

DRAFT

Appendix 2 - Sites of Aboriginal Significance: Research and Consultation



Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodianship

The past and present traditional custodians of this land, the Whadjuk people are acknowledged and respected in this interpretation plan.

Their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of Cottesloe and the region is recognised.

It is a privilege to be working with Whadjuk people, Whadjuk land and the stories created here.

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Prepared by Helen Curtis, Apparatus September 2016



Mudurup Rocks 1922, Photo from Town of Cottesloe Collection, The Grove Library

Interpretation of Aboriginal Heritage

‘Heritage interpretation is about sharing memories and experiences. It respects the connections between people and place whether a place is natural landscape or one modified by use...’

Sharing Our Stories National Trust of Australia (WA)

‘Aboriginal heritage is indivisible from the country. It is the past and the present connections to that landscape. It is living cultures imbued with cultural heritage through story, song, dance, language, kinship, custom, ceremony and ritual. It is living heritage given life through oral tradition and continued interaction with the landscape.’

The task of interpreting Aboriginal heritage is impossible without mapping and celebrating cultural connection to Country. This connection provides the soul to interpreting Aboriginal heritage. An interpretive work that captures this multi-layered, rich and cultural connectedness to Country ensures the strength and power of the Aboriginal voice is heard.’

‘We’re a Dreaming Country’

Guidelines for Interpretation of Aboriginal Heritage (National Trust, 2012)

Background

The Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment is a project advanced by the Town of Cottesloe.

The Masterplan is being developed by Cardno, with Apparatus providing heritage interpretation and public art research, planning and coordination services.

This document is part of the overall interpretation and public art plan for the whole of the Cottesloe Foreshore redevelopment.

In particular, this document describes the process of consulting with Whadjuk Noongar Elders and those stories that reveal and enhance the cultural heritage values of Aboriginal Significance found within the area.

The stories and information gathered here will be used to promote public understanding and prompt curiosity about the site’s past uses and inform and guide the design and installation of interpretative material for the redeveloped site.

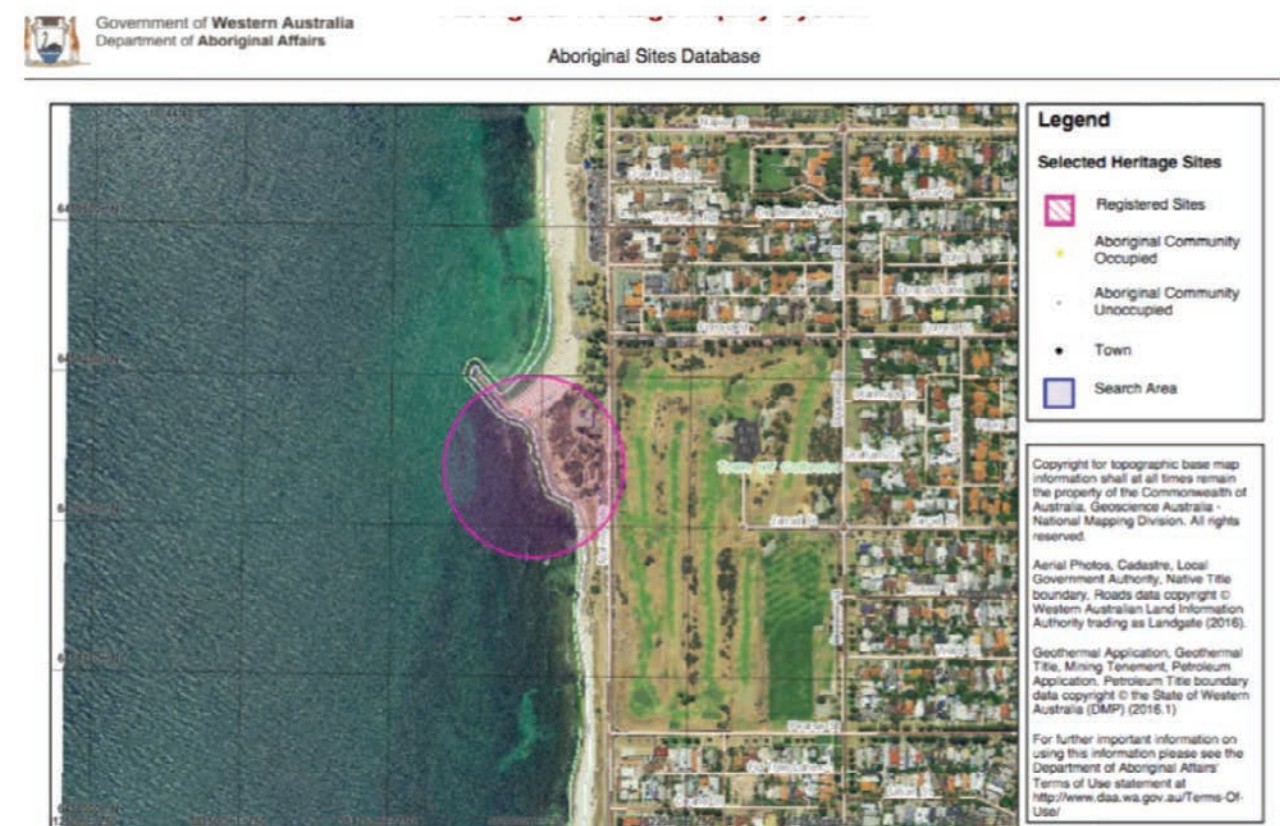
Consultation

Consultation with the Whadjuk Noongar Elders for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment was undertaken in line with the consultation protocols set out by the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Registered Sites

One registered site - Mudurup Rocks - was found on the Department of Aboriginal Affairs Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System (AHIS) on the DAA website.

Mudurup Rocks is a mythological, ceremonial and fishing site. It is registered as Site ID 435 at the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Cultural and Heritage Division, Perth.



Risk

According to the Aboriginal Heritage Due Diligence Guidelines: Aboriginal Heritage Risk Matrix, the risk to the above sites is low. This conclusion was reached based on the Previous Land Use being Built Environment e.g. urban environment, towns, metropolitan region and the Land Activity Category being Significant Disturbance e.g. creation of new roads or tracks, major landscaping/contouring.

The action required of a low risk project is to “Review the landscape and proposed activity (see sections 2.4 - 2.8 - assessing the landscape and the activity). Refer to the AHIS.



http://cottesloecoastcare.org/dir/current_projects/project_mudurup

Aboriginal Consultation for Registered Sites

Aboriginal Consultation for this project is required with the:

- (a) determined native title holders;
- (b) registered native title claimants;
- (c) persons named as informants on Aboriginal site recording forms held in the Register at DAA; and
- (d) any other Aboriginal people who can demonstrate relevant cultural knowledge in a particular area.

The purpose of such consultation could be:

- (a) to provide easily understood information about the proposed land use and to seek responses from the relevant Aboriginal people;
- (b) to identify sites in the area that may not have been registered;
- (c) to assess whether the proposed land activity might damage Aboriginal sites; and
- (d) to develop strategies for heritage management for the proposed land use and for any longer term disturbance that might occur as part of the activity (e.g. construction of power poles and later periodic maintenance).

Recommended Consultees

Traditional custodian of Pindjarup Noongar land, Mr Ken Colbung was named as a DAA site informant and as such a required consultee, however Mr Colbung passed away in 2010.

Two Native Title Claims exist over the area:

Registered claim – Whadjuk People (WAD242/2001); and

Not registered – Single Noongar Claim (Area 1) (WAD6006/2003) represented by the South Western Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC).

SWALSC was contacted regarding who best to consult with regarding this project.

The following consultees, all Whadjuk Noongar Elders, were discussed with and approved by Clem Rodney, South Western Aboriginal Land and Sea Council.

Meetings were held with the Elders in April 2016 and again in June 2016.

Whadjuk Noongar Elders consulted:

Mr Richard Walley - 0419 919 888 - abprodpr@iinet.net.au

Mr Noel Nannup – 0400 770 409 – noel@indigenouswa.com

Mr Barry McGuire - 0452 264 880 - barry@redsphear.com.au

Mrs Doolann Leisha Eatts - 0439 925 750 - walter_eatts@optusnet.com.au

Mrs Theresa Walley – C/- Rose Walley - 9489 7802 - Rosemary.Walley@telethonkids.org.au

Mrs Marie Taylor - 0457 343 663 - mariejtaylor1@bigpond.com

Mr Walter Eatts, Honorary Noongar Elder. 0439 925 750 - walter_eatts@optusnet.com.au

The following information was presented to the Elders for their consideration and all Elders approved the information as culturally appropriate to use as interpretive material for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment.

Archaeological Evidence of Aboriginal Habitation

Some Noongar Elders consulted by Anthropologists Ken McIntyre and Dr Barbara Dobson were aware of ancient Noongar campsites which had been located by archaeologists in the 1960's and 1970's in the Cottesloe/Mosman Park coastal belt.

These indicated a long history of seasonal occupation of this coastal area. Two of the sites registered at the Department of Aboriginal Affairs are Site ID 3335 (Victoria Street Station) and site ID 3336 (MacArthur Street, Mosman Park). Other isolated artefacts have been located in the sand dunes near fringing vegetation in the vicinity of the Cottesloe Vlamingh Memorial and the old Cable Station. These include pre-contact and post-contact materials. Isolated fragments of worked bottle glass prove that these pre-contact sites were occupied into post-colonial times¹.

Ancient artefacts, such as chert and quartz flaked implements, have since been found at a number of local sites, including those discovered in 1972 by archaeologist Dr Charles Dortch on the eastern side of Curtin Avenue, near the Victoria Street railway crossing in Mosman Park.

These invaluable finds suggest that this particular neighbourhood was once frequented by the original inhabitants, who made regular use of the stone taken from coastal quarries some 10 000 to 30 000 years BC. It is believed that the area may have once been part of a well-worn route leading from the river to the former extended coastline.

Other archaeological artefacts, carbon dated at about 8,000 BC, have been unearthed at similar registered sites in Curtin Avenue, Cottesloe, and in the vicinity of the former Billy Goat Farm at Mosman Park, layers of fossilised marine shells have also been found set in the limestone banks².

1 Indigenous Significance of Mudurup Rocks, Cottesloe”, Macintyre and Dobson, page 10.

2 Cottesloe – A Town of Distinction, Ruth Marchant James, 2007, page 4.

Sites of Aboriginal Significance: Stories for Interpretation

The following information is largely derived from papers written by and information compiled by indigenous heritage specialists and long-term Cottesloe residents Ken Macintyre and Dr Barbara Dobson. This information is the result of their anthropological research based on extensive interviews with Aboriginal Elders from the Swan Coastal Plain and examination of historical documents. My thanks to Ken and Barb for the generous provision of their work for this project.

DAA site file information and information from texts listed in the bibliography have also been used.

Whadjuk Noongar Elders, Doolann Leisha Eatts, Theresa Walley, Marie Taylor, Richard Walley, Noel Nannup, Barry McGuire and Walter Eatts have provided information and stories about the Cottesloe foreshore and these are noted below.

My thanks to the Elders for their stories, their time, their warmth and their willingness to help with this project.

Note about Noongar Language

Noongar names and terms can be rendered in many different ways. There is no single correct spelling as the Noongar language is traditionally an oral one. Choice of spelling usually depends on an individual or group's preferred orthography and/or regional or dialectical linguistic variations.

The term Noongar denotes Aboriginal people whose roots traditionally derive from southwestern Australia. Noongar can be spelt Nyoongar, Noongar or Nyungah or Nyungar, depending on individual or group preferences. The language is fundamentally similar throughout southwestern Australia (as noted by Grey 1840, Moore 1842, Bates 1914 and others) albeit with regional and dialectical variations (and in some cases colloquial terms and expressions which are confined to a particular district).

Mudurup Rocks - Background of the Site

According to DAA site file information recorded in 1995 'the site is located immediately W. of the Cottesloe Surf Lifesaving Club and SSE of the Cottesloe Beach Groyne.'

Macintyre and Dobson consultations with senior Indigenous spokespersons with knowledge of the area, record the site as extending north and south of the present day groyne, including part of the rocky shoreline and beachfront limestone formations which existed there prior to the construction of the groyne.

Consultants were unanimous that the Mudurup Rocks site included all the high ground, including the ground on which the surf club is built. Two Elders, Humphries (1992) and Colbung (1998, 1999, 2000) were convinced that the site extended northwards beyond the sloping ground on which the Indiana Tea House is now located.

Place Name - Mudurup

Macintyre and Dobson state that the original site name is Mudurup (pronounced 'Moordoorup' or 'Murdarup').

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs changed the name of the site from Mudurup to Moonderup based on the site information provided by Ken Colbung and recorded by archaeologist Pat Vinnicombe from DAA in 1995.

Macintyre and Dobson state that that "... all the other Aboriginal heritage spokespersons (including Cliff Humphries 1992 and Corrie Bodney 1994, 1995) had stated categorically that the place had always been known to them as Mudurup, and as far back as they could recall all the 'old people' had called it Mudurup."³

According to Macintyre and Dobson, one senior Aboriginal consultant (Bodney) was convinced that Mudurup was the district name prior to white settlement.

Macintyre and Dobson state that "We could find no historical or ethnographic reference to Mudurup Rocks as Moonderup in the archival literature. Old newspaper reports showed that the name Mudurup Rocks had always applied, ever since the time of settlement of Cottesloe in the 1890's."⁴

Meaning 'Place of the Whiting', the name Mudurup derives from the Noongar *mudu*⁵ meaning 'yellow-finned whiting' + *up* - meaning 'place of'.



Art by Roger Swainston

Art by Roger Swainston –www.westernangler.com.au

³ Indigenous Significance of Mudurup Rocks, Cottesloe, Macintyre and Dobson, page 7.

⁴ Indigenous Significance of Mudurup Rocks, Cottesloe, Macintyre and Dobson, page 6.

⁵ (or muda, murdar, murda or muda)

Mudurup – Place of the Yellow Finned Whiting

The probable site name, *Mudurup* is said to refer to the place of the whiting.

The whiting referred to is most likely the yellow-finned whiting (*Sillago schomburgkii*) most commonly found in this area and also known as the Western Sand Whiting, which is, according to Hutchins and Thompson (1983: 34) ‘Abundant on sandy bottoms in shallow coastal areas.’

Hyndes and Potter (1997: 435) note that this species ‘spends its entire life cycle’ in ‘sheltered near shore waters in southwestern Australia’ where it ‘spawns predominantly from December to February.’

Yellow-Finned Whiting is a good eating fish and to be celebrated, it is the prized catch of all inshore whiting species.

It was during mid to late summer *birok* (Dec-Jan) and *burnoru* (Feb-March) that indigenous people used to frequent a place called *Mudurup*, which we now know as the Cottesloe coastal strip¹².

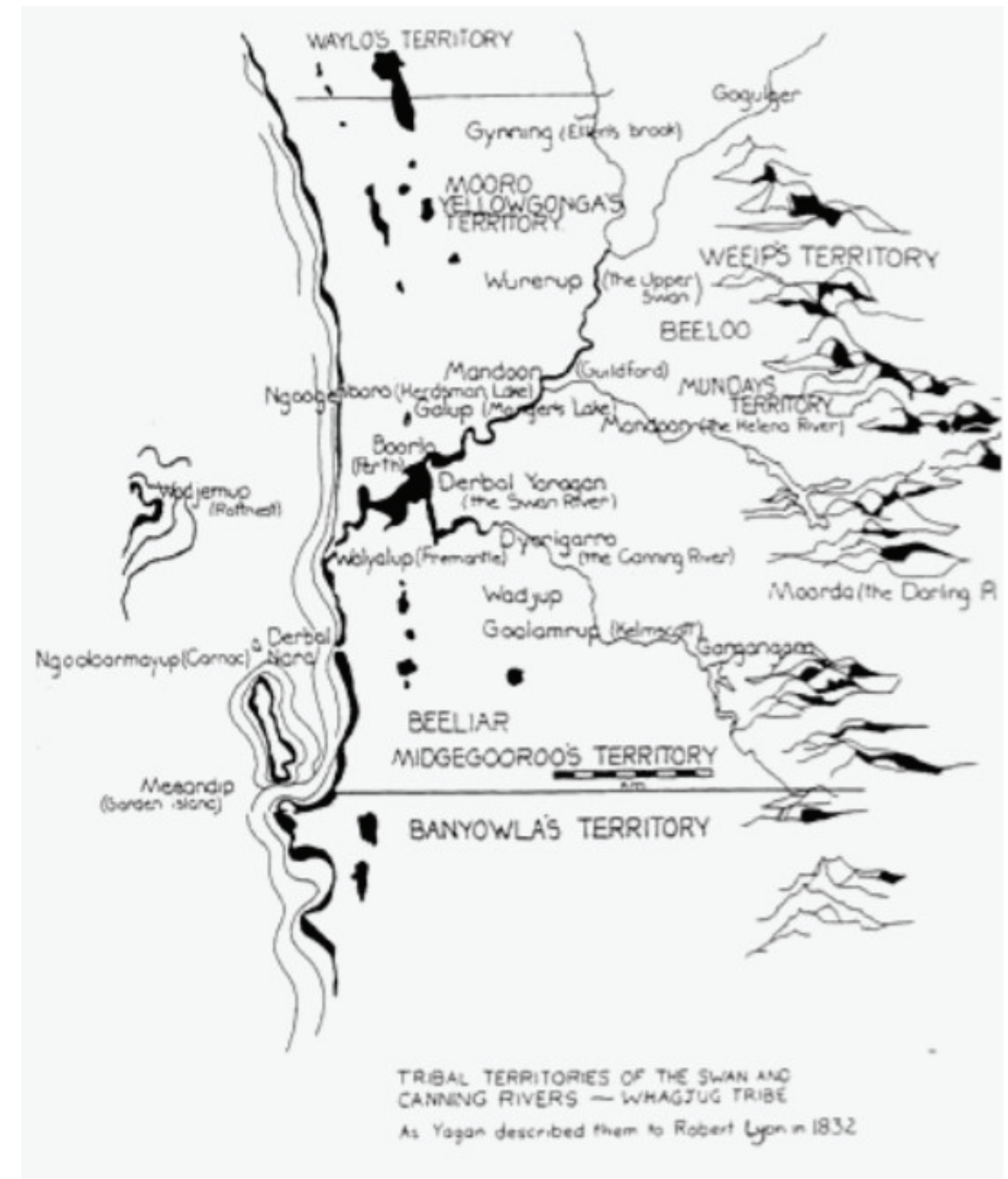
Macintyre and Dobson suggest that the Whiting’s breeding cycle was a dependable seasonal marker which drew Noongar people to the coast at this time to take advantage of this abundant food source.

After spawning occurs they gather during the summer months in the inshore waters. The whiting feeds in shallow waters and are easily spooked. They then head to deeper waters as the temperatures cool. This means you can catch whiting over summer knowing that they’ve done their breeding for the year³.

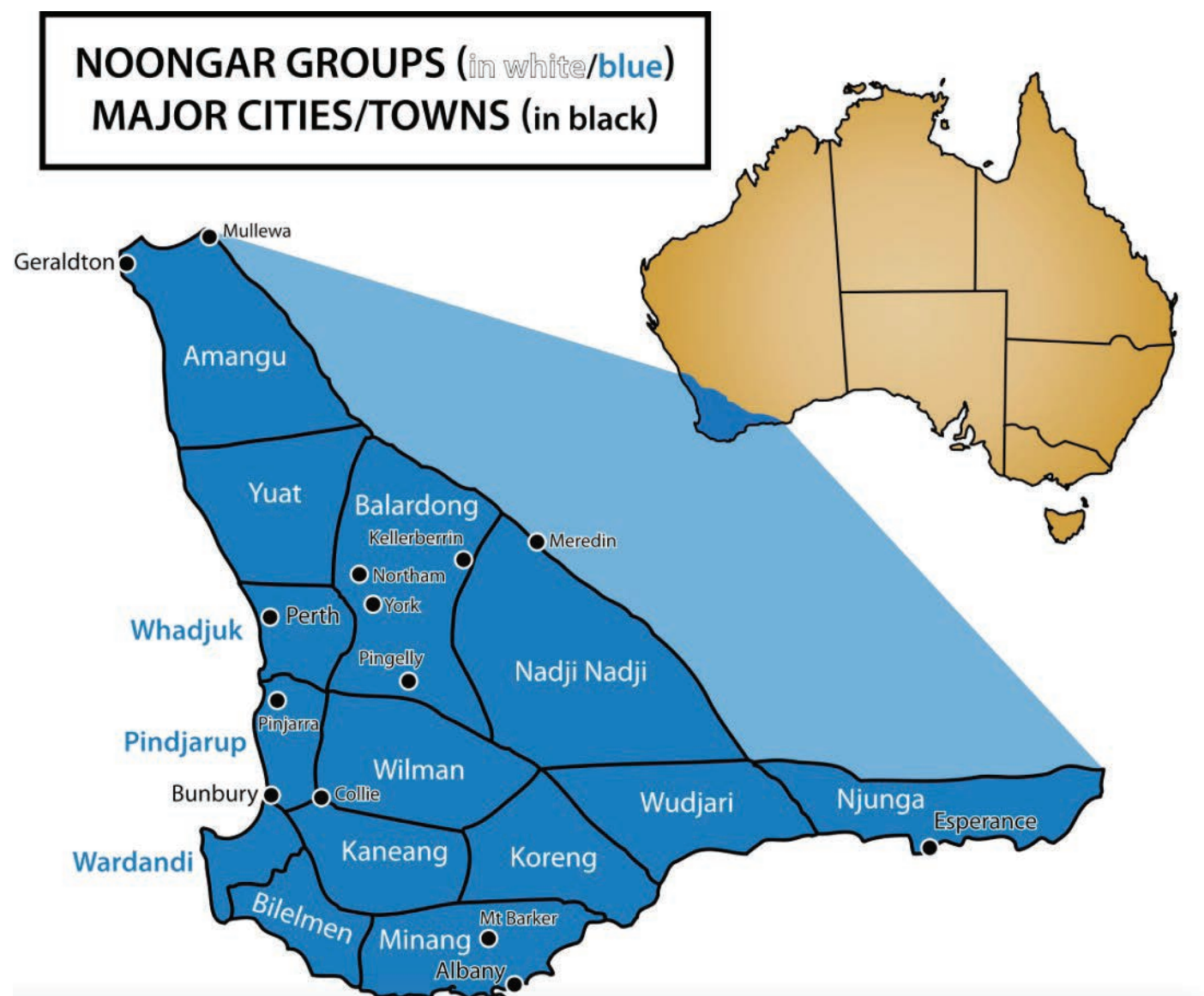
1 Aborigines and the Cottesloe Coast, Macintyre, 2004 page 1.

2 Note: the Western notion of calendar months is used loosely here to refer to the approximate time of year. Noongar people would have used season markers and indicators such as flowering plants, animal movements and behaviours and astrological conditions (solar and lunar cycles) to ascertain the particular season.

3 <http://www.fishingwa.com/species/whiting-school-yellowfin/>



Map illustrates the Perth region before settlement (according to Robert Lyons as told to him by Yagan, in Tindale, 1974)



Mooro People

The inhabitants and custodians of the coastal strip between Yanchep and Fremantle were collectively known as the *Mooro*.

The group was led by Yellagonga who had territorial control over this vast domain. The land included the area now known as Cottesloe, as well as the future site of Perth – *Boorloo* - where he had his principal headquarters⁴.

Yellagonga’s group was one of several that were collectively known as the Whadjuk, who were based around the Swan River. The Whadjuk was a part of the greater group of fourteen, which formed the south west socio-linguistic block still known today as Noongar (The People), or sometimes by the name *Bibbulmun*⁵.

The lake system and wetlands, from Yanchep in the North to Galup (Lake Monger) and including Ngoogenboro (Herdsman Lake) throughout the coastal dune system and the Swan coastal plain, provided a strong economic base for Noongar people. The wide variety of ecosystems, aquatic vegetation, and forests supplied fresh water, fish, birds and waterfowl along with kangaroo and other small animals for food and clothing, tools for hunting and materials, and resources for building shelters and for trade with neighbours⁶.

Their society was well established and structured. There has always been a strong focus on family and extended family. The community consists of Elders both male and female, spiritual leader, family groups and children. The Law and Dreaming is passed on through stories, dance, painting and corroborees⁷.

They were a hunter, gatherer, fisher clan who maintained a small, environmentally sustainable population. It was for this reason that Aboriginal people were able to sustain a continuous and harmonious lifestyle for over 50,000 years⁸.

Doolan Leisha Eatts stated “they never took lots, only enough for that meal”⁹.

It is likely that at the time of fish spawning that many clans would visit the site, camps would be set

4 Cottesloe – A Town of Distinction, Ruth Marchant James, 2007, page 4.

5 <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/aboriginaleducation/apac/detcms/aboriginal-education/apac/regions/beechnoro/history-of-the-north-metro.en?cat-id=9192499>

6 <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/aboriginaleducation/apac/detcms/navigation/regional-websites/north-metro/about-the-region/>

7 <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/aboriginaleducation/apac/detcms/aboriginal-education/apac/regions/beechnoro/history-of-the-north-metro.en?cat-id=9192499>

8 *Aborigines and the Cottesloe Coast*, Macintyre, 2004 page 1.

9 Consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nyungar_language

up and large quantities of fish would be consumed and caribberie¹ held. It is likely this would include arranged partnerships or give aways, shell collecting and decorating for use as tools, drinking implements and trade, stories would be told, songs sung and dances danced - *ke-ning*².

Noel Nannup described that when the Wardung flew between Wadjemup and Mudurup it indicated a change in the weather and the arrival of fish³. Noel Nannup described the fishing as being a communal activity where women used branches of the paperbark tree to herd the fish into one spot where the men could use *gidgees* to spear the fish⁴.

Noel Nannup continued that after the harvesting of fish during *Birok*, the clan would head inland to burn the land hunting for marsupials before the rain came⁵.

There is no doubt that kangaroo, emu and large game were hunted but it would seem that the staple protein of the indigenous people of the Swan Coastal Plain was obtained predominantly from fish, aquatic reptiles and crustaceans found in the lakes, swamps, rivers and coastal estuaries (Macintyre and Dobson 2002).

Barry McGuire told the story about the elderly men who would sit by the ocean and chant with their tapping sticks. Hearing the loud noise made by the tapping sticks, the dolphins, *keela* would come rushing toward the beach. The fish would shower onto the beach sand to get out of the way⁶.

In her book, *Cottesloe – A Town of Distinction*, Ruth Marchant James states that Mudurup Rocks provided an abundance of seafood, but was "shadeless, windswept and lacked the convenience of a freshwater spring." Marchant-James goes on to state that "Separated from the more inviting river banks and freshwater springs by only a narrow tract of bush, the reef below Mudurup Rocks was more likely to have been frequented by hunters intent on collecting the fruits of the ocean as an alternative to catching fish in the river... Seasonal camps comprising bark-covered huts sheltered members of the Mooro people from the more discomforting aspects of the elements."

Marchant James continues "Captain Frederick Chidley Irwin, Commandant of the 63rd Regiment and one-time acting-governor of the colony, observed... 'Huts about 4 ft high and capable of containing but three or four persons. Constructed with sticks and covered with the bark of the Melaleuka or tea tree. Bark, a soft cottony substance strips off in large flakes. Entrance is opposite prevailing wind'."



Camp at Lake Monger, 1923. Image copyright State Library of Western Australia. 54500P.

Daily life mainly consisted of hunting, fishing and food gathering. It is likely that women performed chores such as the preparation and collection of many natural foods using the *wanna* or digging stick, to the fashioning of useful items from animal skins and paperbark, such as carry bags for travelling and for cradling infants. Men probably hunted marsupials and took care of their spears and hunting equipment. Common fare comprised kangaroos, possums, tortoises, land crabs, as well as a range of grubs and roots in season and a plentiful supply of fish, which was generally wrapped in bark and cooked in hot ashes.

Mooro people lived a complex, sophisticated and deeply spiritual life with stories, traditions and beliefs passed down through each generation. Noongar people needed to be resourceful, innovative and flexible to survive and adapt to the changing environment.

The earliest records of Aboriginal seasonal patterns of movement on the Swan Coastal Plain are provided by Stirling (1827) who states: "... in Summer they frequent the Sea Coast where their skill in spearing fish is truly wonderful. In Winter they inhabit the higher grounds, where the Kangaroo, the Opossum, the Land Tortoises, several species of Birds and roots compose their sustenance..." (Stirling 1827: 570 quoted by Hallam 1979: 23).

Mooro People – Spiritual Beliefs

The spiritual beliefs - *wiirn mut*⁷ -of the Mooro, like other Noongar tribes throughout south-western Australia, was deeply involved with mythology relating to the Cold Times or Dreaming - *Nyitting*.

⁷ Noongar language thanks to Marie Taylor.

¹ **Corroboree** - Was first used by Europeans to describe Aboriginal ceremonies of song and dance. The Aboriginal word is 'caribberie' and the ceremonies pass on stories of the Dreaming or Nyitting. The Noongar word for dance is ke-ning. Dances and ceremonies vary, depending on which part of Noongar country they are performed in. The use of ochre and designs indicate the type of ceremony and which language group is performing. <http://www.noongarculture.org.au/glossary/>

² Noel Nannup, Marie Taylor and Doolan Leisha eats in consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.

³ Consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.

⁴ Consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.

⁵ Consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.

⁶ Story told by Barry McGuire in consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016

Mooro spiritual beliefs also involved the maintenance, restoration and revitalisation of bird, animal and insect species through ‘increase rituals’ at certain places⁸.

Bodney (1995) speculated that the caves at Mudurup may have had something to do with increase ceremonies to ensure a plentiful supply of whiting. He said ‘the old people must have negotiated through ceremonies with the spirit that controlled the supply of the mudar. This spirit was the gobourn (totem) of the old people who performed the sacred rituals. They were the custodians of this place.’⁹

Macintyre and Dobson state that while there were differences of opinion among Noongar heritage spokespersons consulted between 1992 and 2001 as to the mythological narrative and symbolism associated with Mudurup Rocks, all agreed that it was a place of deep spiritual, ceremonial and ancestral importance¹⁰.

Noongar cosmology traditionally recognises an interconnectivity between all facets of the natural environment. It is even possible for them to believe that humans could transform themselves into other animal and bird forms and that these animal and bird forms could also assume the guise of humans. Such beliefs form an integral part of traditional Noongar Dreaming mythology¹¹.

Theresa Walley stated that the ocean was a spirit place, she was warned as a little girl “don’t go there or the spirit will take you away, she continued that sea birds were not to be eaten, they were the spiritual guardians of the ocean¹².



Art by Roger Swainston –www.westernangler.com.au

Melak¹³

One of the main activities in the summer season was the migration of the Australian salmon, known by local Aborigines as *melak*.

It was during this season that fishing became an intensive and sometimes cooperative activity, driving fish inshore to be speared. It was at times, such as the salmon run, that considerable quantities of fish would be consumed and shared with neighbouring groups.

To maintain a hunter/gatherer lifestyle, it was often a matter of “feast or famine” as weather conditions and the availability of food were not always predictable. Thus it was essential to consume as much protein and fat as possible so that it could be stored in the body and utilised during times of famine.

Gulamwin

One of the attractions of the Cottesloe coast in summer – and this also applies today - is the regularity and cooling effects of the sea breeze in summer, known by the indigenous people as *gulamwin* (south-westerly breeze)¹⁴. *Gulamwin* is also known as the Fremantle Doctor.

Sweet/Fresh Water Collection at Beach Street Groyne and the Waugal

A commonly asked question is how did indigenous people survive on this dry coastal belt. It would appear that they had a number of strategies for obtaining fresh water. Occasionally water was found on the leeward side of sand dunes that had been eroded by wind and water down to the water table. In some cases these soaks had to be dug out and regularly cleaned. Another means of harvesting water was to collect it from the surface of the sea, *kappi wodern*. Freshwater feeds into the limestone reefs via underground springs from the water table. During low tide and calm weather, freshwater which has a lower density than salt, floats on top of salt water and can easily be seen as a type of oily slick. This oiliness is the result of iron in the freshwater. Water would have been harvested from the surface using a paperbark *yoralla* (carrying dish). It is highly probable that fresh water seeped out of cracks in the limestone cliffs and outcrops along the coast at Cottesloe and Mosman Park. It should be noted that up until the 1950’s Aboriginal people were resident in the Swanbourne area and utilised the coast for fishing activities, as some still do today¹⁵.

Bodney (1993) stated that coastal Aboriginal people traditionally collected fresh water from natural springs located in the sand dunes and limestone formations. However, he did not have any information as to the exact location of the water source in this particular location along the coast. One natural spring was found on the north side of the Beach Street Groyne (which is also known as the Dutch Inn Groyne), almost at the same location as an existing storm water drain. This area seems to be an underground discharge area for fresh water.¹⁶

Bodney (1994) further explained that fresh water may have been collected from the surface of the ocean

8 *Aborigines and the Cottesloe Coast*, Macintyre, 2004 page 4
 9 *Indigenous Significance of Mudurup Rocks, Cottesloe*, Macintyre and Dobson, page 6.
 10 *Indigenous Significance of Mudurup Rocks, Cottesloe*, Macintyre and Dobson, page 8.
 11 *Indigenous Significance of Mudurup Rocks, Cottesloe*, Macintyre and Dobson, page 11
 12 Theresa Walley in consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.

13 *Aborigines and the Cottesloe Coast*, Macintyre, 2004 page 2
 14 *Aborigines and the Cottesloe Coast*, Macintyre, 2004 page 2
 15 *Aborigines and the Cottesloe Coast*, Macintyre, 2004 page 4
 16 *Indigenous Significance of Mudurup Rocks, Cottesloe*, Macintyre and Dobson, page 11.

where it was discharged from the aquifer as underground streams in the limestone reefs. He said that it is easily located as it looks like a long, oily slick. This oily impression is caused by iron molecules suspended in the fresh water which, being lighter than the heavier seawater, floats on top. He suggested that fresh water could have been easily scooped from the surface in earlier times using paper bark containers, when other sources of fresh water were depleted.

Noel Nannup explained that another way of finding sweet water was to look for cyanobacteria, the green algae that grows on the rocks where sweet water runs.¹

Bodney and Colbung both believed that these streams of fresh water were the spiritual manifestations of the *Waugal* and that they symbolised the interconnectivity between the terrestrial/sweet water *Waugal* and the sea *Waugal*.

The springs and gnamma holes were made when the sweet water *Waugal* chased the sea *Waugal* over the lands and they popped up for air.²

Every tribe, bard, had their own waterhole and you needed to ask permission before you could use or even approach the waterhole.³

Permission was granted through the use of the message or talking stick, *boornawongkie*, where messages and a request for permission to use the waterhole was carved onto a *boornawongkie*. The bard that looked after the waterhole would then approve or deny the request by marking the stick.⁴

The continuous chain of lakes from Moore River to Mandurah were said to have been created in the *Nyitting* by the *Waugal*. The creative spirit of the *Waugal* was believed to have been responsible for the creation of rivers, lakes and wetlands in the Perth and surrounding region. The *Waugal* was not only a creative totemic being but it was also a protector of the environment. According to Noongar law, springs and gnamma holes could not be drained as it was believed that this would kill the guardian *Waugal* spirit and cause the water source to dry up permanently. The *Waugal* was said to be responsible for attracting the rain and keeping water holes and springs replenished. It was said to inhabit deep dark pools and traditionally was seen to be both a destructive and creative force in that it could cause sickness as well as cure sickness.⁵

Likewise, underground springs that flowed into the sea were believed to be the essence of the *Waugal*, and in some cases these springs were viewed as the children of the *Waugal* flowing from the river towards the sea. Thus the idea of fresh water is so intricately involved with the mythology of the *Waugal* that it is hard to extricate, in some cases, the mythological metaphor from that of proto-science.⁶



Shane Pickett, *Waagle and Yondock story*, 2004, acrylic paint on canvas, 1260 x 950mm, City of Fremantle Art Collection, Courtesy of the Artist's Estate and Mossenson Gallery. Photo Victor France

At a deeper level *Waugal* mythology was indeed the metaphor which emphasized the proto-scientific mysteries of the rivers, water sources and landscape. It also explained through the mythological track of the *Waugal* how water moved throughout the Swan Coastal Plain as a system of underground streams interlinking wetlands to the rivers and ocean. This knowledge was an essential component of Aboriginal survival.⁷

1 Noel Nannup in consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.
 2 Doolan Leisha Eatts in consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.
 3 Doolan Leisha Eatts in consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.
 4 Marie Taylor in consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.
 5 *Aborigines and the Cottesloe Coast*, Macintyre, 2004 page 2.
 6 *Aborigines and the Cottesloe Coast*, Macintyre, 2004 page 2.

7 *Aborigines and the Cottesloe Coast*, Macintyre, 2004 page 2.

The Run of the Wardung

Indigenous oral history states that *Mudurup* (or coastal Cottesloe) was one of the traditional haunts, or 'run' of the crow (Australian Raven) or *Wardung*.⁸

The *Wardung* was an indicator bird heralding the arrival of storms or fish. Bodney stated that it was said by 'the old people' that when the *Wardung* who camped on Wadjemup (Rottnest Island), visited the coast at Mudurup, they would herald the arrival of the mullet (*Mugil cephalus*) and salmon (*Arripis truttacea*). This was a sign of a time of plenty. Even in traditional times when Aboriginal people moved inland in late autumn/early winter to escape the onset of the harsh wintry conditions on the coast, they knew that the Crow man would continue his weather forecasts through his obliging kin, the *ngoolark* (white tailed black cockatoo) and *minyet* (ants).

In traditional belief *Wardung* were the messengers of the rain beings, thunder beings and the wind. Only a powerful sorcerer, such as the Crow man, could divine the subtle unpredictability of these natural elements. When storms approached, the Crow man would announce its coming to his kinsmen, the loud screeching *ngoolark* and excite the busy movements of the *minyet* leaving ant trails, *biddit*.

8 *Indigenous Significance of Mudurup Rocks, Cottesloe*, Macintyre & Dobson, pages 1 - 2.



Photo: Adam Plucinski



Johnny Cudgel prior to his release from Rottnest Island prison in 1915.

'Indigenous Significance Of Mudurup Rocks, Cottesloe'

The Crow Man⁹

There is no doubt that the story of the Crow man has its origin in ancient Noongar tradition. However, the story of Cudgel (whose name may also be rendered as Cudgell, Cadjil, Kudgel, Kudjil, Kadjil or Kutjil) is another story, a more contemporary one involving a real life character by the name of Johnny Cudgel.

Marie Taylor was told stories of the crow man who was called by his Noongar name, Bibarn, in the stories. Mrs Taylor continued that when Bibarn escaped from Rottnest he turned into a crow and sat on the mast of a tall ship. When the ship got halfway to Perth there was a message that Bibarn had escaped. Everyone was looking for him. No body on the boat realized that Bibarn was the crow. And had flown away.¹⁰

In traditional mythology the *Wardung* (crow) sometimes assumed the role of a wise man, a cunning trickster or a malicious "bulya man" or sorcerer. Cudgel was all three. Some high- ranking sorcerers were believed to metamorphise into birds, such as crows and owls, and to travel great distances in such guise to seek out their unsuspecting victims. There was no escaping the crow man unless the crow man was a clever *bulya* man persecuted by an enemy tribe, as in the story of Johnny Cudgel.

Cudgel was a hero to Noongar people, a resistance fighter, a rebel warrior who flouted white authority whenever possible, especially when it involved matters of inequity and injustice between black and white people of southwestern Australia. Johnny Cudgel was a regular inmate of the Rottnest Island gaol between 1890 and 1925.

In 1892 at the age of 18 Cudgel received heroic newspaper coverage of his daring escape during a violent storm from the lighthouse on Breaksea Island off the coast of Albany where he had been billeted on work duties. By the early part of the 20th century Cudgel had become a media star, a black bush ranger and a folk hero to the oppressed Noongar people of southwestern Australia. Stories of his uncanny ability to

9 *Indigenous Significance of Mudurup Rocks, Cottesloe*, Macintyre and Dobson, pages 12 - 13.

10 Marie Taylor in consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.

escape from the custody of Her Majesty's gaols abounded within the community to the point where his feats became seen as superhuman, not to mention his perceived ability to transform himself into a crow and mysteriously escape across the sea from the notorious Rottnest Island prison.

Noongar Elders who had formerly camped at the Swanbourne site (where the new Swanbourne Primary School now stands) remembered stories told to them by 'the old people' around the fire at night about Kadjil's miraculous escape from Rottnest Island. There was no doubt in their minds that this story was true and that Johnny Kadjil (or Cudgel) had indeed landed in the semblance of a crow on a beach not far from the (then) Swanbourne camp. In another version of the story we find him as the Crow man camped in a cave at Mudurup Rocks performing sacred ceremonies. We could find no documented evidence of Cudgel's escape from Rottnest. However, the Swanbourne fringe camp-dwellers and their descendants were (and still are) convinced by the oral history passed down to them that Kadjil's spirit had escaped and visited his people in the guise of a crow. By the 1920's Cudgel had become a legendary character of Noongar folk mythology. It is not difficult to imagine how such a powerful contemporary folk hero as Cudgel rejuvenated the traditional narrative of what is now known as 'Kadjil, the crow man.'

Biidjiigurdup

Noongar people went down into the caves and lit a fire. The fire took hold and lit up the root system and it became a great underground oven. When the ground dried up it cracked and cold water rushed into the crack the water collided with the intense heat and created an explosion. That explosion changed the land and a water body flowed in creating the many islands off the coast. Hence the name Biidjiigurdup - Place of the fires that formed the Islands

Mamang - Why the Whales beach themselves

When the sea level rose around 8,000 years ago it trapped many of these spirits under the sea. The only way these spirits can return to the land is through the whales. It is said that whenever a whale calf is born one of these spirits attach themselves to the whale calf. The whale will take the spirit on a journey for up to eighty or ninety years around the ocean before returning to the Western Australian coast. The whale will naturally want to beach itself. The scientific explanation is that the sonars from submarines and ships disrupt their travel. Before these technologies were around the whales were beaching themselves. The Noongar people know that they beach themselves to return the spirit being carried by the whale back into the land where it belongs. The Noongar men knew when the whales were coming in and would prepare a ceremonial knife called a daap. When the whale washed up on the shore the daap was used to cut the whale open and when the blood from the whale ran into the land the people would be satisfied that the spirit had been returned.¹



Mudurup Rocks looking south down coast 1922, Photo from Town of Cottesloe Collection, The Grove Library

¹ Story told by Noel Nannup in consultation with Helen Curtis for the Cottesloe Foreshore Redevelopment, 2016.

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