

Waking up the Snake – building a coalition for hope!

By (Waskam) Emelda Davis & Robyn Hutchinson

FIRST NATIONS DAY Yarnings held on Saturday, 18 September, 2021

‘Waking up the Snake – a coalition for hope’, is a quote from Dr Anne Poelina, which well describes the deadly yarning that took place on Saturday, 18 September. The amazing photo is one of Craig Cromelin’s. Both Anne and Craig were 2 of 18 panellists on the series of 4 yarnings on the day. The day of yarning was curated and hosted by Thomas Mayor, Torres Strait Islander, born and raised on Larrakia Country in Darwin.

This day was organised at the invitation of the Raising Peace Festival team, and launched a week of thought provoking events calling for peace! <https://raisingpeace.org.au/> All events are available on the Raising Peace website.

This first day found some 500 participants on zoom, listening and interacting via chat, with these deadly First Nations grassroots leaders from across Australia, leading a dialogue on peace with First nations sisters and brothers in our own nation! The videos and music, greatly added to the spirit of the event.

We are grateful to the ‘Peoples Movement’ and thank the Raising Peace team for their vision and commitment, and to the many volunteers and networks for their solidarity. They helped to create a powerful grassroots day in making history with the inclusion of Australian South Sea Islander history, an often forgotten narrative for over 60,000 displaced Pacific peoples trafficked to NSW with the influx to Queensland in the 1800’s. More on history: <https://youtu.be/m02GMck26B0>

The 4 Yarning sessions

Yarning with First Nations was our session 1

Facilitated by Thomas Mayor, National Indigenous Officer at the MUA, with welcome to country by Nathan Moran, CEO of the Local Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council, Redfern. The panel also consisted of (Waskam) Emelda Davis, chairwoman of Australian South Sea Islanders (Port Jackson), Carol Vale managing director of Murawin, Shane Charles community leader, educator and reconciliation advocate, film director, Adrian Russell-Wills who introduced the screening of ‘88’ documentary.

Each leader spoke to the success of their work in social justice and cultural specific narratives with the call for unification on a voice to parliament. Reflection was reminiscent of the day of mourning the protest of Australia’s Bicentennial of the First Fleet on 26th January 1988. This historical event triggered the largest gathering of Indigenous people the country has ever seen. Aboriginal people travelled from all over Australia to take part in the March for Freedom, Hope and Justice. The protest became a catalyst for mass public debate about the concept of Australian history and the events of this day subsequently changed white and black Australia forever.

‘88’Trailer:
<https://youtu.be/5nlCxz650Yo>
The film ‘88’ can be
purchased
www.pursekey.com.au

Yarning Uluru Statement from the Heart & Truth telling was our session 2

Facilitated by Thomas Mayor and guest leaders and community advocate speakers Craig Cromelin specialising in community governance, politics, design and development. Dean Parkin, Director for From the Heart campaign, and Nicole Laupepe a passionate advocate for social justice and Youth off the Streets, shared the significant scope of work achieved to date.

The yarning shared the trials and tribulations involved, in furthering Australians' understanding on why there is a need for constitutional reforms that will empower First Nations peoples in taking their rightful place in their own country.

Yarning Mother Earth – caring for country was our session 3

This session was facilitated by strong Indigenous voice, media and communications professional Michelle Aleksandrovcics Lovegrove. Panellists included lands and 'Water for Rivers' campaign rights activist Bruce Shillingsworth and Dr Anne Poelina, chair of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council. Anne spoke of 'First Law' and the need for unity in caring for country and her words complimented the wisdom of respected elder and Aboriginal educator Craig Cromelin.

Yarning Walking Together was our session 4

Facilitated by Michelle Aleksandrovcics Lovegrove with special guests Nicole Laupepe, Jacqui Parker, educator, trainer and mediator, Michael West, who specialises in culturally respectful engagement, Remo Guiffre founder and director of TEDxSydney, GeneralThinking, REMO, Miche-Elle Myers the National Women's Officer for the MUA and Paul Wright, of ANTA, with extensive experience in working for government and non-government sector.

The panel reflection and wrap up session appealed to the ongoing work required to meet the objectives of Voice Truth Treaty and Peace. We need a continuum in campaigning for unity, collective education and sharing of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, as a call from the people, in being the solution for better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A few quotes

<i>'listen to the wisdom of the snake'</i>	<i>'It only takes good people standing by doing nothing, for injustice to flourish' - this is our challenge!</i>
<i>'The majority of the population knows the truth – the challenge is to transfer from grassroots to the top!'</i>	<i>'The great Australian silence' -this is shifting!</i>
<i>'we need a JUST energy plan'</i>	<i>'regionalism - place-based governance, connecting land and water, intrinsically intertwined through</i>
<i>song, dance, ceremony and the Uluru Statement from the heart – the songlines - come with us on this learning journey -'</i>	<i>'We are ALL on a journey of survival'</i>
<i>'talk to country' – 'listen to country'</i>	<i>'Our waters need to be sustained for time immemorial!'</i>
<i>'be an accomplice – deep listening to be part of the change'</i>	<i>'It IS political!!!'</i>
<i>'it takes ALL of us!</i>	

So many participants asked *'How do we build on the momentum of this day of truth telling and hope?'*

The strategies – the road map is clear, the Uluru Statement from the Heart has laid it out for all of us clearly!
<https://fb.watch/8jouU-CqdU/>

There is a groundswell of commitment to direct action leading up to the election, and beyond, which so many of us are committed to continuing.

The power of this event was that it was a grassroots informal yarning from the heart!
A format worth repeating!

We invite every reader to join, or continue, the journey of *'Walking Together for the VOICE of First Nations and PEACE!'*

***'Wake up the snake
– we are building a coalition
of hope'***



Photo by Craig Cromelin

(Waskam) Emelda Davis,
www.assipj.com.au
Footprints documentary on ASSI history
<https://youtu.be/m02GMck26B0>

Robyn Hutchinson, Women's Reconciliation
Network <https://wrnredfern.org.au/>
& Sydney Alliance
<https://www.sydneyalliance.org.au/>

Supporters, <https://fromtheheart.com.au/>

RECORDINGS

All First Nations Day videos are up on the Raising Peace website at <https://raisingpeace.org.au/festival-recordings/> and are also accessible through the festival's YouTube playlist <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLI1o93LXsExzDQNmVS6IVFSGErFcAOClr>.

You may like to listen to Dr Anne Poelina's 'Wake up the Snake': <https://youtu.be/FZmf1OQarnM>

'Collective wisdom brings nature back to balance'