

Yuin celebrate keeping place

By MARION WILLIAMS



A GROUP of Elders and community members have created a digital keeping place that records and shares information on people and events that have helped shape Yuin history, language and lifestyle.

The Yuin Digital Keeping Place (YDKP) is a website with more than 160 short films, plus cultural and historical documentation drawn from state institutions, local archives and personal collections. It has three language dictionaries, took 3.5 years to build and everyone has free access.

The group was helped by SharingStories Foundation which gets funding to set up digital keeping places for communities who want them.

Aunty Trish Ellis OAM said in 2022 that Brooke Small of SharingStories Foundation approached renowned visual artist Cheryl Overton (nee Davison) about doing something on her and her art.

"Cheryl is the kind of person who wants to be inclusive of all the community and suggested getting a board of Elders and community members together to see what the community wanted to do," Aunty Trish said.

"She saw the opportunity to get information out there about the Yuin people. That was very unselfish, and Cheryl has my utmost respect for that."

Cultural knowledge

The Yuin Project Working Group was established with ten members: Uncle Bunja Smith (Batemans Bay), Aunty Vivienne Mason and Lynne Thomas (Narooma), Cheryl Overton (Tilba), Uncle Warren Foster and Gary Campbell (Wallaga Lake), Judy Norris (Cobargo), Uncle BJ Cruse (Eden), Aunty Trish Ellis OAM (Moruya) and Lorraine Naylor (deceased).

The huge amount of information in the YDKP reflects that diverse group with so much knowledge.



Members of the Yuin Digital Keeping Place (left to right): Uncle Bunja Smith, Lynne Thomas, Garry Campbell, Uncle BJ Cruse, Aunty Vivienne Mason, Cheryl Overton, Judy Norris, Aunty Trish Ellis OAM, and SharingStories senior producer Brooke Small. Picture: SharingStories Foundation.

There are personal stories and experiences, Dreamtime stories, pictures and links to more information. There is a generic European timeline and a much longer one for the Yuin people.

They have shared their personal knowledge, plus cultural practices and knowledge. They were asked for their opinion on topics like the Voice, Native Title and the Stolen Generation.

"There is a lot of local history from an Aboriginal perspective," Aunty Trish said. "Some conversations bordered on political. It is a really good mix of views.

"Not everything on there we

all agree with, but we acknowledge it is different people's stories. Some stories match, some don't. It is up to the individual to make what they will of it."

They tried to include all Yuin people who had served in the Defence Forces, plus their famous people including sportspeople.

"We tried to include all our role models and heroes and achievers who you would not normally hear about," Aunty Trish said.

While recording the three dictionaries, they realised the Dhurga, Djiringanj and Dhawa languages are very close.

"Aboriginal people would have

spoken all three plus Dharawal," Aunty Trish said.

"There is no line in the sand where people spoke one language and stopped speaking another."

She said the YDKP is another way of passing on their knowledge through stories and it will continue to grow.

As a teacher for 40 years, Aunty Trish said YDKP gives educators somewhere to come for a local perspective instead of always referring to desert people.

Amazing experience

She praised SharingStories Foundation for being so respectful and inclusive.

"They took us for walks on Country and I told them a Dreamtime story and they had a drone taking video footage. That made it so much more real," Aunty Trish said.

"It was an amazing experience to be involved in this program."

She felt honoured and privileged to be involved, tell her family's stories and pass on her knowledge.

"I don't see knowledge as power," she said.

"I see knowing as something that must be shared."

"Every time an Elder passes, we lose another library. YDKP made it possible to store some of our library resources."