AGES 14 AND UP · TO DISCUSS

Yugambeh LGBT+

Yugambeh people are just like any other society of humans living on earth, we breathe and love the same as other people, and just like other nations, **there are Yugambeh people who are LGBT+.**

> *"On the edge of Cudgen scrub, we met an Aboriginal named Bilmin, he was 6ft 6in. One of the tallest I had ever seen. He was a hermaphrodite."*
>
> Nerang, 1870

Yugambeh culture is rich in stories, language, and cultural practices surrounding LGBT+ people, as well as other people whose sexual behaviour may not align to a hetero-normative ideal. **Did you know that Yugambeh women have always been free to stay single and live their lives how they wish?** Without the social pressure of accepting a marriage or raising children. Historically, these women would bear children (if they wished) to be adopted by childless members of the community, they had their own special single women's camp, and rules and protocols for entering and requesting their services.

During the days in the traditional camps, LGBT+ couples were not concealed and were as celebrated as any other relationship in the community. **Speaking of their move into town, one Yugambeh Elder said "Things changed a lot, one aunty said it was too much to put up with, she took her woman out west to go live."**

Unfortunately, a sad part of colonisation has been the oppression of not only obvious cultural expressions, like language, dance, and song, but also less obvious ones, like lifestyle and sexuality that did not align with European ideals. European settlers also had less care for nuance, **one traveller coming through Yugambeh country in the 19th century labelled several individuals simply as *hermaphrodites*.** In modern terms, these same people would be called *transgendered or intersex*.

Yugambeh people understood the additional discrimination inflicted on their families by settler institutions and have always protected their LGBT+ family. **A Yugambeh Elder born in the 1930s reminiscing of their transgendered relative said "(S)he couldn't do it out in public back then – but we all knew, and we didn't care. I even saw them once all dressed up when I was a little girl. It was a very pretty dress"**

Discussion guide. Listen respectfully, speak for yourself, and keep personal stories shared in the room private.

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Discussion questions

1. What do you know about the Aboriginal LGBT+ community already?

2. How are Yugambeh ideals around women different to European ones? (Historically and now?)

3. What would it be like to be discriminated against for your race AND sexuality?

4. What does intersectionality mean for Aboriginal LGBT+ people?

5. What do you think *hermaphrodite* meant in the quote? How has the language changed since?

6. What would it have been like to have been a transgendered Aboriginal person on the Gold Coast in 1930?

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