



Boodjargabbeelup POINT FRASER

cultural INTERPRETATION Nyungar

Living off the Land

Nyungar *maam* or men, *yorgkas* or women and *kullungars* or children were highly proficient in collecting food from the *beelya* and displayed sophisticated land management skills. *Gidgeeing* or spearing, netting and hand seizing were techniques used to collect food such as birds, eggs, fish, frogs, gilgee, marron and tortoise.

Within their *boodjar* the local Nyungar groups knew what food sources were available using their precise knowledge of seasons and ecology handed down by Elders or *boordiers* since *kura* or a long time ago.

Further Selected Reading

Collard, L., Palmer, D. (1998) *A Nyungar Interpretive History of the use of Boodjar in the Vicinity of the UWA*. Aboriginal and Islander Studies, WA: Murdoch University.

Bates, D. (1992) *Aboriginal Perth and Bibbulmun Biographies and Legends*. Victoria Park WA: Hesperian Press.

Bates, D. (1985) *The Native Tribes of Western Australia* Canberra: National Library of Australia.

South West Land and Sea Council, Host, J and C. Owen. (2009) *It's still in my heart, this is my country: the Single Noongar Claim History* Crawley WA: UWA Press

Decision on the Single Nyoongar Claim (Native Title) <http://www.noongar.org.au/noongar-single-claim.php>
<http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/multimedia/nyungar/menu9.htm>

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NB: *Italics denote Nyungar language.*



Understanding the connection of the local Aboriginal Nyungar people to Perth's Swan River

The Perth waters section of the Swan River is known to the Nyungar people as '*Derbal*' '*Yerrigan*' meaning estuary; 'to rise'. In the past, local Whadjuck Nyungar often called themselves *Darbelyung Nyungar* or people of the estuary.

The local Nyungar people have had a long association with *Boodjargabbeelup*, meaning the place where the water meets the land, or Point Fraser. Before European settlement this was one of the main crossing points to the eastern side of the *beelya* or river, owing to its shallow water and exposed mud flats.

Along this Nyungar *boordi* or cultural trail, signage panels, walls and pavements provide pieces of information about the local Whadjuck Nyungar association with this place.

Further Information

This document is also available in alternative formats upon request.



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Part of this information comes from stories told by Traditional Owner Whadjuck Nyungar people.

It is hoped that this will promote some understanding of the unique connection between this environment and the Nyungar people.

Kakaroomup

It rattled its skin,
shaking its scales off
into the mud as it turned its big body
to gain access to Perth Water

Living off the Land

The Nyungar year is divided into six seasons:

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Bunuru</i> | February and March |
| <i>Djeran Wonjeran</i> | April and May |
| <i>Makuru</i> | June and July |
| <i>Djilba Djilba</i> | August and September |
| <i>Kamcrnbarang</i> | October and November |
| <i>Birak</i> | December and January |

Many Nyungars moved inland during the season of *Makuru* when cooler winds from the southwest would prevail. Communities would then return to coastal areas in *Kambarang* with the onset of warmer weather and as rains decreased.

Over the hot weather of *Birak*, controlled burning was undertaken to ensure the bush was regenerated for the season of *Djilba* when milder climatic conditions would promote vegetation growth coming into warmer weather.

Connection to the Land

"Nidja ngullah Nyungar boodjar ngulluk wankiny - this is Nyungar country we are speaking about."

Len Collard, *personal communication* 2003

In the early days of the colony, the imposition of property rights for *Wedjelas* or colonists over the Nyungar *boodjar* or country often led Nyungar people into conflict with *Wedjelas*. The European concept of land ownership and of trespass was alien to the Nyungar. Conflicts arose when the *Wedjelas* sought to deny the Nyungar access to their *boodjar* and its food resources.

Nyungars' connection to the land makes it impossible for them to distinguish between people and *boodjar*. This relationship between the people and the land has developed over thousands of years. At the heart of it is the belief that ancestors are part of the *boodjar*, in trees, animals and in the nourishment that the *boodjar* provides.

Therefore, for the Nyungars it is impossible not to live in the *boodjar* of their people.

Balbuk, also known as Fanny, a Nyungar *yorgka boordier* or woman landowner had been born on *Kakaroomup* or Heirisson Island and is documented as having strong ties to the region.

"... from there, a straight track had led to the place where once she had gathered jilgies and vegetable food with other women [Nyungar yorgkas]... [climbing] over fences and walking through [the property of Wedjelas]. When a house was built in the way, she broke its fence-palings with her digging stick [wanna] and charged up the steps and through the rooms ..."

Collard, L and Palmer, D 1998 after Bates, D 1992

"... if you look around, there are beautiful big gum trees, this is all the area where Aboriginal people used to camp and live ..."

Judy Jackson, *personal communication* 1997