



# Nyoongar Seasons

## Birok

The season of hunting yonga (kangaroo), which is part of Nyoongar tradition. Ceremonies are conducted as part of this season.

## Bunuro

The season of Karra (goanna). Small areas of land were burnt at this time to flush out game and encourage new plant growth, ensuring animals had plenty of feed.

## Creation Story



Painting by Shirley Harris of Creation Story surrounded by images of the six seasons.

## Kambarang

The season of watch (emu) and wildflowers. Animals care for their young. Summer is not far away and people begin to move to cooler places — a time for giving, sharing and ceremonies.

## Jilbar

The season of nesting and Maarle (black swan), the symbol of friendship and consumption. All animals are mating and preparing nests or burrows for the birth of their young.

## Wangarang

The season of insects, and hunting Nyingarn (echidna). The fat and some internal organs of the Nyingarn and Karra are used for medicinal purposes.

## Maggoro

The season of water and koya (frog). There is new growth all over the homelands. Nyoongar people know that if koya cannot be found near or in wetlands, then the environment is in danger.

# Custom and Land

Early colonists recorded their impressions of the culture they encountered.



[Courtesy Ratty Library, 1913P]

## Ownership

"...in the Swan River Country ... the natives have their private property..." (J. Barrow 1834)

"There was no bill of sale or agreed transfer of Nyungar land to the early settlers." (Comment at consultative meeting 2000)

"Each tribe had its own hunting grounds, and no tribe trespassed on those of another without being specially invited." (W.S. Brachow 1857)

## Food Gathering

"There are between thirty and forty distinct roots, nuts, and vegetables eaten by them, and which are procured nearly all the year round; and the flowers of three or four trees and shrubs afford them honey either by suction, or steeping in water." (Armstrong, Perth Gazette 1836)

## Meeting Places

"It was the custom for numbers of the old-time natives to visit their places of birth and stay at them as long as food conditions would allow them to do so. Guildford was one of these places." (Dessie Hammond, 1933)

"According to tradition, Success Hill region is an ancient Aboriginal camping area. This was one real famous meeting place." (Quoted in report by R. O'Connor, C. Bodney & L. Little)

## Custom

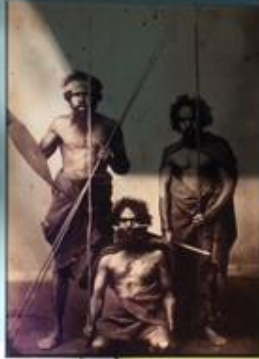
"In winter they live apart by families ... for a month or six weeks where they have built their huts."

"In the summer time the tribes for sixty miles around assemble ... they entertain each other with dances and chants of the corroboree." (Armstrong, Perth Gazette 1836)

# Early Conflict

"We take possession of their Country, occupy the most fertile parts, where they are in the habit of resorting to for nourishment, destroy their fishing and Kangaroo, & almost drive them to starvation & they naturally consider themselves entitled to our Sheep & Stock whenever they can get hold of them... I believe one tribe was nearly exterminated by two or three Soldiers who followed them after they had stolen some sheep, & coming upon them unawares the Natives were nearly all bayoneted."  
(Admiral Fremantle Diary, 1832.)

(Courtesy Batty Library 57706/31)



Dyer and Dodds were local residents. Fremantle was visiting the upper Swan. The massacre occurred in October 1831 and was probably near Success Hill.



"Tom sends you a kangaroo-skin, two spears, and one throwing board; the latter the natives never part with but with life. A party of natives drove off several of Mr Browne's sheep, in sight of the shepherd, calling 'Kangaroo, kangaroo', which was a plain way of saying 'you have killed our kangaroo, now we must have yours'. ... they were followed, and the soldiers and others fell in with them ... fired into the midst of the thickest groups, killing some, and wounding many; the others fled in the greatest confusion, leaving all they possessed ... and among the rest the spears in question..." (Jane Dodds, Chelsum bin, (near Bassendean traffic bridge) from letter published in The Morning Herald (UK), 4 September 1832)



Sketch by James Walsh 1860. (Courtesy Art Gallery WA)



(Courtesy Batty Library 104100)

"... we had several skirmishes with them ... Mr. Stephen Henty & myself was out in the bush a kangaroo hunting & our dog had just got one at bay we heard the natives hollow; up came 26 of them to us. 2 of them went along with me I killed the kangaroo & throwing him up on my shoulder ... Up came all the natives then I was obliged to put him down ... some of them came home with us ... we take care not to go out without a gun anymore."  
(William Dyer March 9, 1831)

# Waugal Dreaming

"Teddy Harris told me the spring on the slope of Eden Hill is Woggalguftuk also the spring in Hamersley's Chinese Garden." (Daisy Bates' notebook 13, c1910)



1948 aerial photograph of Success Hill and Hamersley property. (Courtesy SRO)

"Me and my uncle were fishing for turtles in the reeds there and all of a sudden this thing came out of the water. My people used to talk about this waugal: don't go swimming there." (Toopy Bodney, 2000)

"Aboriginal people believe the home of the Waugal is a cave situated below the water where Bennett Brook meets the Swan River at the bottom of Success Hill."  
(Nyungah testimony, 1984)



Chauncy's 1842 map showing location of springs at Success Hill. (Courtesy SRO)

"It inhabits most deep waters, salt or fresh, and almost every lake or pool is inhabited by one or more such monsters... There are certain large stones, in different parts of the colony, which they believe to be eggs laid by the Waugal... On passing such stones, they are in the habit of making a bed for it, of the rushes of the blackboy." (Armstrong, Perth Gazette Oct. 1836)

"We say to our little cobbars, before we get in the water: 'Get your hand full of sand now' and throw that in the water and then no spirit will catch you."  
(Nyungah testimony, 1984)

"He is responsible for the creeks running and the river itself since the beginning of time."  
(Robert Brophy, 1984)

"It's a Sacred Snake that keeps the water fresh, keeps it from going salty, keeps the flow."  
(Gillian Humes, 1984)

"Sacred stones were stored at Success Hill in the past; but were moved to the Mundaring area when European settlement of Bassendean and Guildford developed."  
(from O'Connor, Bodney, Little, 1985)







# Desecration



(Courtesy Bassendean Local Studies Collection)

Success Hill is a reserve; it has never been freehold land.

In 1831 Guildford residents obtained their fresh water from Success Spring.

In 1962, Road Board and State Government members visited the Hill to decide its future. It became the Bassendean Shire Council sandpit.

Alarmed at the extent of sand removal in 1962, the WA Historical Society wrote: "excavations of sand at Success Hill will alter the aspect of that feature out of recognition and may imperil the source of the spring."

Aboriginal Elders expressed deep concern over the reshaping of the land, but this was before the time of the Aboriginal Heritage Act and they had no powers to prevent the desecration of the site. Before 1967 Aboriginal people were not citizens in their own country.

The Road Board obtained Tourist funding to develop Success Hill Park. Toilets (now demolished) and lookout were constructed with this money in 1963.



(Courtesy Denis Woods)

36,000 cubic yards of Success Hill sand was allotted to construction sites in 1963 — some of it went to make the raised banks on the Swan Districts Football Oval.

(Courtesy Swan Districts Football Club)



This photograph of Success Hill was taken from the Hammersley property in the early 1900s. Many Aboriginal families lived in the house, known as the Chinamen's cottage. The Chinese gardens were in the foreground.

Success Hill. (Courtesy Bassendean Local Studies Collection)



# Gathering Place

Members of the Bassendean Road Board Centenary Committee with their partners picnicking on the Hill in 1929. (Bassendean Local Studies collection)



Corroborees were held in the Success Hill area up to the 1950s. It has always been a traditional meeting place and important meetings are still held here.



A Christmas party at Success Hill in the 1920s. (Courtesy Bettey Library BA25/L/1, 67117P)



(Courtesy Jim Phillips)

**Sesquicentenary**  
Captain Stirling's 'landing' was re-enacted again in 1979, 150 years after the colony started.

## Stirling Myth

A story published in the Swan Express in 1922 claimed Captain Stirling had landed at Success Hill to refill his water barrels while exploring the river in 1827. Although disputed a week later by Jose Hay, naturalist, historian and Bassendean local identity, the story was given credence in 1929 when a marble plaque was erected near one of the springs in the belief that Stirling "had watered his horses there somewhere in 1828."  
(Swan Express, 27 November 1929)

## Swan River Centenary

Some residents celebrated with a re-enactment of Stirling's 'landing' and erection of the plaque in 1929.



The plaque reads: 'Centenary of W.A. Commemorating the landing of Capt James Stirling in 1827.'