

Councillor Ndiaye's Delegate Report: Myall Creek Massacre Commemoration Trip with Rous County Council

Recommendation:

That Council receive and note Councillor Ndiaye's delegate report on the Myall Creek Massacre Commemoration Trip with Rous County Council.

Date: 8 - 9th of June 2024

Introduction:

In my role as Chair of the Rous County Council Reconciliation Action Plan Advisory Group (RAPAG), I went on a trip the Myall Creek Massacre commemoration.

It was an enlightening and deeply impactful experience for all involved. Accompanied by Rous staff members and local Aboriginal elders who sit on the RAPAG and family members, the journey provided a profound opportunity to reflect on the significance of the event and the importance of reconciliation in Australian history.

Significance of the Event:

The Myall Creek Massacre, like many other massacre sites across the country, represents a dark chapter in Australia's history of colonisation and Indigenous relations. The massacre, which occurred in 1838, resulted in the brutal killings of at least 28 Aboriginal men, women, and children by a group of European settlers. The significance of the Myall Creek Massacre lies in the fact that it was one of the few instances in Australian history where white men were actually convicted and punished for the murder of Aboriginal people. It was not the first instance of violence against Indigenous Australians by any means - or the last, but it was one of the first times that the perpetrators were brought to justice under colonial law. The trials and subsequent convictions marked a significant departure from the prevailing attitudes of the time, which often condoned or ignored violence against Aboriginal people. What was particularly moving was that families of both those who were killed and those who were involved in the killings participate in commemorative events. They made pledges of reconciliation, call on the spirits of the ancestors and hug. It was hard not to shed a tear. The involvement of families from both sides can be a powerful symbol of healing, understanding, and reconciliation.

The Myall Creek Massacre and its legal aftermath therefore serve as a landmark in the ongoing struggle for justice and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The commemoration serves as a reminder of the atrocities committed against Indigenous Australians and the ongoing journey towards reconciliation and healing.

There was also a strong participation from students coming from a variety of schools in QLD, NSW, ACT and Victoria.

Importance of Reconciliation:

Reconciliation is essential for Australians to come to terms with the injustices of the past and build a more inclusive and equitable future. The trip provided a platform for meaningful conversations about the impacts of colonisation, the legacy of the Stolen Generations, and the ongoing effects of intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous communities.

Enlightening Conversations:

Throughout the journey to and from the event, as well as during dinner discussions, we all shared personal stories and insights, some of those really shed light on the lived experiences of Indigenous Australians. Stories of growing up under the welfare act, being denied access to basic rights, and experiencing the pain of having siblings removed from their families highlighted the profound injustices faced by Indigenous communities.

Shared Moments of Joy and Resilience:

Despite the sombre nature of the event, there were also moments of joy, laughter, and cultural celebration. Participants engaged in singing, dancing, and storytelling, showcasing the resilience and strength of Indigenous cultures. These shared moments fostered a sense of connection and solidarity among attendees, reinforcing the importance of cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

Recommendation for Further Engagement:

The organisers of the Myall Creek Massacre commemoration expressed a desire for other councils to participate and become involved in similar reconciliation initiatives. They suggested exploring opportunities to establish local sites where reconciliation activities can take place, fostering dialogue, understanding, and healing within communities.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the trip to the Myall Creek Massacre commemoration was a profoundly moving and enlightening experience that underscored the importance of reconciliation in Australian society. I would highly recommend that others seize the opportunity to participate in similar events and engage in meaningful dialogue with Indigenous communities. By acknowledging the past, honouring Indigenous perspectives, and working towards a more just and inclusive future, we can contribute to the ongoing process of reconciliation in Australia.



