predicament we are in now is going back to Bob Carr (former Premier of NSW) and Andrew Refshauge (former NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs). Bob Carr was all for our project many years ago but two years ago, three years ago, he supported our project but then because what happened as you know, the state government is generally driven by redevelopers and this revenue they are trying to find and the reason why they are trying to undermine and degrade us and make us look bad is because black face is no good for business.

We own a piece of land here, very prime real estate that the government wants. Now apparently we are the main corridor of the expanding of the city from the city right to the airport, now we've got a bit of land that is right in front of their face, we are the blockage and that is why we are in a very difficult time now with this new Minister for Planning, Frank Sartor.

I really feel only for the founders of this organisation and the early activists, we wouldn't be where we are today so [I] want to thank them but I believe the present now and the future got to carry on because the past is always with them. I mean, everyone has got a past but we don't want to carry on the past for the next generation to the next generation [or] we will end up having a lost generation. That is just my own personal opinion. I think that the time is the *present* and the future we look at but bring them, other people, along and say, 'Come on, it is time, enough is enough.'

When I first come to Sydney, or when I first started with the company, I used to see all the early activists out there marching and I would think, 'what are they doing?' I used to say to myself, 'oh gee, I'm never going to do anything like that.' But once you [are] working all the days and see the injustice that the government is doing to our people, it just make you want to stand up and fight for justice with all your heart and soul and strength. You saying 'we got lost', maybe we was too set in that circle of it, like 'happy and caring and sharing' [and] we didn't realise that the other vicious side of the thing was creeping in slowly

I had a dream of this company about fifteen to twenty years ago. Five part—three part happened already and there are two more to go. Now I have seen it in colour. The last part of the vision, I was sitting up here after midnight looking down on the company and the land was just like a golden yellow colour but I couldn't see what was there, just that colour in the last part of the dream. I have seen... what do you call them? ... expressway or bridges or something over round near Regents Street. I have seen building knocked down before it was knocked down. I have seen a wall in that dream get extended. Three to six months later, it happened, so I don't know, things just come to me.

Maybe it come to me because I have got to make sure of this company, that maybe my role is that this company do succeed, I wouldn't know, I couldn't really tell you seriously. I couldn't really tell you. But my heart is in this place, I suppose I am much stronger, I am very strong now of my belief, and I believe the goal, the vision of the company. I have got a very strong Board that has really endorsed what we are doing. Everything that I do is endorsed from the Board [of] Directors and from the members too. People say, I am big noting myself. No way, I am merely doing what has been endorsed by the Board and the members. Once you get the approval from the Minister for Planning and we start redeveloping this complex, we are going to build sixty-two affordable housing, four, three and two bedroom, we are going to have a commercial centre here building a new gym, health and fitness centre, we are going to have a business college, we are going to have an art gallery. We are going to have a hostel in conjunction with our building here, retail and office space.

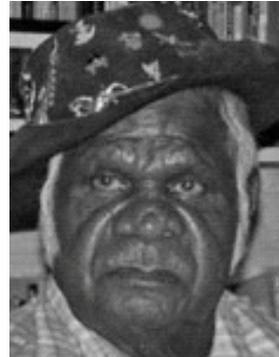
Once we do all that, we will change the image of this place, and I believe as I said before, it is like that burning city out of the ashes comes that phoenix bird. Our main vision, our main goal, is to make sure that we build this for the next generation, pave the way, set the platform. When the next generation grow up to be adults, at least they can start with self-esteem, respect in themselves, and be proud of [who] we are, who they are. So I think we have got a future, you know, it is going to be a beautiful future for our people, and it is going to happen, trust me, it is going to happen.

Community

MAX EULO

Uncle Max Eulo's face is associated in Sydney with 'Smoking and Welcome Ceremonies'. He remembers going to the Block in 1973. He used to 'live off the land' but his adventures took him to many towns in New South Wales and even overseas to America and New Zealand. He says, 'I've had a good life.'

15 April 2002 and 21 January 2007



I was born in the Darling River in Bourke. I had five brothers and five sisters. None of us stolen. We were all reared up in Enggonia, about 60 miles from Bourke going towards the Queensland border. My mother used to carry water from white people's tap to get our clothes washed ready for school. She dried the clothes in the bush, no clothesline, she dried it that way. My Dad was a stockman and drover. He was a drover from one station to another. In Queensland, they call them 'Ringers'.

You didn't really need money then when you live off the land. But I wanted to see other towns so I was skinning, boning kangaroo to make a few bob, did stock work too. I'd roll my swag up and that's what it is. When I was a boxer, they called me 'Snow White' [a tease because of his very dark skin].

When I came down here in 1973. I met up with Judy and we used to live in Louis Street here and I found everyone really good and friendly. I got on good with the whole lot of them. All the houses were built up then along here. I used to drink around here a lot but I never got into a fight with any of them. I just like it, you know. That's why every time I go home to the bush, I come back here to Redfern and see the old friends. Some of them are gone now, passed on. I knocked the drink off in 1975.

I used to sleep at the Presbytery next to Fr Ted's Church and another place too, the Black Theatre. I got to know Fr Ted really well then. He was a really good bloke. You wouldn't find a better bloke than him around Sydney. He just loved Aboriginal people.

I get a good feeling, you know, they all respect me and call me 'Uncle' from kids right up to elder people. Even white people call me 'Uncle' and I figure really they see the good side of me and they make me feel real good.

I've been welcoming people onto this land on behalf of the Gadigal tribe. I do my smoke ceremony; cleanse the land and the people around us. I do a lot of that around here. I first started doing it when the Pope [Pope John Paul II] came to Australia.

ALI GOLDING

Ali Golding is a Biripai woman from the north coast of New South Wales. She is graduate of Nungalinga College in Darwin with a Certificate and a Diploma in theology. She lived on The Block for twenty years and is a community elder. She and her family now live in Little Bay near La Perouse.



14 April 2002



Bonus *Listen to Auntie Ali telling her story to Paulette Whitton on Koori Radio 93.7*

I've been here a bit over twenty one years. When I got here in the late 1970s, six [out of seven children] moved to The Block with my husband and I. Our first home was given to us by Mickey, by the Housing Company, run then by Richard Pacey who was the co-ordinator. I have been questioned, "Why do you live on The Block?" and I say, "Well if you have felt the energy and felt the spirit that I feel in this place, you'd want to too." ...

Because I love gardening and I love trees, when we first moved in, there were little verandahs outside the front of the houses and there was a tree each. You would look down Eveleigh Street and there was a nice little square space for a garden outside each house and in that little square verandah piece in the front of the houses, all different trees. There were paperbark trees, which grew lovely, and then when the time of the season came around, there would be the white blossom, they'd be really lovely. Then we had the palms and the palms would have like beads hanging from them and it was really beautiful. So there were these paper bark trees and nice palm trees growing in nearly every little garden, our front little square verandah, our front. People would have their pot plants around on the square, part of the verandah on the bricks as they were built in a square form.

[There] used to be the Black Market in those days in the late 1970s. We used to go in there and it was really handy for the families there because that was our shop. The kids had a lot of pride in that. Not only the kids, but the whole Aboriginal family, had great pride in having their own shop, supermarket. I remember one of the teachers at the opening, he was an Indian teacher at the Darlington Primary School, and he said, "Oh I heard about the opening of your Black Market, the supermarket down in Louis Street," he said this to the kids, and they said, "Oh yes, sir and you're allowed to come in to our Black Market because you're black too." He was Indian, see, or Pakistani. They had the pride in their own supermarket. I was really disappointed when they did close it down, our own supermarket. All down that street also was trees growing out further onto the footpath in Louis Street. Hugo Street was the same, it was a tree-lined street as well. But Eveleigh Street looked really nice from the top of Eveleigh Street looking over the trees outside every house and looking towards the city, the buildings. It was really a beautiful sight. Then Vine Street, they made that street wider. They wanted that to be made wide because it was flat for kids to play out in and that, so it is the widest street on the Block.

Along Caroline Street as far as Louis Street, I think, it is where that vacant block is now, was where the Housing Company used to be, the office. That was really lively with people coming and going, coming and going. It was really a great place in those days of great movement. There was a lot of moving in the community, children, families and workers as well there. Namaroo was established, the education part of The Block, they had TAFE courses running there. It was really good.

The Black Market I can see it really plain in my mind, coming around off Vine Street, coming into Louis Street to the Black Market and you would see all the little kids sitting on the steps there licking ice-creams and having ice blocks and stuff there. It was a really happy atmosphere in those days. People talked. The beauty part of it is when I first moved there, you had little children knocking on your door, "Aunty, my mummy said have you got a needle and cotton?" Or someone else would come over, a little kid with a little sweet bowl, "My mummy said, can you give her a bit of sugar until tomorrow," Pension day was tomorrow, see. All this went on and it was real cultural communication, someone coming to your door for a bit of sugar, a needle and cotton and other things. It was great in

that way in the late 1970s and early 1980s. That was the most comfortable and enjoying years of my experience living on The Block, the late 1970s and early 1980s.

There was a man for fourteen years, he was in a little bus, combi van, and he used to sell juices and eggs and bacon and everything here to all the families on The Block. Alan, his name was. They named him 'Mr Juicy'. I tell you what, with his eggs and bacon and off-pension week, the ladies used to tick him up for big plastic bottles of juices of all sorts, passionfruit, lemon, orange, and he'd give it to them. A couple of packets of eggs, packets of bacon. He always seemed to be handy. They all waited for him, sweated for him, off-pension week. Fourteen to fifteen years he was doing that kind of thing, delivering eggs and drinks and that for the families on the Block. He was greatly missed when he got married and went and lived down the south coast. People used to sit around and talk about Mr Juicy. We missed him, you know.

I remember just before I came onto the Block, we used to live in Wilson Street, up near the railway there, there was a rabbito man, used to have a van, going around in a little small van selling rabbits, skinned rabbits. You would hear him and he would sing out real loud, "Rabbito," and ring the bell. Then there were other people coming onto the Block selling things like packets of lollies, a \$1.50 or \$2 a bag. Mr Whippy was very popular on the Block with the kids. His last moment before leaving the Block, the kids would be running behind his van and they would be ticking up ice-creams and stuff, but then he would give him free because they were his last couple of minutes. I think Mr Whippy still comes. But all these people got used to the children on the Block, like the lolly man, Mr Juicy with the families, Mr Whippy. I tell you what they knew, when to come around too, they knew the pension days. But then Mr Juicy used to come on off-pension days, so he was more handy with the families than the others.

The CDEP that started up in 1990. That was going really good in the early 1990s because they had all these enterprises like they had the Koori Cafe up on the top of Eveleigh Street where the old pub used to be. They had qualified caterers and the CDEP ran that through the TAFE in Petersham, that's where the qualified caterers went through. Then the art work was done in Holden Street here, all the fabric and everything, they set up a screen printing area here in Holden Street. Then they had sewers, women that sewed the dresses, tops and stuff, and put them up into another section from the cafe, into another little room section, that was a shop where they would sell all the screen printing stuff and the T-shirts and everything. People started coming in and buying, non-Aboriginal people was coming in as customers. I think the sign was a little bit out of order because it had the Koori Cafe. There were university students coming out of Redfern Railway Station and they'd peep in and they'd say, "Is this all just for Kooris to come in and have a hamburger or a cup of tea, or for everybody?" I would say, "For everybody." I would think we should get off that sign, the Koori Cafe, but then we thought no we wouldn't get rid of that because that was our cafe, all we have to do is write underneath it, 'Everybody is welcome'. So it was good. There were two Westpac tellers, girls, non-Aboriginal, and they'd say they were the best hamburgers they had ever tasted in Sydney.

The CDEP used to run fashion parades, just to advertise their stuff. We used to wait for all the festivals, South Sydney Festival, Newtown, The Rocks, and we'd have the fashion parades there, so that was really, really good. Out from that we had the boys doing the garbage run, we had other boys doing lawns and things for hospitals or wherever they wanted lawns mowed, so it was very active in the early 1990s. It got back up again, really active. I think the CDEP made that happen. So yes, the CDEP did bring it alive again.

The Project Garden, that used to be up and running really great, but something has happened there. I think the CDEP does give a hand in that as well as that young Tongan gentleman called Alex. I would like to see that come about really good and have native plants there, geebung or the wild fruit trees growing there. [It was] just beside the Murawina Pre-School up the top of Eveleigh Street. The intention was that we'd grow our own tomatoes, lettuce, carrots and onions and everything in it, including the wild berries, bush tucker. We tried to get the bush tucker into there, the fruits and the herbs, but it was a bit of a struggle. It started off really good at first, when the CDEP first started it. People did take care and pride in seeing it happen, helped look after it. But then later on people left. A lot of people had to move from the Block here to get into Department of Housing and things like that. These are the people who had a lot of interest in the Project Garden, interest in the CDEP programme, and they had to leave. These were the people that had a bit of energy, you know, and were very active. As people left, I think we sort of slacked. We miss those people because they were full of energy and so supportive and so active. When these people leave, you are lost without people like this sometimes. But things were happening in the early 1990s.

PETER GOLDING

Peter Golding is an Englishman who had lived on the Block for many years with his Aboriginal wife, Ali Golding and their children. This is his story.

27 March 2002



I'm originally from England and I came out to Australia when I was seventeen years old. I got a job on the railway and they sent me out to a place called Byrock. I met this Aboriginal fellow there, Jim Morris, and he was a good lad, well spoken, to me he was a gentleman. Any way I used to drink with him and used to have a game of darts and have yarns and he said to me one day, 'Pete me two daughters are coming up from Dubbo to stay with me for a while.'

Ali and I ended up getting married. We moved to Bourke, had two children, Phillip and Peter. We lost Ali's father there.

In 1966 we moved to Sydney and we had another five children, Ricardo, Craig, Honey, Vicky and Linda. Round about 1980, 1981, we moved down to the Aboriginal Community in Redfern. It wasn't called The Block then, it was called the Aboriginal Community. We moved into 52 Eveleigh Street, which is not there now, and the houses were pretty well maintained then, they were livable and we liked living there, living in the community there. The people were good, like they all respected me and Ali, although I was white, I think I was the only white man in the community at that time. We moved round the corner into 1 Vine Street, still in the Aboriginal company. We stayed in Vine Street. Then when they were going to do repairs to that, they moved us into 9 Vine Street. My son and his wife live in that house now. Then as the years went by, the houses started to deteriorate, the Housing Company wouldn't restore them and they gradually went to ruin.

The Block, I think that was the media's name for it. They used to print headlines of bad things on The Block but they'd never print anything about the good things. They were racist against Aboriginal people, that's my opinion of the media. There are a lot of grassroots people still here, left in the community, who are good people.

My children were happy. My boys all played rugby league for the Redfern All Blacks. The girls, Vicky and Linda, they played netball and it was good to go and watch them play. We used to look forward to the weekends for the sport. We used to have some good barbecues up at the park at the top there sometimes, you know get together and talk, it used to be a good thing.

Les Reid he was a great friend of my boys, Craig especially. His mother, from Bathurst or somewhere out west, disowned him and we took him in, more or less. He always tells everybody that me and Ali are his mother and father like, real proud-like. He is a good boy. He is out at Cowra now.

Even today when all me kids are married and got children of their own, we still have family Christmas parties, but we usually hold them down at The Settlement down in Edward Street, not far from the Community. Oh yes we have good times, good family get togethers, bring a few friends too and make it one big happy party.

All my sons are working. Two of them live on The Block now, all the others have moved out. They've got jobs. One works in Redfern RSL and the other one works with the Sydney City Council, has been there for many years. I work down in The Settlement where all the Aboriginal kids go of an evening after school. I do the cleaning there, and a bit of maintenance.

We have twenty-three grandchildren and one great grandchild. While I have been speaking here memories have come back of our kids growing up on The Block and how well they have come through it all.

Ningenah Sam Hookey

Ningenah, grew up on The Block in the 1980s and remembers his grandmother who used to live in 98 Eveleigh Street. He talks about growing up with the community spirit on The Block.



27 March 2002

My grandma moved out of Cowra, she didn't want to be married to one of her own people. She moved from the country and she was like a gypsy. She first stayed in Taree, then Erskineville. When I came she always lived in 98 Eveleigh Street. People from all different country towns live here. There's Hookeys, Smith, Sessmans, old Jay Moneysett, Slaters. My Aunty Kay, she and my other Aunty Pat who passed away, they both lived in Redfern. We ended up moving just up to Rawson Street, we had a house next to Mrs McCarthy, Bob McCarthy's mum. My Uncle Dicko and Freddy Bryan lived in the church next to Father Ted's.

It was nice and peaceful round about the 1980s. There wasn't much drugs, nobody ever brought out drugs like they do today. 1992, 1993 that started opening up. Everybody would go out and party on, go to the pub, have a nice night out, have odds and ends of little fights, shake hands, sit down and be sociable. No police. It wasn't like it is today, police harassing us. Then we could walk from here to Town Hall and the older people used to go for walks around The Block.

The kids we've got to protect them because they have never seen the good side of Redfern. Everyone says Redfern's bad but it is not bad. We had all our houses up, we had dentists, coffee shops, fruit stands, we had a pizza shop, we had hock shops. I had heaps of friends from church and Black Theatre and living here.

The Black Theatre was a place made up of black sheep. No matter what state you came from or what country town you came from, there was one black sheep from that town. I used to dance up when I was going to school. We used to have dance classes upstairs while they were drinking downstairs and singing along. They didn't bother us, they were all just our family and they were harmless. We would rather sit down there and listen to them rather than go up and dance because it was more relaxing and comfortable. I used to think of them as my big family.

You are very good with young children and you are also very respectful of the elders, you look after them. Where do you get that from?

I got that from my grandparents. They always taught me always to look up to your elders, respect them and look after the younger ones because they are the next generation and they will be looking after you. You respect them and a couple of years along the track, they will be looking after me.

The most enjoyable thing I like is when everyone just got their guitars out, all the old people, just sat down and just sang songs and enjoyed themselves. Even people older than me they were sitting down, they had grown, and just listen to the music and singing along. If they didn't know the song, they'd just tap their feet and just enjoy themselves. It was just harmony.

We had heaps of fires in the winter, sitting around. When other people came from different towns they said they couldn't believe we had a fire right in the middle, wouldn't we get in trouble. I said, 'Hey look, this is our mission. It is like your mission. You build a fire on your mission, we'll build a fire on our mission. A lot of people did spin out and say they had never ever seen this in the city, a fire right near the city.

What do you think about when you sit down and look at the fire?

It brings back memories of all the people I grew up and was reared with. People have passed away over the years. Big Uncle Fred, Uncle Tommy, Uncle Stan, Daphne, it just keeps going on and on. Wayne. I was only young and they all treated me as their son. I was the youngest out of the lot of

them then. Sharon Chiller, do you know Joe Bonham, his girl friend. The Black Theatre and the church people. She was about twenty-three and I was about nineteen, twenty. She was the youngest girl and I was the youngest boy and we got treated like their own. We had great-aunties, great-uncles, nannies, poppies, mums and dads. We loved them and respected them and they showed us that they loved us and respected us too. I might have my ups and downs and I talk and I cry to the brothers. If I'm down and out and I go and ask for advice because they are older than me and they've always said if I ever need advice, just come and ask.

The younger generation is asking me for advice now because, like they say, they all look up to me as a big leader and respect me. I am thankful I've got a gift like that and I can talk to them. It doesn't matter if they are on drugs or drunk, but at least I've got the time to sit down and just have a talk. I thought that is more comfy than just saying I don't want to have anything to do with it and just walking away from it. We can just sit down here. With teenagers, it is better to calm them down rather than they just walk round the corner. The main thing is you have five or ten minutes. It makes me feel happy and makes them feel a whole lot prouder of themselves. They say, "If Uncle [so-and-so] can do it, why can't we do it?"

All they need is a bit of TLC [tender loving care] like we got. We had a lot of that, because there were only two of us young people, me and Sharon, compared to the kids today, there's about sixty-seven of them, who don't even get a quarter of what we got. It is very sad. That is probably why I am so energetic because the kids keep me going and I think that is a really strong part of my life anyway. Without them I think I would already have been dead by now.

There are a lot of elderly women coming into the top of The Block in the last few weeks.

They are getting a bit lonely and they want to be back with their family. We all grew up together and have lived in one big whole mob. You can't take it away from all of us because we all are just one family, even though we lost a lot on the way. We still have a lot who have got standing, that is why we all get together when they come down.

They have all got houses but I don't think they are comfortable, they miss the freedom. They see us squat around and I think it makes them feel, 'That's what I used to do. I used to be like them young fellows. I used to squat here.' In a way it is good for them because they feel more comfortable, more relaxed. If they didn't, they'd be home in their houses. Plus we look after them too. We rug them up and we do everything, clean up, help them out.

We all grew up as one. That is the best part about it we've never broken that bond and I don't think we will ever break it.

You are very close, I can see that. You are very, very close. It is like one big family, isn't it up there? It is very precious. Nobody can break that. You are very lucky because in a white world there are really more people who are much more lonely than the elders here. They are much more lonely because they don't have that sense of family.

We have always grown up with them. Not only all of us. We have white friends, we have all different races in our families. The Black Theatre was all about inviting people in to our circle because we were all black sheep, it doesn't matter if you are white, black, Chinese, you are the odd one out of the family. Like a mystery to some. Always up to mischief. We have had white people, Chinese people and Islanders and all that. We are all the same.

So you sat down and you decided that you would welcome anyone. Did you have to make rules?

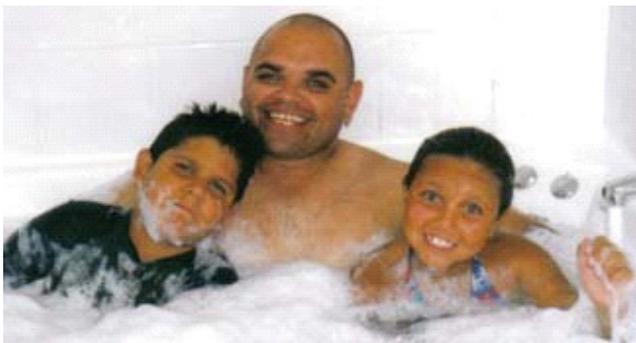
No. Open arms. Someone would ring someone and say, 'Look my friend has got nowhere to stay', and that's it, he is a part of the family. He leaves whenever he wants to leave, but most of them don't leave because we are too close. We get too close and it is just hard to leave each other.

Were there any leaders? Was there a leader there among you?

Uncle Max, Aunty Judy, Aunty Eunice, Uncle Merv. All the elders. What they said went because they were all older than us and we all just followed because we all had respect for each other. Like certain places. Very organised. God bless them all because they are all marvellous. They always look after us. No matter where we sleep, no matter what we do, they will always be our family.

PAUL MORRIS

Paul Morris is originally from Kempsey. He is a proud father of three children, Paul, Jordan and Brittany. Born in 1970? he has been coming to The Block since he was a kid and is thirty-two this year.



15 April 2002

I grew up in Kempsey and I always visited here, my family is here, my father's people are here. My grandmother is Joyce Ingram. I moved down here at the end of 1986 to look for work and play rugby league; just looking for a different side of life than country life. Yes it was mainly to look for work. When I came to Redfern it opened my eyes to a lot of things, meeting people like Max Silva and Kevin Smith and Shane Phillips, people who are a different type of person to people you'd meet in your home town in the country. It just opened my eyes to a lot of things. A bit more community-focused I suppose. I saw another side of life. So I came down more or less to escape the country and find work and sort of improve myself in a lot of areas. Kempsey and Redfern they've got a lot of strong connections from a lot of families. I always in my head pictured the Block, when I was younger; a place to party, a place to play football and meet other people.

Outside of my children, probably one of the biggest turning points in my life was being at the 1988 march when Aboriginal people from all over Australia, and a lot of non-Aboriginal people, came to Redfern and we marched into the city. That was a real feeling of togetherness. That really gave me something I had never had before. It gave me spirit, I suppose you could call it that, or belief in my own people. I think we could achieve something if people focus on everyone as a whole.

It is a haven for all Aboriginal people. At the same time a lot of Aboriginal people are scared to come here because of the images they see on TV. But to me this is home. When I first came here there were a lot of different communities here from all over the place. Now there is what you could say is a second generation of people here. Everyone knows one another now, and there is a bit more closeness in some areas. But at the same time there is a lot of separation too. I mean everyone is welcome here.

Redfern, how can you describe it? I feel safer here than I would anywhere in Sydney. At times there is a real sense of community when there is trouble. The experiences I had here I wouldn't change them, especially a lot of the community stuff. The march I was talking about earlier and the football and the work I've done in the community-based organisations. Just the friendship that is here at times.

It is like all other Aboriginal communities, missions and what not, people grow up somewhere like here in Redfern, they get educated, they get a good job and they move away. Instead of running from their problem they should stay here and generate more interest in what they do for the younger kids, give the kids something to look up to and be proud of. Try to change the community. Aboriginal people have got to start thinking laterally, start thinking twenty and thirty years down the track where their community is going to be, otherwise we will continually be going through these cycles and have nothing. It is not community-focused any more and I don't blame them in many instances. You've got all these community-based organisations that are there to do a specific job but they cannot do it alone, they've got to do it all together, a co-ordinated effort from everywhere. People in twenty years time will look back and say they should have done this, should have done that. Now is the time to change, not wait until something happens.

We've got to educate our kids more. That sort of plays a major part in my thinking. At the same time I have got to lead by example too, in some areas. By not going out drinking and not smoking cigarettes and not smoking 'yarndy'. It starts with the individual, then family groups and the community. It has got to change.

Redfern is about much more than just this. I am sure in the late 1960s and early 1970s when people first started coming here if they thought it was going to be like this thirty years down the track they would have made a change. People want to think another thirty years down the track, what's it going to be like then. People have got to make changes, they've got to make sacrifices. There are people that bring drugs and trouble to this community a lot, and people have got to stand up and get rid of them, move them out or straighten them up or it's never going to change. At the same time Redfern is a good place and hopefully this is just sort of a phase it is going through, hopefully things will change.

The Block won't die? I don't think it will but I've got a feeling, just like everything, they will try to split the community up. They've already done that in parts. You've got your community people who live in the area and you've got the people who are coming to work, they've all got their own opinions and they are entitled to them.

Aboriginal people should be more out in the open, straight up with one another and decide their own future instead having people in the background dictating to them.

There is just a lot of healing to be done. You can't point in one area and say this is the problem, you've got to look at things holistically. It is going to take years. It has taken years to get to this point, it is going to take years to change it. But as long as we are moving in the right direction and people start standing up and force the change, start forcing the issues, I am sure we will head in the right direction. A lot of the times people ignore our younger people, not educating them properly, getting them involved in community issues. I feel that more people should be involved and a lot of people should be involved in decision-making.

We've got our rugby league team still here, still surviving, Redfern All Blacks. We've got the CDEP, that is the Work for the Dole Scheme. I haven't been involved with them for a long time, but they clean the place up and make it look a bit respectable. Appearance does count for a lot and it is good that people do get out and start cleaning the place up. We've got The Settlement for the kids, there are a lot of educational programs down there. We've got Tony Mundine's gym, there's a bit of resurgence there. With Anthony Mundine training there, it has picked up a lot.

When I first came down here Redfern represented a lot of hope, like ambition, not just with work but with sport and community. It has been known around here. I don't know if Aboriginal people are supposed to have ambition the same as non-Aboriginal people, but I've always had my goals. You know to own a car, a house and what not. Redfern represented a different way of life.

When I look back on it now a lot of good sportsmen have come through here. A lot of strong leaders. Today you look at it and you don't see any of that. It is sad but it is true. People can't keep avoiding the issues, we have to stand up and start to make changes. I believe we can go back to what Redfern used to be, it is just going to take a while. It is going to take a lot of people to stick their necks out and force change. It is just like that old saying, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. Now we've got to drag that horse to the water and make him drink. We can't just let things cruise the way they are. People have got to start standing up.

Me saying all this, I'm not completely innocent of contributing. I went through my earlier years and I was just like everyone else. It has just taken me a long time to wake up. When people took me under their wing that's when I really started to change, when I could see other people did care. Outside of my family too. That sort of made me wake up and think these people do care about me. That's when I really started changing. I went to university and I've got a Grad. Dip. now. I've got a good job. In some ways it is good to be seen as a role model, but I don't want that to burden me, not yet. At the moment I feel I just need to work to get myself financially set before I can turn around and start helping others.

It is a shell of what it used to be. When I looked at The Block I didn't really look at the buildings, I just looked at the people who were there, that sort of made it more for me. It was good because you didn't know everyone and it was good to get out and meet everyone. There were always people coming and going and it was good to meet people from other areas. When you travelled away, you always knew someone in that town and they would welcome you to their place. That was a good thing about the Block in the earlier days.

The funniest person on the Block is my grandma [Joyce Ingram]. As old as she is she will still stand there and argue with any one and the things that come out of her mouth you could fall over laughing. I went to a meeting one day and she got into an argument with this lady and there were swear words flying everywhere. I couldn't believe it of my grandmother. She is probably the strongest woman I know, or person. She would sum up everything, she's funny. She has done a lot around here for a lot of people. People that no one wants anything to do with. She has probably been the biggest influence on me.

People like her and Ali Golding and a few of the other people around The Block, they represent the hope that they have around here. People like Daniel and a few of the younger people that are going places, that don't leave The Block, they are the ones that represent hope and give people a bit more ambition. Alex Tui, even though he is not an Aboriginal, we own him as our own and he represents a lot of hope around here for the kids and for the adults, the men and the women.

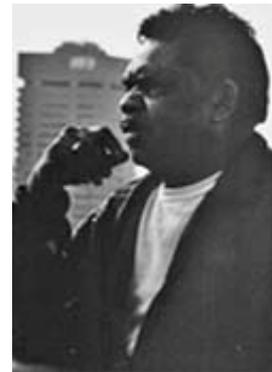
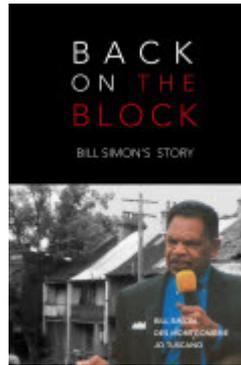
I don't want to brag because she is my grandmother, but I would say she represents everything about The Block. She looks after the people no one wants anything to do with, even her own family. She has always got a kind word to say to people. I say you would call her a bit of a counsellor around here. That's the thing that makes them stand out, that they always find that goodness in the worst possible situation and that makes them really stand out. They are always concentrating on the good and not the bad, and that is what makes them stand out in my mind. At the same time they're not perfect either. I am sure a lot of people will try to tell you that too.

Redfern represented a lot of hope for some people and that hope might come back, but it is going to take a lot of hard work and a lot of money and a lot of educating people. You could name just about everything I would say. I work at Prince Alfred Hospital now, and every student I get under me I always bring them to The Block. I always give them a first hand look at what Aboriginal people go through in this area. I have never ever been ashamed of The Block and what's happened here, but most of the things, I see it for what it is.

BILL SIMON

Pastor Bill Simon lives on the Block and ministers to the community there. He comes from the 'Stolen Generation' and had been in prison himself in his younger days. He shares his early memories of the Block and what transformed him.

26 March 2002



I'm one of the stolen generation. I came in here to find most of my people. I especially came in here to find my mum, Grace Simon, known now as Grace Dundas.

I was around about sixteen, seventeen, when I first came into the Block here. Of course it was a lot different then to what it is today, especially going into The Empress [an Aboriginal local hotel] and other places like that. There were so many two-up schools around here and for us as kids even going to smoke was pretty bad, let alone drink. We had our elders here and everybody took notice of what the elders said to them and that's how we lived our life. I remember at one stage we used to have a coffee shop near the station, it used to be called Snowy's [a caravan setup that sold hamburgers and pies] and all of us, when The Empress had finished, we'd all go there and get something to eat, and then come back home down here. I lived with my uncle, Noel Jackson, Noel Saunders, Jackson was his nickname, him and Auntie Elsie, my dad's first cousin. They lived down Eveleigh Street.

The Block here is Aboriginal land and they feel at home on their own land, whereas the rest of us, the majority of Australia, they can't do that. There are so many missions around Australia that the white man has put us on. But this is central to all indigenous people, to all the Aboriginal people, to all the Kooris, they know this is their home here. We've got our own housing company here and things like that. We just like to live out our life here to the best of our ability.

Now today we have a lot of things, situations, that are going on today. The police coming in trying to find out what they can do with the Block. A lot of the elders around here, most of them have already been through the hard situations, through the years and the years and the years of fighting the poverty and fighting with the police. The Christians have tried to come in and put their bit in, tried to help and all that, but there are so many different kinds of Christians here now. We've got the Seventh Day Adventist, we've got the Pentecostals, we've got the Uniting, we've got the Catholic, we've got the Anglicans, we've got the Presbyterian. They're all coming in thinking that they know what is best for the Aboriginal people here. It is a bit confusing for the people that stay here.

I used to have my house full up with seventeen or eighteen kids, runaways, from Queensland, Melbourne, Brisbane. My son was like a magnet. All these young blokes seemed to follow him everywhere and he'd bring them all home and ask if they could stay there. I'd always have a big pot of soup on my stove, down at 65 Eveleigh Street, so when they came in they had something to eat.

I've had lots of complaints, elders have come up and said their son has done this, their son has done that ... Once these addictions get a hold of anybody's life, it goes. I know through personal experience as being one of the stolen generation of all the hurt and heartache that was in my heart, because I blamed my mother for letting the white man take me away to the boy's home. I didn't know in my little mind growing up, eight or nine years of age with my three little brothers with me when the police and the welfare came and they grabbed us and I cried out to mum for help, I didn't know that she couldn't stand to see us being taken away from her and how much the pain and hurt would have been on the mother's side. I didn't know all that. I'm only a little boy and I'm crying out for my mother.

Now I spent a long time in the homes and all that time I never ever got a visit from my family. The staff told us that they didn't love us, they didn't want us. We believed that. Every day they told us that so we believed them. They also told our families that they weren't allowed to come and visit us. So we were believing them because we never ever got a visit from our families. All the time being told this everyday for nine years something builds up in there.

The government haven't got any idea what they have done to the Aboriginal people when they've taken them away, the young people. How much disruption they've caused in a family. They haven't got any idea about it. They don't know that saying sorry is going to start a healing in this land, in this nation, because Aboriginal people are family oriented. You do one thing wrong against one of them, you offend the whole nation. So saying an apology to one part of it, it might only be five per cent, who knows how many were taken, as long as they apologise to them, that means they are apologising to the whole nation, the Aboriginal nation, of Australia. Then the healing can start to take place.

Now they sit out there and they do this and they do that and they know that I'm here and I don't do that, what they're doing. That's letting my light shine, you see. They come here and I give out a soup kitchen to them. I give them curried soup and things like that every Tuesday. Actually I've got my pot on now, I'll be putting it on later on. I give them a feed. They love it. They come and have a feed, have some bread and that. If any of them lets a swear word out someone else will always say, 'Don't swear with the pastor here.' I get that kind of respect. So I'm letting my light shine in that area.

There is so much hurt, in our people there is so much hurt, with the police coming down here all the time, it is only adding more and more pressure to them. So my aim in life is to see that burden and lift it off my people. Not only here, but I believe this is going to be a landmark.

When I was taken away I was given a number and I was only a little kid, so were my three little brothers. We were given a number and we were known as inmates. I went to Canberra and I found out what the term for us, the stolen generation, was in them days and it was inmates and we were given a number. My number was thirty-three and I was known as thirty-three in the homes all the time I was there. When I left the home I went down to Bankstown and at eighteen years of age I cracked a window, a shop window, a big shop window. I went to court and I ended up in Long Bay Gaol and I was eighteen. When you go to Long Bay Gaol you are given a number. Do you know what my number was? Thirty-three. You are never taken off the list. Wherever I went in the gaols my number was always thirty-three. I've done five years in gaol and nine years in a boys' home, and three years in gaol before I became a Christian, and five years in gaol after I became a Christian. We grew up being prisoners. It was the government of that day, of that time.

The main reason I suppose we are all here is, is we are all caught up in this little world here, because this is where it all started. When Cook came over here, the Aboriginal people got hoodwinked and that's still going on with the government today. They say they will do this and they'll do that. Where has all the honesty gone? It's gone out the window, hasn't it? It has got to start with our people, with our own people because it is our own people that are getting hurt and it is our own people that are dying. These things we need to get together. If we can all centre in on one.

Times have changed a lot here on The Block, you know. People will tell you about all the bad things, that's what makes news, and books and all that. People need to hear the good things that happen here as well. Now there are a lot of good things that happen here. Up at the top up here Tony Mundine, his electricity needed to be fixed up. I was up there painting and this young guy came in to fix up the electricity. He was a bit frightened, and I sort of quietened him down and said, 'Just keep on doing what you are doing and don't worry about outside there.' I just told him my testimony, how I became born again, how I became a Christian and all that and how all fear was taken away from me. It must have got to him and I asked him would he like to receive Jesus into his heart, and he said yes. Now he went back over to North Sydney to a church over there and he told them that he came all the way down to Eveleigh Street here, and he came down here and he received Christ Jesus into his heart and became a Christian. That all happened here, you see. People don't even know about that. They don't want to hear stories like that, good stories that happen here.

I think the quicker we can pull together for the good of the people on the Block, the better it will be. In other words for the good of the nation because the whole of the nation is riding on the Block. The Aboriginal nation is riding on the Block. What happens here will be not only for people on the Block but will be for the nation itself because people are judging us, Aboriginal people, by what is happening on The Block. So the quicker we get the Block cleaned up, the better for everyone.

Back to the Block was written with Des Montgomerie and Jo Tuscano was released in 2009.

What Redfern means to people, what it represents

Bob and Kaye Bellear

This was Bob's principle, that they owned land in the middle of the biggest city in the country. He wanted to secure a fairly substantial piece of land that would house Aboriginal people in the middle of Sydney, so that Aboriginal people would always be there and the rest of the community had to acknowledge that this land was freehold land, owned by the Aboriginal community. It was the first land owned freehold in Australia, owned by an Aboriginal community organisation. They still own it and that to me is a really, really important thing. But the thing that Bob really pushed the hardest was that there had to be really good accommodation for homeless people.

Sonya Brindle

All roads lead to Redfern, if you're black.

Col Davis

It's the place we can meet without any discrimination, and all that goes with it. We all go there to see who is in town. It's how some of us met our dads and mums, and you get to meet the grandkids coming up.

Sharon Hickey

It was called 'Community'. It was a gathering place. If people came to the city, they would go down and visit my Aunty Joyce. They knew the spot to go to, it was like a gathering place, a meeting place. People walked through and out all the time and that is what you loved.

Ningenah – Sam Hookey

It was nice and peaceful round about the 1980s. Everyone just got their guitars out, just sat down and sang songs and enjoyed themselves. It was just harmony. We had heaps of fires in the winter, sitting around. We all grew up together and have lived in one big whole mob. You can't take it away from all of us because we all are just one family, even though we lost a lot on the way. We all grew up as one. That is the best part about it. We've never broken that bond and I don't think we will ever break it. Open arms. Someone would ring someone and say, 'Look my friend has got nowhere to stay', and that's it, he is a part of the family. He leaves whenever he wants to leave, but most of them don't leave because we are too close. We get too close and it is just hard to leave each other.

Auntie Joyce Ingram

It was a community affair. It was a Koori place and we felt really at home. It was a gathering place for the Aboriginal people. It still is, because it is like Mother Earth calling us back on to this land, if it is only just to sit and reminisce. I just sit still, for what reason I don't know, but it is a gathering place for Kooris.

I really believe that if this place was given new blood, as a person's body would be given new blood, it would come to life again. I believe by having houses here, homes for the people, not apartments but homes that they

can be proud, our children, future generations will be happy and walk with a little bit of pride and dignity . I am living for that day.

Lesley Franks

For me the block in Redfern will always be a special place. I would even go so far as calling it a sacred site for all blackfullas. For me its significance is that it is the place where my dad was stolen (Hugo St) and it is also the place where he found out where his family was again. It has always been a haven for all blacks to share and care together. Me and my family lived on the block in the 80s when there were many families and lots of kids around. It was the safest place for blacks to live and we always remember those times as the happiest. The friendships my kids made are still strong. It didn't matter where you came from. If you were a true blue black fulla you were right. The community spirit was just beautiful. They can't get rid of the block. Redfern for life.

Paul Morris

When I came to Redfern it opened my eyes to a lot of things, meeting people like Max Silva and Kevin Smith and Shane Phillips. A bit more community-focused. I saw another side of life. I always in my head pictured the Block, when I was younger; a place to party, a place to play football and meet other people. Redfern represented a lot of hope, like ambition, not just with work but with sport and community.

One of the biggest turning points in my life was being at the 1988 march when Aboriginal people from all over Australia, and a lot of non-Aboriginal people, came to Redfern and we marched into the city. That was a real feeling of togetherness. That really gave me something I had never had before. It gave me spirit, I suppose you could call it that, or belief in my own people. It is a haven for all Aboriginal people. To me this is home. When I first came here there were a lot of different communities here from all over the place. Now there is what you could say is a second generation of people here. Everyone knows one another now. Everyone is welcome here.

Redfern, how can you describe it? I feel safer here than I would anywhere in Sydney. The experiences I had here I wouldn't change them, especially a lot of the community stuff. The march, the football and the work I've done in the community-based organisations. Just the friendship that is here. A lot of good sportsmen have come through here. A lot of strong leaders.

Mick Mundine

When I first came to Sydney, I used to see all the early activists out there marching and I would think, 'What are they doing? But once you are working all the days and see the injustice that the government is doing to our people, it just make you want to stand up and fight for justice with all your heart and soul and strength. Maybe we were too set in that circle of it, like 'happy and caring and sharing'. We didn't realise that the other vicious side of the thing was creeping in slowly.

We will change the image of this place, and I believe it is like that burning city - out of the ashes comes that phoenix bird. Our main vision, our main goal, is to make sure that we build this for the next generation, pave the way, set the platform. So I think we have got a future, you know, it is going to be a beautiful future for our people, and it is going to happen, trust me, it is going to happen.

Rhubee Neale

[Rhubee is an Anmatyerre-Arrernte educator and singer/songwriter who moved from Alice Springs to Redfern six years ago.] This is home. Being away from the Northern Territory, my heart is always back there, but Redfern grounds me, anchors me. It helps me to cope in a big city; I know I've always got a safe place, a haven, where I can be me. The community welcomes me, and supports me in pursuing my childhood dream to sing. My music has blossomed here. Wherever I go, whatever I do, I hold Redfern dear in my heart, and I know it will be always there to get back to.

Lily Shearer *2016 archive project* <http://www.ifyouseesomethingsaysomething.net/2016%20interviews.htm>

I like that I know lots of people here, that you can walk through The Block and talk to people and there are blackfellas from all over Australia – it's like an extended family. I have my great niece here with me today and she is playing in the park and now she has wandered across the road and I don't have to worry because she is talking to an uncle and aunty. I couldn't do that if I was in the city, it would be too dangerous.

Bill Simon

The Block here is Aboriginal land and they feel at home on their own land. This is central to all indigenous people, to all the Aboriginal people, to all the Kooris, they know this is their home here. One reason I suppose we are all here is, is we are all caught up in this little world here, because this is where it all started. It has got to start with our people, with our own people because it is our own people that are getting hurt. We need to get together. If we can all centre in on one, I think the quicker we can pull together for the good of the people on the Block, the better it will be. What happens here will be not only for people on the Block but will be for the nation itself because people are judging us, Aboriginal people, by what is happening on The Block. So the quicker we get the Block cleaned up, the better for everyone.



Audio highlight

The Gathering Ground 2006

Erica Vowles from 2SER 107.3FM talked to Aletha Penrith, Karen Therese, Lily Shearer & Sarah Simon for the Wire.



Organisations and enterprises

1940s Redfern All Blacks

In the Depression in the 1930s the only uniforms available were 'black shorts and black socks'. With the wartime influx of Aboriginal people into Redfern, the club then did become 'all black'.

1963 -1973 -1977 Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs

FAA was at 810 George Street until 1973, when it moved to bigger premises in 61 Regent Street . The many people moving to the city were supported politically, culturally and socially. Having a support network maintained a sense of community.

1971 Aboriginal Legal Service

The establishment of Australia's first free-shop front legal aid at 142 Regent Street created a surge of confidence throughout the increasingly concerned Aboriginal community. Professor J. H. Wooten (UNSW) provided support, with Eddie Neuman and Peter Tobin. For the first time people were being represented in courts. (Redfern Legal Service opened in 1977.)

1971 Aboriginal Medical Service

The next logical development was the initial idea of Gordon Briscoe, ALS field officer. It was supported by FCAATSI's Dulcie Flower and Shirley Smith. Sally Gould was the first Aboriginal registered nurse at 171 Regent Street. Dr Naomi Mayers started with AMS in 1972 and has been CEO for many years.

1972 Tent Embassy

Following the anti-apartheid campaign during the Springbok tour in 1971 the organisers continued to meet. When Prime Minister McMahon insensitively delivered his government's policy delaying land rights on 25th January, Aboriginal leaders in Sydney planned an overnight journey. Four of them set up the next morning on the lawns of Parliament House.

1972 - 1977 Black Theatre

A house was rented at 181 Regent Street for the first two years, then a warehouse at 27-33 Cope Street.. Extensive workshops included writing, silk screening, printing, photography, music, dance and children's workshops. The drama department was run by Bob Maza. Bryan Syron continued running classes. Bettie Fisher was a manager.

1973 The Aboriginal Housing Company

The AHC was the first community housing provider in Australia. It formed in direct response to the widespread discrimination Aboriginal people experienced in the private rental market.

1973 Murawina Childcare Centre

Murawina operated for many years in Eveleigh Street. They moved to the former Redfern Public School in 2003

1973



THE METROPOLITAN LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Founding members included Allen Madden, Jenny Munro and Sol Bellar. www.metrolalc.org.au

1975 Aboriginal Children's Service

Formed by Jenny Munro and Isobel Coe, concerned about children being removed from their families to whites or Christian charities. Offices opened in Wagga, Cowra and St Marys. DoCS funding was stopped in 2008.

Early 70s The Organisation for Aboriginal Unity [OAU] Members from all organisations, and individuals.

1979 Aboriginal Dance Theatre Redfern [ADTR]

Formed by Christine Donnelly directly behind the Black Theatre and Radio Redfern sites.

1980 Aboriginal People's Gallery set up by Maureen Watson in Regent Street

1981 Radio broadcasting

Maureen Watson and son, TIGA Bayles started broadcasting on Radio Skid Row and 2SER.

1984 - 1991 Radio Redfern

They set up in Cope Street, next to the Black Theatre, so that Redfern people could become more involved.

1984 Eora Centre

Bob Merritt was prime mover in setting up the centre for visual and performing arts in 199 Regent Street, operating as a TAFE college. Artist Gordon Syron, actors Athol Compton & Justine Saunders, and producer George Ogilvie joined the staff.

1984 – 2007 Streetwise Comics

Elouera Gym 🧘🧘 Tony Mundine opened the gym in the mid 80s.

1987 Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative

Formed by ten Sydney-based Aboriginal artists at 199 Cleveland Street. Some time between 1991 and 1995 they moved to 27 Abercrombie St, Chippendale, before moving to their current home in Leichhardt.

1988 Radio Redfern sows seeds for Koori Radio

Radio Redfern informed and educated the public about Aboriginal perspective and responses to the Commonwealth Games, and the bicentennial protest. This inspired people to work towards setting up Koori Radio to provide Sydney's Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community with a permanent voice.

1991 RAC Redfern Aboriginal Corporation <http://www.redfernaboriginalcorporation.com.au>

The CDEP program was abolished by government in 2006, so RAC now tailors training programs to Aboriginal jobseekers. Some of the CDEP programs are continuing as they offer opportunity for community contribution.

1992 Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Corporation Women's Centre

Evolved from the South Sydney Women's Centre. Drop-in, advocacy & liaison, family support, grief & loss support, anti-violence support group, accommodation & referral.

1993 Gadigal Information Service

Cathy Craigie and Matthew Cooke established a community based media, arts and information service. They started broadcasting on Radio Skid Row, and leased the upper level of a terrace house on the corner of Cleveland and Edwards Streets. Close to the Block, it remained an important drop-in and information centre.

1994 Blackfella Films & The Black Book

Formed by Rachel Perkins and Michael Riley. Rachel now works with Darren Dale. Film studio at Redfern.

1996 Wyanga Aboriginal Aged Care Program

Founded by Sylvia Scott and Mary (Megs) Silva. The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC), which is an Australian Government Statutory Authority, purchased and refurbished the property in Waterloo on behalf of Wyanga.

1998 Gamarada Montessori playgroup and learning centre

Initially set up at the Elouera Community Centre, in 2000 moved to Redfern Public School. A program was also provided at Alexandria Park Public School for some time. In 2006 to Bourke Street Public School.

1999 Tribal Warrior Association

Founded by Daniel Ariel, managed by Shane Phillips. The Association purchased a pearling lugger and commenced training young Aboriginal people to attain commercial qualifications, acquiring Deerubbin in 2001.

2000 Pemulwuy Project

The AHC put in place redevelopment plans for the Block. Slow going due to some government opposition.

2001 Koori Radio 93.7FM

Gadigal Information Service was given a full-time broadcasting licence after six years. When the Chippendale terrace was sold, they used Marrickville's old hospital premises in Lilydale St, moving back to Redfern in 2008.

1878 Redfern Public School Closure in 2002 disappointed the community.

2003 ICAMPA Inner City Aboriginal Multipurpose Association

2003 REDWatch Monitors government involvement and media coverage, pushing for outcomes for community.

2004 Blackout violence

2004 Lights Camera Action Agency for Aboriginal people in film, television and print.

2004 Redfern Community Centre

RRR, RAC, the Settlement and Renew lobbied from 1998 for community use of the Wilson Bros site.

2004 Recording studio (now Studio RCC) at Redfern Community Centre

Engages with local developing artists and musicians to develop skills and record. See Music section for CDs.

2005 Redfern Aboriginal Authority [RAA] Reformed from OAU, headed by Sol Bellear.

2005 Short Black Films

2005 Wyanga Aboriginal Aged Care Program. Expanded to 35 Cope Street, (107A Regent St ?)

Quality home-based care: help with meals, cleaning, maintenance, transport, community gatherings, outings and health awareness programs.

2006 Babana Men's Group

2006 Midnight basketball

Australia's first Midnight Basketball program was launched in Redfern / Waterloo. Open to all local people 12 to 18 years. During tournament season, matches are played on a Saturday night between 7.30pm and midnight.

2006 Yaama Dhiyaan

Catering service, function centre & hospitality training school run by Aunty Beryl Van-Oploo, with RWA support.

2007 A.D.A. Cafe

Originally the Survival Espresso Bar, then the Bush Berri Cafe, Sue and Collin Vincent took over in 2008.

2007 Aboriginal Rights Coalition

Formed as a response to the Northern Territory intervention, campaigning for human rights.

2007 Coloured Digger Project

Led by Ray Minniecon. ANZAC Day march and service, art exhibition, campaign for Sydney memorial.

2007 Koori Collection at Waterloo Public Library

2007 Moogahlin Performing Arts

2008 All Blacks Sports Club

Grew out of Redfern All Blacks Football team as many of the original players played footy together and then decided to have a go at basketball. It materialised as one basketball team in mid 2008 and then grew to seven teams by season 3. The youngest age group is under 10s; some were as young as 5.

2008 Gadigal Music

When Koori Radio moved into the rebuilt Black Theatre and Radio Redfern site, they launched a recording label.

2008 Keeping place

Committee / support group formed for Gordon & Elaine Syron to sell their art /photo collections.

2008 Redfern Records

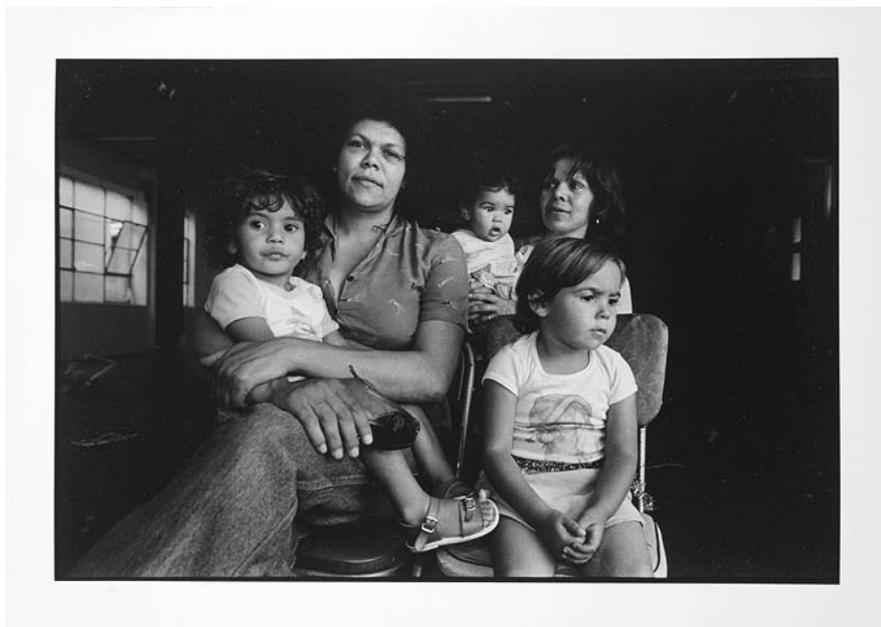
Record label launched in 2007, moved to 145 Regent Street in 2008.

Dates needed for

- Auntie Polly Smith Centre
- Mac Silva men's hostel, Waterloo
- Sorry Day committee

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN'S SERVICE

Sisters, Jenny Munro and Isobel Coe started the Children's Service.
Bev Coe now runs it.



Isobel Coe, Children's Services, Redfern, 1981 [photographed by Penny Tweedie]

<http://image.sl.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/ebindshow.pl?doc=pxa465/a1346;seq=6>

ABORIGINAL HOUSING COMPANY WEBSITE

<http://www.ahc.org.au/>



In 1973 the AHC formed in direct response to the widespread discrimination Aboriginal people experienced in the private rental market. The lack of affordable housing for Redfern's increasing Aboriginal population and general racial discrimination in the private housing market resulted in a group squatting in empty terraces in Louis Street Redfern, in the latter months of 1972. In November that year, police arrested 15 squatters. They were released in the care of Father Ted Kennedy at St Vincent's Church in Redfern. Fr Kennedy housed the gummies in the church hall, but when the number of homeless people living in the church grew to over 50 South Sydney Council exerted great pressure on Fr Kennedy to evict them

Fr Ted Kennedy teamed up with Aboriginal leaders including Bob Bellar and his brother Sol. The Builder Labourers Federation imposed a green ban on the Louis Street site prohibiting the owner from demolishing and redeveloping the houses.

The squatters organised themselves and formed The Aboriginal Housing Company. A grant of \$530,000 from the newly elected Whitlam government allowed the AHC to purchase and restore the first six terrace houses.



When the Fraser Coalition government was elected in 1975, a year later it terminated capital works funding to the project. Without financial assistance the Block descended into disrepair. By the early 1980s the Aboriginal Housing Company had acquired almost half the properties on the Block and with another change of federal government (Hawke/Keating) came renewed support for Redfern's Aboriginal community. In 1994 the last house on the Block was finally owned by the Aboriginal Housing Company.

The AHC has been working on their award winning redevelopment plans since 2000, meeting more than a little opposition. The plans were finally presented on exhibition in 2008, the AHC has responded to the feedback, and they await approval. See the AHC's website for more information.

ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE

© GUWANYI; Stories of the Redfern Aboriginal community.
An exhibition at the Museum of Sydney 21 December 1996 – 4 May 1997

The origins of the Aboriginal Legal Service Ltd. lay in the response of Aboriginal people to the police activities in and around Redfern at the close of the 1960s. In 1970, the police were enforcing an official curfew. This curfew was in existence from 9.30pm onwards and was against Aboriginal people - walking the streets in the inner city suburbs of Redfern, Newtown, Alexandria, and Chippendale. Anyone breaking this curfew was subject to arbitrary detention and arrest. On Thursday and Saturday nights when Aboriginal people congregated at the Clifton and the Empress Hotels, police would on numerous occasions block off the streets of Redfern and indiscriminately arrest individuals, later charged with offences such as drunkenness, offensive behaviour and unseemly words.

These arrests were based upon a piece of repressive, legislation that the Askin State Government had enacted - the Summary Offences Act - which was designed to stop large student groups gathering for demonstrations and remove culturally and racially undesirable people off the streets of Sydney at night.

A group of young Aboriginal people - Gary Williams, Gary Foley, Isabel Coe, Tony Coorey, Bronwyn Penrith, Les Collins, James Wedge, William Craigie and Paul Coe attempted to organise a vigilance group. They spoke at University campuses and trade union groups in an endeavour to raise and highlight the problems. As a result of these talks, a number of young white student lawyers offered to give their time and knowledge on a voluntary basis.

In mid 1970, a Professor of Law, now Supreme Court Judge Hal Wootten, was approached by a law student, Mr Peter Tobin; to attend meetings with this group of Aboriginal people to see what help and advice he could give. Justice Wootten enlisted the aid of a number of prominent lawyers to assist in dealing with, in particular, the police activities around the inner city area.

Justice Wootten, at the end of 1970, drafted a submission on behalf of this body to the then Office of Aboriginal Affairs for funds to set up a full-time storefront legal office. In early 1971 the Office of Aboriginal Affairs provided the newly created Aboriginal Legal Service with a grant to pay for the salary of a full-time solicitor, field officer and secretary. This has grown from one small store-front office in Redfern to cover the whole of the state with regional offices throughout New South Wales.

The Aboriginal Legal Service initiative was repeated in other states of the Commonwealth. Thus, the Aboriginal Legal Service is more than a legal office, it was and still is the embodiment of a generation of Aboriginal people's desire to control their own destiny.

See also [Black Power in Redfern 1968 - 1972 by Gary Foley](#)



Search Picture Australia for photographs <http://www.pictureaustralia.org/> [names needed]

ABORIGINAL MEDICAL CENTRE

© GUWANYI; Stories of the Redfern Aboriginal community. [excerpt]
An exhibition at the Museum of Sydney 21 December 1996 – 4 May 1997

The AMS began in 1971 when a group of concerned Koori people wanted to act against the neglect and racism that Aboriginal people were suffering in mainstream health services. There was chronic disease and little or no bureaucratic will or knowledge to deal with it. Community people, doctors and lawyers who were committed to the Aboriginal struggle for equality, came together on a voluntary basis and operated a clinic in an old shop-front from 4pm to 10pm daily. Finally, after much lobbying and struggle, they received a small grant from the DAA and were able to hire three staff: a doctor, a nursing sister and a field officer, Shirley Smith.

In 1972 they received funds for a coordinator and Naomi Mayers was appointed. It was still a small operation, working on a shoe string budget with an enormous task ahead of it but it had a clear direction and wide spread community support on its side. The organising committee had 33 Aboriginal community people from all over Sydney who gave their time and energy freely as did many doctors. The AMS eventually moved to slightly larger premises at 36 Turner Street, Redfern. These had to be renovated before it could be used as a clinic. Over \$80,000 was raised through community donations and the government met that amount and provided a little more so the building could be converted to house a large clinic and the growing range of health programs.

In their first year of operation they saved the government a massive \$387,000 in costs. Today [1996] services include a Nutrition Program, Aboriginal Health Worker Education Program, Home and Community Care Program, Immunisation Program, Public Health Program, DENTAL Service and the Allawah Hostel.

The AMS has also pioneered the concept of Aboriginal community controlled health care services as the only successful way of improving the health of Aboriginal communities. Our experience in Redfern has proved that Aboriginal people are capable of solving their own problems: if we are given control of the resources and facilities and allowed to do it our way.

TEXT COURTESY OF ABORIGINAL MEDICAL SERVICE

BEHIND THE SCENES



Everyday Brave production stories Jetja Nai Medical Mob - Naomi Mayers

Abridged with permission from Film Australia ©

Naomi Mayers is a determined woman. She has a generous laugh and a strong spirit which comes from her deep family ties to the old Cummeragunja mission.

She's been the CEO of the Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) in Sydney's Redfern for many years. Episode director was Catriona McKenzie.

"Naomi's from Cummeragunja on the border of NSW and Victoria and my mob's from Victoria too. It felt like hanging out with my family. Naomi decided she was going to a school reunion in Shepparton. Her sisters, Geraldine and Beverley came along as well as her cousins, Lois and Thelma. It was like a road trip."

Naomi comes from a strong family. Two brothers married two cousins so the families are very close. As a child, she recalls everyone fruit picking in the orchards on the fruit picking and her early memories are all very positive.

But things took a turn for the worse when her parents split up and Naomi and her sister Beverley were sent to an orphanage. They spent many years away from their family, first at St Aidan's Orphanage in Bendigo then at Abbotsford Convent in Melbourne. Despite the trauma of these experiences, both women look back on those times as character building.

Producer Rod Freedman says, "In the film, Naomi relates some very personal memories. They reveal a lot about Naomi's qualities, like her instinct to oppose racism in every form - if necessary by confrontation! We hadn't scripted any of this, so it really affected the development of the film away from being just a history of the Aboriginal Medical Service. The film now interweaves her personal and professional life in a powerful portrait of a proud woman."

He comments, "Archival footage was particularly important in this film as Catriona filmed the main interview with a bluescreen background and we needed stills and footage to illustrate important times in Naomi's life. Both Catriona and line producer, Isabel Perez, did some great research in finding relevant footage, including the opening of the Aboriginal Medical Service with characteristic commentary that would be unthinkable these days.

Naomi has never differentiated between the political and the personal. As she firmly states, "Aboriginal people have always been the biggest political footballs in this country."

Aboriginal health issues are at the forefront of political wrangling and Naomi's work over the years has seen a humble community-based service rise to being an organisation respected not just in Australia but internationally. Naomi is frequently asked to address conferences overseas and receives international visitors who come to see why the Redfern service works so well for inner-city Aboriginal people.

Despite the recognition of her services with an Order of Australia medal, you'd be wrong to think that Naomi feels she's been successful. Ever a realist, she faces an everyday struggle for funding and recognition of the health issues facing Aboriginal people in Australia. As Naomi says, "It's a constant fight." © Film Australia

<http://www.filmaust.com.au/showcase/8478/default.asp?content=naomi>

ROBERTA SYKES reminisces about MUM SHIRL

Dr Roberta Sykes was born in the 1940s in Townsville, unsure of her origins. In 1971 she moved to Sydney. She worked as Education & Publicity Officer for the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern. Here she reminisces about a dear friend.

Shirley Smith was involved in establishing the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Aboriginal Medical Service, the Black Theatre, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, the Aboriginal Children's service, the Breakfast Program and the Aboriginal Housing Company. She worked with the Aboriginal Medical Service for many years, being the first field officer in 1972. She lived and worked in Redfern throughout the 70s and 80s.



Roberta Sykes



Shirley Smith (Mum Shirl) 1924-1998

Mum Shirl always had a concern for people who had nowhere to sleep. She would run around to make sure they were all right. There are all sorts of background things that I am not sure about, like what triggered off the police oppression against the people who were sleeping in there, whether the developers suddenly got it in their minds. All those buildings belonged to somebody, somebody had been buying them, some big company, with the intention of developing them at some stage but years in the future. Meanwhile there was a shortage of shelter for people in the inner city so people were taking the advantage of going into the boarded buildings because they had nowhere else to go. Then the police started targeting that area to harass people and that's when Mum Shirl and myself and others got involved. At the same time there were other targets of harassment like the Empress Hotel and places like that, where we understood the Riot Squad was being trained there by running in and rounding up blacks and things happening.

Once we started to become involved, they started to get even heavier and they seemed to be, from my perspective, being trained to act without compassion. Since I would say the overwhelming majority of those young white male policeman had never known an Aboriginal person, it wasn't difficult for them to be made afraid, for them to believe all sorts of fantastic things about them.

In the middle of the night, we'd get calls and have to go down there. There were nuns involved and brothers involved from religious orders who came down and joined us. I remember one nun, she used to come down and she was over eighty years old. I had to drive her home a couple of times and she used to get into trouble for getting home at three o'clock in the morning. You know she was running up and down the street trying to take down the numbers of police vehicles and the numbers of police officers. They are supposed to wear them on their collar but they take it off and put it in their pocket so they can't be identified. She was writing them down. Identifying features if she could to show them the policemen who were most flagrantly law breaking. Because of Mum Shirl's very close ties with the people in religious orders, she was the one who mobilised them.

So I knew Mum Shirl through all this time. It is very difficult for me to parcel out that little area of The Block. All these other things were connected with it. She was always concerned about their lives. So it is in the context of those things that The Block occurred rather than The Block stands by itself. I think that needs to be made clear, because otherwise we might think why should she be involved in that. She would have been involved in any area where people weren't even allowed to put their head down and rest. She was also very actively involved in the old building that became the Black Theatre. It is all interconnected, interwoven as people were driven from one place to another. It was like The Block became a last stand for some people.

People had great expectations after the election and the Labor government started looking as if they would actually buy The Block for the people. People started to dream about this as an area where people could live without being molested. I went with Mum Shirl to a police conference. She'd asked the police for a conference and they had agreed because the newspapers were picking up about the violence that the police were perpetrating against the black community on The Block. Then, whilst they agreed to a meeting and Mum Shirl said, 'You must come to this police meeting,' they delayed the meeting for so long, so long that when we got to the meeting we started to talk about the complaints, they said, "That was months ago. Have you got anything

recent?" That was the whole tenor of the meeting, they controlled it. In my own way I thought this was a complete waste of time, but Mum Shirl never thought anything was a waste of time. You know, she would have waited for five years and she would have recited the list of abuses that had occurred just to refresh their minds. But their minds didn't need refreshing, they knew what sort of things had been going on and they had pulled the police back for that period of time to create between when it occurred and when a meeting would be held.

Mum Shirl was a figure that they held in awe. They never regarded her as a human person who had needs. I mean it was people like myself that she was always borrowing money off to pay rent or to pay the electricity bill. I mean I would go there and the electricity would be cut off. At the time, I was a single mother supporting two kids so it really was very difficult for me to spare money to give to Mum Shirl even for her own personal needs. A great deal of the time, it wasn't for her personal needs. She'd come to me with some sad story about how somebody was being evicted and she had got five kids, dee dah, dee dah, dee dah, and hadn't been able to pay the rent. It seemed to me that if I put the money up for that, then in three months time I'd have to do it again, the situation wouldn't improve and the need would just pop again from time to time. So I tried to restrict my financial support of Mum Shirl to Mum Shirl's personal situation because I didn't want to find her sleeping at a bus stop. I mean it got that close so many times.

It was around that time that the South Sydney Council were harassing the Aboriginal Medical Service. I was writing a newsletter for the Aboriginal Medical Service and there is a litany of obstruction by the South Sydney Council. They said, "If you put a medical service here, it will attract Aborigines to the area." As if you could overlook the twenty thousand that lived there, which of course they could and did.

We were there to see what the police did and do whatever we could about it. I mean various of the religious people, and Brother Tom might have been one of them, went in and sat in the houses. A couple of the religious people were arrested in the houses. By that time it was no longer a matter of prising the boards off the windows. You could walk through the doors. But there wasn't anything there and the police could come and arrest people. They arrested one man for sitting on the toilet and they said he was loitering with intent or something, a ridiculous, ludicrous charge. Another man was sleeping on a bit of blanket on the floor, and he was 'drunk and disorderly in his bed'.

In order to stop people, they had disconnected the toilet facilities and smashed the cisterns and all that sort of stuff. Ripped the electricity out. Ripped holes in the floor to discourage people from using them. So people would jump over the holes in the floor to get further out the back where they had to flee from the police. I mean we all got to wander through the houses and those of us unlucky enough to be there when the police arrived would be arrested for being there. The brothers would come and sit on the floor so the police had no option but to arrest them as they arrested the Aboriginal people too. That was interesting. I mean it wasn't like burning the Christians, it wasn't that gigantic, but it was very pleasing to me to see the level of commitment of some individuals. I can't generalise that because there was opposition to what they were doing from inside the church.

The Block, like any other Aboriginal projects, was set up to fail. Because no sooner had the government bought it, than the newspapers were advertising all over Australia 'Housing for Aborigines' Thousands of people have come from as far away as Perth and North Queensland. We were never going to be able to accommodate the number of people who were then involved in the influx and there were a whole lot of people there who couldn't say no, and so people were sleeping on broken down floors. The 'relies' [relatives] started flowing in and there was an enormous number of people there. I don't know, I wasn't there, but there must have been conflict about the people who would hang on the longest and get the houses. I would say different ones from Western Australia would be very much on the outer and told to go back to where they came from.

I mean it was a disservice by the media in the way they portrayed the purchase of that block. It started off being overcrowded, under-resourced and then people had no experience. Even when they started to get up and go, you will notice all the floors in there are softwood, not hardwood, they aren't very strong and the rats come up between the boards because it is softwood. They had no experience to say to the people who were doing the building that they wanted hardwood floors. Those sorts of things. At the same time they were trying to seize for themselves the overseeing of the site - a role for which they were not educated or prepared. People like Colin James could have told them that - but they didn't want a white person. He is not intrusive. Some of the people who were involved then were rip-off merchants, various ones who were involved in the construction were finding cheap materials. Only somebody who is experienced could say the difference. It was never set up to be permanent. There was a transient quality about the quality of the housing.

I was walking down near the station one day, you know the traffic lights, TNT Building. A group of black women from the Block came around the corner and one of them yelled out to me. I know those two girls, one is a drug addict one is a university student. Her sister was at university. She had opportunities but she hit the needle and her lifestyle was chosen. They were living in the same house, one was dealing and the other one was at university. ... If only it could be pointed in the right direction.

In a way it is like a forest that has been ravaged by fire. Have you seen those little green shoots coming out after the fire. It will take time. But while ever there are new shoots, there's a little green shoot there and a little green shot there the possibility of transformation of the area continues to exist. It is when we all turn our back on it that it will become a mire with no little green shoots in it at all.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE'S GALLERY

Maureen Watson set up a gallery and shop in Regent Street in 1980

Article from **AIM** *Aboriginal Islanders' Message* **October 1980**
thanks to Elaine Pelot-Syron for digging deep into her vast treasure trove of archival material.

BLACKS OWN ART GALLERY

Maureen pointed out that it wasn't easy getting premises for **ABORIGINAL AND ART GALLERY**. The agents in the area of Redfern and surrounding areas did give her a few of the old familiar tales of no place available; no at the moment we don't have a thing. Her brother Lenny Watson went to the same agents and acquired a place immediately. The shop opened despite resistance, and the opening gave a feeling of warmth and unity, as Magungun Wanumbe, a tribal elder from Arnhem Land, danced dances of his tribe.

The shop isn't aiming at making a profit; the main aim is to have a centre for those who

want to display their works, and express themselves in their art. The gallery enables people to meet and have workshops in barkpaintings, video, and screenprinting. Also there will be discussion groups, and a seminar on racism. An art exhibition for students of any age commences on the 27th November. Entries must be in by 20th of November. Also there will be a photographic exhibition on the 4th of December. All entries must be in by the 27th of November. Name and address on the back of entries would be appreciated.

Anyone who would like their work to be sold at the gallery get in touch with Maureen Watson, also there is a

10% commission charge on anything sold.

Donations have already been given to the gallery by groups from all over Australia, and some are on loan. A lot of the works donated and given on loan are from Wallaga Lake, The Finke River, and Noonkanbah. Among the artists who have some of their works for sale are Colin Isaacs, Richard Martin, and a few other notables. Phemie Bostock has her works of tapestry and leatherwork. A lot of the works come from the area of La Perouse, in Sydney.

For those who live in Sydney, and visiting, there will be notices put in the front window announcing times of sessions of story telling given by Maureen Watson. Theresa Creed, Mervyn Fitzgerald



Andrew Donnelly prints a 'T' shirt Photo: Elaine Kitchener

ABORIGINAL TENT EMBASSY



photo taken 27th January 1972

Day 1 of the Tent Embassy with Bertie Williams, Billie Craigie, Michael Anderson and Tony Coorey, arriving 26th January and planning to camp till at least February 22 when Parliament resumed. About 40 Aboriginal women joined them, in Canberra for the second annual conference of the National Council of Aboriginal and Island Women which ended 31st January. By the 2nd February a flag was being made in Sydney. 'We will stay here till Christmas if necessary.' The number of campers grew, and people travelled down from Sydney for the weekends. A flag was up by the 14th.

from <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/images/history/1970s/emb72/embassydx.html>

Prime Minister William McMahon had outlined the Government's long awaited statement on Aboriginal land rights. Freehold land rights were rejected in favour of fifty-year general purpose leases to Aboriginal communities for social and economic purposes. An emergency meeting was held in Sydney, involving the Redfern community, and four drove down to commence a protest.

No matter how hard they try to move us off this lawn we will stay here. We are sick of playing jokes. This time we mean business. We will stay until the government listens to us. [Michael Anderson see newspaper articles on Kooriweb]

Family Days on the Block

Successful Family Days were held on the Block in 2008. On one occasion 17 men turned up to enforce the *No Drug dealing & Substance abuse* in the community on Family Day. The event is now held monthly.

The event is aimed to encourage Aboriginal people to stand together as one to reclaim the people & community on the Block without drug dealing & drug use.

Come along and enjoy some family time with ya kids and family, hear some history, share some history and make a statement that black fullas are strong & proud!

For more information contact
Shane Phillips at Tribal Warrior on 9699 3491



BABANA ABORIGINAL MEN'S GROUP

from the website
<http://www.treocom.net/babana/>

Babana Aboriginal Men's Group first met in March 2006, motivated by the need for a broad non-aligned community group for community support and development activities and provide positive networking opportunities for local Aboriginal men.

Babana means 'brother' in the Dharug language. A common term of greeting among Aboriginal men, it also conveys a sense of cooperative effort and community.

Average attendance at monthly meetings is around 40-50 men. Over that time, Babana membership has grown continuously, continuing to obtain endorsement and respect from both the Aboriginal and non Aboriginal community.



Tribal Warrior to health day at Rodd Island

Programs have included:

- Family Days on the Block - inspired by Shane Phillips, highlighting an anti drug position.
- Event at Sydney Town Hall e.g. Carer's week, Seniors Week, World Indigenous Day.
- Joint International Research Project with Aboriginal Medical Service, Babana and University of NSW for Aboriginal researcher positions to increase the capacity of Aboriginal people to conduct social research and to examine the role of resilience
- Gatherings at Shark Island, Clarke Island and Rodd island e.g. over 100 men
- Men's Health and Well being days on Rodd Island 20/3/08 with over 100 men attending. - preventative health info, general health stalls, healing, nutrition and healing workshops
- Supporting Probation and parole clients of the Walking Together program to gain work experience via the Tribal Warrior association.
- Family violence forums bringing community leaders, officials and local residents together to work proactively together for positive solutions.
- Support for youth to be trained and to build canoes to lead the Tall Ships on Survival Day.
- Cultural trips involving members and elders, liaising with other men's groups.
- Ongoing representation and consultancy with police regarding community relations
- Encouraging the private sector to bring Certificate II training courses into Redfern
- No Drugs on the Block campaign - , walk-arounds creating awareness
- Coloured diggers march and service ANZAC Day

BLACK LACE

Malcolm (Mac) Silva was born in Kempsey, New South Wales in 1947. He lived on Burnt Bridge Mission until his family moved to Sydney in 1965.

Mac was a very talented musician and singer and upon arriving in Sydney he started performing at the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in George Street in the city. Mac's band performed at the Foundation's dances every Saturday and Sunday night.

In 1966 he formed the Silva Linings band in which he was singer and drummer. The band won the Gold Coast Battle of the Sounds. After several years the band changed its name to Black Lace.

Black Lace became very popular and gained a following throughout the Aboriginal communities in NSW and beyond. Blacks from everywhere would come to see Black Lace play, from Dubbo, Moree and Northern NSW.



Black Lace at the National Aboriginal Day Ball, 1975

Back row: Arnold Williams, Frank

Front row: Andrew Donnelly, Cecil Patten, Kevin McGrady, Malcolm Silva

Mac had a way of making people feel welcome. When he was playing he would greet people coming in the door. He showed no partiality to anyone regardless of their importance or

standing in the community. He called all Kooris his brothers and sisters and he meant it. He was a great supporter of the Redfern All Blacks. Mac had a very gentle nature and would never row with anyone. Everyone loved him.

He used to sing the song *Malabar Mansion* which was written by a young Aboriginal man while in Long Bay Gaol. The song is about blackfellas in gaol and they say that it's the most requested song on Radio Redfern. It is all about being in gaol and how sane men go mad when inside.

When the Black Theatre for the Arts folded, the building continued to be known as the Black Theatre. Sylvia Scott organised weekly dances at the Black Theatre for the young people of Redfern. Sylvia's involvement with the Black Theatre started around 1977 while she was employed by the Aboriginal Children's Service. These dances were held by different Aboriginal organisations and served a dual purpose of giving the young people something to do of an evening and raising money for the organisations, such as the Redfern All Blacks football team. *Black Lace* used to play at those Saturday night dances.

Mac passed away in April 1989 from a heart attack at the age of 42. His funeral was held at St Mary's cathedral. The church which holds over a thousand was so full people stood in the park across the road. Mac was the first Aboriginal person to have a funeral service at St Mary's Cathedral.

As singer in the band Mac would always sing the song *Put a candle in the window*, the lyrics of which were 'Put a candle in the window – I won't be away too long and I'll be coming back.' It was thought this was a very apt song for the Mac Silva Centre, which opened in February 1991. It was what the centre was all about, making a home for people and making them always feel welcome. This is why the logo for the centre contains the candle.

from *The Mac Silva Centre*; an oral history project. TAFE Outreach 1994

Thank you to Sylvia Scott for giving us permission to reproduce some of the book *The Mac Silva Centre*, an oral history project carried out with Sydney Institute of Technology Outreach, and Barbara Silva and family, for allowing them to do the story of Mac's life, providing information and photos, and allowing us to reproduce it.

**20 year anniversary - Band members are looking for footage
Can you help?**



THE BLACK THEATRE

In 1969 Brian Syron ran acting classes at the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs. In 1971 Paul Coe asked Jenny Sheehan to run classes and in 1972 Carole Johnson started dance workshops.



1972 The Black Theatre grew out of political struggle. Street theatre publicised the Black Moratorium and the Aboriginal land rights claim against Nabalco. The next performance led the July land rights demonstration. A few days later the news came through that the Aboriginal embassy in Canberra had been removed. At the re-erection the *Dance of the embassy* was performed.



Bob Maza was invited to Sydney. *Basically black* was performed at the Nimrod.



1973 *Basically black* was televised Aileen Corpus, Gary Foley, Zac Martin, Bob Maza, Bindi Williams



Lester Bostock carried on as administrator after a *Basically Black* tour, followed by Tony Coorey. There was a lull after the tour, but for the first time, a theatre company used Aboriginal people to play Aboriginal people - Sydney Theatre Company's Boddy's *The Cradle of Hercules* at Old Tote theatre.



1974 A venue was found in Cope Street. Bettie Fisher was the director of the Black Theatre Arts and Cultural Centre. There were a number of showcase performances, and the Ebony Profile casting agency. Writer of *The Cakeman*, Bob Merritt was permitted to attend opening night under guard. The cast refused to go on until handcuffs were removed.



1975 Six week training course - 28 students selected nationally, many becoming household names.

1976 Lester Bostock replaced Bettie Fisher when she died suddenly in her thirties. Production of Gerry Bostock's *Here comes the nigger*. Funding was withdrawn by the new Liberal government.

1977 The ABC television production of *The Cake Man* was the first telemovie written by an Aboriginal playwright. It was also produced at Bondi Pavilion starring Justine Saunders with Zac Martin and Brian Syron. With still no funding, the Black Theatre closed.

Many initiatives sprang from The Black Theatre, such as the Aboriginal Dance Theatre next door. The building was handed over on behalf of the Aboriginal community to the Organisation for Aboriginal Unity (OAU). The OAU and the late Charles Perkins wanted the site to be developed as a cultural centre for the Redfern community, but there were never any funds to redevelop the site. As new organisations came into existence, the Aboriginal community established the Redfern Aboriginal Authority. When ATSIC was abolished, the ILC took over the overseeing of the site, liaising with RAA and developing it in 2008. Koori Radio was the first tenant in the new building, returning to its roots.

N'ingla a-na; Hungry for land film includes interviews and performance. www.smartstreetfilms.com.au
Tjintu Pakani - Sunrise awakening film of workshops and six week course available Film Archives.

Father dropping off his child:

You go in there and get what I can't give you. Those theatre people can give it to you.

Gerry Bostock:

We performed as black theatre groups, as street groups, in the marches. Black theatre would get involved with all the political demonstrations It was a major step in breaking down barriers, as for many people attending Black Theatre, it was their first visit to Redfern.

Lester Bostock:

Its whole emphasis was to put the points across to its own community. That was the first step. By the people, for the people. All those other things that happened are secondary. ... In a spiritual sense, as a philosophy of an ideal, it's still alive. The dreams and aspirations of those people are still carried on. ... It developed a state of mind and it was also a focus of energy ... Many individuals have gone onto radio, television, dance or drama and now contemporary Aboriginal culture is recognised throughout the world.

Aileen Corpus:

It's necessary to have a teaching avenue for black people - by presenting their hassles on stage, by making them aware of their black pride and identity. ... We've got to forget about whites at this stage and start stimulating some sort of racial confidence in our people.

Bettie Fisher:

The centre for me is my blood, my guts, my heart and my soul, for my people and their culture. I'm a very emotional person as far as this centre is concerned. Because there is a helluva need for it.

Marcia Langton:

It was very much a community centre. During rehearsals lots of people would come to watch how things were done in the theatre. It was one of those periods when a group of people with amazing backgrounds came together, Maza, Foley, Merritt and Syron, and it worked. It was a hothouse.

Bob Maza:

Australia needed a mirror to reflect all those things that were happening in this society. And Koori Australians were the ones that were going to have to say it. Let the black man tell the black man's story. We can do it. We just need to be given the chance. ... Black Theatre is geared to communicate with people, not just to entertain. We want to make people commit themselves to social responsibilities.

Ted Maza:

The outlook for me, working with Black Theatre, it changed my whole outlook of, uh, just political issues and I was just proud to be part of it. And being a black person.

Justine Saunders:

It gave the possibility of life... It was wonderful. .. the best thing I ever did, it fine-tuned me. It gave the chance to touch base with my culture. It was a blessing to a people.

Kevin Smith:

It inspired a confidence in the community, that things could be done, and a message could be given. Black Theatre itself was a message stick. It was also a refuge, a smart option, a vehicle and a place [to go] without being harassed by police and police dogs, being set upon and attacked and then having a criminal record.

Brian Syron:

We are fighting through art.

COLOURED DIGGERS

'For too long the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the war efforts has not been recognised. There is very little to show Indigenous recognition at the Australian War Museum, unless you walk up a rather lonely path. David Huggonsen, a Canberra historian says 'Few Australians are aware that Aborigines have fought in every war that Australia has been involved in since the Boer War.' And Aboriginal Australia was never given the opportunity to learn of those brave men and women either. They are the 'Forgotten Heroes' of Australia.

So, the Coloured Digger Project came about. It was formed by a small group of men and women who believe that 'Our' history should also be told. That 'Our' men and women should also be recognised and honoured.

Both government and private history sites state that many Aboriginal Australians who served in the wars, once they came back to Australia, were herded back onto the missions. Some had their children taken away, some who served were even part of the Stolen Generations themselves. There are still those who remember being told to march at the back of the march and not with their units in country towns.

So we will honour Indigenous fallen. We will honour those Indigenous who came back. We will honour those who fell by the wayside after they came back. We will honour them all. 'We will remember them.' Mark Spinks in the April Babana newsletter.

Lest we forget.



Oral History project

An oral history project is also being undertaken in conjunction with the City's History Unit and the Coloured Digger Project. This seeks to record the stories of servicemen and women, their children and families. This project will complement the work being undertaken nationally to record the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders servicemen and women, and will commence prior to Anzac Day 2008.

Source: City of Sydney Council

http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Council/documents/meetings/2008/Council/120508/080512_COUNCIL_ITEM12.pdf

ELOUERA GYM



TONY MUNDINE
GYM

★ ★

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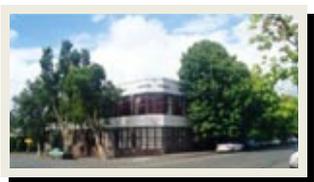
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Poster made in 1985, courtesy of Elaine Syron, the Keeping Place

The Eora Centre for Aboriginal Studies

The Eora Centre for visual and performing arts and Aboriginal studies offers people full time certificate courses in a wide range of subjects.



333 Abercrombie Street
Chippendale NSW 2008

Phone: (02) 9217 4878
enquire@eora.net

A grasp at dignity, Interview with Bob Merritt, Coordinator of the Eora Centre in Links published by UTS

Education Links 30 Summer 1986/87 p9-10 <http://www.education.uts.edu.au/research2/archives/pdfs/RED30.pdf>

This place got off the ground because I went out and "read" communities, I "read" their hopes, their aspirations, their dreams and their frustrations. There's nothing much taking place in this Centre that doesn't take place out on the street. In a fairly volatile area, like downtown Redfern, your identity is reduced to being sick or criminal. There is no incentive for the little person. Our dreaming has been reduced to the next fortnight when the postie brings the cheque — even that is not too reliable.

All we (TAFE) did was to hold up a mirror and people saw their own reflections and responded. It's important to all people to see a reflection of themselves as opposed to someone else's point of view. For two hundred years we've been role playing, we've been someone else's interpretation of who we should be, and unfortunately failing the test badly.

The Centre emphasises the visual and performing arts?

... All that's happening here is that, our culture that's been lying dormant, that hasn't been encouraged to be practised over a period of time, two hundred years, is now raising its frustrated head. What do we do here? Excellence only comes second best to a rounding-off of people, to restoring confidence and self awareness. Here education is applied in terms of survival, mainly.

It's a place of discovery; people come in here and they discover themselves. If we did no more than equip them with

knowledge of how to deal with officialdom, which has intimidated them all these years, inherited from their forebears, so to speak, that would be enough.

I see hope in this place. I see already what's happening here filtering out into the community. I see our students becoming ambassadors for their race. I operate on the premise that we're basically a show-and-tell people, coming from an oral tradition. It's a bit like music, you play it as you feel it and then after you've played it you realise what chord you've done it in, you learn what chord. There's no such thing as people can't read or write — they will learn to read and/or write if it's pertaining to them.

What we aim to do here is educate, in an entertaining way; it's thanks to TAFE, they've allowed us to operate on the principle of freedom of the artist rather than running it as an institution. There's more freedom for the people who come here, within the confines of these walls, than there is in the whole of Australia, out there.

Places like this serve as a waystation in the journey back into mainstream life. People have been here who have realised some hidden talent. Some people take a little longer than others to realise their forte but we're interested in people here, it's a people's place, and it's the people's dreams that we're interested in protecting and

nurturing and encouraging and it's not a place for forcing values. And it's not really about politics. ... it's been one of TAFE's more adventurous moves, but if you can measure it this way, it's been a fairly cheap investment but with a great return.

The future for Eora?

Once the motivating force for me was to do a salvaging operation but I'm a little bit more optimistic than that now, the third year down the line.

There's growing acceptance of the place by black and non-black alike. At first there was some suspicion from the black community. Having been brought up on a promise and a prayer, being victims of the old institution called Aboriginal self-doubt, they wanted to know, are these people just going to whet our appetites again and then take it away? It has also been their experience that anything of value does not get funded. But what happens in this place, and what filters out from here, does more in terms of changing attitudes than 1,000 demonstrations. For perhaps the first time there is a way of looking at Aboriginal people, and their problems which is positive.

Everyone thinks that educationally blacks are getting all this and blacks are getting all that — well that's a myth I can assure you. We have students, with dependants, losing up to \$50 a week when they come off the dole. That is, being penalized for showing initiative. And yet they're still coming here and I can put that down to that is a last grasp at dignity outweighs an empty gut.

LINKS 9-10



GAMARADA MEN'S SELF-HEALING GROUP

the South Sydney Herald

"Celebrating the lives of the diverse people of South Sydney, inviting discussion on issues of concern and interest, adding encouragement to possibilities for community."

Gamarada - men of earth

In Redfern, a group of Aboriginal men, and a Maori, have been trained and are running the Gamarada Men's Self Healing Program reports the South Sydney Herald of June 2008.

"I thought this sort of stuff was not for me and was sceptical at first. However, I enjoyed the program, learnt lots and realise how what we are trying to create together has the ability to assist people with a lot of their own self-healing and to take control back of their lives and emotions," says Shane Phillips, CEO Tribal Warrior Association and Gamarada graduate.

The idea was inspired by Shane's passion for doing something new and positive in the community. Shane, Ken Zulumovski, David Beaumont and Mark Carroll decided that it was important to attempt to use ancient holistic principles and Aboriginal culture and spiritual values to create a strong men's self-healing space. David Leha joined with Nathan Leslie and camera-man Mark Taylor. The training program was completed in 2007.

The program runs each Monday night at the Community Centre Redfern, from 5.30 to 8.30pm. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men are welcome to join any time, after they agree to abide by the men's group agreement and complete a nomination form.

"I have been interested in looking at different ways that we can work on building emotional and inner strength. We as a community have created this program and everyone who attends takes an ownership of it and can join in the great feeling that we all receive as a result of attending," says Ken Zulumovski, worker in the field of Aboriginal mental health and social and emotional well-being for 10 years.



Principles such as breathing and relaxation, anger management and cultural healing techniques are used. Compassion, honour, community service & increased awareness are explored. This is being constantly enhanced by a strong Aboriginal perspective, influence and now ownership of the program.

'Inspired by Shane, we thought it was time to try and bring some men together, to share ownership and wisdom and to create a healing space focusing more on the here and now and where people want to go, to help begin a detoxification process not only of the body and mind but perhaps even the spirit,' says Mark Carroll.

David Leha who performs as Radical Son and conducts Gamarada anger management and healing sessions is paid for his healing skills by the Government. He says, "For many years now, from a background of anger, prison, violence and my own pain, I have learnt to open my mind and to take in things which can help me with my own healing. Gamarada has inspired and given me many new skills which I am now using to support others in their own healing."

There are various Aboriginal men's groups and programs in the community now. Some of these are Walking Together Aboriginal program for people on probation or parole, Babana) which provides a powerhouse of men's and community events and is chaired by Mark Spinks (note: all current Gamarada leaders are Babana members) and now Gamarada. All of these programs are complementary and have their own distinctive way of supporting Aboriginal men.

.....
We are open to the community supporting Gamarada. You can email Ken on kenzulumovski@yahoo.com.au for some more info about the program or look at our web page.

The South Sydney Herald - June 2008 11

GAMARADA MONTESSORI LEARNING CENTRE & PLAYGROUP

Montessori playgroup and a Montessori Early Childhood program 0-6 years, operating through donations and voluntary support.



The Gamarada Playgroup commenced in 1998 on Eveleigh Street, Redfern, at the Elouera Community Centre which incorporated the gym. A small space at the gym was donated by the Aboriginal Housing Company. Enrolment included children from the Block area of Redfern, and the Centre was open five days a week.

In 2000, the Redfern Public School generously offered the Centre a small room in their complex. Operating in this new public school venue meant Gamarada was able to cater to a community of more diverse cultures and support more families. When Redfern Public School closed in 2002, the Centre was given a larger vacated classroom. The Centre was then able to serve children from birth to six years old. In August 2003, the classroom next door became available and was added to the Centre's facilities making it possible to provide separate environments for the birth to three-year olds accompanied by a parent and the three to six children. The Centre also worked with Alexandria Park Public School to offer a programme for 4 to 6 year olds within the public school system. This programme met with success but was discontinued when the instigating Principal left the school.

In 2006 the program had to leave Redfern Public School, and unfortunately all that was offered by The Education Department was a room at the Bourke Street Public School, removing the school from its target group. The programme is one of the success stories of Redfern and has received the support of Tanya Plibersek, Federal Member for Sydney and the Montessori Children's Foundation.

Program Founder, Barbara Stephen

Barbara is part of the community and has continued to offer ongoing support to the children and families of the Redfern Waterloo area. In 2003, Barbara was awarded "Citizen of the Year" by South Sydney Council for her tireless contribution not only to local early childhood education but also to the community at large.



'Gamarada' means 'friend'

THE KEEPING PLACE



SMH 13/11/08 | Unpublished photo by Elaine Syron, 'Mum Shirl leading land rights rally'

THE VISION

...celebrating our survival...

....growing our culture...

...protecting our heritage...

...keeping our community strong...

Our plan is to find a benefactor who will purchase the Black Fella's Dreaming Museum's collection from Gordon and Elaine Syron and use it to found the Keeping Place and Cultural Centre for the absolute benefit of the Aboriginal communities. As well as an extensive art collection it also includes unseen and never-published photographs taken by Elaine (Kitchener) Pelot-Syron that document events, portraits and Sydney's history over the last thirty five years.

Committee:

- RHONDA DIXON-GROVENOR [HEAD OF THE KEEPING PLACE COMMITTEE]
- Prof Larissa Behrendt, Prof of Law – University of Technology Sydney,•
- Michelle Blakeney, Still Photographer & Youth Worker,
- Josephine Cashman, Indigenous Solicitor,
- Genevieve Grieves, Film-maker and Oral Historian (Koori Heritage Trust, Vic., The Australians)
- Djon Mundine, Indigenous Curator - Campbelltown Art Gallery,



Listen to Gordon Syron talking to Paulette Whitton in December 2008 on Koori Radio 93.7



Watch *Yaarnz*, an NITV documentary showed Gordon at the Eveleigh workshop

THE KEEPING PLACE
Black Fella's Dreaming Museum
499 Wilson Street, Darlington, 2008
Phone: 8399 0988 Mobile: 0421031392
www.blackfellasdreaming.com.au



(Mother Earth Fairy - Gordon Syron)

MAC SILVA MEN'S HOSTEL [see also Black Lace]

This book is available at Waterloo Public Library. LOCAL HISTORY 362.849915 MAC

The Mac Silva Centre is an oral history project of the Mac Silva Centre and Outreach, Sydney Institute of Technology, East Sydney. Published in Darlinghurst c1994

'Sylvia Scott used the Rona Tranby award to tell the story of the Mac Silva Centre, a refuge for homeless Aboriginal men with alcohol related problems, by interviewing residents and staff with the aim of writing a book. By publishing the positive achievements of this Centre, Sylvia feels that others will be encouraged to set up similar places to help people in her community.' <http://www.tranby.edu.au>

from the book:

The Mac Silva Centre was established in 1990 as a result of the great concern in the Aboriginal community of Redfern for the homeless Aboriginal people who lived in the Black Theatre.

Complaints were made by concerned citizens, the residents themselves, church groups and South Sydney Council about the terrible living conditions.

As a result of continued efforts by certain members of the Aboriginal community, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs (OAA) co-ordinated the Department of Housing, ATSIC and Aboriginal Hostels (AHL) in order to provide alternative accommodation.

Six flats were provided for those of the residents who could live independently and three houses in Wellington Street, Waterloo, for those who required support. The three houses operate as the Mac Silva Centre which was incorporated under the Aboriginal Councils and Associations act, and is federally funded.

The residents occupied the centre in February 1991. There was an immediate and dramatic improvement and it is hoped that with the support of the workers and the community they will be motivated to self-rehabilitate.

A number of residents have moved to permanent accommodation. This is the aim, to encourage rehabilitation so that residents can become independent and eventually move into unsupported housing.

MUDGIN-GAL ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

This service is now known as Mudgin-Gal, once the South Sydney Women's Centre which was a mainstream service servicing all women in the South Sydney Area. After ongoing support and pressure from the Aboriginal Community and women negotiating with the then South Sydney Women's Centre Management Committee, the service was handed over to an Aboriginal controlled committee, hence the start of Mudgin-gal Women's Service. Mudgin-Gal means Black Woman which derived from the South Coast of N.S.W.

The official opening of our service was on July 21st, 1992.

Present programs:

- Daily drop in service Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm
- Advocacy and liaison for all issues of concern to Aboriginal women
- Washing machine/dryer and bathroom facilities
- Family support
- Court support
- Grief and loss support (appointment only)
- Women's anti violence group (twice a month)
- Accommodation available and referral resources

Due to a lot of dedication, support and voluntary work from Aboriginal women in the community our service has developed into an accessible and valuable service for Aboriginal women.

BLACKOUT at the KNOCKOUT

The starting point for a state-wide campaign was a peaceful rally held by a number of women from The Block.. The rally drew more than 100 people and a co-ordinated grass-roots campaign soon followed. The Blackout Violence program was set up and run without any government funding. However, its success has been recognised with the 2004 NSW Violence Against Women Prevention Award.

To launch the 'Blackout Violence' program, players from 85 teams took to the field at the 2004 NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout wearing purple armbands to show their opposition to family violence and sexual assault against women. Around 2,000 Blackout Violence kits were handed out to players and spectators throughout the four-day carnival, containing information on how to prevent violence and where to get help. The rugby league knockout is the largest gathering of Aboriginal people in NSW so it was the perfect place to get the message out, said campaign organiser Dixie Link-Gordon.

"The message of Blackout Violence is simple: enough is enough. Family violence has no part in our culture. It's not the Koori way and it needs to stop," Ms Link-Gordon said. "It's a difficult issue to talk about and we've put it under the carpet for too long. But this campaign has allowed a large number of people to take an important message back to their own communities." Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council Chairperson, Rob Welsh, said the Blackout Violence campaign showed Aboriginal people taking a leadership role by tackling the problem head on. "Blackout Violence is all about us taking control of our actions and showing respect for each other and our communities. By doing this we can show the way for other communities around Australia – black and white."

"The focus of the campaign has always been on community engagement and that's why it been such a success," said Blackout Violence partner, Christine Robinson, from the Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre. "From the start Indigenous men, women and children have all supported the program. They are determined to change how their community views and deals with issues like domestic violence."

A training manual has been developed to support Indigenous communities address violence in all its forms – domestic violence, community violence and other forms of violence, such as bullying. The program has drawn interest and support from a wide range of groups, including police, courts, universities, community groups and health services. "It is very important this campaign continue to be driven and maintained by Aboriginal people but supported by non-Aboriginal people," said Ms Link- Gordon.

Blackout Violence was developed by the Inner City Domestic Violence Group, Redfern Legal Centre and the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council.

Success stories in indigenous health; A showcase of successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health projects is published by ANTaR and is available as a booklet or online <http://www.antar.org.au>

Murawina



1970s NAA



1980



1980



1984

These photos from the National Archives are marking the space till some stories are available.

Radio Redfern & Koori Radio



In **1981** Maureen Watson and Tiga Bayles, then Redfern residents, started broadcasting on Radio Skid Row and 2SER. It grew from ten minutes to ten hours to 40 hours.

In **1984** they set up **Radio Redfern** in Cope Street, next to the Black Theatre, so that Redfern people could become more involved.

In **1988** Radio Redfern played a pivotal role in informing and educating the public about Aboriginal perspective and responses to the Commonwealth Games, and the bicentenary year. This inspired people to work towards setting up Koori Radio to provide Sydney's Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community with a permanent voice.

In **1993** Cathy Craigie and Matthew Cooke established a community based media, arts and information service - **Gadigal Information Service** They started broadcasting on Radio Skid Row, and leased the upper level of a terrace house on the corner of Cleveland and Edwards Streets. Close to the Block, it remained an important drop-in and information centre.

In **2001** Gadigal Information Service was given a full-time Sydney-wide broadcasting licence, after six years hard work. 93.7FM on a 50kW transmitter. Koori Radio. Live and deadly. When the Chippendale terrace was sold, they moved temporarily to Marrickville's old hospital premises in Lilydale Street.

In **2008** the ILC renovated the Black Theatre site and leased it to local Aboriginal organisations. Koori Radio returns to Redfern !!!

Tiga Bayles: It was 1980, '81. My mother, Maureen Watson, came back from a conference in Alice Springs, where she saw CAAMA Radio. Came back talking about this Aboriginal radio station, or these Aboriginal people that were working in radio—we were in Redfern at the time. She came back talking about radio and how it was important and we should be looking at it down in Sydney, in Redfern. She said, come on, let's go in here. We'll talk to the manager of 2SER. So we went in there. She got 10 minutes a week for starters. It was just a 10-minute little filler, but there was an empty spot, I suppose, in their programming. And within a month-and-a-half, two months, we learned how to panel ourselves. It wasn't good enough just sitting there being talking heads, we wanted to panel and press the buttons and do it ourselves. From there, within three months or so we said we want more than 10 minutes, so we expanded to one hour a week and did that quite regularly. Mum started it, and because she travelled a lot, I filled in when she was away.

So it really all started out there at 2SER back in the early 80s. And it expanded from there where I did a three-hour music program from midnight until 3am. That was a black music show, and did that for about five years or so. But our biggest problem down there, Donna, was the Kooris. Like it was difficult to get Kooris to leave the community of Redfern, even though Broadway's only a 10-minute walk. About '83, '84 Skid Row got a licence. The very first allocation by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal of community licences in Sydney. There were nine licences issued in '83, '84. And Radio Skid Row got one of those licences, and they were based in the Wentworth building of Sydney University, down in the basement. And they stepped up and said, there's 10 hours a week for you Kooris—straight up, ten hours. We almost fell over in shock, thinking however could we manage ten hours a week? But it was good. It was good, because it put the pressure on us then to get more people involved. But again, ten minutes walk up to Newtown there, to King Street from Redfern—it was still difficult to get our people out.

But we grew that, from '83, '84, that ten hours grew to 40 hours a week, and a real partnership thing. I was elected as chair of the Skid Row station at some point—'85 or so. We ended up with our own studios in about '84—twelve months or two years or so of being on air, and having the difficulty of bringing Aboriginal people from Redfern into either one of these studios. And the reason they didn't want to go there, it wasn't our place, it wasn't our environment, it wasn't our community. We weren't in control. It wasn't our place. So we thought, well, let's take radio back into Redfern. Let's put studios in Redfern. And that's how Radio Redfern was born, really. It emerged, was established, as a result of just bringing radio into the community, and that's how we got the name of Radio Redfern. People in the community just dropped in and talk and chat, and cuppa tea—it was a real hub, especially for visitors. But for the local community—visitors when they come to town looking for an organisation or a family member or somebody, or a friend—they'd come to the station.

excerpt from Indigenous Media ABC 2RN <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/learning/lifelong/stories/s1174633.htm>



Radio Redfern - The Koori voice in Sydney

Wayne Costelloe [reprinted from **Artlink** Vol 10 1&2 1992 with permission]

Located in an old terrace house in Cope Street, Redfern, is the voice of the Aboriginal community in Sydney. The terrace house is not unlike any other in the inner city. However with the Koori colours on one wall and the music of Koori bands blasting out from speakers up on the balcony, the house is fairly outstanding.

On entering the building, past the first room, is the reception area. Here hangs an Aboriginal flag, surrounded by a Rainbow Serpent, which snakes across the walls and ceiling. There are other traditional designs and motifs which flood this room and one can be overwhelmed with a sense of being in a sacred cave.

Up at the end of a narrow staircase is the mixing room where the reel tapes are recorded. Koori music is the predominant occupant on these reels and each volunteer DJ makes up their own mixes. These reels then go into the library on the ground floor and are for the general use of the announcers whilst on their shift. An elaborate registry system is in place to easily locate particular songs when and if they are required for airplay.

In the back room, next to the kitchen, is the broadcasting room. What was once presumably a bedroom is now converted, with all the trappings of a radio station, There is the console to air, three revox reels, one cassette deck, two turntables, one cartridge and three microphones. There is also the facility to conduct telephone interviews.

These resources leave Radio Redfern open for growth and development in its role. As was mentioned earlier, Radio Redfern is the voice of the Aboriginal community in Sydney and its role takes the form of community announcements, ie rallies, services etc., catering for the musical taste of the listeners (the audience wants to hear Koori bands), and finally, being seen as a positive and constructive move towards maintaining and supporting the culture of our people.

An example of the influence of Radio Redfern is how the community was rallied to attend a protest march in support of the inquiry into the death of David Gundy and black deaths in custody. A further example is the calling together of the clans for a football match.

Radio Redfern is 88.9 FM on the dial and currently holds approximately forty hours of airtime, which is a vast improvement of 15 minutes per reel hosted by the enigmatic Maureen Watson circa 1982/3. In those early days 'Radio', (as it is affectionately known to local Kooris), was affiliated with 2SER. However, Radio Skid Row is the current umbrella group. This is an FM community radio which has a broadcasting licence and sells airtime to various community groups.

Tiga Bayles who hosted Radio Skid Row gradually built it up from 30 minutes per week to its present airtime. The Public Broadcasting Foundation and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs contribute money to Radio to assist in general administration and broadcasting costs.

All the announcers with Radio Redfern are voluntary, as I am. My association with Radio came about as a result of a friend in Redfern thinking, "You would be good as an announcer and there need to be more Kooris doing shifts". I had no previous experience in this sort of thing so I had to think about it. In the end I took it on and, in one easy lesson from a seasoned announcer and now good friend, I launched into radio broadcasting.

I was pretty much thrown in the deep end having to do a four hour shift every Saturday from 12 midday to 4pm. I was left with a four hour shift after one announcer finished to be with his expecting wife. However, I loved having this much time and space to experiment in. So I did community announcements, held live interviews, a live didgeridoo performance and had a feature which I called *Koori Three Pack* of songs every thirty minutes or so and attracted an appreciative audience.

At present I am down to a two hour shift which is good news because that means more Koori people are doing shifts which in turn means a greater community involvement by the very target group catered for. The doors of Radio Redfern are open to the public, giving that freedom for people off the street to come in and say hi to friends and family over the airwaves, or to make requests, dedications or announcements. This is indicative of the sharing and openness that remains part of our culture. True community radio.

The music library is quite comprehensive with at least all of the known contemporary Aboriginal music present and accounted for. There are also a few reels of traditional music. Included in the library is a vast range of country and western music from Australia and the United States, this style being a great part in the lives of our people across the country. Many of the announcers, including myself, bring in our own music, which in itself presents varying styles of tastes, and the listening audience is exposed to more than a few styles.

Many of the bands and artists featured on Radio Redfern take time out to come in and be interviewed live whilst they are doing a stint in Sydney, They also perform at The Settlement, the Aboriginal Community Centre in Edward Street, Chippendale, which makes it a special night.

Radio Redfern has a bright future and its role will increase significantly in the broadcasting arena that is Sydney. The competitive edge that Radio has is that it is Aboriginal operated. In an environment where the status of Aboriginal people is improving through art and music, this is unique and important.

KOORI RADIO

93.7 FM Live n' deadly



Photo from 'Gadigal Music Launch album' by Gadigal Music label and studios

Check out their photos at their website www.gadigal.org and Facebook



Gadigal Music launches a recording studio and label

Gadigal Information Service which runs Koori Radio 93.7 fm in Sydney, opened a recording studio and label in 2008. It is run by Michael Hutchings, a musician who has produced events such as the Survival concerts.

Hutchings is contacted at michael@gadigal.org.au and 02 9384 4017.

Demos to PO Box 966, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.



Bonus *Listen to a podcast of the launch and an interview with Michael on ABC Speaking out*

REDFERN ABORIGINAL CORPORATION (RAC)



This is a reprint of an article in South Sydney Herald in February 2008. The information is out of date, it is here to hold the spot while we wait for more resources to interview people.



Vicki Ashton and Dennis Weatherall [photo Ali Blogg SSH]

The STEP ERS program, administered by the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation, has been introduced to replace the successful Community Development Employment Program, which was axed by the Howard Government in mid-2006 reports Carissa Simons in the South Sydney Herald of February 2008.

The differences between the two programs are stark. CDEP paid Indigenous people for approximately 15 hours work a week in areas such as screen-printing, catering, rubbish and furniture removal, and lawn mowing. These businesses were administered by the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation. Many of the participants were unable to find other employment, due to their age, criminal convictions or addiction. They gave up welfare payments in return for the opportunities given to them by the CDEP program. According to Redfern Aboriginal Corporation CEO Dennis Weatherall, the program fostered a work ethic amongst its participants, many of whom had a welfare mentality, and gave people a sense of community and stability. He says that the previous Government was a "cruel and heartless" one, which let down the people who had long relied on the Redfern CDEP.

The STEP ERS, or Structured Training and Employment Projects & Employment and Related Services system, focuses on training and development for participants and providing support for employers. The Redfern Aboriginal Corporation is responsible for helping people enrolled in the program to find suitable employers and providing them with adequate training. Participants are expected to remain in these jobs for at least a 12-month period. At present, only two people from CDEP have enrolled in the STEP ERS program.

Those involved in CDEP, which gave participants structure, stability and support, are sceptical about the success that the mainstream STEP ERS program will have. "Until racism is stamped out, mainstream approaches aren't going to work," says Vicki Ashton from the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation. 'I feel like the Government wants them to do crime.'

Weatherall and Ashton are hopeful that the new Labor Government will live up to its election promise to reinstate the CDEP program, although both expect that new restrictions will be placed upon it.

www.southsydneyherald.com.au

REDFERN ALL BLACKS (RAB)

Redfern All Blacks is the oldest Aboriginal Rugby League Football Club in the country. It was officially founded in 1944, though from some accounts, it possibly goes back as far as the Depression years of the 1930s. One of the stories of how the club was originally formed is that when Aboriginal players could not get a run with the other clubs in the local South Sydney District Junior Competition, they formed their own team.

In 1973, the Redfern All Blacks, along with La Perouse, formed the inaugural New South Wales Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout (The Knockout). It was initiated by six men who were affiliated with Koorie United, Bob Smith, Bob Morgan, Bill Kennedy, Danny Rose, Victor Wright and the late George Jackson, following a 'meeting' at the Clifton Hotel. Firstly, and it cannot be separated from the excitement and heady days of the Redfern political activism, the Knockout was formed with the view to providing a stage for many very talented Aboriginal footballers who had been overlooked by the talent scouts. Secondly, *It was about family and community, and coming together, it was never just about football.* http://www.sportingpulse.com/club_info

Merv 'Boomunulla' Williams, 1940s, Redfern.



(Mumbler Collection, AIATSIS, Canberra)

Club to be proud of

BY KEN BRINDLE HON. SECRETARY, REDFERN ALL BLACKS *New Dawn* June 1970

Most of these people have just arrived from remote country areas in search of permanent employment which is unavailable back home. ... It is hoped that many of the All Blacks' players eventually attach themselves to other clubs in the district, but it is felt that when youngsters first arrive in Sydney, a club consisting of their own people, that they can become involved in and feel a real part of, assists them immensely to settle down in the first crucial 3 or 4 weeks. This club also affords good training in management. ... Committee members find it impossible not to become involved in their players' problems and often find themselves helping to find employment, accommodation and quite often legal assistance. The club runs dances and cabarets to finance its activities and the junior team have their own social committee which runs dances each Friday night at the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs.

ALL BLACKS SPORTS CLUB

In 2008 this club grew out of Redfern All Blacks Football team as many of the original players played footy together and then decided to have a go at basketball. It materialised as one basketball team in mid 2008 and then grew to seven teams by season 3. The youngest age group is the under 10s; some of our players were as young as 5 when they started - such is their talent and tenacity for the ball. Key people involved apart from myself are Rob Welsh who is chair of Metro Land Council, Carlo Svagelli - life long resident of Redfern born of an Italian immigrant father and Aboriginal mother, Joy Smith - teacher at Alex Park Community School and Jackie Jarrett - Black out Violence coordinator. [Thank you to Cathie Burgess for this information.]



<http://www.tribalwarrior.org/about.html>

The Tribal Warrior Association was established by concerned Aboriginal people with a view to spread and vitalise Aboriginal culture, and to provide economic and social stability.

The Association provides quality training for employment skills, and extends everyday practical assistance by distributing food and groceries to struggling families.



Tribal Warrior returning to Sydney on 9 June 2003 after circumnavigating Australia.

The Tribal Warrior Association uses the gaff-rigged ketch *Tribal Warrior* and the *Deerubbun* to train Aboriginal people to attain their Master Class V commercial maritime certificate and other qualifications including Radar certificate, and Marine Engineer certificate.

On all public occasions and celebrations, the *Tribal Warrior* flies the Koori Flag and the jib sail painted with the words "It's a Koori harbour" and the Black Duck totem.

Wherever the boat goes or where Aboriginal people have seen it, it has been intimately their boat. This has been the spirit and goal from the beginning.



Management Committee

- Shane Phillips, Chairman & CEO
- Mark Spinks, Secretary
- Anthony Cook, Treasurer
- Daniel Ariel, Public Officer
- Uncle Max Eulo, Member
- Michael Mundine, Member
- Dallas Clayton, Member
- Troy Russell, Member

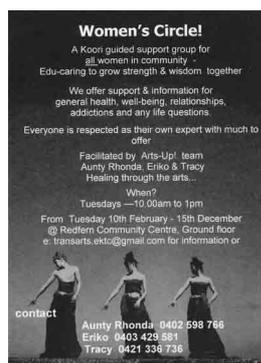


Shane Phillips, Chairman & CEO

Founding Members

- Daniel Ariel
- Uncle Lionel Mongta, Elder of Walbunja community
- Uncle Bruce Stewart, Elder of La Perouse community
- Uncle Max Eulo, Elder of Redfern community
- Uncle Allen Madden, Elder of Redfern community
- Uncle Solomon Bellea, Elder of Redfern community

WOMEN'S HEALING CIRCLE



what we do

- Dadirri – deep listening
- story-telling & sharing
- multi-media and arts
- participant driven

themes

- understanding the impact of colonisation
- living creatively
- change, loss, grief

Koori guided program | Edu-caring to grow | Strength & wisdom | Healing through the arts
Facilitators: Auntie Rhonda Dixon-Grovenor, Eriko Kinoshita and Tracy Callaghan

YOUNG MOB LEADERS



First graduation [Wazzup July 2007]

This program is supported by Koori Toastmasters, World Vision Australia and City of Sydney. As well as public speaking and event coordination, there is also a focus on developing skills in supporting each other to achieve goals, building self-confidence, conflict management, and understanding cultural protocols such as acknowledgement to country. There is also a chance to learn about culture and exchange knowledge with other communities. Due to its success, schools have also expressed an interest. In May 2007 the first Redfern Young Mob Youth Leadership program celebrated its graduation. More than 100 community members attended. The young people showcased their public speaking talents. Nine young people between 12 and 15 received certificates.

In December 2008, 10 young people from the Redfern, Mt Druitt and La Perouse communities were selected to attend the World Indigenous Peoples Conference: Education (WIPC:E) on the lands of the Kulin Nation in Melbourne. This is a triennial conference that attracts people from all around the globe to celebrate and share cultures, traditions and knowledge with a focus on education.

Mereani Cooke, Redfern Community Centre:

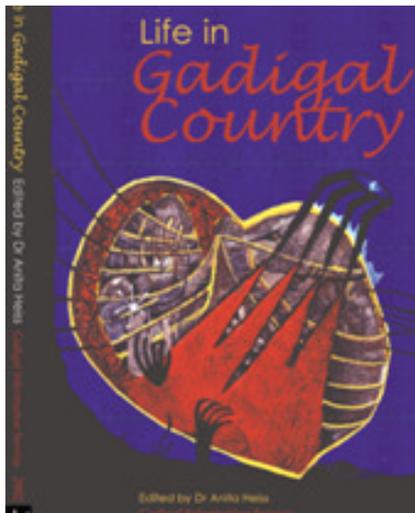
'The confidence levels of the girls who have done the toastmasters training have improved dramatically. They are now at the stage where they can MC an event in front of hundreds of people. They're very professional.' SSH May 2008

'Akira Louise, Hope, Koorine and Lilly-Anne were chosen from our program. Presenting on an international stage was a life-changing experience not only for them, but for me too,' she says. "To see these young kids on stage, so confident and self-assured, was really inspiring and we are just so proud of them.' Jetstar Magazine March 2009

Are you interested ? Volunteer !

- interview
 - record
- take photos
- scan photos

LIFE IN GADIGAL COUNTRY



This is the first anthology of writing published by Gadigal Information Service, and a tribute to the Gadigal peoples of Sydney.

A collection of writings of some of the strongest political voices, some of the most promising contemporary writers, and some of the most significant issues that have faced the first peoples of the country known as Gadigal Country, since the process of colonisation began in 1788. With an introduction by Dr Anita Heiss, the contributors include: Brenda L. Croft, Kate Gilbert, Nancia Guivarra, Gordon Hookey, Terri Janke, Jonathan Jones, Ruby Langford Ginibi, John Lennis, Melissa Lucashenko, Lorraine McGee-Sippel, Brenda Palmer, Kerry Reed-Gilbert, & Steven Ross.

Call the Gadigal office during business hours on (02) 9384 4000 or email info@gadigal.org.au \$15.00

From the Koori Radio website <http://www.gadigal.org.au/Arts/Life%20In%20Gadigal%20Country.aspx?Id=45>

Some old films can be seen at the National Film and Sound Archives 1800 226 615
We are compiling some archival footage of Redfern. Contact us if you would like to see it.



N'INGLA A-NA

Community centres

PATRICIA ORMESHER, rscj The Gathering Place

Sister Pat Ormesher is a retired Catholic nun who moved to the Block in 1987 with Sister Marnie Kennedy, sister of the late Fr Ted Kennedy. The house is called 'the Gathering Place', a place where they can welcome people, have a yarn and a meal or have a reflection on Monday nights after a meal. Sister Pat has now returned to Melbourne, and Sister Esme is on the Block.

21 March 2002



It is extremely necessary for this to be recorded, especially for the young people. The history would be lost. Word of mouth, yes, because there are traditions carried on through the families, very important, but I think also for the non-Aboriginal community, they need to know more about the Block. There are gems, there are really interesting insights into the lives of these people that would be very educative for the non-Koori population.

We came as people who wanted to welcome our friends and neighbours freely into the house, to get to know them, to listen above all, to learn and to help where we could. My sister, Dorothy was here in the first six years. Ali Golding came for about two or three months and that was a great learning situation. First of all we heard some knocks on the door and it usually was the men coming in to check us out. We just welcomed them. People were pretty shy at first, including ourselves, but as time went on people began to get to know us.

We had the round table, which is a symbol of togetherness. It is all about relationship and I believe that religion too is about relationship. So in fact that is what we simply were open to and tried to do. First and foremost we have to be learners of the cultures. It is no good pretending you are actually part of the big Koori family because we are not, we have our own culture. I really firmly believe that is a mistake some non-Aboriginal people make. We need to appreciate our own culture and then we can reach out to other people's cultures.

People have come to get to know us as friends rather than anything else. We live on a pension so we don't have too much money, but we do have food that is given to us by St Vincent de Paul and people are genuinely grateful for that when they need it. It is only a very small part of our service because food to me is a symbol of hospitality and a symbol of friendship, the sharing of food, and it is lovely when we can sit down around the table and have a meal together. Sometimes they are very grateful to take the food away to their families only when they need it. This really is the core of our lives here.

One of the things I've learnt and felt humbled by, is the fact that there are people who are so very dedicated to their families and make enormous sacrifices, because that comes first. If somebody is sick, that person comes first. They must go and see them. They must look after them. It is a wonderful thing to see because sometimes it is quite different from the non-Aboriginal people. We have our love for our families too, but there is something special about the Koori love for each other as family. That's one of the main things, shining things, I've learnt.

We had a police raid once, and we watched it from our balcony and experienced the quite, not exactly brutality, lack of understanding of the police. How they assumed every-one was an enemy and came up and entered some of the houses and demanded to know, asked questions, and were quite rough with some of the people. The people get angry occasionally, but there was no real fighting, there was no aggression much on their part, except a few stones being thrown. So it taught me how things can be built up in the media.

Redfern is a symbol for the meeting of families in the world of the Koori and it has got very, very strong roots. People on the Block want to be there for one reason or another, but I think one of the basic reasons is that they want to be near their families, if their families are close by. Redfern is a very, very special place because it's one of the places where people meet their relatives from all over New South Wales and further. Many people have found lost relatives in Redfern, so it's like a magnet to some people. I think it's a cultural thing, it's a symbol. There were great hopes that this place would be like a haven for families. Some of them came because the cotton growing was mechanised and there was not so much need for pickers out there in Walgett and those places. They drifted towards the city to try and get jobs, but it was very difficult for them in the beginning. There are people from different backgrounds, different areas of the country and therefore from different traditions and different cultures and they don't find it easy to interact too much. They normally interact with their own family group. They call the Block their home. They have a lot of memories of things that have happened, shared memories, which in one sense builds up a community, but in another sense I see a lot of fragmentation. 'The Gathering Place' was named about three years ago by Auntie Ali Golding who said to one of her friends one day, 'Let's meet at the gathering place,' and she suddenly realised she meant us. One of the things I enjoy most is the humour of the Kooris, they are so humorous. I really enjoy it too and learn to laugh with them. They've got a really good sense of humour, much more acute than some of us have.

LYN TURNBULL on The Settlement

Lyn Turnbull and her husband, Geoff have lived in Lawson Street for over thirty years. They are members of REDWatch, a community group who monitor Government involvement in the Redfern Eveleigh Darlington and Waterloo area to push for outcomes that benefit the community. Lyn is on the Settlement Committee and is convenor of Redfern Residents for Reconciliation.

5 January 2006



The Settlement dates back to 1908 as The Sydney University Women's College Settlement. When The Settlement was first set up it was originally university students working with the poor in Woolloomooloo. There was some time when it worked out of a building in Carillon Ave near Women's College. We moved to our present premises in Edward St Darlington in 1926, but it's only really since the AHC was set up that it's had such an Aboriginal focus to its programs. This article, which appeared in the Sydney University Alumni Magazine last year, gives a more detailed history. <http://www.redwatch.org.au/links/0609usyd/download>

There are common links between my involvement on the Management Committee of The Settlement because the majority of the the Settlement's services are for kids from the Block and what RRR [Redfern Residents for Reconciliation] does is to try and support people from the Block. At the Settlement, for the children, there are the after-school and holiday programs and programs for kids who are at risk of becoming homeless and dropping out of school, but increasingly we have had fairly major involvement with men's issues in the area. So while Mudgin-gal has always existed for the women in the area over the last couple of years, The Settlement has been running some men's programs with the Department of Probation and Parole and with the Department of Health. For instance last year, The Settlement took a group of men and young men on a trip to the Centre helping them connect with their roots within the Aboriginal community and a non-urban Aboriginal experience.

One of the issues that The Settlement faced in 2004, after being in Edward Street for eighty years, was that a group of people who lived or owned property in the area stacked the Management Committee of The Settlement. They were people who had bought their houses in the 1990s mainly at a time when the Aboriginal Housing Company was pulling down houses on The Block and real estate agents around the area were selling property and telling buyers 'look, the houses on The Block are coming down. This is going to be the next Paddington, you'll make a killing on the property. Come in and buy cheap real estate and sit back and watch it appreciate.' That particularly led those people who lived in Edward Street to feel that the only thing that was depressing their real estate values was The Settlement because The Settlement owns low income housing and has programs that catered mainly for the Aboriginal children. All children's activities are noisy and they made the area less desirable in potential purchasers' eyes. They stacked the Management Committee and it wasn't until they painted out the mural of the front of the building that people came to realise how much tension there was.



The mural was painted in the 1980s by some now very prominent Aboriginal artists like Bronwyn Bancroft, Tracy Moffatt, Fiona Foley, Avril Quail and Geoffrey Samuels, to name but a few. It had got to the stage where that particular Management Committee had a sign on the door that said: 'All children should use the back door.' It came to a head when people who had been involved over the years discovered that the committee were in the process of trying to purchase some property elsewhere.

It is an exciting time for The Settlement as redevelopment will commence soon. The backyard will become a much greater focus for programs. A number of craft and activity rooms will open onto a playground. The kitchen will be moved to the back of the building, where the stage is at the moment, so that it can open out onto a BBQ area. A new level will be built above the new kitchen and toilets with three different project rooms so a number of different activities can be run at the same time. The mural will be restored.



LYN TURNBULL on <http://redwatch.com.au>

The Redwatch updates started just after the Premier's Department released the RED Scheme as part of the Redfern -Waterloo Partnership Project. It was clear that the consultants employed were using information to play various groups in the community off against each other. To stop that happening, we thought it was important that everybody was aware of as much information as was possible. The publicity for consultation meetings was very poor and there were times where the only people that turned up were the people who had found out about them through reading our emails. After the RED Scheme was met with such negative community response, the government realised they needed to take a different approach. When they couldn't get the Aboriginal Housing Company to sign up to the way of developing the Block they wanted, they set up the Redfern-Waterloo Authority

REDWatch was formed just before the legislation to set up the RWA. Because the state government assumed that the Labor party candidate would become the Lord Mayor, at the mayoral elections after South Sydney and the City of Sydney were amalgamated, they thought they'd have control over the area. When Clover Moore won, the RWA was set up with powers to allow the state government to develop all the land they own in the area, which is about a third. Because there were people from all the main political parties on the delegation that went in to lobby for changes as the legislation was being rushed through parliament, REDWatch was successful at getting some changes made. One problem with the Act was that, while there were boundaries for the Redfern-Waterloo Authority area, it allowed the minister to extend them without having to refer back to the government at all. So the government were probably looking at being able to amalgamate the Redfern-Waterloo Authority area with the Green Square development to the south. That clause was changed restricting the extension of boundaries to five per cent of the initial area defined.

Because Redfern stands in the way between Port Botany, the airport and the city, things like major transport links are seen as more important to the state government than the needs of the local community which are being neglected. State Rail Authority has to develop Redfern Station but instead of the funds coming from the main state budget, Redfern community is being told that the third of the land that the government owns in the area needs to be sold and developed that which will inject another twenty thousand-odd residents into the area. They also want to redevelop the public housing areas in Waterloo and Elizabeth Street, Redfern, by maintaining the number of existing tenants but social engineering and 'diluting' the concentration of public tenants by allowing private developers to come in and build new mixed residential housing.

I think that the changes in legislation have been very important but there is increased community awareness of the dilemmas that a series of eighteen-storey buildings up either side of Gibbon Street coming up to the station will do to the area. Traffic flow issues, because the other thing is that they are trying to get a lot of employment in the area. But I think there is also an awareness of the discriminatory way in which some of those principles are being applied in the community. They say that they want to have maximum density for employment around the station and residential around the station to improve usage of the area, but they will not allow the Aboriginal Housing Company to have the same floor space ratios as what they are allowing themselves on land that they own in the Eveleigh area, which is equi-distant from the railway station.

Geoff has been very involved particularly on the Pemulwuy Task Force which was put together to get support from people who have expertise in housing, planning and social planning issues. *They are talking now, the Minister for Planning and Mick Mundine?* Yes, they are talking again. When they met Frank Sartor said, 'Well this isn't the plan that you showed me two years ago,' which is what the Housing Company has been trying to get across to him the whole time. We have talked to the community around, we have been consulting with people, getting input from various experts in terms of community safety, in terms of the social planning as to what the viable size of community can be and looking at some of the commercial groups that will be able to participate in the non residential side of the development that Frank Sartor keeps on saying he wants.

REDWatch is building links between local people from different political backgrounds who discover they have a lot in common in terms of wanting this community to continue to be a very vibrant and diverse community. The problem is that a lot of the planning that the government is doing seems to be aimed at people who will be attracted to the area in the future as the area gentrifies, rather than planning for the existing community, For instance, it will become too expensive for lots of people living in the high-rise because they are ageing and the government is selling Rachael Forster hospital which would have been a good place for residential aged care.

Another impact on the public housing is the changing tenancy requirements from the Department of Housing which will mean that people's tenure is much shorter, and if people are successful in taking up employment opportunities, they are then no longer eligible for public housing and would need to move out of the area because housing is too expensive. Those sorts of things are not being addressed within the social planning. Gentrification was happening anyway, but it was happening slowly at the sort of pace that was not as confrontative as it is. It will shift the balance so it becomes more difficult for poorer people to live here so the character of Redfern is lost. The change is happening rapidly so that it's hard for people to adjust.

REDFERN COMMUNITY CENTRE

DEBORAH RUIZ WALL, April 2004

Deborah Wall is a foundation member of Redfern Residents for Reconciliation (RRR). In a piece for The South Sydney Herald, she gave a background of RRR's advocacy for a community centre.



Prof Marie Bashir, NSW Governor officially opens Redfern Community Centre in 2004 with elder, Auntie Joyce Ingram
(Source: [The South Sydney Herald](#) Volume One, Number nineteen, April 2004, p. 4)

Early in 1998, the old South Sydney Council wanted to demolish the old warehouse, the Wilson Bros buildings. Strong community lobbying, mainly by Redfern Residents for Reconciliation, resulted in Council shelving the plan temporarily, and engaging social planners to conduct community consultations. (Sarkissian Associates Planners) Consultations over his site involved many parties, often with conflicting objectives.

Four groups (Redfern Residents for Reconciliation, Redfern Aboriginal Corporation, the Settlement and Renew) put forward a joint proposal for the use of the site as a Reconciliation Community and Cultural Centre and for job creation opportunities. Another group, the Chippendale Residents Wilson Bros Factory Site Action Group wanted a police station installed on the site as well as a park. The meetings were often tense and contentious.

Redfern Residents for Reconciliation organised a petition online and a website to support the use of the former Wilson Bros factory site by the Aboriginal community for productive purposes. The community's feelings about the site were mixed. Some felt the refurbishment of the Centre was a step that would lead to upgrading the area. Others felt it was the beginning of the end of The Block and the Aboriginal community's access to low cost housing. The Aboriginal Housing Company, on the other hand, wanted to speed up its housing development project for the area and get rid of what it sees as entrenched drug problems there.

Four community representatives were appointed by Council to the steering committee: Dennis Weatherall, Deborah Wall, Margaret Weir and Jan Flanagan. Each of these representatives held different views. Apart from campaigning for a Reconciliation Centre, Redfern Residents for Reconciliation lobbied for the preservation of the Block as a heritage item under the ATSI Heritage Protection Act 1984. With support from a Builder's Union, the group approached Lee Rhiannon, Greens MLC, NSW Parliament House, to put forward their view.

Fabulous photos of 2nd anniversary <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Galleries/RedfernCommunityCentre/>



Lily Shearer talking to Squatspace Tour of Beauty



Yaama Dhiyaan, at 255 Wilson Street, is a unique opportunity for people to experience the friendly service and high standards of food offered by Aunty Beryl Van-Oploo, and exciting young chef Mathew Cribb. It provides quality hospitality training in a commercial environment, to ensure students gain industry experience.

Functions/catering: Mathew 8399 0924 0423 864 352 mathew@yaama.com.au

Training course: Melinda 9202 9100 melinda.walker@rwa.nsw.gov.au

Yaama means 'welcome' and Dhiyaan means 'family and friends' in Aunty Beryl's Yuwaalaraay language of the Gamillaroi people of NW NSW.

Jobs for the mob

The Koori Job Ready course trains unemployed Aboriginal men - including some who've had difficult home lives - for jobs in the construction industry.

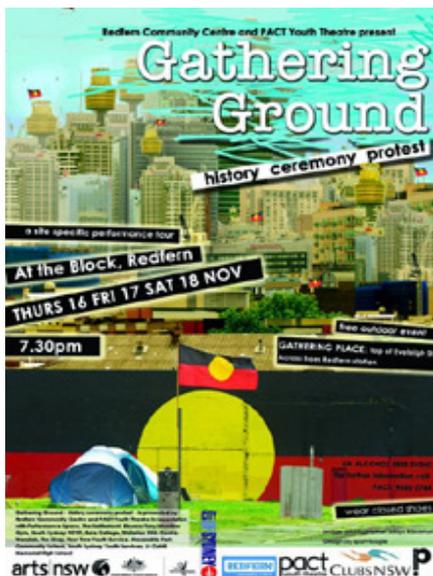
"Employment, I suppose, is our initial outcome. Gaining the things that come with employment, too. You know, wealth, self-esteem, a sense of who you are", says course manager Rohan Tobler.

Auskar Surbakti went on the job to meet some young graduates constructing more than just buildings: their futures. *Source: Living Black, SBS*



Jobs For The Mob (Living Black, SBS 11.5.09)

http://news.sbs.com.au/livingblack/jobs_for_the_mob_563656



Gathering Ground 2006 & 2008 with PACT Theatre
2010 is being planned with Moogahlin Performing Arts

FILMS

Films about, set in or with a connection to Redfern

1965 Living on the fringe [Giancarlo Manara ABC 54 min. b&w]

Politically incorrect but still a great portrait of Redfern in the 60s. Available at Waterloo Public Library.

1972 N'ingla a-na; Hungry for the land [Alessandro Cavadini & Carolyn Strachan 72 min. b&w]

The establishment of the Aboriginal Embassy, National Black Theatre, Aboriginal Legal Service and AMS.

1973 Basically black [ABC] Based on the Black theatre production at the Nimrod. Available at ABC Sales.

1973 Sharing the dream [Milena Damjanovic] A short film showing Carole Johnson's dance workshop. N?A

1974 A Time to dream [Bruce McGuiness] Black Theatre mob went to the first national Aboriginal arts seminar.

1976 Tjintu-pakani Sunrise awakening [Ande Reese] The 1975 six week training held at the Black Theatre.

1979 Murawina [Film Australia 11 min.] Part of 11-episode Our multicultural society 105 minutes

1981 Waterloo [AFC] No Aboriginal content, but provides context with Marg Barry's fight with Jack Munday in 1976 to prevent the government from clearing houses for tower blocks. Community consultation became a reality.

1984 Eora Corroboree [one of six films in Black futures]

Shows nearly 100 Aboriginal student actors, dancers, painters, musicians and storytellers at the Eora Centre. Bob Merritt works with students so they'll in turn do the same for their communities. Copies given to high schools and TAFE colleges.

1985 Short changed [Feature film 104 min.]

Script by Bob Merritt, 'magnifying the aims and objectives of the Eora Centre and its people'. Sylvia Scott & Mac Silva

1988 88.9 Radio Redfern [Film Australia 54 min.]

Radio Redfern provided continuous coverage of the protest in Sydney in 1988. Inspiring and moving footage of the events includes the tent embassy at Lady Macquarie's Chair, and over 30,000 people coming from all over Australia to march.

1988 Australia Daze [75 min.] Twenty-nine camera across Australia recorded the Aboriginal protest.

1988 Black futures [set of six] Includes Eora Corroboree

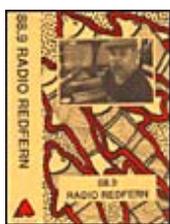
!988 The Bicentennial will not be televised [Paper Tiger TV & Radio Redfern]

1988 The black march [ABC 50 min.] This film was said to be a first with all Aboriginal crew and narrator.

1988 Boomalli: Five Koori Artists [Michael Riley]

1988 One people sing freedom [ABC 50 min.]

The demonstrations in Sydney, Hobart and Alice Springs. Pat Dodson, Tiga Bayles, Gary Foley & Redfern's Shane Phillips.



Radio Redfern



One people

1988 Tiga country [ABC Four Corners 46 min.]

Hopes in the bicentennial year for self-government, land claims and enterprise development. Focuses on Tiga Bayles, Chairman of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council Chairman, Redfern resident for 15-16 years.

1991 Special treatment; Locking up Aboriginal children. [Smith Street Films]

Visits rural towns as well as Redfern. Includes Lyall Munro and Shane Phillips.

1991 Poison [Michael Riley]

An award winning film based on the loss of lives of young Aboriginal teenage girls; refers to failure of western society.

1991 Walking the walk; social justice in everyday life. Margaret Vincent [Greenwich Video]

Margaret Vincent shows the Pollie Smith Centre, CDEP programs and the community garden.

1991 Cop It Sweet [Jennie Brockie ABC 1 hr]

An ABC film crew followed police officers as they went about their daily duties, revealing police culture in Redfern.

1996 The Eveleigh Railway Workshops: Oral History Video [Lucy Taksa Summer Hills Films]

1997 Box [Catriona McKenzie ABC 16 min. b&w]

Glenn Kelly is trained by legendary Aboriginal boxer Tony Mundine in his gym in Eveleigh Street.

1997 The Block [ABC Four Corners May 12]

1998 The street where you live [ABC Australian Story] Sister Pat and Sister Dorothy at The Gathering Place.

1999 Ali Golding [ABC Message Stick 7 November]

1999 Bob Maza talks about Basically Black [ABC Message Stick 31 October]

2000 Road [The Settlement / AFTRS]

Devised and acted by young Aboriginal people in Redfern. It follows the lives of people over one eventful night.



Poison



Road



2001 Steam Power: A History of the Eveleigh Railway Workshops [Summer Hill Media]

Funded by the Australian Research Council, produced in association with Lucy Taksa.

Short films produced by The Settlement Neighbourhood Centre with Penelope Nutt.

A group of young people spent a few years collaboratively writing story, script and soundtrack. They had no acting experience and filming was done spontaneously in the local neighbourhood. The soundtrack was also collaborative and original. Fight for Your Blood won best film at the Riverina Film festival, enabled the next short film Silent to be shot professionally.

2000 Kid Redfern [The Settlement 20 min.]

Kid is training for the local lightweight boxing championships. After a game of basketball with his best mate Tyrone he talks about how he could be making more money by selling drugs on the corner. Kid's life changes when he is not selected.

2001 Fight for your blood [The Settlement 20 min.]

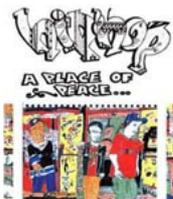
Kid struggles to train as his sister Liz has just walked out of home, and he recently lost his mate Tyrone in a car accident.

2001 Jetja Nai Medical Mob – Naomi Mayers [Film Australia 26 min.]

Naomi Mayers joined the Aboriginal Medical Service in 1972. She has been its Chief Executive Officer for many years.

2001 A place of peace 28 mins [The Settlement / ABC sales]

Workshops to write lyrics and record music for a CD tutored by well-known hip hop artists MC Trey and Bexs.



2002 Black Theatre & Philip McLaren, writer. [ABC Message Stick 11 August]

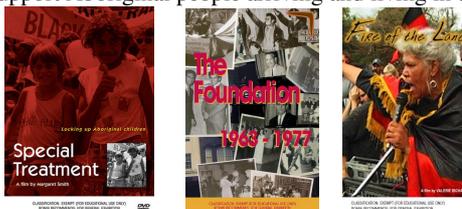
Philip McLaren was born in Redfern. He shares his experiences, his books and his life so far.

2002 Fire of the Land [AFTRS]

Valerie Richard's film of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy's peace camp in Victoria Park during the 2000 Olympic Games

2002 The Foundation 1963–1977 [Chili Films 25 min.]

The Foundation raised funds in order to support Aboriginal people arriving and living in the city.



2002 No fixed address; Redfern and Waterloo youth [SBS ICAM 23 May]

ICAM Producer, Julie Nimmo, talked to the kids who roam the streets find out some answers. Walkley Award

2003 Silent [Short Black Films]

Jolene (Angeline Penrith) never knew her Aboriginal mother and is unhappy with her life in the city with her abusive white father. She is helped by an Aboriginal boy Aaron (Desi Madden) to seek her identity and culture.

2004 B.L.A.C.K. - An Aboriginal Song of Hip Hop [Grant Leigh Saunders AFTRS 26 min.]

Wire MC's powerful songpoem. and an exploration of hip-hop with archival footage, news & Redfern personalities.

2004 Bob Maza [ABC Message Stick 13 August]

Interviews with family and friends.

2004 Col Davis, Street preacher [ABC Compass]

2004 Fuse [AFTRS] An example of a film utilising the agency *Lights Camera Action*. Shai Pittman played Gii.

2004 Redfern rocks [The Settlement & UTS]

Young people talk about The Block.; with a strong sense of community and family.

2005 A History of the Political Struggle: A Personal Point of View by Dr Chicka Dixon [Jumbunna UTS]

Jumbunna Annual Lecture. DVD collaboration with Jason De Santolo.



2005 Another day [music video] Won Best Music Video at St Kilda Festival in 2006, shot in and around the Block.

2005 The Making of Another day [ABC Message Stick]

An inside look at the music program at the Settlement with Chris O'Young.

2005 Mabo [Phillip McLaren [Metroscreen Lester Bostock Scheme 7 min.]

Violent electrical storms across Australia connect hundreds of young Aboriginal people who set off on a graffiti awareness campaign ... one word in beautiful copperplate ... washed away by the next rainfall, but quickly replaced.

2005 Surf dreaming [ABC Message Stick]

Paul Morgan: The idea was to give the kids an experience of a really fun time but also build on their skills and resilience.

July 2006 Broken Borders [ABC Messagestick]

Explores issues of past and present migration of indigenous people who make the transition from country to city.

2006 Gathering ground Willurei Kirkbright-Burney's video of kids talking about the Block was shown at Gathering Ground. 'How they feel about the area, what's great about it and how they'd feel if the Block didn't exist.'

2006 Night time out [UTS]

An MA student's 20 minute doco following the pilot of Midnight Basketball. Screened at RCC 15th September.

2006 The prophet of Redfern [ABC 30 min.]

ABC TV's Compass program was given access to film Ted Kennedy's funeral ceremony at the Block in 2005.

2007 Back Seat [Bit of Black Business 5min.]

Actors include Redfern people such as Lily Shearer and Aletha Penrith. Janine meets her biological family.

2007 Blind date [Metroscreen Lester Bostock scheme] Rhubee Neale has a part in this.

2007 Redfern, Kempsey, Aborigine, Me [Sonya Brindle & Eora]

Sonya Brindle talks about life growing up in Caroline Street as daughter of Ken Brindle, and her life's pathways.

2007 Between the lines; the initiation of Adam Hill [Esther Lozano & Monica Garriga]

Adam goes on a journey of identity through his music, paintings and political activism. Three scenes are shot in Redfern.

2007 Boxing Day [feature film]

Co-written by Richard Green & Kriv Stenders. Richard was nominated Best Actor in the IF Awards, Kriv Best Producer.

2007 It's black, it's white [Zoom films 2 min.]

Heard of Babukuieria? This mockumentary by Rowena Welsh-Jarrett and Angeline Penrith turns the tables on the Brits, shipping them back home, and commenting on their terrorism.

2007 Max-a-milion [Short Black Films] A gangsta film, Redfern style, with Uncle Max. [check date]

2007 The real neighbours [Wai Yuen Chong University of Sydney 3 min.]

A student documentary about Sonya Brindle, including the sadness of the death of her brother in custody. University prize.

2007 Words from the city [AFC]

One of the artists is Wire MC, during the Survival Day celebrations of Yabun, hanging out at home .. across several months.

2007 The writers' train [ABC Radio Eye] <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/radioeye/features/2007/train/alicurung/>

One of the writers travelling on the Ghan through the NT is Philip McClaren

2008 Black Diggers ANZAC Day March [Maling Productions / NITV] Live broadcast hosted by Lola Forrester.

2008 Deadly tales

Thirteen students from Mt Carmel joined with 13 students from Kelso primary School in Bathurst to participate in a pilot episode of a brand new children's TV series being produced by Sydney-based film company, Giant Vision.

2008 Dim crims [Short Black Films]

Funny azz film by Nathan Smith, Nayden, Latai, Tremaine, Terrence, and a bunch of other people in Redfern & Waterloo.

2008 Gordon Syron at the Eveleigh workshop [NITV Yaaarnz]

Shows Gordon speaking about some of his paintings, Ray Minniecon commenting and the Black Diggers' March.

2008 Wanja the warrior dog [Angie Abdilla, Tom Zubrycki]

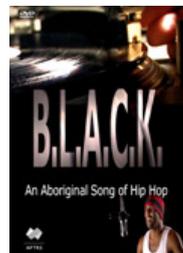
Aunty Barb's dog was well-known for chasing police. Stories by people who knew her. begins to explore policing issues.



Richard Green in Boxing day



Gathering Ground 2006



2008 Gathering Ground [Eora, in production] Watch out on NITV, Messagesticks 2009?

2008 Woodford Bay Memorial Ceremony 'Journey of the Spirit' DVD & Study Guide

Produced by Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation and a lot of Redfern people through the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

2009 MyFace [Metroscreen / Short Black Films] for TropJr February 22

2009 Ralph directed by Deborah Mailman, starring Madeleine Madden, Stephen Carr



SSH Nov08

2009 The keeping place [Amber Wright untitled, ongoing] The historical significance of the Syron's struggle

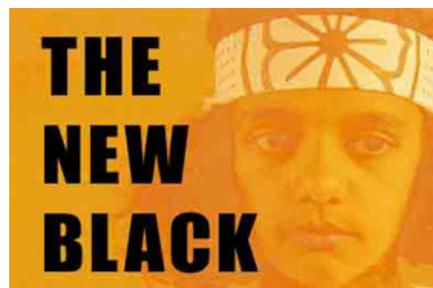
2009 The selling of a black fella's dreaming [Rebecca Ingram 60 min.]

Rebecca Ingram filmed Gordon and Elaine Syron and their art gallery for three years. She followed them back to Redfern.

Premiered at [MessAge sTicKs FILM FesTivAl](#) 2009

7 short films included *The farm*, *Auntie Maggie & the Womba Wakgun* and *Ralph*.

Redfern talent included producers Deborah Mailman & Lisa Duff, and actors Madeleine Madden, Stephen Carr, Reagan Carr, Angeline Penrith and Wirrabee Penrith.



B.L.A.C.K WireMC

Silent

Helen and Troy

Poolin' around

Kid Redfern

Fight for your blood

Max-a-million

Desiree's decision

Dream

It's black, it's white

Suffering and smiling

C o n t a c t V i n c e n t M c M a n u s
s h o r t b l a c k f i l m s
a t g m a i l . c o m

Short films available on YouTube



Redfern rocks



Sonya Brindle



The Settlement
81st anniversary gala



Settlement showreel

We have over 70 YouTube favourites



1972 N'ingla a-na clips



1992 Redfern Address



2007 The Block story



2007 Rock the Block



2007 Babana



2008 Convergence



2008 Apology



Short Black Films

music



Jesse and the Clevo Street Boys sing *The Block* | Rhubee Neale | Nadeena Dixon



WATCH and LISTEN on YouTube

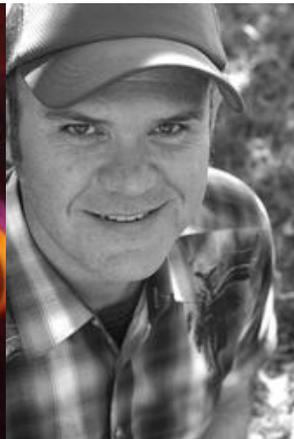


Hip-hop *Place of peace* | *Another day* by RBL | *Making Another day* | Richie Jarrett at RCC

Listen on MySpace etc



Nadeena Dixon



Perry Keyes

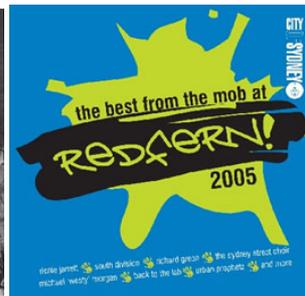
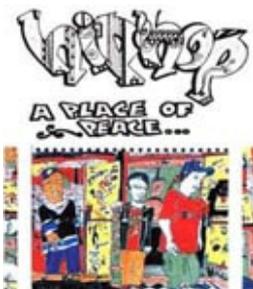


Stiff Gins



WireMC

Look out for these at the back of your friends' cupboards – they aren't available to buy.



Hip hop is modern day corroboree ... still singing and dancing and telling stories about the immediate environment. Wire MC

Going shopping for some new music? These CDs show how Redfern rocks.



Redfern Neighbourhood Centre 158 Regent Street
\$15.00 donation goes to music program



\$15 at A.D.A. Café



check Koori Radio



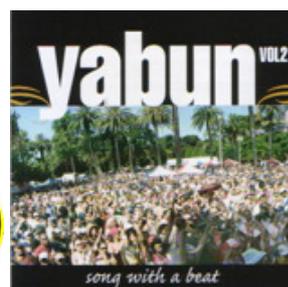
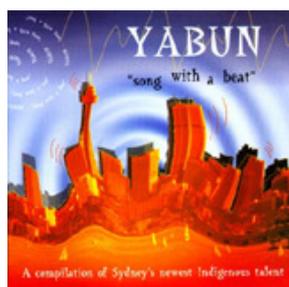
\$25 at ABC Shops, record shops and itunes



<http://www.marlenecummins.com/>



from Redfern Records, on sale at JB HiFi stores



Yabun 1 & Yabun 2006 at Redfern Park. Go to Koori Radio's online shop.

INTERVIEWS ABOUT REDFERN PEOPLE AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE

- ✓ Shane Phillips was interviewed by Stuart Rintoul for *The wailing; A national black oral history* p 325-329
- ✓ Polly Smith was interviewed with Auntie Joyce by Stuart Rintoul for *The wailing; A national black oral history*. pp 19 - 26 William Heinemann, 1993
- ✓ Hilton Donovan was a Vibe teacher of the month
- ✓ Ken Brindle wrote an article in New Dawn 1970
- ✓ Lester Bostock was interviewed for the National Film and Sound Archive 2007 and ABC Verbatim
- ✓ Noreen Carr was interviewed for ABC Radio Eye - growing up in Caroline Street in the 60s and 70s.
- ✓ Lily Shearer and Ray Jackson are in the 2016 Archive Project
- ✓ Travis Toomer, physiotherapist, was interviewed by Paulette Whitton for Black Chat on Koori Radio
- ✓ Richard Green was interviewed by Kriv Stenders on YouTube
- ✓ Wire_MC was interviewed for Local Noise in 2006, and in the film *Word on the street*
- ✓ Gordon and Elaine Syron were featured in Good Weekend's *2 of us* 24/1/ 2009
- ✓ Brenda Croft is in *Life in Gadigal* country available online at Gadigal Information Service – Koori Radio's online shop

OUR WISHLIST for INTERVIEWS

- Joan Honeysett
- Millie Ingram – 50s and 60s in Redfern
- Bowie Hickey
- Paul Coe
- Darug people - Richard Green ...
- Auntie Val
- Penrith family
- Munro family
- Dennis Weatherall
- Barbara Stacey
- Bonnie and Margaret
- Edna Craigie
- Brucie Ellis
- Barbara Greenlp-Davis (lived on Louis St)
- John
- Lani
- Jim McLaren
- Philip McLaren
- Allen and Charles Madden
- Naomi Mayers
- Eddie Neuman
- Sol Belleair
- Norma - community worker at Darlo school
- Richard Pacey
- Rita & John Smith (top Louis St),
- Lyn Thompson
- Neil Thorne (teaching aid Darlo)
- Gordon Briscoe
- Ben Butcher, original priest with Ted Kennedy

Do you have more ideas? Let us know.

When there is some funding we look forward to more interviewing being done.

INTERVIEWS IN PROGRESS

Philip McLaren

Philip McLaren was born in Redfern. He worked as an artist/set designer/illustrator with Channel 7 while he studied at East Sydney Art College at night. He spent twelve years overseas. In 1982 he started his own business, McLaren Concept. He is the author of six novels. His second book was set in Redfern. His latest novel 'Utopia' was released in French, in 2007. His UTS PhD thesis was 'The Portrayal of Aboriginal Australians in Fiction'. He is currently writing 'Black silk' set in an Aboriginal Legal Centre.



I was born in our house at 32 George Street, Redfern (a home birth) and attended Cleveland Street School until aged ten when we moved to the Parramatta area. We are the Smiths, Leslies, Cains and McLaren's from Coonabarabran. My dad played for the Redfern All Blacks for years until he was 40-something (Jack McLaren), my uncle Isaac Bates did as well. My mum and dad moved there from Coonabarabran around 1938 to be near my grandmother who lived in William Street for 50 years from about 1927. My older sister lived in Caroline Street with Ruby Langford well before it became known as the Block.

Sylvia Scott



Listen to Sylvia talking with her niece Suzanne Ingram in 2008 on Awaye.

Transcript coming.

Sylvia Scott was also featured in Time Out in 2008

Louisa Ingram

Congratulations to Suzanne Ingram, winner of the NSW Indigenous History Fellowship 2009-2010 to research Louisa Ingram's biography including her activism in Redfern.

Louisa Ingram is second from the right in 'that' photo with children Isaac Ingram, Esther Ingram, Phillip Ingram, and holding daughter Olive Ingram.



Richard Philips / Dick Blair - interviewed by Margo Beasley, City of Sydney 's oral historian

Sons of Langus Phillips and Gladys Bellea, three brothers from the Tweed village of Fingal, took up boxing in Sydney – Richard, Aubry and Clarence. Richard, born on August 23 1937, had his first pro bout in August 1963, hanging his gloves up in 1975. He fought under the name Dick 'Blair' to honour his mother. Both Dick and Aub worked with the AHC in its early days. Dick, now a pastor in Redfern, is famous for these words.

'The whole aim of the project is to bring Aboriginal people together so that we can live in the way we want to live and share what we have with one another. Many of us are now living in slums and pigsties because we cannot afford the high rents. It is difficult for us to get jobs because we have no skills and because white people don't want to employ us. We can't be proud to live in these conditions. Rut when we are living together we will be able to help each other to learn skills and to get jobs and, most importantly, we will be proud of our houses and proud of our community. Our children will be able to grow up with more opportunities than we had and they too will be proud of their community and proud of themselves. All we ask is that we be given a chance to prove that it can work.'

The Redfern Housing Project, Dawn - Feb 1974 <http://www.laatsis.gov.au/dawn/docs/v22/s09/3.pdf>

Redfern – places of significance – this is a draft only, send us your ideas.

Starting point Eveleigh workshops, 1880 – 1988, now Carriageworks, temp Keeping Place
[biggest employer of Aboriginal people, during late C19th and the early part of the C20th - in addition to other industries.]

255	Wilson St	Yaama Dhiyaan / another?
333	Abercrombie St	Eora
276	Abercrombie St	RAC
231	Abercrombie St	Mudgin-gal
BLOCK Caroline / Eveleigh / Vine / Louis Streets		
85	Eveleigh St	1973 Murawina opened in terrace ...new building .. 2003 RPS
1	Vine Street	Elouera Gym / cnr Louis 3, 11? Vine St Aunty Polly Smith Centre
29-53	Hugo St	Redfern Community Centre
17	Edward St	The Settlement
135	Cleveland /Edward	Gadigal Information Service / Koori Radio 1993 - ?
104	Lawson St	AHC Aboriginal Housing Company
106	Lawson St	Tribal Warrior till 2007
25	Cope St	Radio Redfern 1984 – 1989/92 Koori
27-31	Cope St	Black theatre 1974-1977 Radio 2008
35	Cope St	Wyanga, purchased 2003 ILC
88	Renwick St	Aboriginal Dance Theatre (ADTR) behind Black Theatre
83	Regent St	Empress Hotel - patrols, All Blacks origins - now closed
107A	Regent St	Wyanga previously?
111	Regent St	Tribal Warrior 2008
142	Regent St	Aboriginal Legal Service 1970s
145	Regent St	Redfern Records
171	Regent St	Aboriginal Medical Service 1970s
181	Regent St	Black theatre 1972 – 1973 ??? 174?
199	Regent St	House rented for Bob Maza & family here for Black Theatre Eora Centre started here
1	Botany St ??	Clifton Hotel – now closed – check location
36	Turner St	AMS [fronts George St]
137	Redfern St	A.D.A. Cafe [Bush Berri Gallery / Survival Espresso Bar 2007]
71 ish	Redfern St	Redfern Park - All Blacks, Keating's 1993 speech, near lagoon
18	George st	Aboriginal Children's Services
36	George St	Land Council
75	George St	Crossroads
199	Cleveland St	Boomalli 1987 - ? [Was legal servicel next door at one time?]
Cleveland Paddocks		
180	George St	respite from town restrictions early C18 NCIE Nat Centre Indigenous Exc (RPS till 2002) Murawina
61	Regent St	FAA 1973-1977
810	George St	FAA 1963-1973
49B	Wellington Road	Mac Silva Centre
770	Elizabeth St	Koori Collection, Waterloo Public Library

to do - Children's Breakfast Program Shepherd St, Gamarada preschool,



I spy photography project



name?



Raelene's design
Out of Redfern 2005



Smoking St Vincent's Church
2006



Black market



Margaret Rock the Block 06



Children's photography
exhibited



Stiff Gins remembering
Mum Shir!



The Settlement 81st Gala



Candle light vigil 2005



Community Centre birthday



Ningenah, Sam Hookey
Survival Day 2005



The Goldings



Uncle Max 1998



Clean Up Australia Day 2005



Bill Simon & John



Lights, Camera, Action;



young Redfern talents



DPS dancers 2000



Restaurant partners, Beryl
Van-Oploo (L) and Janice
Kirsch (R) with Aunty Connie



NAIDOC market day



Auntie Joyce's farewell



National Day of Action



Govt apology 2008

This is a sample of some of the photos on the website.

Do you have any photos you would like to share? Can you tell us any more names of people?