

'THE GATHERING PLACE'



(A 'Langwarrin Park' Story)



At the back of a wonderful little school called 'Langy Park' there is a group of rocks that stands proud and strong.

This group of rocks is called 'The Gathering Place'; a place where anyone can go to relax, sit, talk and be together.

If you looked down on these rocks today, you would find a group of students, quietly sitting, listening to their teacher.



‘This is a magical place,’ the teacher tells the children.

‘A place where unusual things can occur’.

‘What type of things?’ one of the boys asked.

‘People say there is a black button somewhere on the rocks and if you press the button, you can be transported back in time!’

The children all laughed. ‘That’s silly!’



'No', said the teacher. 'I'm serious. It's there; you just have to look closely.'



And when you find it, you can go anywhere,
anywhere in the world and anywhere in time!

It's quite amazing.

You just press it, sit on a rock and presto

..... off you go!'



The children exchanged curious glances. No-one wanted to be the first person to look. They sat there until one little girl; could take it no more. She jumped off, got down on her hands and knees, and looked around the rocks. Then she noticed something unusual, a small black button.

‘Look at this,’ she said to the others. ‘Can we press it?’ asked another little girl. ‘Well yes!’ the teacher answered. The little girl reached down and pressed the button. All the children waited to see what would happen.

‘Quick, hop on or you will be left behind,’ said the teacher.



They all hopped back onto the rocks and waited. Nothing happened at first. They waited and waited and then the rocks started to vibrate; slowly, then faster. A humming sound filled the air and the area around the rocks started to glow. A soft whirring noise got louder and louder and louder!

‘Quick hang on!’ They sat there holding on as the rocks whirred and whistled..... they jumped and thumped..... whizzled and wobbled..... and then pop!.....



A large bubble appeared above them and descended over the rocks. It shimmered and sparkled in the sun, enclosing the teacher and the students.

The rocks trembled and vibrated and started spinning around. Slowly at first but then building speed. Faster and faster and faster. The children kept their eyes closed and hung on for dear life.

As they spun the rocks roared and the bubble filled with a misty fog covering them and making it hard to see.

Other students playing in the schoolground kept playing their games and if by magic they didn't notice the kids and the teacher disappear inside the spinning, glowing bubble. If they happened to glance over, they would see the rocks, but the kids somehow had disappeared, into thin air!

Back on the rocks the students held onto each other tightly and looked around. They were whistling through space! Stars and planets zapped by as the whistling became louder and louder and louder until PLOSH! it stopped

..... there was silence!



The children opened their eyes and looked around. The rocks were no longer in the school grounds! They were sitting on the top of a bare sand dune surrounded by small bushes and a few spindly trees. At the bottom of the sand dune were swamplands spreading off into the distance.

‘Welcome to 1782,’ said a strange voice. It was coming from the Rocks. ‘I am your guide. Thank you for travelling back in time with me. Please remember to be back on the rocks in one hour or you will be left behind. Have fun.’

‘Was that the rock?’ one of the children asked.

‘Yes, it was,’ said the teacher. ‘The rock is a time machine and by pressing the button we have all gone back in time.

We only have one hour so we better get to it!’

One of the girls, shook her head. ‘Guys I think it’s true. Look around. We are not in Langwarrin anymore! There are no houses or power lines or streets or roads, just bushland, sand dunes and swamps. I think we have travelled back in time.’



‘Is this Langwarrin in 1782, just like the voice said?’ Pete asked? ‘Yeah, I think it is,’ answered Mary. ‘I seem to remember Mrs Rose talking about this. Langwarrin used to look like this before houses and roads were developed. She said that the sandy heartlands around here were formed by sand being blown up from the dry seabed of Port Phillip and Western Port bays a million years ago. I think this is where our school will be in 240 years!’

‘240 years!’ the children called out.



‘Yeah. That’s what it looks like to me. It all makes sense,’ said Pete. ‘When my dad buys soil and sand to use in the garden, he buys ‘Cranbourne Sand’ because it’s supposed to be so good for paths and things. And when he buys soil for the garden beds, he buys ‘Narre Clay’ named after Narre Warren because it’s soil is nutritious and holds water. This place does look like the area that our school is built on too! It explains the sandy soil and the small trees on the sloping sections and also the swamps in the hollows. The area from Langwarrin all the way to Seaford was pretty swampy in the old days.’



‘You could be right.

The sky is really blue too and smell the air, it is so clean, no car fumes or factories at all,’ said Trevor.

‘Yes, children the rocks do take you back in time. This is the location of your school but not in 2023 in 1782!’ said the teacher.

‘Either that or we’ve all gone crackers!’ laughed Candice.

‘Let’s have a look around, we only have an hour remember,’ said Pete.

The children walked a small distance away from the seat and looked around. In the distance they could see people wading through the shallow water in the swampy areas. They kept bending over and picking things up and putting them into a bag on their back.



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tree



The children were captivated by this scene. And as they watched a young girl, about 12 years old, walked towards them. She was carrying a sack over her shoulder and seemed to be collecting things from the swampy water as she approached. When she got closer, they realised that she was a young aboriginal girl. She looked up and saw the children standing by the rocks. They were looking at her.

Their eyes met, she smiled and came closer.

‘You can talk to the girl if you want to. The rocks can translate so she will understand you and you will understand her,’ said the teacher.



The girl walked closer. 'Hello, my name is Mani. Where did you people come from?' she asked.

Mary didn't know what to say but after a moment she managed to mumble, 'From the rocks.'

'The rocks, that's a funny answer,' said the girl. 'You are all dressed in a funny way too'. She looked them up and down.

'Are you a member of the Kulin people?' the girl asked.

‘No Mani we are just visitors,’ Clarissa said. ‘We are not from around here. We have just come to ask you a few questions.

What are you doing Mani?’

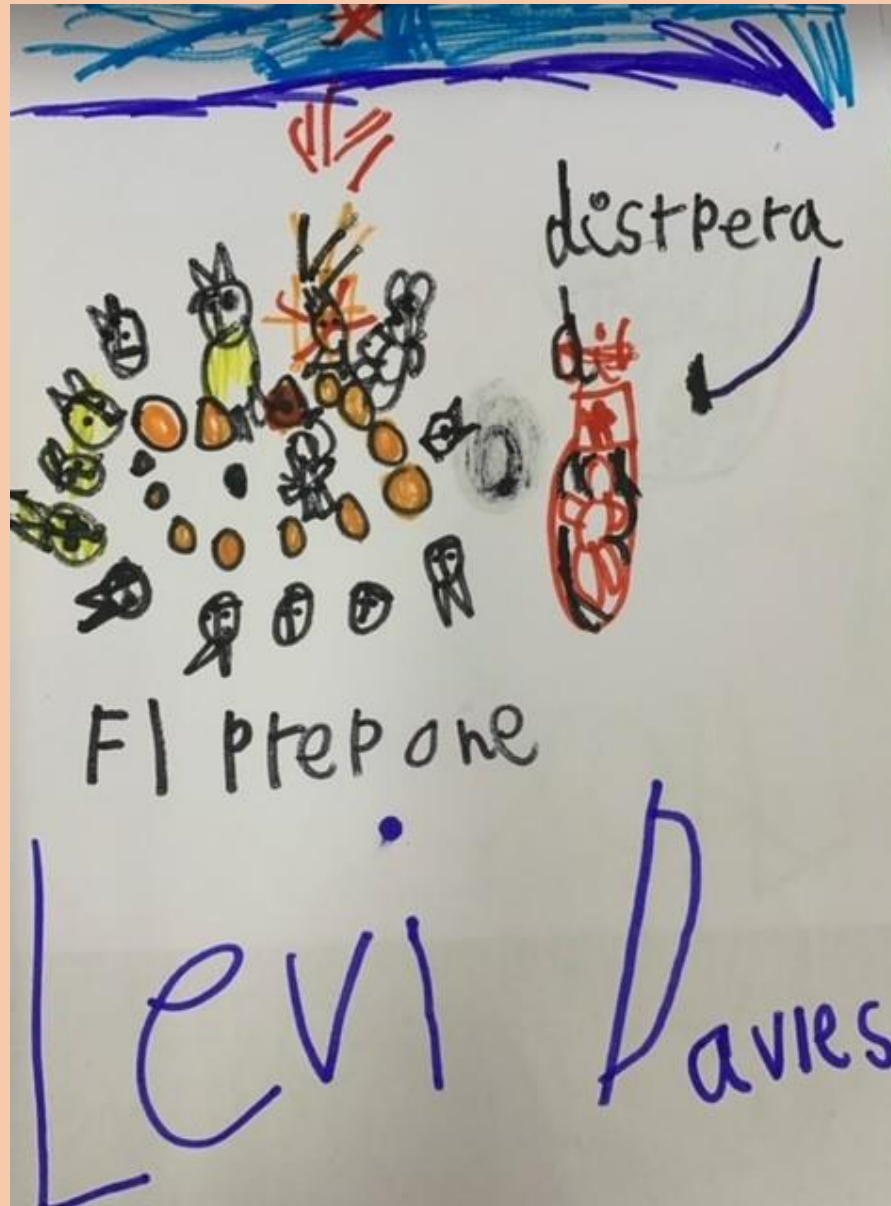
‘Collecting food of course,’ she answered. ‘My people use this area to hunt for tubers of orchids and other plants and berries, seeds, and the fruits of many plants.



These swamps are a great source of food and up there on the grassy woodlands my brothers are hunting kangaroos, possums, and emus.

‘We are from Langwarrin, where do you come from?’
asked Trevor.

‘Langwarrin, that’s a nice name. I am a member of the Bunurong people. We live all over the southeastern lands. We are part of the Kulin nation’.



‘I’ve heard of the Bunurong people,’ said Mary to the others.

‘We call you Koories sometimes. But the Bunurong people prefer to be described as Kulin (koolin) or Bunurong rather than Koorie which is a word from another Aboriginal language. I heard that the Bunurong people lived around Langwarrin many years ago’.

‘Not many years ago,’ said Pete. ‘Many Bunurong people still live in the Langwarrin, Cranbourne and Frankston areas and all over this side of the city’.

‘What do you mean still live here, of course I live here!’ said Mani with a funny look on her face.



‘It’s a bit complicated Mani,’ said Clarissa.

‘Can you tell us a bit about yourself, we only have a short time?’

‘Well yes certainly,’ Mani answered. ‘My family are on our way to the river mouth to net and spear fish. When we see the first wattles flower, we know that the fish we like will be ready to be caught. This is the best time to catch the fish we love to eat.’

‘Don’t you use a calendar to keep track of time?’ asked Pete.

‘A calendar! You do have funny words,’ said Mani. ‘I don’t understand this calendar thing! We watch the changing seasons and travel from place to place to find food. We have done this for thousands of years. Our lives are ruled by the changing of the seasons. My people have been here for thousands of years, and we can predict when certain plants and animals are available. We watch the changing trees and plants, and the way animals behave. These things tell us all we need to know.’



Can this thing you call a calendar do that?' she asked.

'Well, no, not really', Mary answered. 'Tell us more about your life Mani.'

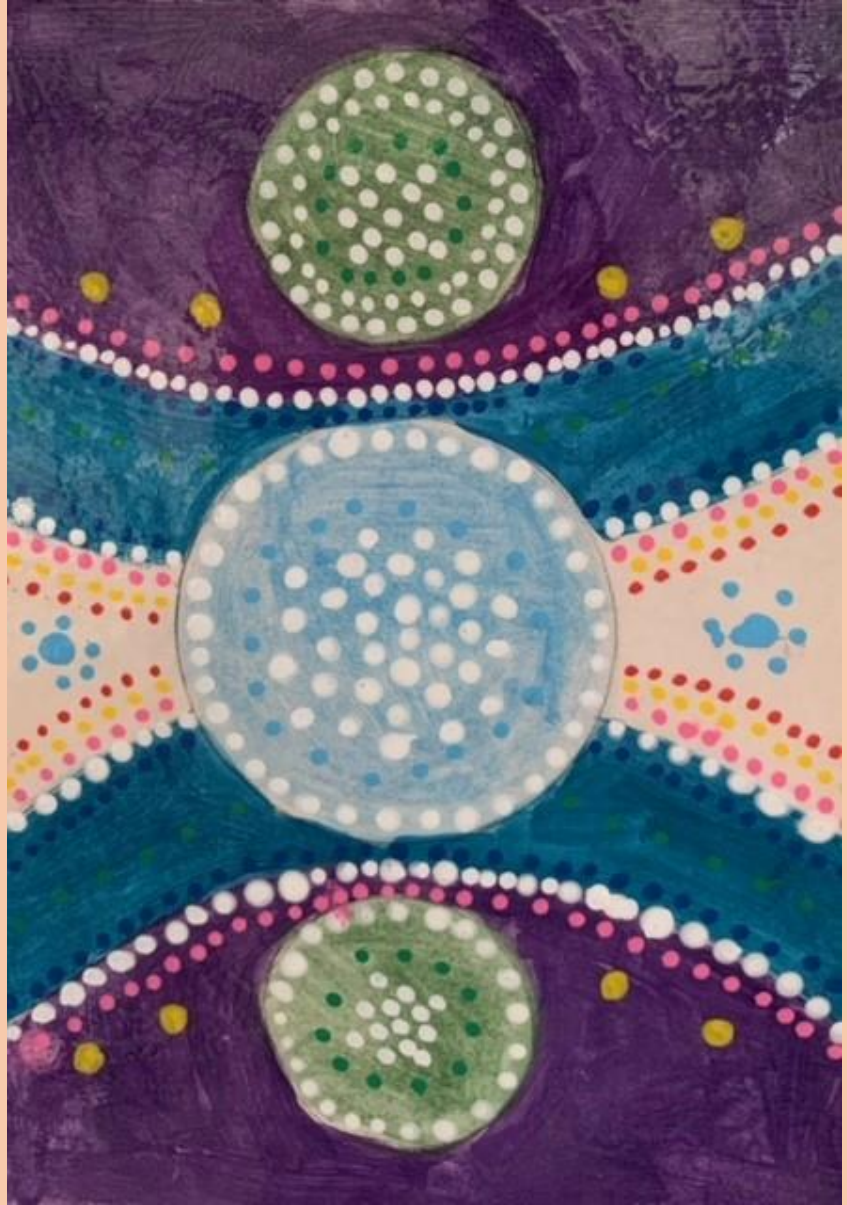
'During the summer months we set up our camps down near the coastal areas.' Mani said pointing off into the distance.

'That must be near Frankston!' said Pete.

'You confuse me with your strange words again,' said Mani.

‘Shush Pete. Frankston won’t be built for hundreds of years. Don’t worry Mani just keep going, this is very interesting,’
said Mary.

‘Well during the hot months, we search for our favourite birds’ eggs, fish, shellfish and hunt for kangaroos and possums. We also collect bulbs, shoots and foliage like warrigal spinach. We also make a wonderful drink from the nectar of the coastal Banksia flowers. It’s really nice and sweet.’



‘We live in small huts called Main’mia which we make from the boughs of trees, and we thatch grasses to make them strong and keep us warm at night. We also treat the pelts of kangaroos and possums my brothers catch to make cloaks and rugs for the coming winter months to keep us warm. We also trade some of these cloaks with other Bunurong groups.

They are very valuable.

We can get things like axes made from greenstone to chop trees and things. One possum skin made from 50 hides is worth one greenstone axe head.’

‘At night, around the fire, my grandmother tells me stories of the big hairy monster named ‘Toora dun’ that lives in a deep waterhole nearby.’

Yes, yes, I know that story!’ squealed Pete. ‘The town of Tooradin was named after the creature in that Bunurong story! I heard about that at school from Mrs Mowat’.

‘What is a school?’ asked Mani.

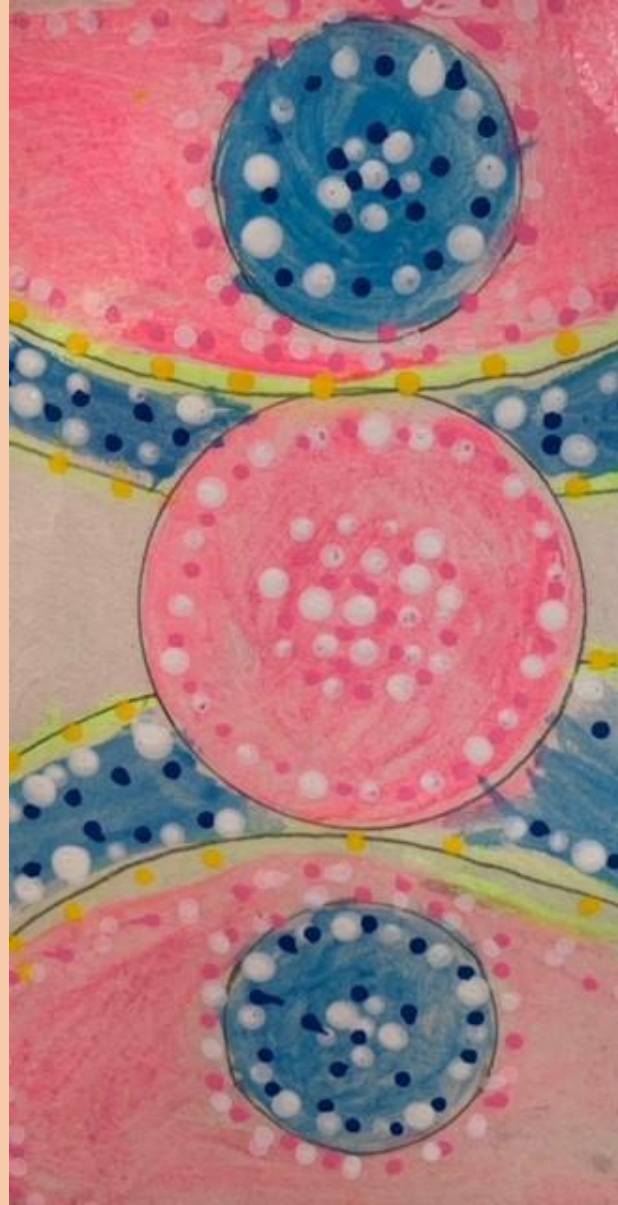
‘Oh, don’t worry, you don’t need to know about that you lucky thing!’ laughed Trevor. ‘Ignore them Mani keep going, what do you do in winter?’ asked Candice.

‘We move inland away from the sea breezes and set up camps over that way,’ she said pointing towards far off Dandenong and the hills beyond. We meet lots of other Bunurong clans and mount large scale hunts, and we have long ceremonies. We also catch eels, freshwater mussels and crayfish and search for winter mushrooms. We also get seeds from ant’s nests and mix it with other things to make a bread that fills our stomachs. We add wild honey and that puts a smile on everyone’s face when it is cold and grey.’



‘My brothers learn how to snare and track small animals and my sisters and I, learn the art of making eel traps and baskets to collect fruit and berries. We have a great life listening and working with nature.’

‘And when the Black Wattle blooms again we begin our trip back down to these swamps and on to the coastal areas again.’



Just then the rocks began to whistle and buzz.

‘Oh no! Has it been an hour already?’ Trevor said.

‘Yes,’ said the teacher. ‘It’s time to go.’

Mani took a step back. The noises frightened her. She looked like she was about to run away.

‘Don’t be scared,’ said Clarissa. She walked forward and put her arms around Mani. ‘Thank you so much for telling us about the way you live. We have been very lucky to meet you, but we must go now’.

‘Why are they making noises and glowing like the sun?’ Mani asked, pointing at the rocks.

‘Oh, they’re special Mani,’ Clarissa said. ‘Goodbye. It was wonderful meeting you.’ The children jumped onto the rocks and grabbed on tight.



Mani was confused. 'You are strange people, always in such a rush!' she said.



The rocks began to vibrate and rattle..... spin and slosh, wobbly and tumble and with a last huge zipping sound they began to spin and then they disappeared.

‘Goodbye Mani, you are our friend. We hope to meet you again one day!’ Candice cried out as they left Mani standing on the sandy soil wondering who these strange people were!
And where did they go!



The children and their teacher zapped off, through space and in no time found themselves back in their own schoolyard. The bell chimed out and they realise they had to go back to class. After their adventure, somehow inside learning wasn't much fun anymore. They longed for their next adventure on the rocks. They didn't have to wait long.

**The next day their teacher came to them and said,
'It's time to explore some more! Want to come?'
'Yes!' they all screamed. 'Where will we go this time?'**

You have been reading a story illustrated by students at
Langwarrin Park Primary School.

We used artistic ideas from many artists and from other
artists in our classroom 3 - 6 art program. A lot of people's
ideas are reflected in this book.

Thanks Everyone

