Yah – na noye - greetings

I am Julie Dunlop

I wish you to acknowledge that you are on Aboriginal land today, always has been and always will be Aboriginal land. I pay respect to my Elders who have passed before me, and to those still present with me today, a special welcome to Auntie Patsy Cameron , family of the great warrior Managalenna who sought a treaty for our people which has never been honoured. To our 4 Nations of people of Hobart and South. These being the Lylue–quonny people way down south as far as Recherché bay, the Nuenone people of Bruny Island which is where our very own truganinni lived at black lagoon – the mouheneene people of Hobart and surrounding areas and finally the people on who’s land we all stand today the Melukerdee people of the Huon Valley.

A very big Welcome today to our Premier, the Honourable Mr Will Hodgman and to Mr Roger yench Minister for many portfolios but here today wearing his Minister for Aboriginal Affairs hat. We are delighted Gentleman that you could share with us today this special occasion of our very 1st Ballawinne Festival and I will shortly invite Mr Hodgman to officially open our festival.

Today we share some of our culture with you and we very proudly welcome to Tasmania Mr Bruce Pascoe.

Bruce is a writer who comes from Tasmanian, Bunurong and Yuin background.

His book Dark Emu has turned established history on its head. To distract from the obvious truth of the book and its social and political impact we see media from those who wish to deny Aboriginal people their rightful place in Australian society. They do this by attacking the man and not his work. Their attack on his Aboriginality comes while Bruce was fighting fires, saving lives and homes in his community. They wrote that he could not be contacted on his phone or his email for 8 days and he had no comment – They possibly may have thought you were holidaying in Hawaii Bruce.

The media are currently attacking an Australian hero not an Australian Aboriginal

We as Tasmanian Aboriginals experience the denial of our identity on a regular basis and we understand the torments associated with this so We are today privileged and honoured Bruce, that you are able to join us for our very first Ballawinne festival given the horrific situation you have recently faced with our country on fire. We are extremely grateful for your presence at our festival and wish you and your community all the best on your long journey to recovery. We also welcome you today as an Aboriginal man to the country of the Melukerdee people.

Ballawinne is the Aboriginal name for red ochre. Ballawinne is an ochre used for celebration. It is referred to as black mans gold. It was not shared or traded as were other ochres - It was used only for important ceremony such as marriages, births and deaths. Ballawinne has great spiritual meaning to our people.

Unlike Ballawinne the ochre we intend today to share Ballawinne the festival with as many people as possible.

I recall some of my earliest memories as a small child of about 4 or 5 and my grandmother Florence Cowen taking me on what I recalled to be a very long walk to collect this substance she called whitening. She carried 2 old paint tins and hand in hand, watching out for snakes, we would set off into the bush. We would get to this place after what seemed to be a really long time and there in the bank was her whitening. I now know the place was a quarry. She would fill up her paint tins with the sticky substance one white and one orange and back home we would go. This is where it got exciting for me. When we arrived back home grandma would take some of the sticky substance and mix it with a little water and let me paint the big old dirty black fireplace and hob. The white for inside the fireplace and the red for the hob.

It wasn’t until years later that I was introduced to an ochre quarry where I found some whitening. It was only then that I realized that what we had been collecting all those years was ochre. I held that ochre in my hand, closed my eyes and I was right back there 60 years ago with my grandma collecting ochre to clean the fire place. I have searched the property many times since that day but I cant find the quarry now. Perhaps my walk was shorter than I perceived as a child. Perhaps it was longer - the quarry it seems it is no longer there.

However things are not always as they seem. I believe the quarry still exists, its still there - it just exists now under different conditions. Very much like our people. We exist but our existence is dominated by a different and sometimes dangerous culture. After invasion and the devastating black war where many of our people died, like the ochre quarry we began to disguise ourselves or hide from this dangerous existence purely to save oneself. I believe that one day the quarry will reveal itself again in all its splendour but only when the world deserves it, has earned it and can take care of it.

The quarry may look different on its return but it will still be ochre. Don’t judge – Aboriginal people continue to be judged at every turn – especially the color of our skin, There is an old saying – you can take the boy out of the country – but you will never take the country out of the boy. Same deal people – you can take the black from our skin – but you will never take it from our hearts.

Aboriginal people will not wait another 200 years to come out of hiding. Today our once silent generations are not so silent - we do have a voice and we will be heard.

When our country was invaded – and it was an invasion people – it was not a settlement and it was not a discovery as stated in our history and still disgracefully taught to our children today – it was an invasion and with that invasion our voices were silenced. Not being able to understand the language of this new dominant culture not only silenced us – it controlled us. Our voices have been a mere whisper for in excess of 200 years.

We are the sovereign owners of this country - there has been no treaty with us that has ever been honoured

WE HAVE NEVER CEDED OUR SOVERENTY.

Captain Cook declared the legal lie that our land was terra nullius, a wasteland and unoccupied. Our humanity was denied, the truth is that cultural and physical genocide was attempted against us and yes the land was made vacant as they rounded up our people like their sheep and their cows and placed them in concentration camps they liked to call Aboriginal missions where most of our people died and so began the historical lie that Australia was peacefully settled.

Cook was a liar and still today only a few weeks ago a little boy came home from school and his grandma (one of our staff members) asked him what he had learned that day. His reply – bless his little heart was I learned all about Captain Cook today grandma and how he discovered Australia. He was 6 years old in a local school.

What we instill in our children from their early learning years becomes their truth. They trust in the adults they learn from. What they are taught today cultivates their ideas and influences their little moral compass for life. These children will one day be our leaders, They must be educated with the truth – both good and bad. You tell yourself – but I am sure they are. I am sure my child is today at school being taught the truth. You might want to check that with your childs teachers what they actually believe themselves to be the truth and what they are teaching your child.

Today people we still have a long road to travel but unlike the ochre quarry we will not hide.

There are still many injustices toward our people and the battle wont be over until the day we can all walk hand in hand together as one in harmony and peace on this beautiful country we all call home.

Only when the truth is told can we heal.. Only when our voices are acknowledged, and our truth is accepted can we move forward in the name of reconciliation – today is a great day to begin your acceptance and support of your country’s first people.

Thank you to Reconciliation Tas and our sponsors – Ballawinne couldn’t of happened without you.

As I mentioned earlier issues of identity for Aboriginal people in Tasmania are complicated and much due to lack of education. What you are about to hear is the result of taking kids on country and encouraging them to embrace their culture and be who they really are. Please welcome Tom with a poem of his experience on country.

**On the Shores of Truganini’s Lagoon – by Tom Clark after a cultural workshop**

**Today we meet on Aboriginal Land – Our Land.**

**Honouring our Ancestors.**

**Singing song in melukadee language**

**Listening to stories of the past.**

**We feel confused, sad and physically sick**

**Thinking about the horrifying**

**Things that Our People endured.**

**Will the trauma of the past be too heavy for us to bear?**

**The thought of it is terrifying!**

**Yet, here we are – Our Community.**

**Watching the black swans drift peacefully through shards of sunlight.**

**As we stand together**

**On the shores of Truganini’s Lagoon.**

**We look around- all of us together**

**Connected by who we are-**

**Aboriginal People.**

**Pride and passion fill our hearts.**

**Us young ones are the future.**

**Feeling lucky to be at Home-**

**Our Courage and strong spirit will forever connect us-**

**To each other**

**To our Ancestors**

**Our hearts are full of pride and gratitude.**