

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PROGRAMMING

LCAM
LAKE
MACQUARIE
CITY
ART
GALLERY



BEYOND THE DOT

TIMELINE

-
- 2000 ● OF THIS TIME:
CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL ARTISTS
WORKING IN THE HUNTER
 - 2001 ● AWABAKAL DREAMING
WATER YARNS
 - 2002 ● BOORAGUL WETLANDS ART PROJECT
 - 2003 ● SONGLINES NOW!
THE MEETING PLACE
 - 2004 ● PASSAGE
 - 2005 ● ON SIDE
OLD STORIES THROUGH NEW EYES
 - 2006 ● STORIES: COUNTRY, KNOWLEDGE
SPIRIT & POLITICS
CASE STUDY FOR NAVA NATIONAL
INDIGENOUS PROTOCOLS WORKSHOPS
JOINT PRESENTATION: NAVA
INDIGENOUS PROTOCOLS WORKSHOPS
FACILITATION: DESIGN AND INSTALLATION
OF ABORIGINAL DISPLAY CASE AT LMCC
MANAGEMENT: COMMISSION OF
ABORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR LMCC
CHAMBERS
 - 2007 ● NAIDOC TIMELINE: LOOKING FORWARD,
LOOKING BLACK
 - 2009 ● YAPANG MARRUMA:
MAKING OUR WAY
(STORIES OF THE STOLEN)
 - 2011 ● A POSSUM SKIN CLOAK BY THE LAKE
BRIDGING CULTURES
 - 2012 ● BEYOND THE DOT
STENCILS PAST, STENCILS LAST
 - 2013 ● PROJECT: BIRABAHN (AND THRELKELD)

2014

- NSW REGIONAL VISUAL ARTS
ABORIGINAL EMERGING LEADERSHIP
PROGRAM

YOUR COLLECTION: TODAY'S PAPER

2015

- A TRIBUTE: UNCLE JIM RIDGEWAY

(IN)VISIBLE: THE FIRST PEOPLES
AND WAR

LORE & ORDER

2016

- JUDY WATSON: A CASE STUDY



OUR COMMITMENT

As a cultural institution, the gallery plays a key role in supporting cultural practice throughout the region. A specific feature of this role is acknowledging and engaging with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community as the First Peoples, and being able to provide a place where Aboriginal voices can be heard and culture presented.

To this end, in January 2000, as the newly appointed Gallery Director, I engaged Lake Macquarie City Council's (LMCC) Aboriginal Community Development Officer at the time, Dawn Townsend, as an exhibition consultant. Since we wanted the emphasis to be on visual arts and community, we called a meeting with artists and Aboriginal representatives from all of the service and educational organisations in the region.

At that meeting, the Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) was born, and began to focus on working with the gallery on Aboriginal programming and projects. Three of the original members of the group – Douglas Archibald, Selena Archibald and Donna Biles Fernando – still work with the gallery, along with long-term members Louise Charles and Scott Luschwitz and more recent members Professor John Maynard, Nicole Chaffey and Tara Standing. They have been joined by many members of the community throughout the past 16 years – some for the period of a specific project and others on a long-term basis – all contributing significantly to the program.

Every aspect of the gallery's Aboriginal programming is discussed with the Aboriginal Reference Group and decisions are made on relevance, protocols and quality. Together we cover many areas of expertise, which makes for informed and professional assessments and a healthy partnership. Our relationship is about working side by side to provide knowledge of, and nurture respect for, traditional and contemporary Aboriginal cultural practice and issues. It is also about building pride within the Aboriginal community through skills development and presentation.

The gallery's philosophy clearly embraces Aboriginal programming as one of its key drivers and over the past 16 years, together with the ARG, we have undertaken more than 25 Aboriginal-specific projects representing over \$500,000 of grants and Council funds. It is a privilege to work with the community through the ARG to develop such significant projects as *yapang marruma: making our way (stories of the Stolen)* (2009), *A Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake* (2011), *A Tribute to Uncle Jim Ridgeway* (2014/15), *(in)visible: the First Peoples and War* (2015), *Lore & Order* (2015) and most recently *Judy Watson: a case study* (2016). Our commitment extends to a KPI in Council's Management Plan of at least 60% of exhibitions including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander content and the gallery has established a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander works on paper sub-collection.

We have many more projects in the pipeline and we look forward to the shared journey ahead.

Debbie Abraham

Gallery Director

THE RELATIONSHIP

The Aboriginal Reference Group and gallery continue to work towards a common examination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art expression.

The relationship between the institution and the local Aboriginal community began in 2000, presenting the opportunity for a dialogue that established a clear vision of reciprocal intent, recognition, respect and pride. The value of the relationship is cemented in our actions and is evinced in the excellence of the gallery's Aboriginal exhibition content, community workshops, education programs and recent collection focus.

The core of our ethos is a long-term commitment to local and national Aboriginal art, artists and education. This is achieved through mutual participation and truth telling; looking beyond the dot – beyond a commercially viable and audience-guaranteed view of Aboriginal exhibition content, to one that is about community and integrity.

Donna Biles Fernando

on behalf of the Aboriginal Reference Group

Terms of Reference

Together the gallery and the Aboriginal Reference Group have agreed upon the following Terms of Reference under which to work in partnership:

- acknowledge the role the local Aboriginal* community and Elders, past, present and future, play in the cultural life of the region
- ensure protocols are adhered to and promoted within the gallery and community context
- develop projects that invite and encourage members of the local Aboriginal community to share their stories in their voices through visual art projects and programming
- increase participation of Aboriginal people in the arts
- educate and promote respect for Aboriginal traditions and community life to the broader community
- promote Aboriginal visual arts, craft and design
- provide professional development and employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people
- provide opportunities for cultural partnerships
- record contemporary Aboriginal culture
- confer on the acquisition of works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists for the gallery's collection.

* Although the Terms of Reference relate to Aboriginal people, the ARG have worked with the Torres Strait Islander community as consultants and artists throughout the program.



18 MARCH – 24 APRIL 2016

Judy Watson: a case study

This exhibition was the fourth in the annual case study series. Following on from the success of previous years' projects, featuring Anne Zahalka, Janet Laurence and Ben Quilty respectively, the gallery brought together strong works by leading Australian contemporary artist Judy Watson. Curated specifically for senior school students, the selection comprised iconic pieces from the artist's practice including two major works from the gallery's collection. With the focus on the HSC curriculum, Kate Caddey conceived a comprehensive artist case study publication to complement the exhibition.

A gallery project curated by emerging Aboriginal curator Nicole Chaffey, in consultation with artist and educator Kate Caddey, supported by Arts NSW.



4 SEPTEMBER – 11 OCTOBER 2015

Lore & Order

This exhibition explored the complex relationship between Birabahn and the Reverend Threlkeld, based around Ebenezer (now Toronto) as one of the first Christian missions in Lake Macquarie. The narrative extended to mission life and included archival materials, contemporary artworks (both borrowed and commissioned) and local stories from Aboriginal Elders forced to live under the *Aborigines Protection Act* in New South Wales.

A key audience engagement component of the project was the *Ration Bags*, an installation of 240 ceramic ration bags made by over 200 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school students and community members during a series of workshops. Together they represent all the missions, stations and reserves in New South Wales.

Artists included: Margaret Adams, Roy Kennedy, Lewis John (Johnny) Knox, the late Jim Ridgeway, Tara Standing, the late Jim Stanley, Judy Watson, the late HJ Wedge, Alison Williams.

A gallery project curated by Donna Biles Fernando with the Aboriginal Reference Group. Funded by the State Government through NSW Aboriginal Regional Arts Fund.

Exhibition installation view featuring the *Ration Bags* project produced by Hunter and Central Coast Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school students and community members.



27 MARCH – 24 MAY 2015

(in)visible: the First Peoples and War

War is a complex, difficult and emotional subject. This exhibition project considered war from the perspective of Aboriginal men and women: from the frontier violence that informs ongoing conflict and contemporary culture, to the ramifications of more recent world wars. It reflected on military service, the Anzac story and the post-war experience. Aboriginal soldiers endured a great deal of inequality, particularly when rewards were being distributed to returned servicemen in recognition for fighting for their country. Through the work of contemporary emerging, mid-career and established Aboriginal artists, and including a local community project, this exhibition recognised and responded to some confronting truths.

Artists included: Tony Albert, Julie Gough, Amala Groom, Anna Liezeit, Archie Moore, Judy Watson, Jason Wing, Vernon Ah Kee, Megan Cope, Jennifer Herd, Alair Pambegan.

A gallery project curated by Yhonnie Scarce and Meryl Ryan in consultation with the Aboriginal Reference Group, supported by Arts NSW.

Exhibition installation view featuring *Babana Bullets* (foreground) and works by Tony Albert.



5 DECEMBER 2014 – 1 FEBRUARY 2015

A Tribute: Uncle Jim Ridgeway Djirang Birrbay, Warrimay guri-guba Djarii*

Well-respected Aboriginal Elder and founding member of the Aboriginal Reference Group Clifford James (Jim) Ridgeway sadly passed away in 2014 after battling with illness.

Uncle Jim achieved highly at everything to which he turned his hand, from amateur boxing and award-winning country-and-western vocals, to the visual arts and language study. He contributed much to the fabric of the community. This exhibition was organised in consultation with Uncle Jim's family and the Aboriginal Reference Group to acknowledge that contribution and the calibre of Uncle Jim's work. He will be much missed.

*A proud Birrbay, Warrimay man from Taree.

A gallery project curated in consultation with Louise Ridgeway and family and the Aboriginal Reference Group, supported by Arts NSW.

Exhibition installation
view featuring
works by the late
Uncle Jim Ridgeway.



2014 – 2015

NSW Regional Visual Arts Aboriginal Emerging Leadership Program

The gallery, in consultation with the Aboriginal Reference Group, and in partnership with Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, Lismore Regional Gallery and Western Plains Cultural Centre, developed the NSW Regional Visual Arts Leadership Program (AELP) to support career pathways for Aboriginal arts workers in regional New South Wales. The program offered financial support for professional development across two years, with leadership and management sessions, state and national conferences and networking opportunities. Each of the selected Aboriginal mentees worked closely with colleagues in one of the four regional galleries on a high-level internship program. This innovative and ambitious program, together with the expertise of the participants, also positively impacted on the culture of regional galleries across all areas of activity. The mentees launching the program were Nicole Chaffey with Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery; Shari Lett with Goulburn Regional Art Gallery; Gail Naden with Western Plains Cultural Centre; and Alison Williams with Lismore Regional Gallery.

The AELP is supported by the State Government through Arts NSW and the Federal Government through Indigenous Visual Arts Industry support.

Front row, L-R: M&G NSW Aboriginal Projects Coordinator Melissa Abraham; Nicole Chaffey and LMCAG Director Debbie Abraham.
 Back row, L-R: Alison Williams; Gail Naden; Shari Lett; Arts NSW Senior Aboriginal Cultural Development Officer Sharni Adamietz; M&G NSW Aboriginal Projects Manager Steve Miller; Museum of Contemporary Art's Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs Keith Munro and Regional Arts NSW Aboriginal Arts Development Officer Anthony Walker.



24 OCTOBER – 30 NOVEMBER 2014

Your Collection: Today's Paper

In 2010, in consultation with the Aboriginal Reference Group, the gallery developed an exciting new focus collection of works on paper by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. Since then, Lake Macquarie Art Gallery Society and the gallery have been building the sub-collection with their respective purchases of contemporary works by Freddie Timms, Eubena Nampitjin, Kathleen Paddoon, Ningie Nangala, Vernon Ah Kee, Thelma Bartman and Stella O'Halloran.

The exhibition *Today's Paper* officially launched this evolving new sub-collection, offering Lake Macquarie residents an opportunity to boast of their gallery's recent acquisitions alongside others in the collection by well-known artists such as Douglas Archibald, Jonathan Jones, Jason Wing and Judy Watson.

A gallery project coordinated by Meryl Ryan and Rob Cleworth, in consultation with the Aboriginal Reference Group, supported by Arts NSW.

Jason Wing
Captain James Crook 2013
ed. 10/20
lithograph on paper
printer: Cicada Press
Lake Macquarie City Art
Gallery, Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander works
on Paper, purchased 2013
© the artist



8 FEBRUARY – 24 MARCH 2013

Project: Birabahn (and Threlkeld)

This exhibition marked the formal launch of a collaborative project to be developed over a couple of years by the Aboriginal Reference Group which culminated in the 2015 project *Lore & Order*. As a starting point, the project drew on the relationship between the Aboriginal leader Birabahn and the Reverend Threlkeld in the early 19th century. Between them, Birabahn and Thelkeld interpreted some of the local Aboriginal language and culture into written English, forming the basis for much current research. The display featured an excerpt of the film of the performance of *Ngarrama: lakeside dialogue between Birabahn, Threlkeld and ...*, written by Ray Kelly with Brian Joyce in consultation with the community, and filmed by John Kirk for the University of Newcastle. The play explores the first contact history of Lake Macquarie through historic and contemporary research and relationships.

A gallery project directed by the Aboriginal Reference Group, supported by Arts NSW.

Performance of
Ngarrama...
at Lake Macquarie
City Art Gallery,
November 2006
Left to right: Brian
Joyce, Rod Smith and
Ursula Yovich.



13 JULY – 21 OCTOBER 2012

Stencils Past, Stencils Last

In preparation for the exhibition, acclaimed street artist Mini Graff worked in the gallery as artist in residence. In a series of workshops coordinated by the Aboriginal Reference Group, Graff together with Aboriginal artist Jason Wing, brought extensive knowledge of street art practice to a group of Aboriginal artists of all ages. Together the group produced artworks using printmaking and stencil-art techniques for this exhibition. As a collection, the works strongly reflected contemporary Aboriginal issues and culture while acknowledging the long history of stencil art as a significant traditional practice.

Artists included: Douglas Archibald, Selena Archibald, Ben Coulthart, Bobby Coulthart, Daniel Coulthart, Caleb Eggins, Isaiah Eggins, Jamane Eggins, Nyoaka Eggins, Shi-Anne Eggins, Mini Graff, Scott Luschwitz, Tabytha Luschwitz, Tazmyne Luschwitz, Tyrah-Ruby Luschwitz, Jason Wing.

A gallery project coordinated by the Aboriginal Reference Group. The Artist & Curator in Residence Grant Program was supported by the Copyright Agency Limited's Cultural Fund, managed by Museums & Galleries NSW.

A primary school group touring the exhibition installation of *Stencils Past, Stencils Last* featuring Scott Luschwitz's wall work *Firestick Farming* in the foreground.



10 FEBRUARY – 13 MAY 2012

Beyond the Dot 12 years of Aboriginal programming

Since 2000, the gallery and its Aboriginal Reference Group have worked together to promote, support and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the region. This exhibition recognised the significant achievement of that collaboration between 2000–12, through selected works from landmark exhibitions such as *A Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake* (2011), *yapang marruma: making our way (stories of the Stolen)* (2009), *Stories: country, knowledge, spirit & politics* (2006) and *Passage* (2004).

Artists included: Douglas Archibald, Mervyn Bishop, Corrie Fullard, Jeanette James, Jonathan Jones and the late Jim Ridgeway. Works were accessed from the gallery's collection or through artists and/or lenders. Photographic images as featured in *yapang marruma*, were also on display courtesy Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

A gallery project curated by Donna Biles Fernando and emerging curator Maryanne Walmsley, supported by Arts NSW.



APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2011

Bridging Cultures

Bridging Cultures brought together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students under the guidance of artists Douglas Archibald and Joanna Davies with teacher Carol Carter. Through an extended artist-in-residence program, students were able to engage directly with artists while learning more about Aboriginal culture and art. Members of the project team were also able to exchange knowledge and skills.

As a result of the project, four ceramic artworks are now installed in the grounds of Whitebridge High School. They are steeped in meaning as well as being technically accomplished, proving the worth of the project and the processes employed.

The most valuable outcome was the way in which the Aboriginal students wholeheartedly re/claimed their culture, and how their parents and carers supported the aims of the project. Processes employed and the final works engendered pride and respect for the students, their families and the schools as well as a sense of accomplishment by the individual students for their achievements.

Project Partners: The gallery, Aboriginal Reference Group and Whitebridge High School.

Project Team: artists, Douglas Archibald and Joanna Davies; coordinator, Carol Carter; administration, Debbie Abraham; education consultant, Cherie Johnson; teachers, Linda Alcorn, Stephnie Jan, Hayley Terry, Sam Dyball; support, Edward Milan, Michael North, LMCC Civilake.

Whitebridge High School Students: Aboriginal students from Years 7–11, Year 11 Visual Arts and Year 10 Ceramics.

Primary Schools: Charlestown East Public School, Charlestown South Public School, and Kahibah Public School.

A gallery project supported through Arts NSW's ConnectEd Program.

Artists Douglas Archibald and Joanna Davies installing the Year 10 Ceramics class' sculpture.



1 OCTOBER 2010 – 6 MARCH 2011

A Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake

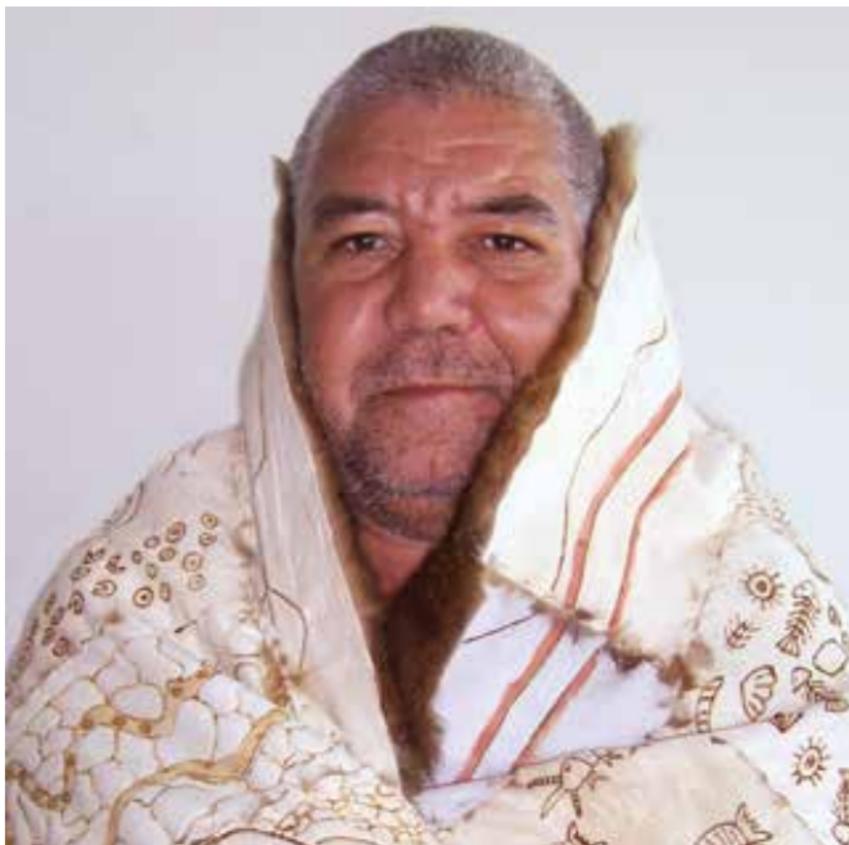
A Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake was a significant cultural revival project developed in partnership with the Aboriginal Reference Group and local Aboriginal communities. The tradition of using possum skins for making cloaks, waistbands, belts, armbands and headbands was long practised by Aboriginal people across eastern Australia, including people from this region, as evidenced by *The Hunter River Cloak* (c.1850), held in the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, USA.

The idea for the project was sparked when the Aboriginal Reference Group and gallery were approached by artists Lee Darroch and Vicki Couzens, and curator Amanda Renolds in May 2009. They wanted to conduct a workshop at the gallery to impart some of the skills they have developed over the previous 12 years, with the intention of reviving this important cultural practice in the region. The workshop, run by Darroch and Maree Clarke, occurred in late 2009.

The Aboriginal Reference Group added skills gained during the workshop to its own collective knowledge base to embark on *A Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake*, over a six-month period. To ensure the protocols were maintained, they set strict parameters for the theme, process, design and community consultation. The overall theme was 'water', inspired by the location of the gallery and the site's significance to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

A process diary documented the cloak's week-to-week evolution as well as discussions, stories and decision-making processes by the group.

Selena Archibald, Donna Biles Fernando and Teagan Goolmeer discussing placement of pelts for *The Lake Cloak*.



The Lake Cloak comprises 55 pelts. The central six panels pay tribute to Awabakal water-based stories. They are surrounded by personal water stories from over 30 Aboriginal participants from many nations, and embraced by an image of Biambi extended across the collar.

An important aspect of the project was education: 10 schools (150 students) were involved in workshops during which they made possum skin armbands and designed a pelt for exhibition. A comprehensive education resource was developed along with two travelling suitcases for use by schools and libraries. A DVD was also produced through the ABC's Open Program.

The exhibition travelled to the Australian Museum, Sydney, from 18 March – 31 July where it was seen by over 50,000 people.

Project Partners: LMCAG, Aboriginal Reference Group, Lake Macquarie City Libraries.

Project Team: artist, Douglas Archibald; project coordinator, Donna Biles Fernando; education consultants, Teagan Goolmeier, Cherie Johnson.

Community Participants: Douglas Archibald, Selena Archibald, Trevor Archibald, Sue Archibald, Amy Buesnel, Gary Biles, Donna Biles Fernando, Laura Fernando, Brittany Biles, Indiana Biles, Bud Gibson, Dawn Townsend, Cherie Johnson, Fred Goolmeier, Neil Goolmeier, Teagan Goolmeier, Louise Charles, Kim Charles, Scott Luschwitz, Diane Luschwitz, Tasmynne Luschwitz, Tyrah-Ruby Luschwitz, Sonya Erskine, Sue Stewart, Elizabeth Deaves, India Latimore, Kash Latimore, Simone Place (Mantor), Adam Ridgeway, Sharon Carrette, Alex Brennan, Lachlan Brennan, Sophie Brennan, Christine Everitt, Tamara Drylie, Dhani Drylie, Yinaa Drylie, Nirikai Drylie, Jen Balancire.

Schools: Booragul Public School, Dungog High School, Hinton Public School, Hunter School of Performing Arts, Rathmines Public School, St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Tomaree High School, Wallsend South Public School, Whitebridge High School, Belmont High School (attended workshop only).

A gallery project supported through Arts NSW's ConnectEd Program and NSW Library Development Grant Program.



31 JANUARY – 15 MARCH 2009

yapang marruma: making our way (stories of the Stolen)

yapang marruma was initiated by the Aboriginal Reference Group soon after the National Apology to the Stolen Generations in February 2008, and its display was to mark the first anniversary of the Apology.

'yapang marruma' derives from the Dhunggati language, and its meaning, 'making our way', was the key message of the exhibition – Aboriginal people making their way from the past into the future as a strong and vibrant community.

The main aim of the project was to examine the role of government policy in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly the race-based removal of children between 1910–70.

Five personal histories from members of the Stolen Generations and their families served as the keystone and provided a poignant and moving experience.

The commissioned and selected artworks, photographs and objects together illustrated the issues faced by the 'stolen' children, those left to live 'under the Act' and the following generations, revealing a truth not commonly known in the wider community.

The exhibition represented a mutual past and present – a collision of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal expectations – and highlighted the misunderstandings held about Aboriginal Australia by those who observe and judge from the outside.

Exhibition installation view: featuring Cherie Johnson's *Lest We Forget* (foreground), commissioned for the exhibition by the gallery.



A key driver was education and awareness. To this end a number of public programs were held including a symposium discussing the aftermath of the Apology, a teachers' information session, and a National Association of the Visual Arts (NAVA) workshop about intellectual property and marketing. The project also comprised a comprehensive education kit prepared by Cherie Johnson and structured tours to a record number of school students.

The exhibition had a profound effect on all who visited and reinforced the importance of 'sorry' to Aboriginal people. The following comment from the gallery's visitors' book is typical:

Without seeing this exhibition, I would never have had this understanding of what happened. It is so incredibly moving and unbelievable. Sorry.

Project Team: Mervyn Bishop, Donna Biles Fernando, Cherie Johnson, Ray Kelly, Rod Smith.

Project Participants: Gary and Brenda Simon, Dawn Townsend, Donna Meehan, Ellie Whaleboat, Amy Beusnel and their families.

Artists: Mervyn Bishop, Destiny Deacon, Cherie Johnson, Tracey Moffat, Leah King-Smith, Rod Smith, Judy Watson with images from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and objects from Bathurst Regional Museum and private collections.

A gallery project curated by Donna Biles Fernando and Brett Adlington in consultation with the Aboriginal Reference Group, supported by the Australia Council for the Arts' Community Partnerships Program.

Donna Biles Fernando speaking with a school group during the exhibition.



2006 – 2007

Practice and protocols

During the years 2006–07, the gallery, together with the Aboriginal Reference Group, facilitated many smaller projects both for LMCC and other organisations.

The key achievement in 2006 was the selection of the gallery and the Aboriginal Reference Group as a case study for the National Association for the Visual Arts' (NAVA) National Indigenous Protocols Workshops. The Aboriginal Reference Group produced a DVD comprising images and recorded interviews with long-term members, about the relationship between the community and gallery and the significance of the program as the case study. The gallery then hosted one of the NAVA workshops during the *Stories* exhibition.

In 2006, the gallery facilitated two projects that marked LMCC's commitment to the Aboriginal people of the city. The first was an artwork by the late Jim Ridgeway for the Council Chambers; the other was the design and installation of a display case housing local cultural objects and information.

As 2007 marked 50 years of NAIDOC – *Looking Forward, Looking Black* – the Aboriginal Reference Group celebrated with a visual timeline outlining significant events throughout that period. The finished artwork, made by Aboriginal students at Morisset High School facilitated by Selena Archibald, was displayed in the gallery during July–August 2007 and then returned to the school.

Douglas Archibald talking to a group during the NAVA National Indigenous Protocols Workshop around Awabakal Dreaming.



18 AUGUST – 24 SEPTEMBER 2006

Stories: country, knowledge spirit and politics

Stories expressed the 'art choice' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and their communities. The selection of artworks under the sub-themes of country, knowledge, spirit and politics provided an insight into a revitalised Aboriginal cultural expression, redressing past constraints, labelling and attitudes.

The exhibition tracked the evolution of Aboriginal art forms and imagery from an urbanised and localised Aboriginal experience – looking 'beyond the dot'. The issue of identity (past and present) and the unique kinship ties of Aboriginal society provided a view into knowledge, lore, ceremony and communal generational teachings, connecting Aboriginal artists and their communities with the irrevocable social ramifications post 1788.

Artists: Ian W Abdullah, Brook Andrew, Douglas Archibald, Gordon Bennett, Byron Brooks, Burrunur, Nici Cumpston, Lorraine Davies, Karli Davis, Tony Dhanyula, Judith Donaldson, Julie Dowling, Michael Gadjawala, Walter Hanse, Cherie Johnson, Jonathan Jones, Leah King-Smith, Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Jack Laranggai, Jack Marranbarra, Queenie McKenzie, Jimmy Moduk, Sally Morgan, Munduwalawala, Terry Ngamandarra, Denis Nona, Lin Onus, Myrtle Pennington, Ian Rictor, Ginger Riley, Michael Riley, Beverley Anne Shipp, Jelta Tapau, Michael Nelson Tjakamarra, Dawn Townsend, Dundiwuy Wanambi, Carlene West, Alec Wurrmala, David Yrindilly. Hunter-based Aboriginal artists contributed work made during a printmaking workshop with Jane Lander.

A gallery project curated by Donna Biles Fernando and Diana Robson in consultation with the Aboriginal Reference Group, supported by Arts NSW.

Exhibition installation
view featuring
Jelta Tapau's
traditional
headdresses
(foreground).



10 JUNE – 17 JULY 2005

On side

On side was a community photographic project celebrating contemporary culture and, in particular, the Aboriginal community's pride in their football players.

Using Jesse Marlow's exhibition, *Centre Bounce*, curated by Annette Welkamp, as inspiration, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members were guided through the issues and aesthetics involved in documentary photography by Marlow and prominent Aboriginal photographer Mervyn Bishop.

The participants practised their skills by watching and photographing local rugby league matches featuring Aboriginal players. The result was a fascinating snapshot of local footballers, their clubs and the role sport plays in the Lake Macquarie community.

Artists: Debbie Andrew, Douglas Archibald, Mervyn Bishop, Louise Charles, Cheryl Farrell, Lanelle Lee Chin, Rachel Mallaby, Jesse Marlow, Juanita Sheenan, Linda Swinfield.

A gallery project in consultation with the Aboriginal Reference Group, coordinated by Susan Ryman and supported by Museums & Galleries NSW.

Louise Charles
*Allan Lebroq with
Glendale Silverbacks
(Shortland Oval)*
(detail) 2005
digital image
© the artist



13 OCTOBER – 20 NOVEMBER 2005

Old stories through new eyes

Old stories through new eyes was developed as a collaboration between local secondary school students, the gallery and the Aboriginal Reference Group. It was conceived after a request from LMCC's then-Aboriginal Consultative Committee to have a permanent artwork in the Council administration building that focused on Aboriginal youth and their connection to traditional stories and culture.

The project was developed over a series of workshops with the students directed by the late Jim Ridgeway and Peta Lonsdale. Traditional Awabakal stories were told during appropriate guided Aboriginal site visits, and contemporary painting techniques were used by the students to interpret them.

A large-scale mural was produced that highlights the achievements of the young artists and educates the wider community about traditional stories and the value of Aboriginal culture.

Artists: the late Jim Ridgeway with Peta Lonsdale and local Aboriginal school students.

A gallery project coordinated by Susan Ryman and supported by Lake Macquarie City Council.



10 SEPTEMBER – 24 OCTOBER 2004

Passage

Passage was an expression of memory and the living culture of the Aboriginal peoples of Lake Macquarie and beyond. Conceived by the Aboriginal Reference Group and curated by Brook Andrew, it celebrated and explored regional Aboriginal culture, contextualising the local experience within a broader national artistic framework.

This exhibition presented traditional and contemporary artworks alongside cultural objects. It questioned the complex nature of artistic practice and the tendency of non-Aboriginal people to pigeonhole 'authentic' Aboriginal art. Emerging artists' work was exhibited with that of more-established artists; all expressing conceptual and artistic links to homelands. The 'outsider's' view was described through a living-room installation decked out with a collection of Aboriginal Australiana.

The community was invited to join a workshop led by Tasmanian Aboriginal artists Corrie Fullard and Jeanette James, making traditional shell necklaces. This was an opportunity for people to directly experience Aboriginal art and demonstrated the personal and cultural aspects of the project.

Artists: Douglas Archibald, Mervyn Bishop, Roy Barker Senior, Roy Barker, Astro Brim, JB Clark, Debbie Powers Dates, Destiny Deacon, Lola Greeno, Corrie Fullard, William H Fernyhough, Fiona Foley, Jenny Fraser, Joshua Frost, ST Gill, Jeanette James, Joseph Lycett, Daryn McKenny, Joanne Currie Nalingu, Walter Preston, John Skinner Prout, the late Jim Ridgeway, Mick Shane, Esme Timbery, Lady Timbery, R Timbery, Christian Thompson, Connie Whiting, Lenny Wright Jr.

Exhibition installation view featuring works by the late Jim Ridgeway (foreground).

A gallery project curated by Brook Andrew in consultation with the Aboriginal Reference Group and supported by Arts NSW.



JULY – SEPTEMBER 2003

Songlines Now!

Songlines Now! was a mural project bringing together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students from three local schools with Aboriginal artists.

The project's aim was to teach young artists to broaden their experience of Aboriginal art, beyond dot painting and X-ray techniques, and to encourage them to visit the gallery.

The imagery was to be a 'mapping' exercise and an acknowledgment of the relationship between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community as seen through the eyes of youth.

The title, *Songlines Now!* relates to the paths across the land marking the route followed by Creation Beings during the Dreaming. The paths of the songlines are recorded in traditional songs, stories, dance and painting.

The final three-panel mural was created during a series of workshops and assembled on a five-metre easel in the gallery space. After exhibition the panels were returned to each school for permanent display.

Artists: the late Jim Ridgeway and Ray Smith with students from Lake Macquarie High School, Morisset High School and West Wallsend High School.

A gallery project in consultation with the Aboriginal Reference Group, supported by LMCC.

The late Jim Ridgeway putting finishing touches to the mural outside the gallery.



JUNE – NOVEMBER 2003

The Meeting place

The Meeting place was part of the larger project *Lake's Edge*, which in turn was part of a local community renewal project. Through discussions with the Aboriginal Reference Group, the local Aboriginal residents expressed a desire to have a symbolic 'meeting place' by the lake.

It was agreed by the group that the work should evolve as a cultural partnership and comprise local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stories about the historic and contemporary use of the site. The work was developed and made during a series of workshops, with the artists and community members sharing skills and stories, and took the form of a mosaic wall and garden centred around a stylised ceramic midden.

The finished work was dedicated to the late Uncle Cyril Archibald, well-respected Elder and supporter of the Aboriginal Reference Group, and was launched at the *Lake's Edge* festival amidst great celebration and community cultural activity.

The Meeting place now stands as a place of reflection in the gallery grounds for all to enjoy, as well as serving as a permanent reminder of the work of the Aboriginal Reference Group.

Artists: the late Jim Ridgeway and Sue Stewart with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members.

A gallery project in consultation with the Aboriginal Reference Group, supported by Arts NSW's Community and Cultural Development Program.

Launch of
The Meeting place
2003 (detail)
at the *Lake's Edge*
festival weekend.



JULY – OCTOBER 2002

Booragul Wetlands Art Project

The *Booragul Wetlands Art Project* began with a number of workshops conducted with local primary and junior high school students. Issues such as environmental factors relating to the wetlands' placement and construction as well as local Aboriginal history and 'water place' stories were discussed with a group of students.

Guided by established ceramic artists John Cliff and Sue Stewart, with Aboriginal consultant artist Douglas Archibald, the students then used the information as inspiration to construct a series of ceramic poles. The young people were also involved in planting sections of the wetlands as a part of the project launch.

The series of poles, together with the surrounding flora, tell a collective story about the contemporary uses of the site and reflect on the original ownership of the land.

Artists: John Cliff, Sue Stewart and Douglas Archibald with students and teachers from Booragul Public School and Lake Macquarie High School.

A gallery project coordinated by Susan Ryman, supported by the Office of the Lake Macquarie & Catchment Coordinator, LMCC and the Premier's Department through the Booragul/Bolton Point Community Renewal Project.



19 JULY – 23 SEPTEMBER 2001

Water Yarns

Water Yarns was the first Aboriginal exhibition to be staged in the new gallery space and was developed after consultation with the gallery's Aboriginal Reference Group and the local Aboriginal community. Thematically based on local 'water place' stories as told by Elders during a series of recorded workshops connected to the *Awabakal Dreaming* project, it celebrated the culture of the traditional owners of the land, the Awabakal people.

The selected artworks presented a wide range of styles through which each Hunter-based artist articulated their response to these stories as well as their own experiences and connections.

The opening was a celebration of culture with performances by local dancers.

Artists: Richard Campbell, Steve Duke, Carole Hartwig, Cherie McLaren (Johnson), Raymond Smith.

A gallery project curated by emerging curator Bev Whyte with Diana Robson, supported by Museums and Galleries NSW.



JANUARY – JULY 2001

Awabakal Dreaming

Awabakal Dreaming was a cultural partnership project resulting from the Aboriginal Reference Group's and local Aboriginal community's desire to pay tribute to the Awabakal people by celebrating their 'water place' stories.

The process involved two sessions of interactive and recorded storytelling by the late and much respected Elders Uncle Cyril Archibald and Uncle Ken McBride, joined by other community members. The artists and several Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal volunteers sat in on the sessions.

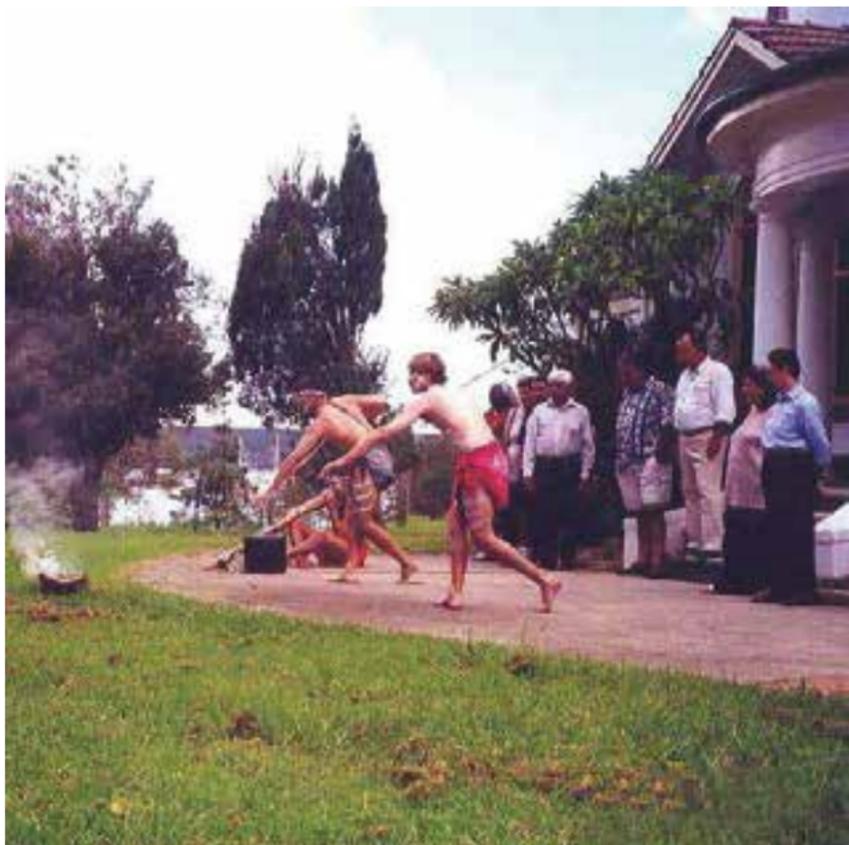
The stories told in these sessions were used as a basis for the design, along with the artists' research. It was agreed that stylistically the group would steer away from the Western notion of perspective and the better known Aboriginal dot-painting styles that emanate from the desert areas, in favour of a design that better reflected the 'local', such as petroglyphs (or rock carvings).

The completed mosaic is positioned in pride of place at the entrance to the gallery and comprises symbols of the local environment and Creation Beings such as Biame, Biraban and Kow-wah. It is a day-to-day reminder of the ongoing relationship between the Aboriginal Reference Group, the community and the gallery.

Artists: Douglas Archibald, the late Jim Ridgeway and Paul Maher with members of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community, with installation support by Mark Johnson.

A gallery project coordinated by Susan Ryman and supported by the Australia Council for the Arts' Community Partnership Program.

Artists Paul Maher, the late Jim Ridgeway and Douglas Archibald with the design for *Awabakal Dreaming*.



13 APRIL – 21 MAY 2000

Of this time: contemporary Aboriginal artists working in the Hunter

Of this time was the first exhibition to be developed by the gallery in consultation with the local Aboriginal community. It marked the beginning of an ongoing commitment by the gallery to the work of Aboriginal artists who had chosen to live and work in the Hunter, and to the process of consultation.

With a balance of styles and materials of contemporary art practice, *Of this time* presented a cohesive exploration of the significant role played by Aboriginal artists within both the Aboriginal and the wider arts communities of the region.

Artists: Douglas Archibald, Carole Hartwig, Mini Heath, Len Leon, Cherie McLaren (Johnson), Kathy Balngayngu Marika, Trevor Patten, the late Jim Ridgeway, with catalogue essay by Laurel Williams.

A gallery project curated by Dawn Townsend, LMCC Aboriginal Community Development Officer (2000), supported by Arts NSW.

Above: Dancers and artists at the opening of the exhibition *Of this time* at the front of Awaba House.

Right: Douglas and Selena Archibald with Gallery Director Debbie Abraham at the MAGNA ceremony at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney, 2016.



AWARDS FOR ABORIGINAL PROGRAMMING

- 2016 Museums and Galleries National Award [MAGNA] Temporary or Travelling exhibition category for *(in)visible: the First Peoples and War*; MAGNA Indigenous Project category for *Lore & Order*
- 2015 M&GNSW IMAGinE Award Exhibition Project category for *(in)visible: the First Peoples and War*
- 2013 MAGNA Highly Commended/Public Program category for *Stencils Past, Stencils Last*
- 2012 IMAGinE Award for Education and Public Engagement for *Stencils Past, Stencils Last*
- 2011 NSW Local Government and Shire Association Cultural Award [LGSACA] for Aboriginal Cultural Development for *A Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake*
- 2009 IMAGinE Award for Education and Public Engagement for *yapang marruma: making our way (stories of the Stolen)*
- 2008 NSW LGSACA for Aboriginal Cultural Development for *Practices not Projects*
- 2006 NSW LGSACA for Aboriginal Cultural Development for *On Side and Old Stories through new eyes*
- 2005 NSW LGSACA for Aboriginal Cultural Development for *Passage*
- 2005 National LGSACA (Commendation) for Strengthening Indigenous Communities for *Passage*

LAKE MACQUARIE CITY ART GALLERY
OPEN TUESDAY TO SUNDAY 10AM – 5PM
& SELECTED PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 11AM – 4PM
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ADMISSION IS FREE

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AWABA HOUSE CAFE RESTAURANT
CAFE OPEN TUESDAY TO SUNDAY 10AM – 4PM
T: (02) 4950 6366 F: (02) 4950 6166

Aboriginal Reference Group long-term current members

Douglas Archibald, Selena Archibald, Donna Biles, Fernando, Louise Charles, Scott Luschwitz
Gallery Director Debbie Abraham

Curator Meryl Ryan

Education & Public Programs Officer Joanna Davies

Collection & Exhibitions Officer Rob Cleworth

Marketing & Audience Engagement Officer Laura Wilson

Art Gallery Assistant – Visitor Services Anna Scobie

Trainee Art Gallery Assistant – Visitor Services Jordann Charter-Smith

Art Gallery Administration Officer Nada Artym

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