

Working Together



Kaya! Working Together hosted an Indigenous Eco Tour in conjunction with Ngalang Wongi Aboriginal Cultural Tours run by Troy Bennell.

On board, Chamber Members relaxed for 90 minutes to enjoy the wonderful weather and beauty of Bunbury's waterways. Troy captivated us with his dreamtime and family stories of the Collie River. If you missed out, make sure you don't next time!

The Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre workshop 'How well do you understand the Aboriginal people you employ – or want to employ?' at Chamber House gave employers practical strategies they can put in place to support the recruitment and employment of Aboriginal people. Taking the time to put some practical strategies in place to create a supportive and culturally secure workplace for Aboriginal employees will help to increase retention rates and produce higher productivity levels for business.

We acknowledge the celebration of NAIDOC in July. This year's theme 'Our Languages Matter' emphasises and celebrates the essential role that Indigenous languages play in the transmission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, spirituality and rites, through story and song.

We would also like to recognise National Reconciliation Week held from 27 May – 3 June. In 2017, we reflect on two significant anniversaries in Australia's reconciliation journey; 50 years since the 1967 Referendum, and 25 years since the historic Mabo decision.

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A Collie River Wongi Tour

Renowned artist Troy Bennell has an obvious love for and connection to the Collie River, which became clear before we even boarded a riverboat for a Ngalang Wongi Aboriginal Cultural Tour upon this surprisingly wide and picturesque waterway.

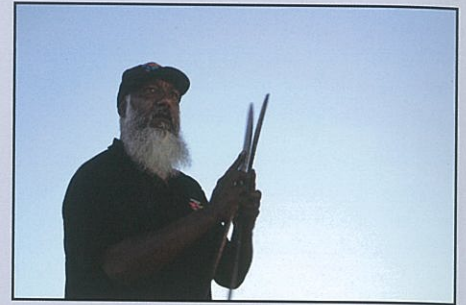
Standing on the bank near the Collie River Bridge, Troy talked about connection to country and the way we interact, touching plants and leaving a little trace of ourselves on them as we brush past.

We were blessed with a perfectly still evening with the dusk sending its fading light across the water.

Ngalang Wongi means "our story" in the Wardandi dialect of Noongar language.

As Tour Leader, Troy entertained us with stories firstly about the river mouth where it meets the Leschenault Estuary, and then about growing up with the community and Elders using the river and its banks.

The river was created, according to Noongar legend, by the dreamtime snake called the Wagyl and the shifting sandbars near the river mouth are said to be where



the Wagyl has flicked its tongue to move them around.

Travelling up the river towards Collie, the Chamber members on the tour were shown big Sea Eagle's nests high in the trees and areas where Troy and his family had used the river banks.

The twilight on the river was a sight to behold by the time we approached the spot where the Brunswick River runs into the Collie River.

During the tour Mayor Gary Brennan announced that plans are being made to extend the Reconciliation Action Planning process across the South West local governments connected with the Bunbury Geopraphe Partnership.

This will be an opportunity to learn more about our unique Aboriginal culture and the aspirations of Aboriginal people so that as we move into the future, we can be a stronger, inter-connected and more inclusive community.

We are often inclined to marvel at the sights and scenery in foreign places, while never quite finding time to see unique, world class attractions close to home.

Do yourself a favour and discover some Aboriginal culture by joining Troy Bennell on a Ngalang Wongi tour.

Beth Ferguson

