

Monday the 18th of May 2020. Parmelia Park near Kwinana. Interviewer: Vanessa Smart.

Stan Headland:

The 10th of the... Stan Headland . I was born in Mukinbudin. Kununoppin near Mukinbudin and I'm on the 10th of December, 1959. What else?

Vanessa Smart:

Yeah, no, that's great

Stan Headland:

Then mum and dad moved down to Merriden and, and they split up. We moved to Perth back to Perth. Mum and dad originally moved out of Perth so the welfare, couldn't take the elder kids away and the rest of us were born up that way. And ever since then I've just been doing what I want to do now. Yeah.

Vanessa Smart:

And what how many brothers and sisters in your family?

Stan Headland:

Mom and Dad had 16, 11 girls and five boys and dad's got another two sons.

Vanessa Smart:

And your mum and dad's names?

Stan Headland:

Hugh Headland and mum's name was Blanche nee Anderson

Vanessa Smart:

And your people?

Stan Headland:

Mum's lot are from Moora. And all my people are scattered all over the place. From Yamaji to Albany.

Vanessa Smart:

Yeah, Yeah Noongar

Stan Headland:

Which was, which was the Williams side and grandmother, grandmother Hedland was Cecilia Wilkes. So we get all our, a lot of our, say our West from mum and the Wilkes family.

Vanessa Smart:

The Wilke's family's got a big history down that way.

Stan Headland:

Yeah

Vanessa Smart:

So what made you come or the choice that you made to take your job that you have now?

Would you want to explain your job now?

Stan Headland:

What do you mean my job now?

Vanessa Smart:

As a monitor [on Wadjemup/Rottnest Island]

Stan Headland:

Oh, as a like a Yeah. Well,ul started going to all the meetings back in the, in the early eighties, mid eighties with Lenny Colbung and a lot of the people at the Aboriginal center in Beaufort Street. And that's how I got into it all. And then, u,om then, u,st to go with Lenny Colbung everywhere, just doing all the meetings and having meetings with state housing and all that. Finally. And um,,d uh,,at's how I got into the meeting. And then that's when I started,

u,ells up. I ended up getting on that committee. I've been on the set working party member and that's how I got onto that. I've been on that ever since and it's just been 35 years or whatever, doing that. Just doing all this stuff.

Vanessa Smart:

When did you come to know or learn of the history on Wadjemup?

Stan Headland:

Wadjemup that usually after we started going to all the meetings because we had no books or anything we weren't given any books or anything like that. And then people started bringing them to the meetings and then it just went on from there and I just delved into it and just kept looking it up. Right back to the start of the history of the settlements. The coming of the the white man.

Vanessa Smart

So when it comes to monitoring, can you explain what that role means?

Stan Headland:

So anyway, yeah. Just going along to the works main roads Western power, wherever. And I'm watching any of the diggings in case any relics or anything comes up like bones or any any Aboriginal artefacts and anything like that. When you come to Wadjemup, how do you feel?

I know. Yeah. You can feel it there, you know, watching ya, I can feel it. And I know they were kind of, I was really at ease when I was doing, when I did the smoking, I smoked, did the smoking ceremony a few months ago, four or five months ago. We smoked at the old morgue and all around the Quod.

Vanessa Smart:

Yeah.

Stan Headland:

And and there was, ya know, there was no like. They weren't telling me to bugger off or anything you know, there was no tension or ya know, you can feel it, like the spirits or whatever can can, can tell you to get away or whatever. There was none of that. It was easy, you know, I was at ease.

Vanessa Smart

Yeah. Do you, why do you think that you're getting that feeling? That it's okay

Stan Headland:

Because sometimes they don't agree with you and they don't like you coming on, you know, being there or you're interrupting or something. You know or they just what do you call it?

God, I can't even think of the word. You know, when someone's interfering with you and you don't want them in the house, you got to go.

Vanessa Smart:

Yeah.

Stan Headland:

That sort of thing. I can't even think of the word to describe it.

Vanessa Smart:

That's fine. Can you remember a time when that was different?

Stan Headland:

Um it was the first time I ever stepped onto onto the camping on the burial site. I really did have a strong feeling then.

Vanessa Smart:

Yeah.

Stan Headland:

Until I said my name and that when I went back again and I'd said something to him called out and that and then that was it, it was okay after that. Yeah. And that's when, and another time I went on there with the one of the blokes, who was doing the x-ray for the anomalies and that checking that underground penetration. Am I? Yeah, I didn't feel anything, so they probably understood and you know, just checking. We did find one anomaly on the South side, you know, where the burial grounds like that or just down here. We just did a quick little thing in there while everyone was watching, you know, with that brick wall is. And then just over from there, everyone was standing around that brick wall, did have some photos, but I didn't bring any.

Stan Headland:

Yeah. There was a few of us, oh it was, it was this year when we did the whole area, you know, around behind where the Karma the bloody Karma, what do you call it is all through that area. And then the bottom there, we even went over the other side cause I found some like sinks, you know, it looked like the ground sunk. So he went over them and found nothing cause I thought, cause it's supposed to be burials over there as well near the white, you know, where the white little cemetery. Yeah. There's supposed to be somebody who was there on the West side of that. Well, he just did a quick little up and down and we didn't find anything. Well, no anomalies anyway.

Vanessa Smart:

And how do you feel when you, when you see the Quod?

Stan Headland:

Um it makes me re, you know, it does reflect back what it really was. It really like when when all them prisoners were there and to see 'em all and try to picture 'em, I'm trying to think how they would have felt and. What was it, what, how to get in their minds to see how they felt to be there. So incarcerated like that that I know I would've escaped.

[Laughter]

I would've tried, that's what I would've done or practice swimming every day after six months. Have a go across.

Vanessa Smart:

Yeah. You know with the Quod was an Aboriginal prison and then it was used for accommodation. Yeah. What were you, what are your thoughts on how...

Stan Headland:

All right, well I didn't even know it was, cause I went up North work and a lot of times, you know, we're driving trucks and all that up bush and that. And I I didn't even know a lot of this was going on cause I wasn't going to the meetings and I didn't know that they were doing it cause I wasn't reading, I wasn't up to date with any of it at the time reading on about it. And and I was disgusted. I said, you know, fancy that, having all that Tentland there and that. And it was just you know, just imagine if we went down to Karrakatta and started doing things like that. You know, how many people have said that before? If we, if a black fellow done that to any white man's burial grounds or anything like that, we just went there.

We did it, the Fremantle prison, what we got this black fellows thing anyway innit, really. And only that the black fella didn't do there was build it. And but yeah, I was really disgusted in that the way they had the Tentland and, and and it wasn't until I was like in my twenties, middle twenties and all that, that I found out that, that I realize that I'm going to all the meetings and I realized that they were, there was all that burial there

Vanessa Smart:

How did you feel about that when you were learning that? Was it hard for you?

Stan Headland:

It wasn't really hard, but I felt like when you when you lose someone to like someone's gone into jail for five years, like one of your brothers or something like that, you do feel really down and out and all that probably sort of feeling like that. That's it. I can really put it.

Vanessa Smart

Can you explain your connection?

Stan Headland:

Well when I was a kid, little kid, Oh, it's still always I'd be hopping through the field like a kangaroo. Through the paddock and it was just black, but there was a light behind me and guiding me ahead. I couldn't see anything just as white light, like, you know, like a spotty at night when you're, when you're going shooting, the spotty. It was like that. And then I'll just go along with the light and there was a light behind me guiding me.

Vanessa Smart:

Hmm. I know you mentioned Tentland earlier. Do you remember when it was the camping ground?

Stan Headland:

No. No, I didn't. Go to Rotto. While, while, while that was all what was full on camping area? Well, 88, I thought it was I went to Rotto and then the first time I went back would have been a couple of years ago. Think, Two or three years ago.

Vanessa Smart:

Why did you go to Rottnest in 88?

Stan Headland:

Cause we had that big meeting there and then we had it in the Quod. All us men went into the Quod. Yeah. We all sat around in a big circle and I can't remember who was there except for Lenny. And we caught the Captain Cook ferry over. There was women and kids and all came there as well. And and all the men sat around. We all sat inside the Quod and an all spoke to where we come from and what connection we had. And, and you know, like who, where, where we're from and all that and what ties we would have had with that, with the Quod or the prisoners. Reflecting back on that sort of thing,

Vanessa Smart:

How did you feel? All these people gathered all across WA for the first time? What was that like?

Stan Headland:

It was really good to have everyone there to have that meeting sort of thing about letting the white man know that we know. And uand uwe were, we were on to them, I'm doing something about it. And, uthe best thing they did was get the tentland, moved or taken, extinguish. And, uafter the main we felt good. You know, we, we were at ease and we spoke our mind and met people like that, you know, w you know, like I'm the ancestors, people and their ancestors and their, they other people and all their ancestors, and all the ancestors we're all together in one area. And so we were sort of thing yeah. And generations later.

No, no, that was good. I can't remember much about what we exactly said to each other and like, cause it was 30, 33 years ago, whatever it was, 32 years ago.

Vanessa Smart:

And today, what are your views on Wadjemup today?

Stan Headland:

Well, I reckon it's going to wreck and ruin. They're not doing really anything with it except for the affluence of the white man, for the white man and their affluent ways and uthere's nothing being done for Aboriginal that I can see when I go. But there is not one place there where we can call our own, like where we could go for the weekend. We can have meetings, anything like that. They talk about this, talk about that. But nothing has been achieved. And

usome of the people who are running Rottnest now are not even looking after the place really, I got black fellas can do a better job than they are. And usome of those places they're gonna knock down. They should rebuild them somewhere else so we can make one big buildings out of all the materials or even just get new anyway, make us something big. There's where we can camp, have meetings, stay the weekend, the night, whatever and do things, and have our own Aboriginal area of our own culture. People, all the tourists come in and, and like we can tell them for us to tails. They can find out from us, not from some catalog. Sitting in the white man's little office there.

They can hear it from the horse's mouth sort of thing. Yeah. And we can have our own like like I do paintings bark paintings and stuff, but not all the people can have their little arts center. They're selling it to the tourists, you know, Mike and money or for that place and for themselves or whatever, 10% for the place and the rest of the do the painter or the artist. Yeah. Okay. Why do we say painter? I never say artist. Dunno what it is.

Vanessa Smart:

What sort of things do you like to do?

Stan Headland:

Um what do you call it? Sunset scenes outback scenes.

Stan Headland:

Mmm. Mmm.

Stan Headland:

I've done the rocks and beach and waves and all that sort of stuff. I paint people their favorite pet or whatever they want done children. Yeah, I do all that sort of stuff. When I, when I was in grade seven, I um, I done a Easter bunny competition. We had a Easter bunny competition. For all the kids of kids out at. The schools were doing it and I made one and I had shadow lines because I was really good artists and I had done this big rabbit and you put your fingers at the back of the eyes, move left to right or whatever. And one ear was bent and it looked like a real rabbit and I shied it in, look where the shade, it, it like in a photo, like, I'd done all that. And all the other kids the white kids, there's a lot of their drawings and pictures were shit, but, and I never got a mention. And then a year later I'd done one for me, sister-in-law, she was about 11. Then I said, what are you doing? She says, I'm doing a picture for Dad.

It's that Karrinyup Shopping Centre having a competition draw your father's day competition. So I said, give it here. So I done it for her and copied it for this caricature that she had on the wall that some bloke had done of her dad. So I copied that and give it to her exact thing and done it the most and put shadows and stuff and then did a bit more, she won the hundred dollar first prize and that's the only drawing I've ever won. But it wasn't, it was hers the Wadjula girl. I never ever want any thing back them days. And like sports was the same too. Like lot of Nyoongars like over that while you got Scarborough and Karinyup and that lot of them all, well to do people at them. We went to the wind up the on the 14 boys wind up, I think it was back in the early seventies.

At one couple of the boys said to me when we're sitting down waiting for the awards is being presented. And they said, what are you doing here? We don't want you here, you know, things like that. And when I'd come out of the pool at Beatty Park, I was champion swimming for Karrinyup and I come out of the pool after winning a race or whatever, walk over, sit down on me towel and that and all the people going up to the other boys and their sons and whatever, tapping them on the back and all that. And I were just sitting there by myself. No one ever came up to me. And that's what the white man is like. You know, Karrinyup football club was run by mothers and fathers and one little kid he got a trophy every year and he was a spoilt

little bastard, you know, and he wasn't well liked. And one year you got best clubman he had to get a trophy every year. Laurie Keane was in that side. They won 69 games in a row over four years. And Laurie Keane was in that side. My brother Cliff was in two of those years I think. And I was down South in at nine up agricultural school.

Vanessa Smart:

Yeah. Yeah. We've took some collection photos of those artefacts, which is another question I really want to ask about. Because there were artefacts that are found in dated minimum of 10, you know, seven to 10,000 years minimum.

Stan Headland:

Well see some of that stuff. If you're taken away from that area, what is, what is it, you know, it's it became, it becomes, it doesn't become an artifact unless you leave it there. Isn't that where, where you found it? What's the use of putting it in that museum? Because there's is that many stuff out there. You can't put it all in a museum. What would you want to just leave it in boxes? You know.

Vanessa Smart:

What would you like to see happen to it?

Stan Headland:

Well, put it back with it where, where they belong, where they, where they were, you know, and and if, if that can't, if that's not possible, then it'll have to go into a museum. I suppose with them. They, there's other things you can do with it, but why can't we ever owned cultural center?

Stan Headland:

You know, I mean, one big cultural center, museum, cultural center thing, and we can have all our stuff in there and date it all where it came from, photos, all that from that, every one of them little itemized relics or whatever. They might be.

Vanessa Smart:

Like a museum on the Island for Aboriginal people and run by Aboriginal people.

Stan Headland:

White fella can live with a black woman or a black family for 40 years in it, but he'll never ever understand black fellas ways. And I don't know why these textbook boys and girls think that they do. You know white girls and boys think that they do know and understand Aboriginal, stuff they don't got no idea. You know, it's ingrained in us. You know, what have they got? What has the white man got, they've lost their heritage, their culture. Right. We've still got ours and all they know is what they've learned in books and we still do it. You don't see them running around. It's funny like I was going to say with a spear trying to chase some animal down.

Yeah, I'd like to get a time machine and go back. Wouldn't that be good? I liked to, you know, sometimes I was going to like, I was going to sit there on South Perth and paint or even on, on the top of Kings Park and that and paint all at scenery as it was before the white man and have that little, you know, people down camping all around, you know, you could see little fires and everything. I still, that's been in my head for years now. I haven't got around to doing it yet, but I was going to do a great big one.

I've done this great big picture. Great big one with a scene that like a sunset and the waterfalls and everything and it's going, it's getting dark and the stars are coming out and on the side here, my mate's got an, I was going to get him to take a clear picture of it and in it to Noel Morritch, get him to send it to Noel. So I can take it out and put it in with the other one of mine. My other picture and umnd it's got the, I did it in just like a ghost of a old man.

You know, old Aboriginal with a thing, dreaming, looking down at everything and umt's uh did one like that before years ago. That's what reminded me, of I'll do one of them, put another figure head in, there like that and the other one I did years ago, I don't know what happened to that. Someone must've taken it because I called it Father Time. I gave one to me, my son and me daughter-in-law, they lived down at Kwinana. I mean Rockingham, I gave them one with the Aboriginals walking through and black fellas walking through the Bush and that. But it's um,'s more or less like after sunset sort of thing.

Vanessa Smart:

Why do you think it's important Stan to tell of the things that happened on Wadjemup?

Stan Headland:

To well because mainly come on mainly, because white people think it's, it's, it's just a recreational playground and um lot of tourists, even Australians that come, here to Perth, or even a lot of people in WA, white people in WA, , they go to Rottnest, and they know nothing about it. They don't, they got a lot of them don't even know anything about the incarceration of black fellas on Rottnest Island. So, he should have our own center. A tourist center for, u,lling them and showing them all the stuff you know like have our own artifacts, little center thing there. So tell him what's this and that. And how they made that and that and what it was made of and where, where that sort of stuff would've come from like the Ochre, and the quartz and, and um,ert and all that. And um,ere it came from, what I know they made it and all that sort of stuff. Cause a lot of these white people, they don't know nothing about it.

Vanessa Smart:

So with the Chert. How would that have been made? The little chert artifact?

Stan Headland:

Yeah. For spearheads and, and knives and cutting things.

Vanessa Smart:

You know. Do you think that when it comes to healing that there's an opportunity for that on, Wadjemup?

Stan Headland:

For healing? Oh, the hurt is pretty deep and it'll take a long time. If time heals, then how come it hasn't healed? Then it's taken us enough time gone past since the and uuthere will be all that, that stigma that, that white man's stigma thing where they don't give a shit they don't care. It's only Blackfella stuff. And umnd a lot of them, probably 20, 30, 40 years time, a lot of the white people probably wouldn't even still wouldn't even know about it, about Rottnest. Well, what happened on Rottnest? So then the healing, if that's the case it'll never heal, things like that, you know? And um,'s something that until there's a union, a proper, proper cultural human between I mean union between white and black, we know, he knows there'll be no healing.

Yeah. You know what I mean? I mean why the union by uniting, I mean by just being one person, people forget about the past and, and and, and, and live in life like we should as normal human beings. And what I mean is you know, I'm just breaking down all them barriers, you know, the white culture, black culture and, and I like, I grew up at school with nigger nigger pull the trigger and all that sort of stuff. And especially it was a lot of, especially a lot of it came from they're immigrants and sons and on the footy grounds playgrounds and in school and yeah, that stuff was still going that that'll, it'll be no healing. They, they're going to have all that sort of stuff still going on happening. Okay.

Vanessa Smart:

Do you think that you're contributing to that good side of the healing on the Island by doing your role?

Stan Headland:

Well, it's come down to progress. So if we, um, put a bit in or put our bit in, everyone puts their bit in every black fella put their bit in onto the island. And when we get over there and do well cultural thing in any sort of way, we can, then we are contributing anyway in that way. And, um, when the white man who's running the place will, um, help us progress in that way. And, um, it's you're talking to deaf ears and the, with the government, the white mans government. Government and unless they listen and take heed to what we're trying to do and say, then it will, then it will prgress into the healing towards the healing and whatever else that might come into that.

Vanessa Smart:

There were many warriors who were buried too.

Stan Headland:

Yeah. It's a lot of the leaders, lot of the leaders were the ones they got rid of because they didn't like , they'd call them troublemakers and they didn't want them to interfere with the running of the, white man's laws and stuff. And, making trouble and, why they got rid of them. And, a lot of them, they were sent on Rotto, they were wanted to incarcerate a lotta the black men, like a hundred years ago, whatever, 120, 30 years ago. They used to take a lot of the blokes away and make them go to work. So the white man, right could interfere with the women. That was a lot of the ways that they had to get rid of the black man. Either shut him up for good or put him somewhere for a while. Get the troublemakers outta the way or even just anyone so they can have the women.

Vanessa Smart:

So Rottnest Island, it's actually, it's bigger than without being dismissive of the, the people and the men that were in the prison who were buried there. It's actually bigger because what you were saying you've got, or men from across the state.

Stan Headland :

Yeah. It's, people think that. A lot of, some people think that there's it's only Noongars are buried there. Come from this one river and that whatever. Lotta them. A lot of people don't realize that they came from up north all over the state. They didn't know that. Or some of them people still don't know about it, enough about it. Why has waltz. Have got You can't tell people this and that that they've got a sign on the bottom. If we want to talk about our culture, why can't we? There's a lot of, there's a lot of, there's a lot of,ucultural awareness that should be done everywhere. I mean, it should be done on every, every workplace, every morning when you have,upre start work.

Some of the things they should say is don't forget Aboriginal culture. You've been taught done that in your, in your inductions that should be done with the inductions.

Vanessa Smart:

Like an acknowledgement to country.

Stan Headland:

Yes. Yeah.

Vanessa Smart:

Do you know how we were yarning before? Ulike the exhibition that we're doing Rottnest Island Always Was, Always Will Be, or Koora Wordel Kalygool Wordel what does that mean to you? Always Was, Always Will Be,

Well always was there. As in a Hill before the ocean's rose and it'll always be there for probably won't always be there. I mean, I'm talking to probably in a million years time it'll probably be gone flat. Yeah. the ocean's probably gone back out there somewhere. And or it might get bigger or it might just disappear in the water. So that way I can see it might not



always be there, always was always will be, you know what I mean? But how long it's been there as an Island. I mean as a before the ocean rose, it was a big Hill. And apparently there was three or four ice ages over the million years or whatever. So, so how long it would have been an Island? Three or four times.

Vanessa Smart:

Would you like to see happen if you could say "this is what I'd like to happen".

Stan Headland:

In what way?

Vanessa Smart:

In the way for Aboriginal people for the Island,

Stan Headland:

Like we'd like to take it back and make it our Island and, and look after it because of the people buried there. And because white people they don't give a stuff about that, all they want to do is make money and that's all the government is doing. And the government are not looking after it. The only, Only proper. The only way it will be properly looked after is we do it ourselves because we know we have, that's the connection we have.

Vanessa Smart:

Is there anything further you want to say?

Stan Headland:

Not really. No. it was good. You know, having this little discussion and and I hope all the other boys and girls there. What do you call it helped you and it's a lot more we've got to learn yet. You never stop learning until you die um, there's a lot more I want to do

My grandkids are getting bigger than that. I'm going to take them out, do some more camping and stuff with them. Start showing them and teaching them a bit more. Yeah.