



Food health and healing the land

Merrie Hamilton describes the Two Fires Festival

The Two Fires Festival programme this time was very diverse and inspiring but among my favourites was a short film titled 'The Quarry' by Stuart Cohen and narrated by Aboriginal archaeologist from the Office of Environment and Heritage, Dave Johnston. Why? Because, not only is it stunningly beautiful and a good story, but it embodies the spirit of the Two Fires Festival. Judith Wright worked tirelessly throughout her life to protect and preserve the natural environment and to honour and respect our Indigenous peoples. In this story, both her goals come together with simple elegance. A stone axe quarry has been discovered on private land — 'Millpost', near Bungendore, NSW. For thousands of years

this would have been a very special place for the local Aboriginal groups. One family's generous sharing of the site with Indigenous people whose traditional country this is, has been a journey into the unknown — brave, rare and much appreciated. I hope that this example will lead the way for other non-Indigenous landholders to open precious sites on their properties (without fear of Native Title or tenure change) and enter into partnerships with Aboriginal custodians. In the 21st century we all need to walk into the future together with confidence and co-operation. To view the Quarry Video, go to the link at: www.twofiresfestival.org.au Congratulations to the 2019 Two Fires Festival committee and volunteers. ■

Geoff Davies adds

For me, a particular highlight among many was the session on Saturday examining the theme of this year's festival, Food Health and Healing Land. The speakers presented a range of approaches to bringing the land, and ourselves, back to health, including permaculture, regenerative farming and indigenous cultivation, foods and burning methods. Several presenters spoke of their difficult journeys learning how to work with the land instead of trying to impose inappropriate European methods. I was not the only one to feel we are starting to move beyond permaculture, which has been based mainly on northern hemisphere plants, good as it is. We are at last learning about our own very different land and how to live in it. There is a great deal more to learn, and we need to get the word out so destruction of the land can be reversed. The Two Fires committee welcomes interested people who would like to be involved in keeping this unique and important festival alive. Contact Julia Green on 0402 605 945. ■

IT'S NOT US AND THEM

Our stories are the land

Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison wants more than a piece of paper

Following my beliefs and the teachings that came from my grandfather, I know we walk the same land, we drink the same water and we breathe the same air. The more that people could understand that, the better we can walk in unity. We can walk this land together. There should be no separation. There's got to be no 'them and us'. Those words in that English dictionary have got to be finally removed. Them and us. It is such a desecration on our spirits and on our beings. It's such a desecration on our culture. I correct my young people that I teach, a lot of those young men, as you seen the dances, when they do something, they do it respectfully. It's about if they take a fruit off a tree, they will shake the tree three times. If the fruit falls off, it's theirs. If it doesn't, it still belongs to that tree. And if we start to pluck those things off, then we are guilty of raping the land. That's what we see people doing now — they're raping the land. We really got to look at how we can take our foods. Actually, we don't need all this big, big milling and big machineries and all this and that.

We got to get off our butts and learn to be able to put something into the land so that it'll grow.

Then we can ask the great creator to bring it up for us. Now, a lot of the things people must say, "Yeah, but how?" How do we feed the multitude of people? Well, we're not the creator. We must just feed ourselves and our children. And we can do that. For 80,000 years and upwards, our mob has been doing that right up until the mission days. Then suddenly we had ration days after working one, two weeks; 10 pound of flour, a pound of tea, even if it was that, a bit of fruit, no butter, little bit of salt ... something like that. We weren't allowed to go out onto the land to hunt and gather our own foods. We weren't allowed to go to the ocean and take our food because we were fined. I remember when brother Walter was granted some abalone licences and a lot of our people looked at that and we thought, "Why do we need that, why do we have to buy this licence?" To go and gather the food that was God given to us? We had the knowhow — we still have the knowhow into the hunting and the gathering of our foods. For sixty years, I've been taking people up and go look at mountains and teaching them about the creation of rocks up there. Then Parks [NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service] took over, and I have to get permission all of a sudden. I don't believe in land rights and native title because it's still white man's legislation. I just don't like seeing the torment and the anguish of our people got to go through to meet the guidelines of a white man's paper. We never had that. It's just a paper — it's not the land.



Our stories are the land. This is what I try to teach all my young people now. I just love teaching them about culture, cultural life. And the dream time. So what is this native title? We're the keepers of the land, we're not the owners. We're the keepers of the land. I don't know how we're going to handle this treaty? Why do we need a treaty for the land? I was the first in the state of New South Wales, as Aboriginal Chairman of a Land Council, to be giving deeds and title back to a community. I regretted that because I seen what happened after. I had to leave my community because my mob just went haywire. You see, it's not only our mob that does this. Everybody in your little block [of land], you have a right to stop people from coming in. You have that ownership on that little bit of paper. So different little things like this is, how do we go? How do we burst this sacred word treaty? We get no hope down in Parliament. We've got very little hope down there. They haven't got a treaty amongst themselves. Have a look at the parties — fair dinkum. I think I'll stop there because I'm getting out of spirit and going into politics. ■