On 14\textsuperscript{th} June Banks wrote in his journal

“The Captain and myself went ashore to view the harbour and found it indeed beyond our most sanguine wishes”

\textbf{INTRODUCTION}

Before I begin this presentation I would like to acknowledge Mr. Eric Deeral. Mr. Deeral is a Guugu Yimithirr Elder of the Gamay Warra Clan, he always says that he is proud of the men of his Clan that made contact with Cook in 1770.

I can say that he has been the foremost Bama historian of the Cook Story and he has always inspired me.

Uncle Eric, was the first and only Aboriginal MLA in the Queensland State Parliament. He served for a term on the Seat of Cook.

He loves history and he reminds me everyday that, during the 2nd World War when the Guugu Yimithirr people were exiled from their home country, his Elders told them; don’t forget WHO YOU ARE, WHERE YOU COME FROM and DON’T FORGET YOUR LANGUAGE.
INTRODUCTION TO PRESENTATION

I acknowledge that Cook’s visit to the Eastern Coast of Australia was not peaceful for all, especially for the Eora people of the Botany Bay area. This presentation in no way diminishes the anger and sadness that is felt by that nation of peoples.

For the Cooktown Guugu Yimithirr Bama, the story is different.

Cook and the Endeavour crew were forced to stay for 49 days.

It was not until 10th July, 1770, that contact was made, by Bama.

Although this encounter was, for the most part, amicable, Captain Cook does not have a very good reputation amongst Aboriginal people. The subsequent devastation that occurred 143 years is often blamed on Captain Cook. That is why I have chosen the topic “Dispelling Myths” for this presentation.

I also hope that through this presentation, the Guugu Yimithirr and Kuku Yalanji story will take it’s rightful place in the Cook Story and ultimately in Australia’s history.

I also hope that this presentation will provide answers to questions that surrounds this Historical event.

BACKGROUND

1770 is such a long time ago, 242 years ago to be exact.

We can be sure that at that time, the arrival of the Endeavour and the strange visitors on her, were observed as the ship limped up the coast and as the pinnace made it’s way up Yuku Baja, looking for a suitable place to repair the Endeavour.

We can also be sure that news was carried by Kuku Yalanji messengers to the Guugu Yimithirr, living on the other side of Yuku Baja.

We can also be sure that from the moment that the Endeavour entered into the mouth of Waalumbal Birri, Bama observed every movement from their vantage points across the river and discussed all options of contact, on their terms.

Although there are no oral stories told about the arrival of Captain James Cook on 14th June 1770 on the foreshore of the Waalumbaal Birri, this historical event as told in the Journals of Cook, Banks and Parkinson has been a source of excitement for us. WHY?
THE COOKTOWN RE-ENACTMENT ASSOCIATION

The Re-enactment of Cooks landing in Cooktown has been celebrated every year for the past 53 years.

In recent years, we have worked together to build this story to tell the Bama story as well. Not knowing the Bama story, proved to be a challenge.

Help to tell our story first came from our friend John Macdonald. John was passionate about the Cook story, and it was his WHY questions about the Bama accounts that forced us to examine the Journal entries of Cook, Parkinson and Banks for ourselves and to examine the actions and activities of Bama from Guugu Yimithirr cultural perspectives. It was from these journal entries we were able to piece together the jigsaw puzzle of events and interpret the bama story.

For the first time and especially for the last 3 re-enactments, Bama are telling their story, not just in the re-enactment but in other ways as well.

Our friend Loretta Sullivan, the current Chairperson of the Re-enactment Association, supports this progress and the changes made to “how” the re-enactment presentation has been supported by the crew of volunteers who take part in the re-enactment and the wider Cooktown and Hopevale communities.

This contact between the cultures of Guugu Yimithirr, Kuku Yalanji and the Visitors on board the Endeavour, is a brilliant story.

It was the interaction and the diplomacy practiced by both sides that lead to the first recorded story of a Reconciliation in this country, that makes this story outstanding.

WHAT ARE MYTHS?

Terra Nullius

“For Bama myths remind us of “who” we are. In many forums I have attended I have heard the word LORE expressed to describe this system of beliefs and morals contained in these stories. In recent times, a Guugu Yimithirr Elder remarked that there is no LORE but all things is LAW. In Bama society this is what our mythical stories tell us. Myths perform useful functions in Bama society, even today.

However, myths can also be stories that are invented, in almost every case there are bases for inventions. I encourage the audience to reason for themselves, whether the myths are true or false.

- I will discuss three myths that came about because of Captain Cook voyage into our history.
- I will also present evidence to understand how and why these myths were invented.
• The benefits of dispelling these myths.

Myth #1. Terra Nullius – The declaration of this land to be void of civilization.

Myth #2. The crew from the Endeavour raped the women of this land.

Myth #3. The conflicts from the Endeavour voyage continued to this day.

longing to no one”

**Myth #1**
Terra Nullius

According to Wikipedia “terra nullius” is a Latin word derived from Roman Law meaning “land belonging to no one”.

• Today, there is some controversy as to an accurate interpretation of this term.

• We can be certain that in 1770 the term Terra Nullius was interpreted as the absence of a civilized society, uninhabited and barbarous country.

• WHY can this be stated; because English Common Law of the time allowed for the legal settlement of “uninhabited and barbarous lands”

• Although James Cook had orders not to claim land unless there was consultation with the Natives, I am sure he believed that it was his duty to claim this land for his King before others did.

**The Evidence against the application of Terra Nullius.**

• The lands were not won in battles.

• The lands visited by Cook was inhabited.

• There was a civilized society in this land.

• There were laws that governed this land and society.
WHY DISPEL THIS MYTH

- Invented stories disempowers people.
- Takes away dignity.
- Allows for domination over others
- Creates inequality and mistrust.

The Evidence

- The Land of the Guugu Yimithirr and Kuku Yalanji Bama were inhabited
- Bama had connection to Land and sea.
- Bama had Language/bi-lingual
- Bama had a complex society/Kinship structure.
- Bama managed the land
- Bama governed by laws
The Language

Guugu Yimithirr is one language with dialects that refer to a coastal dialect Thalun-thirr meaning “with the sea” and an inland dialect, Wargurr-ga meaning “the outside”. The language is both subtle and complex

- Guugu Yimithirr was spoken along the coast-line of Cape York Peninsula extending from the Annan River south of Cooktown to the mouth of the Jeannie River in the north, although it was understood considerably beyond these limits.
- In the north, it was bordered by speakers of Guugu Nyiguudji.
- To the northwest the language spoken is Lama-lama along the Normanby River to Princes Charlotte Bay.
To the west of the Guugu Yimithirr people are the Kokowarra (literally "bad talk").

South of the Annan, Kuku Yalanji is spoken by the people who live between Mossman and just south of Cooktown and inland to Chilligoe. Kuku Yalanji has 13 dialects.

Cook, Banks and Parkinson collated a wordlist of 150 words. Guugu Yimithirr language is the first Aboriginal language to be recorded. Cook wrote (in part) in his journal on the 10/07/1770: “Their voices were soft and tunable, and they could easily repeat many words after us, but neither us nor Tupia could understand one word they said”.

**Kinship terms (Bubu-gujin-bi Guugu)**

- The Guugu Yimithirr kinship structure is complex.
- For example, the word *ding.aal* means the stem or beginning of a flower, the tap root of a tree. It is also the centre or beginning of a new life or *wawu*. It is the glow of horizontal light which gives the sand hills and tree trunks a warm glow of light as day is born. Cape Bedford *bama* at Elim would see the first glow of light on the mainland, the sand dunes south of Cape Flattery, at dawn. This was *ding.aal*, the taproot of the day. So, by extension, the word is used to describe the taproot, or founders, of a family.
- Within the family, there are special names :-
  - *Babi ding.aal* is the father’s mother
  - *Gami ding.aal* is both the mother’s mother and the father’s father,
  - and *ngathi ding.aal* is the mother’s father.
- These terms relate to the cycle of family birth and family responsibility. In this cycle, the training of the young is the responsibility of the old and the caring for the very old is the responsibility of the very young.
Managed the Land

- Guugu Yimithirr Bama were hunter gatherers. This is not to be mistaken as nomads roaming the land without direction. Movement throughout the Clan lands were planned therefore management of the land was very important.

- There were times of plenty and times of little.

- There were laws of management, thaman was practiced. Thaman were “areas placed under usage restrictions. Must not be entered, or accessed for gathering and hunting without permission from the custodians and with due acknowledgement of the lore and law. Sometimes this is seasonal, such as barramundi breeding time or when water lilies begin to flower. This ensures the continued abundance of species” (Guugu Yimithirr Dictionary) this law also applied to the sea.

- Hunting and gathering was governed by seasons. knowledge of the seasons were highly developed.

- Cook arrived in this area during the season of Guumbamu.
Seasonal Calendar

Can we dispel the myth of Terra Nullius?

- Did the evidence support Terra Nullius?
- Can we dispel this myth?
- YES or NO

Myth #2
“The crew from the Endeavour raped our women”
I first heard these comment from my Grandfather many years ago and in recent times from my father. I continue to hear this comment today. Was this story invented? If so “WHY”

Is there evidence supporting the Myth?

- I found no evidence that Cook and the Endeavour Crew encountered Women during their 49 day stay.

- Women were present on North Shore, their presence was noted by Cook and Banks. However for a period of 8 days it was the men who made contact.

- On 18/07/1770- Banks wrote in his journal: “Indians were over today and seemed to have lost all fear of us” Banks describes a spear throwing demonstration and comments “After this they ventured on board the ship and soon became our very good friends”

The Guugu Yimithirr men showed remarkable caution.

We see evidence of these facts:-

- By the actions of Bama. (as described in the journals) the terms of contact was on the terms of the men.

- This was mens business, We can conclude that women would not have been involved in planning, nor where they part of contact during the 49 day period.

However, there is evidence in stories that were invented over a hundred years later, about this myth. This is one example. It is a personal story.

This is my Nguuthurr – My Great Grandmother her name is Topsy
Her Story

• My Nguuthur is a Bulgun Warra woman she was born on the Clan Lands of Bulgun in the estate of Dandii. This land was on the way to the Palmer River Gold fields. The people of the Bulgun Clan Lands were dispossessed of their lands, very early during the time of the Gold Rush.

• Her story is told in the book “We the Aborigines” by Douglas Lockwood. In that story he writes. “It wasn’t long after Captain Cook landed on the east coast in the eighteenth century that the tribulation of the tribes began.” “Our women were caught and raped and our men murdered if they showed the slightest disposition to resist”
Historical accounts, supports the stories of devastation and disasters experienced by the very people who met with Cook during the Palmer River Gold Rush and subsequent gold rushes in the Cooktown region and then followed by the advent of the Cattlemen.

Why dispel this myth?

Just as the injury towards our women is an injustice, the story of blame must be accurate to avoid injustice.

HOWEVER: As an Aboriginal woman especially a woman from the Eastern Coast of Australia, the story of rape and devastation is emotional and personal and rarely addressed. The wounds from past histories has affected Aboriginal woman through the generations

Can we dispel this Myth?

• Was the evidence that was presented tell the story of devastation, rape and murder?
  • YES/No
• Did it implicate Cook and his crew?
  • YES/NO
• CAN WE DISPEL THIS MYTH?
  • YES/NO

Myth #3.
The conflicts from the Endeavour voyage continued to this day.

• I remember the first changed script for the re-enactment which I narrated, it concluded with these words “The claiming of these lands and the dispossession of our people has continued for more than 200 years”
• I remember that this was an emotional declaration. Did I mean it and was it warranted. I say “yes”, because at the beginning of the re-enactment narration, it stated that “this event was the beginning of the pathway that forged this nation we now call Australia.
• HOWEVER: The myth we are discussing today discusses the story of conflict that occurred in 1770 over the issue of turtles.

What was the Conflict

• The conflict that occurred was over the refusal of Cook to give the Guugu Yimithirr men a turtle that was on the deck of the Endeavour. On the 18/07/1770 Banks wrote in his journal: “Indians were over with us today.......they ventured on board and soon became our very good friends”

• Cook also wrote in his journal: “At this time we had 12 turtles upon our decks which they took more notice of than anything else in the ship”

• On 19/07/1770 Banks wrote in “Ten Indians visited us today and brought with them a large quantity of lances than they had ever done before” leaving a man and a boy to take care of the spears they ventured on board.

• He further wrote “They soon let us know their errand which was by some means or other to get one of our turtles”. Banks relates that they showed great resentment on being refused.

• It was from that onwards that this event escalated into conflict.

The story continues............

• After Bama set the grass alight and attempted the second time to set fire to the grass where the nets and clothing were drying, Cook fired his musket and one of the men was wounded. Cook relates that they had not travelled far when a group of men came towards them. Spears were taken from them, Cook writes “On seeing our muskets they again retired leisurely”

Continues on............

• Cook and his men followed the Bama about a mile from the watering place.

• Cook and his men sat on rocks to observe.

• Bama sat down about 100 yards from Cook.

• Banks writes: “A little old man now came forward to us carrying a lance without a point. He halted several times and as he stood employed himself collecting moisture from under his arm
pit with his finger which he every time drew through his mouth. We beckoned him to come, he then spoke to the others who all laid their lances against a tree” Cook then writes of the reconciliation that takes place.

- The group of Bama accompanied Cook back to the Endeavour, they waited for 2 hours, maybe waiting for a turtle.
- When no turtle was forthcoming, they left.

How did the Conflict end?

- After waiting for two hours, Bama departed never to return to the ship again.
- All the hills around were put on fire, Cook writes “Soon after set the woods on fire for about a mile and a half and two miles from us.”
- We speculate that this may have demonstrated four things:
  1. A ceremonial cleansing of the land.
  2. Destruction of vegetation to halt further taking of resources from the land.
  3. Message to the neighboring clans
  4. Customary burning of grasslands

Did the conflict end?

- Cook and Banks both wrote an account of this event: “In the AM I sent some people into the country to gather greens one of which straggled from the rest and met with four natives by a fire on which they were broiling a fowl and the hind leg of one of the animals before spoke of” they further relate “He had the presence of mind not to run from them, being unarmed, least they should pursue him, but went and set down with them”

Continues........
Banks writes  “At first he was much afraid and offered them his knife” “they took it and handed it to from one to another returned it to him” They kept him about half an hour behaving most civilly to him, only satisfying their curiosity in examining his body”

They then made sign for him to go.

On perceiving that he was going the wrong way, they pointed him in the right direction.

**Can we dispel this myth?**

- Did the Journal accounts give evidence of the myth; that the conflict from the Endeavour voyage continue to this day?
  - YES/NO

- Do we dispel this myth?
  - YES/NO

**Why is it important to dispel this myth?**

1. It is good for Bama to know this history and All Australians to learn from; Because it shows that diplomacy is very important in bringing about outcomes.

2. Cook had broken many Customary Laws of the land and taken without consent. The accurate story of events as told through the journals, demonstrates the goodwill of Guugu Yimithirr Bama. It tells of good leadership, and especially, the principle of doing “good” for all of the people.