NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The 2nd General Meeting of the Society for 1988 will be held in: -

THE CONSERVATION CENTRE, 120 WAKEFIELD STREET, ADELAIDE

ON

NB. DATE CHANGE TUESDAY 26TH APRIL 1988 AT 8.00 PM NB. DATE CHANGE

AGENDA

1. Apologies:
2. Minutes of Previous General Meeting:
   Minutes of the previous general meeting, held in the Conservation
   Centre, 120 Wakefield Street Adelaide on 28th March 1988, having
   been circulated in this journal, to be confirmed.
3. Papers and Journals:
   Papers and journals received from other societies and organizations,
   since the last general meeting, will be tabled at this meeting.
4. Speaker:
   Ms Doreen Kartinyeri will address the society. The
   subject of her address will be: -
   "Aboriginal Family History of South Australia."
5. Supper will be served at the close of the meeting.

R. Allison
Hon. Secretary
120 Wakefield Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
The Film

Ngurunderi: A Ngurrindjeri Dreaming

by Steve Hemming

The South Australian Museum in association with the South Australian Film Corporation, Pepper Studios and the Ngurrindjeri Community have produced a film about the Dreaming story of Ngurunderi. This Dreaming relates to the creation of the Murray River and the shaping of the coastal features around Encounter Bay. Ngurunderi is a Dreaming Ancestor of the people of the Lower Murray region of South Australia, the Ngurrindjeri. The film was made as an introduction to the South Australian Museum's planned exhibition on Ngurrindjeri culture. It was recently launched at the Museum and can be seen in the Aboriginal Culture Gallery on the 2nd floor of the Museum's East Wing. It is being screened continuously in the introductory area to the planned exhibition and is accompanied by a series of introductory panels explaining the content of the new exhibition and giving a progress report on its development.

An explanation of the making of this film and an overview of the Dreaming story itself formed the major part of my 1987 Presidential Address. I also spoke about some of the other beliefs that Ngurrindjeri people still have today -- beliefs that set them apart from the surrounding white Australian community.

Several accounts of the Ngurunderi Dreaming have been recorded by anthropologists, missionaries and other white commentators. (Taplin 1873, 1879: Meyer 1846: Berndt 1940: Tindale unpublished) Very few of these accounts provide a detailed understanding of the Dreaming story and each varies in the emphasis of the regions that it deals with. Ronald Berndt's version of the Dreaming is the most detailed published account. Norman Tindale, the other anthropologist to have worked extensively in the area, also has detailed accounts, but these are as yet unpublished. These anthropologists worked with, and obtained their versions of the Dreaming story, from Aboriginal people of different Ngurrindjeri groups. Berndt worked mainly with Albert Karloan from the Lower Murray area and this means that the detail in his accounts will mostly relate to this area. Each Ngurrindjeri group knew in most detail, the section of the Ngurunderi Dreaming that related to their local region.

From several of the published accounts, Ngurunderi's epic journey appears to have started in the Darling junction area of the River Murray and continued down the Murray to the Lakes. Here, with the help of his brother-in-law Nepele, the giant cod Pondle was caught and cut up into many pieces and each piece was changed into one of the present day species of fresh and salt water fish.
inhabiting the area. Ngurunderi's journey continued from the Lakes area, down the Coorong to Kingston. On this part of his journey he was chasing his runaway wives. At Kingston, Ngurunderi fought with an evil sorcerer called Parampari. He killed Parampari and burnt his body which changed into the Granites near Kingston. Ngurunderi then pursued his wives back towards the Murray mouth, crossed it and travelled around Encounter Bay. Along this coast he created many of the islands (including Granite Island) and other features. He caught up with his wives, who had broken several Ngarrindjeri laws and drowned them by flooding the land between the mainland and Kangaroo Island - their bodies became The Pages. He crossed Backstairs Passage to Kangaroo Island where he entered the Spirit world.

According to Ngarrindjeri belief, Ngurunderi established many of their laws and when someone dies their spirit follows Ngurunderi to Kangaroo Island and from there into the spirit world.

Most of the available accounts of the Ngurunderi story have been fragmentary. One of the earliest examples is in Meyer (1846). Here Nurrunduri controls the life of the woman, the moon. When she becomes too thin he orders her to be driven away to eat roots and so recuperate. Meyer's version of the cutting up of the cod and the creation of the fish from the pieces varies considerably from the main accounts, i.e. Berndt and Tindale. He says Pungnane caught a pond and divided it into pieces, each becoming a cod. Strangely enough he threw them into the sea. The association with salt water is to be expected here, with Meyer's informants being Ramindjeri people and therefore predominantly coastal dwellers. Tindale (1935) says that Pungnane is the equivalent of Nepele. Another early version of the Dreaming story is recorded by Cawthorne and published in 1926. Here 'Ooroondovil', Cawthorne's spelling, is described as the 'first great spirit', who made the land, when all that existed was water. Although this is very different to the Berndt account of the Dreaming story, there are some similarities and interestingly, he says that after leaving Kangaroo Island Ngurunderi 'went on westward, where he still lives, though by this time a very old man, and has taught the Europeans the use of firearms, how to make clothes, etc.

During research for the main exhibition and the development of the film, I worked with a number of Ngarrindjeri people who know something of the Dreaming of Ngurunderi. All only know fragments of the detailed Dreaming story that must have existed. One interview I had with a European, Don Ledo, who is an old riverboat man, was very interesting in relation to Ngurunderi. As a child he grew up on the Murray and he spent much of his time with Aboriginal friends. He remembers sitting around listening to one old Aboriginal man telling, or rather acting out, the Dreaming story of Ngurunderi. George Taplin the missionary who established Point McLeay, records in his diary, actually witnessing a corroboree, which incorporated song and dance and that he discovered was about Ngurunderi. There would have been many such corroborees concerning Ngurunderi and the telling of
stories about him would always have been told in the Aboriginal way, by acting them out. When I first asked him if he knew anything about Ngurunderi, he didn’t know what I was talking about. However, he soon worked out that I meant, ‘Ngoorroonderrree’, as he pronounced it. (Heavy emphasis on the first syllable, the ‘oo’s like the ‘oo’ in book, and the ‘rr’s trilled.) Of the several Ngarrindjeri people that I have heard say Ngurunderi, most use the same pronunciation as Don Leda. The Ngarrindjeri did speak several different dialects, and this probably accounts for some slight variation that I have encountered. Coorong people, such as George Trevorrow, pronounce the word with a ‘u’ sound like the ‘u’ in but.

Henry Rankine, George Trevorrow, and Harvey Karpany provided most assistance with script development for the film. We based the film on Berndt’s version of the Dreaming and modified it on the advice of Henry Rankine and George Trevorrow. The pronunciation of the word Ngurunderi, that we used, was the one used by Lulu Sumner, one of the most respected Ngarrindjeri elders. She was particularly respected for her knowledge of the language. Henry Rankine was selected by the South Australian Film Corporation to be the narrator and the actors for the film were chosen from the Point McLeay and Meningie Aboriginal communities. These were the two closest Ngarrindjeri communities to the locations chosen for the shooting of the film. The actors were: Henry Rankine Jnr. (Ngurunderi), Maxwell Rankine (Nepele), Fred Sumner (Parampari), Susan Rankine (Wife) and Margaret Rankine (Wife). The baskets and mats used in the film were made by Yvonne Koolmatrie, Ellen Trevorrow and Glenda Rigney. The film took several years to complete and will provide a spectacular introduction to the new exhibition. It will also as part of the Aboriginal studies curriculum in the Education Department and will be widely available.