Yugambeh Nation

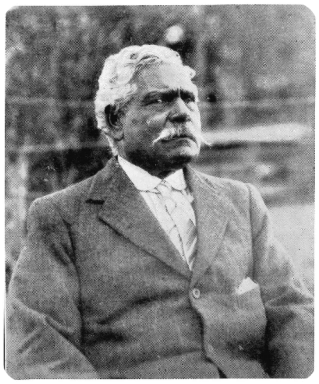
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AGES 11 TO 15 · READING

Uncle Bullum: The Bridge

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this sheet contains the name and images of a person who has died.



If 1842 was the year the "fences went up," then Uncle Bullum (John Allen)—born just eight years later in 1850—was the generation that had to navigate the narrow gaps between them.

Uncle Bullum was of the Wangerriburra people (the "Pretty-faced Wallaby people"), whose Country encompasses the heights of Mt Tamborine and the valley of the Albert River.

His life is a powerful study in the complexity of survival. Orphaned as a child following attacks by the Native Police—the brutal enforcement arm of the "free settlement" era—he was raised by members of his family thereafter. At around 10, he was employed by the Collins family of Mundoolun. By age 11, he was already working the stock routes, eventually becoming a legendary drover and explorer.

In 1913, Uncle Bullum performed an act of immense cultural resistance. Alongside John Lane, he compiled a grammar and vocabulary of the Yugambeh language. He also mapped the Yugambeh clans.

While the colonial administration of the time often viewed such work as "recording a dying race," for us today, it is a foundation stone. Because of Bullum's dedication to his mother tongue, the Wangerriburra dialect remains etched in the historical record, a gift to every descendant reclaiming their voice today.

From Mail Runner to Legend

Bullum wasn't just a "survivor"; he was a force of nature-

- The Explorer: He accompanied Robert Collins into the West, where "Allen's Hole" near Boulia still bears his name. Here he met and formed relationships with the Pitta Pitta Nation on the frontier, having a Pitta Pitta wife and daughter at Boulia.
- The Entrepreneur: At one point, he was earning £1,000 a year running mail between Boulia and Winton—a staggering sum for the era that speaks to his unparalleled skill and reliability.
- The Builder: He helped physically build the Jimboomba State School, leaving a literal mark on the infrastructure of the region.

Colonial obituaries in 1931 called him the "last survivor" of the Wangerriburra. But history told through a Yugambeh lens says otherwise.

He spent his later years at Tamrookum, living among the Williams family. Our Elders born in the 1920s don't remember him as a "relic of the past"—they remember him as a grandfather figure.

They recall with a laugh how, as cheeky children, they would "steal his cane," playing at the feet of a man who carried the entire weight of the 19th century in his memory.

Uncle Bullum (John Allen) proves that while the 1842 proclamation sought to "open" the land by "closing" a culture, the spirit of the Wangerriburra and other Yugambeh clans was never truly contained.

He was the bridge. He was born in a dark time but carried the light of our language through to the other side.

Still here. Still Wangerriburra. Still Yugambeh.

UNCLE BULLUM

Questions

Questions

1. Which people was Uncle Bullum from, and where is their Country?

2. What happened to Uncle Bullum as a child, and who raised him?

3. What did he compile with John Lane in 1913, and why is it important today?

4. Name three things Uncle Bullum did as an explorer, entrepreneur and builder.

5. Colonial obituaries called him the “last survivor”. How does the Reading say Yugambeh Elders remember him?

6. Why does the Reading call him “the bridge”?