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YEPPON PUBLIC ART PROJECT

Contribution to the Pamela Croft, Sandhills Studio Consultancy by Bronwyn Lea Fredericks

Bronwyn Lea Fredericks, Sandhills Studio, Keppel Sands, Qld 4702
You call me a groper, cod or a big fish. I grew to be 2.1 metres long and about 288kgs. I was around 150 years old when I washed up near here in a high tide on a full moon in 2001. My ancestors and I have always swum in the waters of the Keppel Bay. The Capricorn Coast has always been the place to which we belong and which belongs to us, our home place. In the same way as it is the home place for the Darumbal and the Woppaburra peoples. Since the arrival of Captain Cook many people have arrived along the Capricorn Coast from all over the world and have now called it home. Some just come for a short time, some want to stay forever. How have you come to be here?
Number 3a: X-Ray Body

My grandfather told me, as his grandfather told him, that long before Captain Cook, the Darumbal and the Woppaburra peoples used small canoes made of iron or stringy bark, vine strips and ti-tree bark to travel between the mainland and the islands. My grandfather saw the arrival of Captain Cook in Keppel Bay. He had a large boat that was modified for the long journey up Australia’s East Coast. After Captain Cook’s boat many boats came, large wooden boats and then engine powered boats. Sometimes cargo came on the boats or people, like when the South Sea Islands peoples were bought here in chains. In my lifetime, I have seen the arrival of speed boats and even what you call banana boats that I’d dodge as they crisscrossed above me. I wonder what the boats of the future will be?

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Number 3c: X-Ray Tail

The turtles can see the land better than us fish, they come up for air and peer out of the corner of their eyes towards the land. They say that long ago the land looked very different. It looked much greener and there were only small shelters made of bark, wattle and grasses and sometimes they could see smoke from small fires along the coast. After Captain Cook arrived, land was cleared and permanent structures were built that were called houses and buildings. The number of these is still growing. The turtles say that other land was cleared, burnt and turned into farming for pineapples and other produce. My family has tasted the change in the water that runs off the land into the ocean since farming began. This tells us the vegetation and the soil has changed. Look around you at the land, what do you see and what might the turtles look at in the future?
Number 3b:X-Ray Body

There were always fishermen and fisherwomen. In my grandfather’s time they only used spears, handmade nets, fish traps and bone hooks. Over the years my ancestors have compiled many stories about people fishing. The funny stories and the tragic stories about loss of life of both sea animals and people. My parents wondered for a while why the fisherwomen seemed to disappear for many years. Now they are coming back and there are fishermen and fisherwomen once more. People still fish off the shores but also off rock walls, jetties and from many boats in deep waters. I have seen the large metal hooks and nets that catch fish and sharks along with turtles, dolphins, stingrays and pieces of plastic and other rubbish that is in the water. I worry about the rubbish. It impacts on all of us. I worry about my relatives being caught. This is how I came to my death. We are too stringy to eat and there are too few of us, just like there are too few dugongs, dolphins and turtles. What do you think you could do to help us and the water?

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Woppaburra (16 Leaf)

Welcoming
whispers through the leaves
Woppaburra voices
bright open skies
waterways of blues
whoop whoop birds that call
wind that blows softly
whales, dugongs, turtles and dolphins
wedded to the islands
through story lines
song lines
totems
Woppaburra people
wandering thickneses and curloos
wooing, wailing
to the spirits
ancestors
wiry grasses
where rocks become smooth
weathered with time
wonderful spaces
wellness places
Woppaburra islands
Woppaburra

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