

# FOOTPRINTS FROM MUNGO TO YANGA



Kyarah Hines, Charlie Ross, Khy Jess, Isaac Lloyd,  
Maggie Finch and Ben Johnstone

Balranald Central School



## *CREATIVE CATCHMENT KIDS*

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between our funding partners and school students by providing opportunities for positive, cooperative activities that encourage students to learn about and respond to, natural resource management and the importance of agricultural production.

**[wirraminna.org.au/petaurus/creative-catchment-kids/](http://wirraminna.org.au/petaurus/creative-catchment-kids/)**

## *PETAURUS EDUCATION GROUP*

Petaurus Education Group identifies, develops and delivers a range of learning and curriculum experiences, resources and initiatives for schools and community groups to connect with land, water, productive farming, sustainability and cultural issues at the local level. The group was established by Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre in late-2014 to support its operations and education activities.

**[wirraminna.org.au/petaurus](http://wirraminna.org.au/petaurus)**

## *ENVIRO-STORIES*

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

**[envirostories.com.au](http://envirostories.com.au)**

## *WESTERN LOCAL LAND SERVICES*

Established in 2014, Western Local Land Services delivers agricultural advice, natural resource management, biosecurity and emergency management in western NSW. Western Local Land Services is proud to support the Creative Catchment Kids book series. The program gives school students the opportunity to learn about natural resource management issues and engage with their local community. We hope you enjoy this book and promote it to your friends, family and community.

**[western.lls.nsw.gov.au](http://western.lls.nsw.gov.au)**

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## OUR CULTURE

In 2017, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about Aboriginal culture in their local communities. The program was generously funded by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and Western Local Land Services.

Creative Catchment Kids is part of Enviro-Stories, a PeekKdesigns education program.

### Acknowledgement

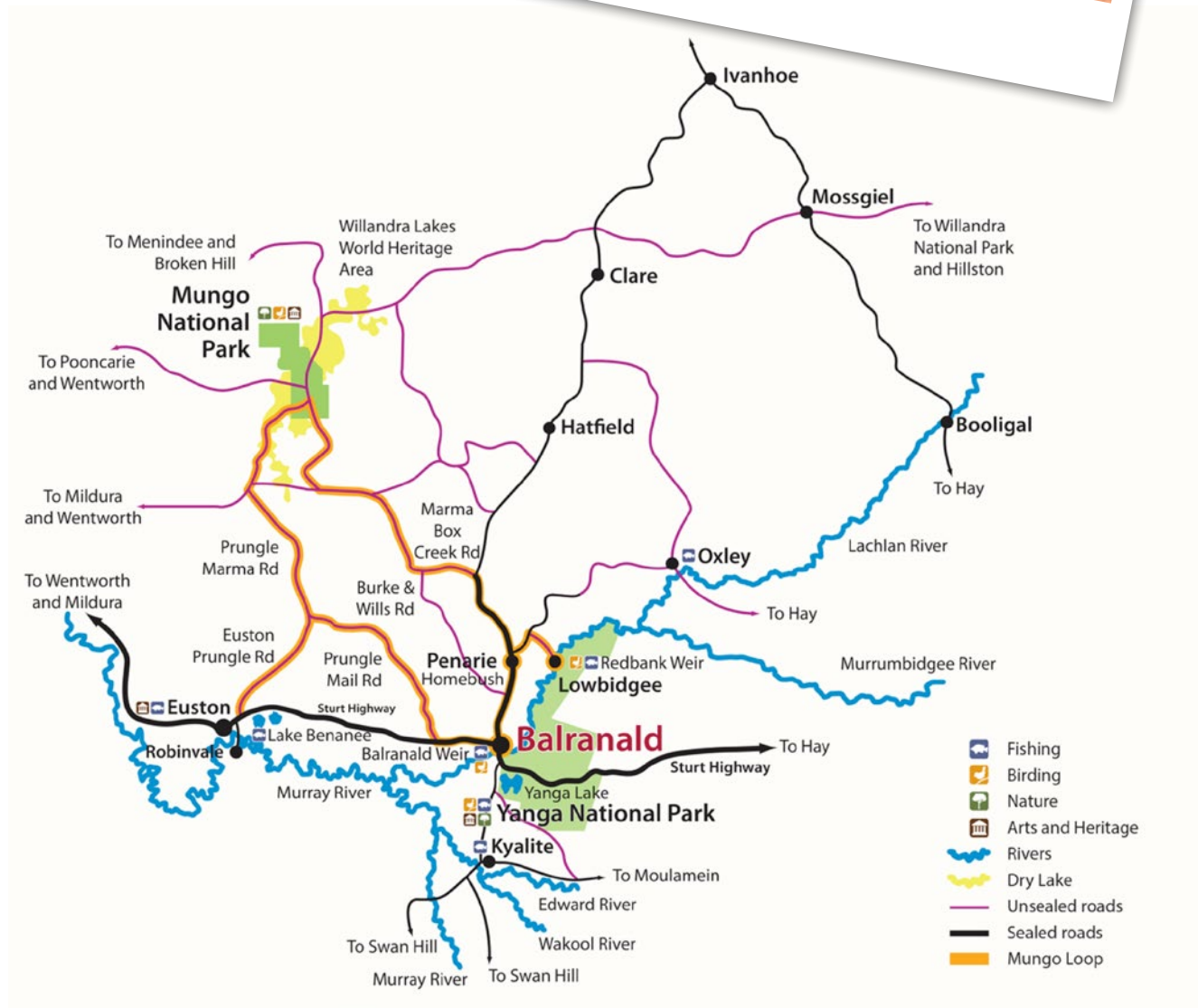
We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land and thank them for sharing their knowledge and culture with us.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document may contain images and/or names of people who have since passed away.



Footprints are symbolic of the presence of our ancestors. They represent walking and undertaking a long journey, both in distance and time.

Our journey really starts over 40,000 years ago at the ancient meeting place of Mungo where our ancestors walked the land and will finish at Yanga. Both places are very significant for Aboriginal culture in the Balranald area.





During our journey we will look at how the area and its resources were used during ancient times as well as interview local Elders about the significance of these sites today.

Mungo National Park is part of the Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area. The region is rich in ancient Aboriginal cultural and archaeological artefacts. Findings in the area include human skeletal material, tools, middens and animal bones, along with relatively undisturbed natural landforms spanning several thousand years.

Two very important skeletal findings were those of Mungo Man and Mungo Lady. They are perhaps the most important human remains ever found in Australia.

Our tour guide while at Mungo was Ivan Johnson. Ivan told us how bush tucker was available on Mungo from the plants and animals. He told us stories how Aboriginal people lived and survived on the land for thousands of years and the process involved in uncovering the skeletal remains of Mungo Man and Mungo Lady.



SOURCE: [www.crystallinks.com/mungoman.html](http://www.crystallinks.com/mungoman.html)

Ranger Ivan Johnson talked about the land and told us stories about how the local Aboriginal people cooked and ate their tucker.

One of those stories was how people cooked the emu. The dead emu was placed on the hot coals. When the head tilted up, and the beak became slightly ajar and smoke came out of it, they knew it was cooked.



Our footprints in the sand take us to Balranald and the banks of the Murrumbidgee.

The Nimmie-Caira Project falls in an area identified as within the boundaries of the Muthi Muthi and Nari Nari linguistic groups. Aboriginal Cultural history in the region dates back over 50,000 years.

Known Aboriginal sites are located on the floodplain near creeks and rivers, with the highest occurrences of Aboriginal heritage sites likely to be located on bordering dunes, red sand hills and within close proximity of creeks.

# Nimmie-Caira Project

The Lower Murrumbidgee floodplain (the Lowbidgee) is between the towns of Hay and Balranald in South Western NSW and is home to the largest area of wetland remaining in the Murrumbidgee valley.

The Lowbidgee, which includes Yanga National Park, encompasses vast wetland areas supporting river red gum, black box and lignum communities. The Nimmie-Caira area covers over 84,000ha and forms a large and important wetland habitat for more than 100,000 waterbirds such as glossy ibis as well as threatened species such as the Southern Bell frogs. It's a special place for people. Aboriginal people lived in the area for many thousands of years and the area contains important cultural heritage sites including mounds, scar trees, ancestral burials and stone tools. The area also has long history of farming supporting industry and jobs in local communities.

Through the Nimmie-Caira Project, the NSW and Australian Government purchased the land and water in the area to protect and restore the Nimmie-Caira environment. The Project aims to balance the protection of environmental and Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the Nimmie-Caira area and create an asset for the local community and the Murray Darling Basin, now and into the future.



IBIS

Pink Eared Duck

Wetlands

Endangered Southern Bell Frog

EMUS

YANGA NATIONAL PARK

Torry Plains

NIMMIE-CAIRA PROJECT

BALRANALD

MAUDE

STURT HWY





Fish have been a great food resource in the Balranald area for thousands of years. Traditional fishing practices involve the building of fish traps like the one pictured above. The fish traps work by using stone walls to guide fish that are swimming upstream into the holding ponds where the Aboriginal people traditionally caught them with their bare hands. They also used their spears or blocked them in the ponds to be caught later. The small fish would also be put into possum skin bags and taken to Yanga Lake to restock it.



Finally we arrive at Yanga. Yanga National Park has a rich Aboriginal history with significant places within the park that have been identified and protected.

Today, local Aboriginal people remain connected with Yanga National Park through employment or community involvement. When we visited Yanga we met up with local ranger Tanya Charles. Tanya was very knowledgeable about the significance of Aboriginal culture in the Yanga area. She told us about burial sites, food resources, medicines and Dreamtime stories.

Food resources available at Yanga include fish, yabbies, duck, rabbit, emu and kangaroo.



A lot of this cultural knowledge was passed down to Tanya from her grandmother Aunty Alice Kelly. Aunty Alice told Tanya about women's business taking place at Pelican Point and men's initiation at the river near Yanga Lake.

Aunty Alice also told her the Dreamtime story of the clever man cutting up a big fish and thinking that his power would go into him. However, it went into the water instead and it made smaller fish like brim, catfish, cod and perch.



QUANDONG FRUIT



EMU BUSH



OLD MAN SALTBUUSH

There are many food and medicine sources in the Yanga area. Fruit was eaten from the quandong tree. The seed of this tree was also used for decorative jewellery. Bread was made from the bush willow seeds. Honey was gathered from under the bark of the River Red gums.

Emu bush and Old man saltbush was used for medicines. The leaves of the Emu bush in particular were placed on hot embers for traditional therapeutic use.



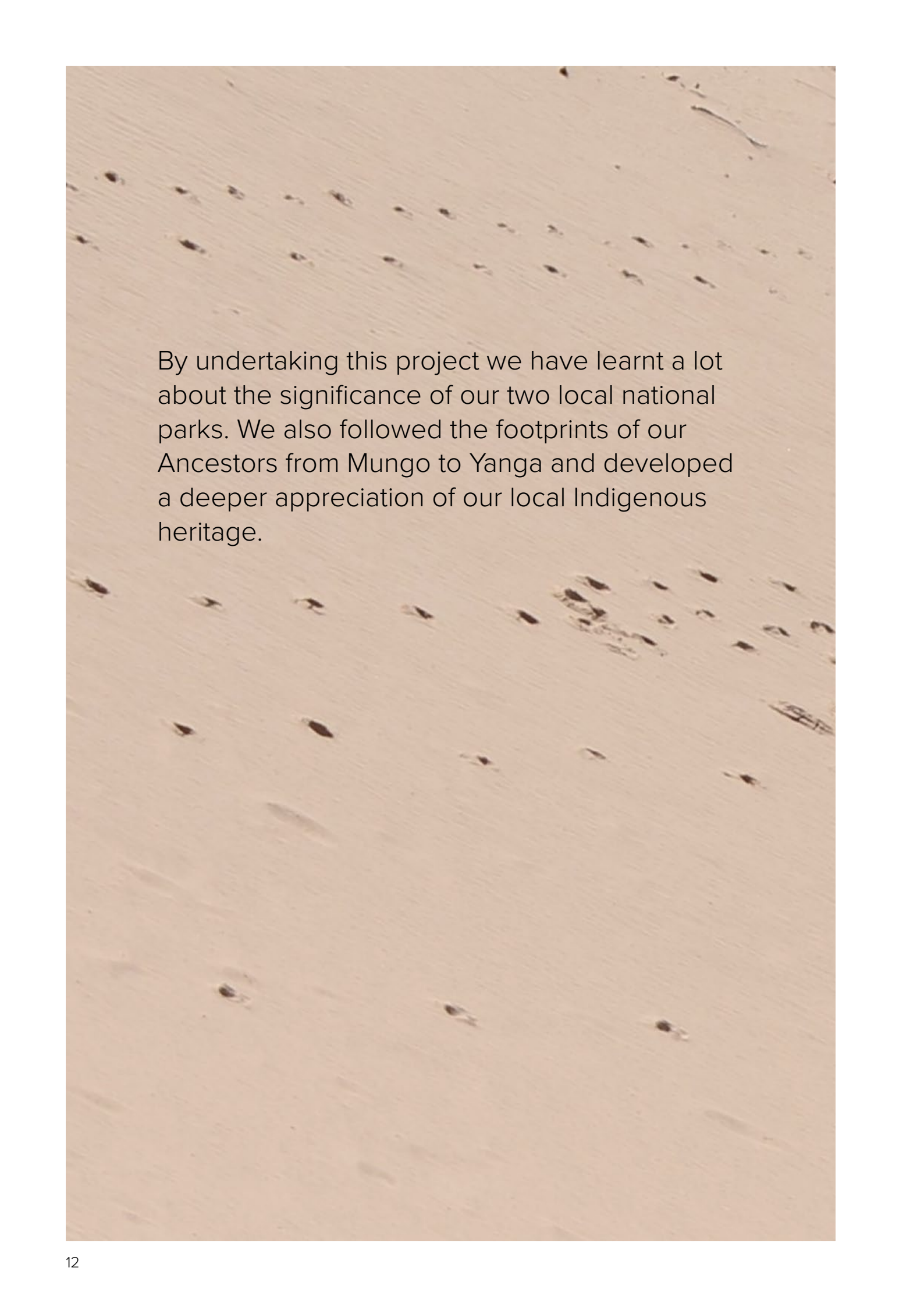
RING TREE

A significant tree we saw on our journey through the bush at Yanga was a canoe tree. Our ancestors would remove the bark from the outside of the tree and use it to travel along the waterways in the area.

Our journey now approaches our final resting place. A ring tree at Yanga signifies a burial place. The ring tree we found at Yanga has been dated at over 800 years old.

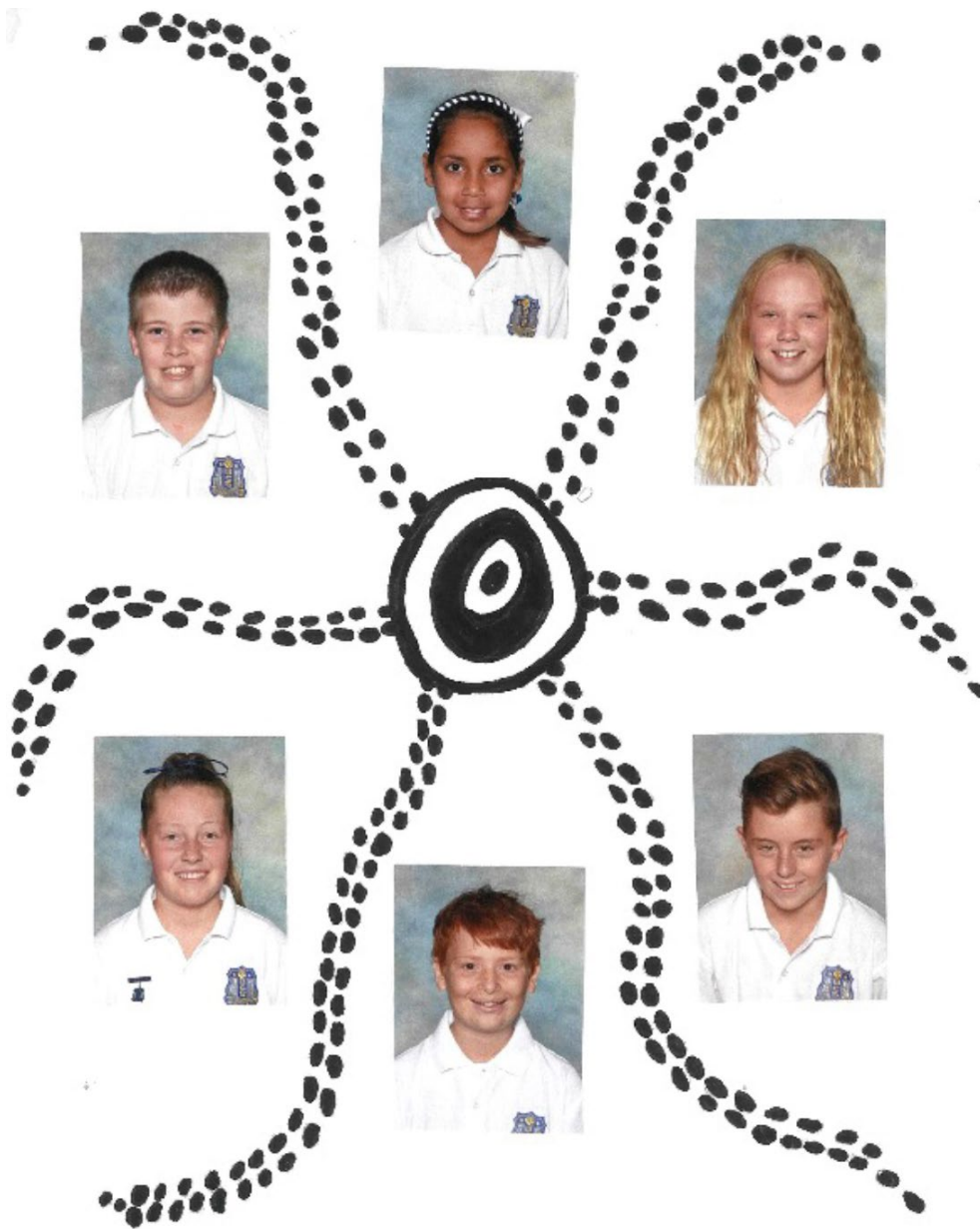


CANOE TREE



By undertaking this project we have learnt a lot about the significance of our two local national parks. We also followed the footprints of our Ancestors from Mungo to Yanga and developed a deeper appreciation of our local Indigenous heritage.





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2017 Year 5/6, Balranald Central School

