



## Indigenous Cultural Course 2013

Grahame Fogarty

*This article shares the story and experience of an Aboriginal man Grahame Fogarty when he participated in the Indigenous Cultural Course at Cherbourg in 2013. The three day Indigenous Cultural Course is focused on the Aboriginal story of South East Queensland. It is aimed at both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff in EREA schools, Flexible Learning Centres, Province ministries/centres or people from the wider Edmund Rice Network.*

*The course has been designed in consultation with the Catholic Murri Ministry and involves Indigenous presenters well-respected in their fields.*

*These areas include:*

- White privilege and race consciousness
- Impacts of colonization in south east Queensland
- Justice issues affecting Indigenous people
- The Cherbourg story and visit

### The organisers and presenters

The course was run by Br Jim D'Arcy and Gerard Keating from the Oceania Province Edmund Rice, with presenters Uncle Joe Kirk Elder from Cherbourg, Josh Creamer, Native Title and Michael Aird, early Aboriginal Photographic history

I would like to say that in this course a lot of stories were told from a personal point of view. Some of these notes are from them and include my Aboriginal interpretation of them.

### The purpose of the course

The purpose of the course was to reflect on the past and create future actions through knowledge of how the Aboriginals were treated in early settlement days and the injustice and cruelty and racism that was dealt to them by the white man and governments of the time. This still continues today. (so called interventions).

We now recognise who the first Australians are, only since K. Rudd (former Australian Prime Minister) said 'sorry'. Most people think that because he said sorry, he has now given an apology for all injustices bestowed on the Aboriginal race when he was apologising for the stolen generation. (It's a start).

### The journey

First stop was just outside of **Woodford** where in the early days it was the centre hub for the re-settlement of Aboriginals from all over the state to move them off their lands. There are a number of reasons for relocation in the eyes of the governments at that time. Return soldiers were Promised Land for their services "the non-Aboriginal ones" that is. For the Aboriginal soldier there was nothing – not even recognition for fighting for their country at the time. Uncle Joe spoke of how the Aboriginals were dumped at Woodford then marched to Cherbourg even if they passed by Cherbourg in the first place. They were brought there by cattle truck; it sort of reminded me of the holocaust.

Next stop was **Yarraman**, which means horse in the local Aboriginal language. The town was built on the horse back which was used to pull big logs from the nearby Blackall ranges. The local indigenous population worked the area for very poor rations –this is the start of stolen wages and a continuance of their treatment all over the Australia. Aboriginals were not allowed into any part of the town unless supervised or working, they could not socialise with the locals or go to the pub. They were fringe dwellers with no rights – like an animal.

**Kingaroy:** Kinjerroy meaning red ant.

Uncle Joe told of the red ant in a culture story. The red ant which is found on the South Burnett, builds their nest with the opening facing north. The Aboriginal knew this and could find their way around day or night.

**Wondai:** which means dingo or wild dog in language. The Aboriginals would wait till dingo pup season when they collected the pups and then train them to hunt certain animals, one being the echidna which is considered a delicacy.

**Cherbourg:** there were many stories told of Cherbourg especially the ones told by Uncle Joe who grew up there. We watched videos of the early days and how tough it was for all. The video can be purchased at the souvenir shop. We drove around Cherbourg and toured the sites of Petticoat Lane, the cemetery, camp site and other areas but the one thing that came to mind was the number of children that were not in school (a bus load of teachers

spotted that). Uncle pointed out that it is hard to get them to go to school. There is a very noticeable amount of vandalism by the youth in the settlement and it is very disappointing to the Elders of the community. Uncle said there is very little respect among the youth and programs need to be introduced to regain a community again. There is very little to do in Cherbourg for the youth. Alcohol is limited by law but the community still drinks a lot of grog, so Uncle tells us. The community is a long way from repair. Br Jim parked his car and hopped in the bus at Cherbourg and Uncle told him to get back in his car and park it down by the ration shed park, because the youth of this small community knows every car and would break-in if given the chance.

### **The Ration Shed**

On a positive note the ration shed is a success. The Elders have got together and done a marvelous job on doing this site up through funding. They tell the story of Cherbourg or Barambah in the beginning. Most of the elders have firsthand experience growing up there as children. Which brings me to Auntie Aida, who told us that as a child growing up on Cherbourg she had a happy childhood because she didn't know any better and thought this is how you get treated as an Aboriginal? What a strong woman.

### **1857 Massacre**

One of the highlights at the ration shed for myself was finding on the wall a story of the Hornet Bank massacre back in 1857. This is a story of interest to me. This story had an effect on my family and how our family was assimilated to the white man's way of thinking. My great grandmother came from Taroom where this event happened. She was from the Yemen or Iman tribe who were nearly wiped out by the massacre. The story goes that the tribe just attacked the family of William Fraser for no apparent reason, while he was away getting supplies. They attacked in a way that the white man had treated their people, raping and murdering the family. One boy survived and raised the alarm which set off a large scale massacre with over 300 blacks killed. It is known that W. Fraser murdered over 100 blacks personally and was given permission to shoot so called perpetrator blacks on site for a year. The reason for the Aboriginals attacking in the first place was given no thought – they were just savages so the white man said. Hornet Bank station was set up on Aboriginal

sacred land alongside a large water hole and fishing ground – it was the white man's taking of a source of survival belonging of the Yemen people that caused the conflict.

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These stories were known and passed down when my grandfather came from Dulacca station to Dalby. My grandfather was no longer needed on Dulacca because he was putting white fellas out of work. He had a large family and was a full blood Aboriginal. In a racist town the policies at the time were difficult for my grandmother, being half cast Aboriginal and Chinese. My Grandfather being a full blood Aboriginal went walkabout and never returned so as not to split the family up. Grandma, having Chinese and Aboriginal heritage, looked like a Maori New Zealander and this kept the family together. This just part of the story of the family.

### **A bit of a break**

After two big days of storytelling and facts it was State of Origin night and we all had a good night at the motel we stayed at with a good crew from Edmund Rice Education: Nudgee Junior College, St James', St Mary's, St Joseph's, St Laurence's, and St Pat's.

### **Native Title**

Friday was a busy day with Joe Creamer from Native Title letting us know what it takes for Aboriginals to claim native title over their land. The average cost on a single native title claim is 10 million dollars and the requirements to be eligible are very hard to pass. Most of the requirements have to be written records of which the Aboriginals have very few – only what the white man recorded. Aboriginals had no form of writing so a lot of claims fail. The average time it takes for a claim to go through is between 10 to 18 years. After sitting through this session with Josh and trying to understand the legal jargon it appears that the governments do their best to make it as hard as possible for Aboriginals to make claim over their lands. This is only for rights to practise their heritage and culture, for example to perform ceremonies – hunting and fishing in the tradition of no later than 1850. If you get your claim went

through you can then be compensated for mining and other projects on your land.

### **Photographic History**

The next presenter was Michael Aird who is an Aboriginal photographic historian who presented photos of Aboriginals in early Brisbane around 1860. A picture can speak a 1000 words and he was not short of them. He showed work of an anthropologist Norman Tindale who went about mapping the genealogy of the native Australian, photographing and measuring of some 5000 Aboriginals all over the country taking, hair samples, skull sizes, height etc. His project was funded by the Americans who were worried about their black Negro gaining power and wanted as much information on our Aboriginals to compare with their own situation.

Another highlight for me was when Michael informed me that Tindale had taken and recorded my grandfather's brother Roy Fogarty and the record is kept in the State Library.

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### **First Australians**

The culture course for me was to truly embed in peoples' minds who were the first Australians and the hardships they endured. To reverse the past wrongdoings in policy and interventions, to recognise and celebrate the Aboriginal people and their culture and what they have to offer. Everybody has heard some sort of statistic of Aboriginal failure whether it be custodial, health or economics. All these issues come to light when you look at the history. The Aboriginals were never meant to survive and now they are on the return after 200 years of neglect and racism. I still wonder how long it will take. Will they ever get land back now that they walk in two worlds? Will culture and language be lost forever in this fast moving world? Has too much been destroyed and the elders died taking their knowledge with them? Do the youth have the strength to take on the fight for equality and equity?

### **Keeping culture alive**

I cannot answer these questions, but I do know I can do my bit to help keep the culture alive with respect and participation and recognition.

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***Grahame Fogarty is an Aboriginal man from Dalby. His land and language is Barunggam. Grahame notes:***

*In Wikipedia it says 'There are no known descendants in the area today, as the Barunggam people were moved to [Taroom](#) in 1916, and then eventually to [Cherbourg](#) or [Woorabinda](#)'. But we were still there, just not under the name Aboriginal because we know how that ends. What would you do to keep your family together???*

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2013 Indigenous Cultural Course group

