Yandel’ora

LAND OF PEACE BETWEEN PEOPLES

Frances Bodkin
Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews
Illustrations By Lorraine Robertson

Www.dharawalstories.com
Throughout the past two hundred years, society has come to regard the Koori Dreaming stories as something akin to the fairy stories they were told as children.

However, for thousands upon thousands of years, the stories in this book were used as a teaching tool to impart to the youngest members of the clans the laws which governed the cultural behaviour of clan members. The successive attempts to destroy the Koori culture and assimilate The People into the Euro-centric population were unsuccessful, and the Dreaming Stories were able to continue in their disguise as charming legends where animals became the heroes and the heroines.

Historians and anthropologists have studied the Koori culture since they first arrived on this continent, and have come to the conclusion that the D’harawal culture is dead. Of, course, this has been done without reference to the descendants of that culture, and without even asking the proper questions. The D’harawal culture is not dead, it is a strong, living, vital culture of the Sydney and South Coast regions that just had to go underground for a while to be able to survive. Now that the right questions have been asked, we have the key to unlock a vast wealth of knowledge of this part of the country in which we live.

It is difficult to explain to a society based on commerce fuelled by the profit motive, that D’harawal culture is not based on the ownership of tangible things like land and dwellings and possessions, but it does have a very strong sense of ownership of information. That information, particularly in story form, was not traded, but could be given, and given freely, but its ownership was respected, those stories were not told or passed on by those to whom they had been given, but the knowledge in them was used by the receiver whilst ever they walked in the Land of the D’harawals, This Land.

It is hoped that our present society is now mature enough to be able to accept the Koori Dreaming stories as they were, as they are, and as they were always destined to be; tools to teach the Children of The People about living with Earth, the Mother, in peace and harmony.

Each story contains several layers of knowledge, the first of which are the secrets. Which can only be passed on or discussed with persons of the same level of knowledge or higher than the story teller. These secrets are never told within a legend, but are remembered separately from the legend itself. These are very important components of any legend, and it is the knowledge of the secrets which determines the level of the person’s worthiness to ownership of that story.

The next layer of knowledge within the stories was the law, or laws, to be obeyed. The laws of the stories were told and often repeated after the telling of each story, after which the laws were discussed and their application in life demonstrated in a variety of ways.

The third layer of knowledge contained in each story was the lessons which could be learned from the story and the lessons were taught to all members of the group as well as visitors. These lessons introduced Peoples to the means to live in harmony with each other, and the land and its resources.

In this series of D’harawal Law Legends, there are many lessons to be learned. The D’harawals believed that children learned better and more quickly when they were encouraged to work through a problem, rather than be told the answer. By sharing the stories of our ancestors with you, it is hoped that not only will you recognise and learn the lessons and laws of the Peoples of This Land, but you will also come to understand and respect the culture of The People and our feelings and relationship with the land.

The stories do not in themselves act as an instruction manual - rather they point the way and encourage The People to think, to learn and to live. It is hoped that by sharing our stories, you too may be able to think, to learn and to live in This Land.

With understanding and respect for each other we can learn to more easily share This Land and live together in peace and harmony.
A very long time ago, all the Peoples and all the animals spoke the same language.
And whenever the three sisters in the sky danced in a straight line, everyone would come together to meet and have a great Bunya, a festival to celebrate their friendship.

At these great festivals, disputes would be settled, marriages would be arranged, and most importantly of all, laws would be made for all to obey. In those days, each nation would take turn to host these great Bunyas, and on this occasion, it was Wirritjiribin, the Lyrebird, who had issued the invitations.
Peoples came from everywhere, Duluma, the Crocodile, made his way down from the salty rivers of the north, and the bad tempered Djunguwaragal, the Devil Dog, trudged through the forests from the south.

The ever playful Garal’ga, the black Cockatoos made a wonderful game out of their long journey over the mountains, Bittoorong’burran, the great red kangaroos bounded their way in from the west, while Kulun’aga, the finches, and Bullabulla the butterflies played hide and seek during their journeys.
All the clans of all the Peoples of This Land came together and chose their camping areas.

Some were marked with carved trees, some with piles of rocks, some were marked by special plants brought in from their own homelands. But all made their home here for the time of the great Bunya.

Wiritjiribin, the lyrebird, who was the host, chose the highest spot to enable him to watch over his guests and to ensure their comfort.
However, one of the guests was Gilinga, the Toad. He was a very handsome creature who had the most beautiful voice of all creatures in This Land. But Gilinga was a very conceited person.

He was only proud of his good looks, and therefore liked to camp beside still waters so that he could admire his reflection on the surface of the water, but he was even prouder of his voice.

He liked to sit beside the water and sing so that every creature who came to drink could hear his voice and be envious of him.

But this time, the Peoples were so excited about meeting each other, that they did not stop their conversations with each other to listen to Gilinga sing. Nor did they stop to tell him how handsome he was.
He became very upset, and looked into the water, just to reassure himself that he was still as handsome as ever. And as he stared at the reflection of himself, he devised a plan to get even with those who did not stop to admire his good looks or his fine voice.
Gilinga hid himself amongst the reeds beside the pond and waited until the first of The Peoples came down to drink. Gilinga watched, concealed amongst the reeds as Kookaburra and his friend Wombat, chatted happily beside the pond as they occasions stooped to drink the water. “Isn’t it a pity that Kookaburra is so greedy that he would rather feed himself, than look after his children?” Gilinga said, using the voice of Wallaroo.

Kookaburra and Wombat stopped their chatting and listened to the cruel words. “Yes, and just look at that fat, lazy Wombat.” Said Gilinga in the voice of Muru’duwin, the Silver Eye.

Kookaburra and Wombat departed the pond, silent, and deeply hurt by the remarks they thought were made by Peoples whom they considered to be their friends.
Then, down to the pond came Burra, the Kangaroo, and Didijiri, the Willy Wagtail. “That Didijiri thinks he is so handsome with his black and white cloak, but he just looks silly.”

Kangaroo drew in his breath, he knew that Didijiri was very proud of his cloak which he always kept so clean, but he was not at all conceited.

Burra, the Kangaroo was about to comfort his friend when Gilinga spoke again, this time with the voice of Gaya’dari the Platypus. “Burra is so dumb. He couldn’t find his way home even in daylight unless he had help.”

Now, Burra, the Kangaroo was very proud of his travelling ability, and of his ability to find his home, no matter how far he had travelled, and to hear his friend Gaya’dari say something like that hurt him deeply.

Didijiri the Willy Wagtail, and Burra, the Kangaroo, returned to their camp, their hearts heavy with sadness.
And down to the waterhole came Wangali the Bandicoot, with Naga the honey bee; Wagal the blackfish with Mara’yan, the spider;
Yuran’yi the duck, with Bilima the turtle; Magudun the blue tongue lizard, the Kai’ray the bush turkey, and many others, and each overhearing one of their friends saying terrible things about them.
Naturally, when they returned to the camping place, they began to argue with their former friends, until Wiritjiribin, the Lyrebird realised that something was very, very wrong.

He went to where Kookaburra and Wallaroo were arguing and asked them what had happened. Kookaburra said that he had gone to the waterhole with Wombat and overheard Wallaroo and Muru’duwin the Silver eye talking about him.
Lyrebird then went to where Kangaroo and Gaya’dari were wrestling on the ground, and asked them what happened. Burra and Gaya’dari stopped fighting each other long enough to explain to Lyrebird that they had gone down to the waterhole and overheard the other saying hurtful things about them.
One by one, Lyrebird went to all the Peoples and asked them what had happened.

And the answer that he received each time was that they had gone down to the waterhole to have a drink, and that was where they had heard the hurtful things said.

Lyrebird gathered all the Peoples around him, and asked them to come down to the waterhole with him, but to hide and be very quiet. There, Lyrebird bent over the water as if he was having a drink, and he heard the voice of his best friend, Dil’bung, the Golden Finch. “I cannot imagine why the Lyrebird should be so proud of that stupid tail of his. It is dull and has no colour.” Now, everybody knows that Lyrebird’s tail is the way it is because of the first fire.

All the Peoples drew breath, because the Golden Finch was standing amongst them, and had not said a word.
Managa, the Eagle, whose sight was better than anyone’s swooped down into the reeds and brought out the struggling Gilinga and dropped him at the feet of Wiritjiribin.

All the Peoples began to beat Gilinga, until he was black and blue, but Lyrebird stopped them, and explained to them that they were doing exactly what Gilinga had wanted them to do.

They were learning to hate each other.
Meanwhile, all this fuss and bother had awakened the Spirit Woman, who was resting nearby, and saw all her Peoples fighting each other. However, by the time she had reached the waterhole, Wiritjiribin, the Lyrebird had made the peace. But she was very angry at having been awakened unnecessarily.

She punished Gilinga for his deception by taking away his handsome looks, and making him the ugliest creature in This Land. And because he had used his beautiful voice to make trouble, she took it away, too, so that all he could do was croak.

The Peoples were happy at this punishment for Gilinga, and cheered.

Now, the Spirit Woman was in a VERY BAD temper. She turned to all the People, and told them of her disgust with them. “Of all of you, only Lyrebird sought the Truths. And because you disregarded your obligation to seek the Three Truths, I am going to take from you your ability to speak to each other. In future, you will no longer understand what the others have to say.”

Then she turned to Wiritjiribin. “Because you sought the Truths, and made the peace, I give to you the ability to speak all languages. Lyrebird will be known as the Peacemaker, and This Land, in which he lives, will be the Land of Peace Between Peoples.”

That is why all The Peoples come to This Land to make their laws and to settle disputes.
And that is why only the Lyrebird can speak all languages.
Some D’harawal words from this Story

**Yandel’ora:**
Land of Peace Between Peoples, the lands north of Razorback Range, West of the Georges River, East of the Wol-londilly/Nepean River, and south of Prospect Creek.

**Bunya:**
Festival, now called Corroboree

**Wiritjiribin:**
The lyrebird, also the name of one of the Two Sisters.

**Garal’ga:**
Glossy Black Cockatoo.

**Bittooron’birran:**
The red Kangaroo

**Yuran’yi:**
the black duck

**Burra:**
kangaroo

**Muraduwin:**
the silver eye

**Magu’dum:**
the blue tongue lizard

**Bilima:**
the turtle

**Wagal:**
the blackfish

**Gilinga:**
toad

**Duluma:**
Crocodile

**Gaya’dari:**
the platypus

**Kulun’aga:**
finches

**Managa:**
the eagle

**Wan’gali:**
Bandicoot

**Kat’ray:**
bush turkey

**Mara’yin:**
The spider

**Didijiri:**
The willy Wagtail


One must always seek the Three Truths in everything one does.