



The Abbotsford Convent Muse

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Abbotsford Convent Foundation
Friends of Abbotsford Convent

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Welcome...

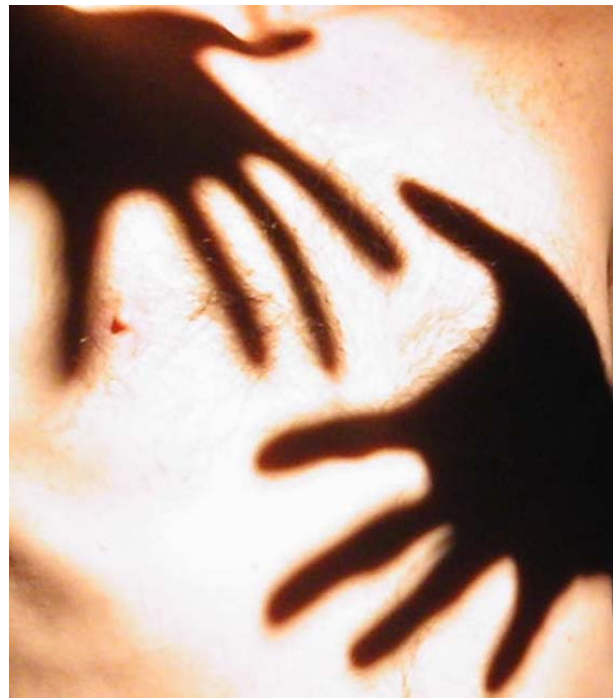
The Friends of Abbotsford Convent have been supporting the Foundation since the beginning. Through assistance with functions, arranging Christmas parties - and innumerable other ways, including working with the Foundation to produce this newsletter - the Friends have been a fellow-traveller on the Convent journey. The Friends held their Annual General Meeting this week and made a number changes to better reflect that journey. See details inside...

September Musings

Bellbirds are a Saving Grace...

Convent artist and member of the Koorie Artist studios, Jacob Boehme, says "Lentil as Anything, Convent Bakery coffee and the bell birds have been my saving grace this year. When creating a new work that initially comes from a very personal place, it's a blessing to have not only a space in which to create, but also the surrounds of the Convent to escape to when I really need to get out of that space."

Jacob has been a resident of the Koorie Artist studios at the Convent since March this year. The themes of cultural identity, belonging and home have been prevalent throughout his career as a dancer, choreographer and theatre maker. Currently studying a Master in Puppetry at the Victorian College of the Arts, Jacob says the Convent has been home to the development of a new work combining puppetry, movement and voice. This new work is called 'Idja'.



“This work ‘Idja’ was conceived out of a need to explore my own culture and heritage. We are all, at the moment, trying desperately to define what this land, our home means to us: trying to find some way to connect to this country while grappling with cultural ties and obligations that are not Indigenous to this land. This is especially true for those of us Indigenous mob born and raised in the city, even more so when raised in cities far from traditional land.”

‘Idja’ (meaning ‘skin’ in Boehme’s native language of the Narangga people of Yorke Peninsula, South Australia) is a personal journey toward the discovery of home, belonging and accepting the skin you’re in. It combines puppetry and dance and is supported by the talents of local Northcote choir ‘fIRST CHORUS’, providing a vocal soundscape live on stage.

‘Idja’ premiers at the Grant Street Theatre, Grant Street, Southbank on 25 - 29 Sep 2007, at 8pm (Tue 25 - Fri 28) and Sat 29 at 3pm. Tickets are free and bookings can be made via 03 9685 9256, vcapuppetry@unimelb.edu.au or www.vca.unimelb.edu.au/production

Postcards come to the Convent

Tune into Channel Nine on Sunday 16 September at 5.30pm to see the Convent feature on Nine’s local tourist show, Postcards. The Postcards team spent a day roving the precinct recently and immersed themselves in the diverse cultural community that works and plays at the Convent. Check it out.

Local Biscuits do good work

Here’s a great idea. When you are at the next Slow Food Farmers’ Market at the Convent (Sat 22 September, 8am - 1pm) make an effort to discover the Abbotsford Biscuits stall and support the local Jesuit Social Services social enterprise program, The Gateway Kitchen. The kitchen at Abbotsford Biscuits provides at risk young people, between the ages of 17 -28, with vocational and employment skills and work experience, plus the opportunities to build their confidence through the production of biscuits under the guidance of renowned Melbourne Pastry Chef, Loretta Sartori.

With yummy varieties such as Cinnamon & Almond, Lemon & Coconut, Chocolate & Macadamia and more, these beautifully boxed treats not only do good work for the community, they go to work on your taste buds too! If you are not a tea ‘n’ bickies type, look out for the Parmesan & Cayenne Rounds - savoury treats that go down well with a cleansing ale!

For more information on the Abbotsford Biscuits program go to www.jss.org.au where you will also be able to order on line for Christmas!

Poem of the Month

Convent Poet, David Simpson will be providing a monthly poem to especially entertain Muse readers. Here is the first in the regular series:

Soup Song

*I’ll sing you a song of bouillabaisse,
Of the taste with a scent of the sea,
Of shellfish swimming in a brimful broth,
Full of the flavours that be,
Of a moon-lit beach and soft red wine,
With candles guiding us home,
I’ll sing you the song of bouillabaisse,
That should never be sung alone.*

What's on This Weekend

Sunday Markets

The third Sunday of each month sees the arrival of the Shirt and Skirt Market and the Makers Market at the Convent. Between 10am - 4pm this Sunday, 16 September, the Convent grounds and Refectory will be crowded with locally crafted artworks, jewellery, apparel, craft, homewear and gifts.

Spend the first and third Sunday of each month at the Abbotsford Convent where you will discover a place of art, design, creativity and learning



Earthdance

The Sacredness of Water 2007

Earthdance is a global movement that unites socially and environmentally conscious people in 340 locations around the world in a celebration of peace and community.

Earthdance Melbourne will be held this Sunday, 16 September, 8.30am - 8pm at the Collingwood Children's Farm. The event encourages the community to take time out of their everyday lives to come together and contemplate life on a peaceful, ethical planet. It is a volunteer produced event to encourage participation in community, peace, the environment and education. Over 10 years the organisers have raised over \$75,000 for charity. To raise awareness about the importance of water, "The Sacredness of Water" is the international Earthdance theme for 2007.

There will be two stages, hosting musicians, producers and djs playing an eclectic blend of styles and featuring an international program of acoustic musicians, workshops and talks. Also featuring on the day will be a sustainable fashion show, promoting recycled and conscious clothing from emerging and established fashion designers. Workshops around global crafts, indigenous story telling and alternative technologies will also be on offer.

The Collingwood Children's Farm is designed for children to interact with nature and a farm environment. In addition to this there will be a bubble dome - a Kids Space filled with an array of exciting activities including craft and recycled art. There will also be puppet shows, cuddly characters, face painting and storytelling.

Earthdance encourages families to come down to the event and get involved. There will be plenty to do for all ages.

For more information and ticket sales go to www.earthdance.org.au

WellBeing Centre Spring Open Day

Ever wondered what happens inside the wing of the Convent building beside the Bakery - the WellBeing Centre? Here's your chance to experience the calm vibe at the **WellBeing Centre Spring Open Day** on Sunday 16th September, from 11.00am to 3.00pm.

It's an opportunity for people to wander through the WellBeing Centre and discover what is behind our closed doors! It is also a chance to chat to practitioners if people are curious to know more about what we do.

And coming up...

Colonies: New jewellery and objects by Convent artist Sari Harris

11 - 29 September 2007 at Chapman and Bailey, 350 Johnston Street Abbotsford

Mere Skirmishes

An exhibition of works by Sally Jensen, Rae Easton, Alysia Rees, Hiromi Tango, Louise Thompson, Jaana Sahling, Ronella Gomez, Christina Tester, Louise Slater and Amy Piesse from Tuesday 19 - Friday 29 September 2007 in the Convent Basement.

Slow Food Farmers' Market at the Convent: Connect with Victorian food

Producers and farmers direct on Saturday 22 September 2007 from 8am - 1pm.

Finding your feet

Workshops on directing your life at the Convent on Sat 29 Sep 2007.

More information: www.abbotsfordconvent.com.au

Friends of Abbotsford Convent

Fresh ideas at Friends Annual General Meeting

The Friends have been active in support of the Convent and its community since the establishment of the Foundation. As the Convent has been reborn, the Friends have worked closely with the administration: this newsletter, for example, is a 'joint production' between the Friends and the Foundation. The Friends have provided assistance with major Convent events as well as sponsoring and managing functions such as the very jolly Christmas party with the Convent community in the Courtyard last year. A recent initiative of the Friends was to purchase and plant a Moreton Bay Fig tree as a replacement for the tree lost to disease and drought adjacent to Rosina.

The Friends held their AGM on Tuesday 11 September and considered the most appropriate direction for our complementary organisation to take, recognising the growth and evolution of Convent into a thriving, strong entity.

A couple of resolutions were passed that will take the Friends into the next fascinating chapter of the Convent story. It was decided that membership fees to the Friends be abolished - ie reduced from \$15 annually to zero. A further decision was to change the meeting pattern and style. Rather than semi-formal monthly meetings, the Friends will hold three or four social or informative gatherings annually. With an accent on fun and interesting information, the forums will offer opportunities for the Friends to get together and share ideas. These activities might include a Convent tour, a meeting with a speaker, a garden day and barbeque - and of course a party. A couple of longer-term activities are also being considered.

It is expected that The Muse will play an enhanced role in informing Friends of activities and developments at the Convent.

Office holders for the coming year are: President, Ian McKendry; Vice-President, Wayne Murphy; Secretary, Meridee Flower; and Treasurer, Lindsay Round.

A vote of thanks was made to the outgoing committee of management (Wayne Murphy, Janine Murphy, Meridee Flower, Ian McKendry, Lindsay Round, Mark Brabham, Gayle Arnold, Hilary Archer, Debra Thorpe and Dennis Moore) for their dedication and contribution to the ideals of the group.

The Interview

This month we interview Megan Goulding, CEO of the Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation and Cultural Heritage Council - the Convent's most recent tenants!

Firstly, what is the Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation and Cultural Heritage Council?

The Wurundjeri Council was established in 1985 by descendents of the Wurundjeri (Woiwurrung) people who are the traditional owners of a large area of country around Melbourne. The Council is made up of three family groups, the Nevins, Terricks and Wandins, and has 30 Elders and around 60 members.

The Council has a number of different roles. These Elders and members work hard to raise awareness of Wurundjeri culture and history within the wider community. The Council is also very active in managing thousands of archaeological sites and places in traditional Woiwurrung country. The Council also works towards benefiting the lives of present day Wurundjeri people and families.

Over the past 20 years the Council has received a number of grants of land that relate to very important cultural places in traditional Woiwurrung country. One of the places that has been handed back to the Council is the Sunbury Earthen Rings, which is an important ceremonial place. In 1991 the state government granted the former Coranderrk Aboriginal Station Cemetery in Healesville back to the Wurundjeri Council. There are many former station residents buried at Coranderrk, including many of the Wurundjeri ancestors. They lived on the Station from 1863 through to the 1940s and present day Wurundjeri people have strong attachments to this sacred place.

Members of the Council are active in providing information to our young people through visiting schools to talk about Wurundjeri culture. They inform students about traditional cultural practices such as bush food collection, making stone and wooden implements and they teach them about Wurundjeri language. The Council Elders are also called upon to carry out 'Welcome to Country' ceremonies that can



include speaking in language, traditional dancing, gum leaf and smoking rituals. These ceremonies can provide a wonderful cross-cultural experience while at the same time acknowledging the Wurundjeri as the traditional owners of country and as a way of paying respect to their ancestors.

Over the years one of the main Council activities has been protection and management of Wurundjeri's cultural sites such as stone artefact scatters, scarred trees, earthen rings, burials sites and stone quarries. Some of these sites are thousands of years old. Bill Nicholson Jnr is an Elder of the Council. He works as a site worker for the Council and is studying Archaeology at Monash University: "These sites are the evidence of our people who lived on this land for thousands of years. The helps us understand the age of these sites and how people lived on the land. It gives us pride to know who and where our people lived. These sites are an important connection between our people today to our ancestors".

Is the work of Council covered by statute?

Until recently, the Council had a statutory role under Commonwealth legislation that gave it the power to grant or refuse consent to disturb Aboriginal sites. This gave the Council members a significant say in how their important cultural places were managed. Recently the state government bought in the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and the Wurundjeri Council is now applying to be a Registered Aboriginal Party under that Act. This will enable the Council to continue to make decisions about its cultural places.

Why did the Wurundjeri Council decide to come to the Convent?

The Council is at a stage where it is ready to settle into its own community space and engage more with members of the wider community. When we started looking for a new office we became aware of the Providence space that was available at the Convent and we immediately realised that it presented an enormous opportunity: to be part of an existing vibrant cultural community and as a site where we could bring Wurundjeri culture to the people.

Another aspect that was appealing to the members was the fact that the site is situated on the Yarra River Dreaming Trail, which is part of the bigger creation story of the Wurundjeri people and their country. The area is surrounded by bush land and was an important camping place for the Wurundjeri people for thousands of years.

Just to the north of the Convent site is the confluence of the Merri Creek and Yarra River, which was an important traditional meeting and ceremonial place of the Woiwurrung and their neighbours. That area



continued to be an important place for Wurundjeri after European settlement. In the 1830s and 1840s the Aboriginal Protectorate was located near the Merri Creek site and the Native police were located there as well. In the 1840s and 1850s this was the site of the Merri Creek Aboriginal school.

The Woiwurrung people spent a lot of time at this location in the 1840's and 1850's but in the early 1860s most of the Woiwurrung people who survived colonisation

had moved to Coranderrk Aboriginal Station in Healesville. This station opened in 1863 (which ironically is the year the first four Sisters from the Order of the Good Shepherd arrived to establish a Convent in Melbourne!)

What are you intending to do in your space on the top floor of the Providence building at the Convent?

The Wurundjeri Council has needed its own office for a long time now. The top floor of the Providence Building will provide a wonderful space within which the Council can grow and carry out its activities. Members have many important aspirations for being here, centring on developing their own community and celebrating their culture within the wider community.

Apart from housing the day to day administration of the Council, the Providence space will be used as a community meeting place and, possibly, as a resource centre where we can bring together information on Woiwurrung culture and history. Members would like to see a lot of the historical information collected over the years to be brought into this one place as a resource for research.

We are looking at ways to make that information accessible to different parts of the community and the Council will be looking at ways of doing cross-cultural activities such as working with school children. The Council would also like develop a permanent display that the general public can visit. Elder of the Council, Wilma Xiberras, would like this to be an inviting place for the public: “We are thinking of ways of setting up a display that will teach people about Wurundjeri culture and the history of our people. It is very important that the public knows that we are the traditional people of Melbourne and that they know more about our culture.”

For Pat Ockwell, an Elder of the Terrick clan, the large space will enable members of the Wurundjeri community to come together to make arts and crafts: “Some of our members know how to make possum skin cloaks, basket-making, painting and woodwork. We would like to be able to do more of these activities and to teach the little ones how to make these cultural objects. The big space will also be a good area for practicing traditional dance”.

Members of the Wurundjeri Council are looking forward to being involved with the Convent community.

Interview by Maggie Maguire

If you wish to correspond with the newsletter editor Ian McKendry please email friends@abbotsfordconvent.com.au.

If you do not wish to receive The Muse , please email muse@abbotsfordconvent.com.au.