

IV. NAWI

Speaking even three languages would not be so unusual in Europe but is not so much the case in Australia with its mono-linguist reliance on English. (Although there are Australians who do learn other languages it is also typical that many bilingual speakers usually have an overseas family background. One supposes that it is rare to meet an Australian who can fluently speak an Aboriginal language i.e. outside perhaps particular anthropological, ethnographic or even within some artistic circles although there is at least an attempt in recent decades to have landmark and place names more often re-labelled or more commonly referred to by their original indigenous pre-colonial names. e.g. Cooks River a Sydney waterway which obviously refers to Captain James Cook who came by Botany Bay in 1770 may these days be also referred to - by those who wish to be more familiar with the cultural and historical aspects of this waterway - as 'Goolay'yari' in reference to the Pelican Dreaming narrative associated with the river (of which, incidentally, this once pristine waterway is still environmentally recovering from the industrial pollution that had occurred during white settlement). Learning the original indigenous name may become a way in to also learning about the original cultural framing of the landscape so as to also gain an insight and new found respect for the first society on Australian land that was territorially usurped.



NAWI (bark canoe) by Joe Hurst. 2019. Goolay'rari /Cooks River. Sydney.

In his Artist's Statement which is on site Joe Hurst (1960-2022) points out that bark canoes were used in Sydney's waterways including Cook River and that they were made from the Yellow Stringybark trees that lined these waterways and were used for fishing. You can read the full artist's statement here:

NAWI. Joe Hurst.

<https://www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/live/living-arts/public-art-projects/gadigal-wangal-wayfinding-project/nawi-by-joe-hurst>

Biography of Joe Hurst (1960-2022). *Please note for anyone of indigenous background an image of Joe Hurst appears.*

<https://boomalli.com.au/artist/joe-hurst/>

As for Cooks River there is a plaque at neighbouring Steele Park which mentions that the Gadigal, Kameygal and Bidigal peoples would fish this waterway making it a main source for food. However, by the end of the nineteenth century due to industrialisation the river had become too polluted and this environmental delinquency on the part of European settlement is yet to be fully rectified.