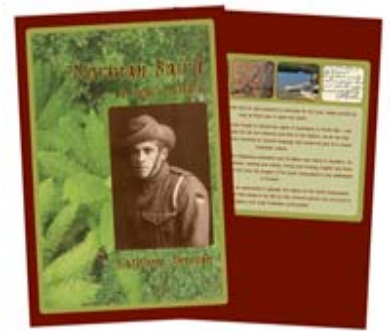


The book "*Norman Baird – a spark within*" has encapsulated the details of the life of an extraordinary indigenous Australian – Norman Baird who was a Bama Buruwarra (man from Buru).



EXTRACTS from *Norman Baird - a spark within*

Norman Baird once wrote that he was prepared to advocate for the Kuku Yalanji people as long as there was 'a spark left within'. In this letter he writes about his concern for the welfare of his community and how bureaucratic process was depriving Bama of their rights.

He was a man who despite feeling as though no progress was being made and that little if any justice was forthcoming, continued to work for the betterment of his people until the end of his life

As a young man Norman fought to defend the rights of Australians in World War I only to come home and fight for his own freedom and that of his children. As an old man and almost blind, Norman recorded an ancient language and preserved part of a unique Australian culture.

Norman's mother was an indigenous Australian and his father was native to Scotland. He learnt skills from both cultures: reading and writing, mining and hunting, English and Kuku Yalanji - skills that served him from the jungles of Far North Queensland to the battlefields of Europe.

Norman's story provides an opportunity to glimpse the history of Far North Queensland - a shared history, and one that needs to be told so that common ground can be found to strengthen and unite Australian communities



Norman's World War I medals:
The British War Medal 1914-20 and the Victory Medal

FOREWORD by Gerhardt Pearson

My mother Ivy moved from Bloomfield to Hope Vale when she married and would often pine to visit her family, including her Uncle Norman. Even if the mission authorities approved her application to visit, Hope Vale Bama were not allowed to own vehicles. This made it almost impossible to maintain contact with family. By the time we could leave Hope Vale freely many of our old people had passed on.

One such elder was my grandfather Norman Baird. I never met Grandfather Norman but through his legacy I have gained an understanding of him and I can now say I know him well. When I talk to my aunties, Polly and Annie, and they tell me what a great man their father was, I can agree. He was a great Maja, a leader of the Kuku Yalanji people.

What is remarkable about Grandfather Norman was his level of education and how it enabled him to avoid removal and give voice to Bama concerns. It was a taxing responsibility and in his voice you can hear the loneliness he felt as he struggled with the injustices around him. Grandfather Norman was a person with 'soft hands' who helped people because he believed in social cohesion. He encouraged self sufficiency in places like Buru and Dikarba as he understood the benefits of such a lifestyle.

Norman Baird - a spark within is a personal and emotional chapter of our history but I feel confident Grandfather Norman would be honored to share his life with you.

BOOK LAUNCH

On Monday 23 October *Norman Baird - a spark within* was launched at the church grounds, Mossman Gorge to a crowd of more than a hundred. People traveled from Hope Vale, Cooktown, Wujal Wujal, China Camp, Cairns and Brisbane to share the event.



Kuku Yalanji dancers opened the proceedings with a special welcome dance.



Gerhardt Pearson presents Annie and Polly with their father's war medals.



Traditional Owner David Buchanan provided the Welcome to Country telling a story about how Norman once stopped the rain for an important ceremony, something which also happened on the launch day.



Mathew Gibson, Chairman of the Mossman Gorge Aboriginal Community and also great grandson of Norman Baird. He said Norman's life was much harder than anyone's today and said he was moved by the information he read in the book.



Noel Pearson, Director of Cape York Institute said there was a "gathering momentum of denialism in this country" and that "local history about real people and real events is imperative" to debunk myths presented as fact.



Kathleen Denigan delivering her speech. Kathleen thanked three special women for their support, Annie Kulka, Polly Fischer and Ivy Pearson.



Gayle Fischer, Polly's daughter and grand daughter of Norman spoke about the great legacy he has left.



Lea Giles-Peters, State Librarian. Lea admired Norman's love of life long learning a characteristic encouraged by libraries. The State Library provided in-kind support to the project.



Gerhardt Pearson, Executive Director, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation. Gerhardt thanked Susan Medway for her personal and professional commitment to the project.



Kuku Yalanji dancers. Norman has helped preserve a great part of Kuku Yalanji culture when in the 1960s he translated and recorded his language.



Kerry and Will MacGillivray. Norman Baird's war time photo has been in Kerry's family for 89 years after Norman posted it to her grandfather.

MEDIA COVERAGE



Proud: Author Kathleen Denigan (centre) with Norman Baird's daughters Annie Kuika and Polly Fisher. Picture: MARELLE HINE

Book debunks 'gathering denialism'

A NEW book about a trailblazing Far North Aboriginal activist will help debunk myths presented as fact in the modern "history wars", Cape York leader Noel Pearson says.

Mr Pearson, at the launch of *Norman Baird - A Spark Within*, said there was "a gathering momentum of denialism in this country" in the past decade about Aboriginal history.

"So local history about real people and real events is imperative," he told a crowd of 100-plus gathered at Mossman Gorge yesterday.

Author Kathleen Denigan, the wife of Mr Pearson's brother Gerhardt, was teary-eyed as she told of government efforts to discredit Mr Baird, the son of a Scotsman and an Aboriginal woman, who died in 1970 aged 81.

Mr Baird's daughters Annie Kuika, 86, and Polly Fischer, who turned 84 yesterday, were also emotional as Ms Denigan spoke of "a man who continued to work for the benefit of his people right up to the end of his life".



War hero: Norman Baird in his WWI uniform.

Cairns Post 24 Oct 2006

Book recognises life of Aboriginal pioneer



Pioneer: Author Kathleen Denigan with Noel Pearson at the launch of a book on the life of local Aboriginal pioneer, Norman Baird.

NORMAN Baird - Monday and celebrates the triumphant life of an extraordinary Australian who fought for Aboriginal rights.

First-time author Kathleen Denigan said Mr Baird's story needed to be told.

"I think it's important that Norman Baird is

recognised for what he has done," Ms Denigan said.

Mr Baird is buried in a grave in Mossman and was well known throughout North Qld for his campaign to protect the rights of the Kuku Yalanji, which frequently brought him into conflict with

authorities.

Cape York Institute director and great nephew of Norman Baird, Noel Pearson described him as a pioneer of Aboriginal language. *Norman Baird - A Spark Within* is available from Balkanu, 152 Grafton St Cairns.

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Port Douglas Mossman Gazette 26 Oct 2006