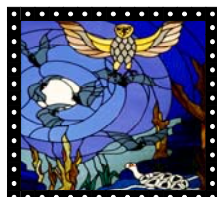
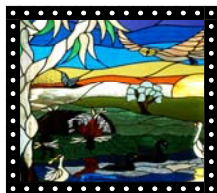


The Wiradjuri Windows



Cootamundra Town Hall

**Stained Glass by
Dianne Berkrey**

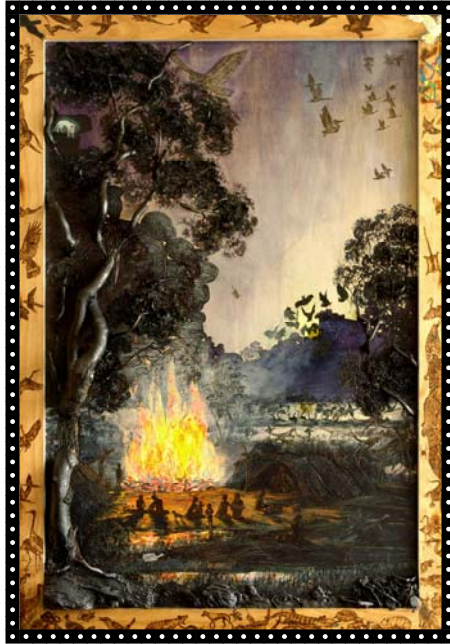
These Windows are our tribute to Melinda Bell for keeping the old stories alive and to those children of the stolen generations who endured their years at the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home

My thanks to my collaborator, Bernie Ryan, without whose artistry, interest in aboriginal culture and encouragement these windows would not have come into existence.

My thanks also to:

- ◆ *Wiradjuri Elder, Bob Glanville, for his acceptance and participation*
- ◆ *Cootamundra Shire Council for their vision and support*
- ◆ *Renowned Wiradjuri author and social commentator, Dr Anita Heiss, for her approval and support*
- ◆ *Melissa Delaney, formerly of ERAP for her invaluable guidance in securing funding*
- ◆ *And finally, The Cootamundra Arts Centre for providing the wonderful space to create this work.*

- Dianne Berkrey



First and foremost this is a Children's story. From its provenance, hundreds, possibly thousands, of years ago, through embellishments or omissions through the centuries, to Melinda's version, my own interpretation receives the approval of relevant Wiradjuri descendants.

I've tried to imagine how an aboriginal child, steeped in the natural and spiritual aspects of their culture, would face the terror of Mirriyuula's coming on the longest night.

Most children are forever optimistic. Behind the aura of menace they seem to sense that the sun is still shining.

Huddle together, be silent, trust their parent's wisdom and the dog will always be vanquished.

The Characters

Mirriyuula	Ghost Dog
Guudhamang	Snake Neck Turtle
Bubuk	Owl
Guurribang	Curlew
Ngarradan	Bat
Baiame	Great Spirit
Gan	Creator Snake
Bageeyn	Clever Man
Weeyn	Fire
Yirri	Sun
Giwang	Moon
Gunyah	Bark Shelter
Gilgie	Yabby
Marrkara	Yellow Belly
Guuguubarra	Kookaburra

The Mirriyuula Story

Long, long ago, high in a cave in the Bethungra Range, lived a wise and powerful Bageeyn.

He was master of the secrets of land and sky and had skill to transform into any shape imaginable.

However he was old and lonely and despaired that he had no-one to whom he could pass on his immense wisdom.

One night, in the guise of a great, striped dog, he carried off a young boy to train as his apprentice.

The boy's friend, pulled a blazing branch from the camp fire, threw it at the dog, setting fire to it's headband. Blinded, Mirriyuula ran howling back to his cave.

The Bageeyn was summoned before a Council of Elders which sentenced him to banishment to the underland for his transgression of tribal law.

However, as a concession to his former greatness he was permitted one night per year to hunt for a suitable apprentice.

Mirrayuula chose THE LONGEST NIGHT.



In the Dreaming, before time begins, Baiame wakes to infinite blackness.

Opening his hand, Gan crawls forth into the darkness and the cosmos explodes into its endless flight through space.

Stars, planets, constellations and the spirits of all creatures that have ever lived or will ever live, wake.

Yirri, Giwang, Gilgie, Marrkara and all other spirits of earth wake, including Guudhamang and Mirriyuula.



Aboriginal society has developed. Parents and older children prepare for the terrible night to come.

Children are ushered into the Gunyahs and cautioned into silence.

Great piles of firewood are collected and the campfire stoked to a fierce blaze.



Guuribang's mournful cry floats out over the marshes, but who knows whether as a warning signal for the people or an invitation to the dog; Curlews could not be trusted.

For whatever reason there begins a mass exodus of fur, fins and feathers.

Bubuk flies off to sharpen her beak and talons for the battle about to commence.



The battle begins, Ngarradan and his night fliers swarm from hollow trees and caves in a great rolling curtain of blackness to obliterate Giwang.

(Like all ghosts, Mirriyuula needs darkness)

Bubuk begins her half-hearted slaughter, but what chance has she against a myriad of nimble bats.

She tries her best but, inevitably, darkness flows down on the land like a great thunder cloud, purple and menacing.



Total impenetrable darkness—no sound but the hiss and crackle of the campfire, whose light is even absorbed by the gloom.

On the horizon's rim of huge, balancing boulders a faint gleam is discerned.

The Ghost Dog looms up from the underland,
luminous and inimical.

His ears are pricked for the faintest heartbeat, his eyes burn holes through the blackness, his great head is lowered swinging from side to side, sniffing the land.

He begins his prowling around the camp.

The children huddle cowering in the Gunyahs, the fire is stoked to an inferno.

Guudhamang knows his time is close when he must assume physical form for a fight to the death with Mirrayuula.

But not yet.

The first faint light of dawn washes over the horizon.

Mirriyula, thwarted, howls in anger and frustration and fades below to wait for the next Longest Night.



There is great joy among the people.

The children emerge to laugh and sing in the
morning light.

Guuguubarra and his mate sing their song of
renewal.

All creatures begin to return to their homeland and
Guudhamang fades back to the spirit land.

Life returns to it's time-honoured pattern.

Peace and Happiness reign once more.

Thank you to the following for their
assistance and insight:

Cootamundra Creative and
Cultural Arts Centre Committee



Cootamundra Shire Council



Photos: Richard Trethewey





