



JOURNEY OF THE EAGLEHAWKS

Eastern Eaglehawks all Aboriginal football team



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A group of wonderful young Aboriginal men came together to play football at a Reconciliation Sports Carnival. A great day of sporting, social and cultural exchange where the crowd enjoys food and music and watching the boys play the sport they love.

Lots of laughter and conversations punctuate a positive day that celebrates what it means to be a community. However, at the end of each Reconciliation Carnival, with all its camaraderie and goodwill there was a certain sadness that there wasn't more to go on with, that there wasn't a continuation of the day, or the opportunity for the young men to display their amazing sporting talent.

The Elders and community leaders involved in the day realised that they wanted to assist these players to go on to the full successful lives that they deserved. From this point, the Eaglehawk Football Team was developed. Today, we are excited to see the establishment of a great football side who will bring tough competition to those they play against.

The Eaglehawks will have access to mentors and role models, a range of personal development opportunities, skills development and training to employment pathways whilst continuing their love of football.



EAGLEHAWKS COMMUNITY MEETING

Tuesday July 15 – Korin Gamdji Institute, Richmond Football Club

The Eastern Metropolitan Regional Justice Advisory Committee (RAJAC) Regional Justice Plan, priority actions includes “Develop local community education and sporting events to support community strengthening and tackle under-age drinking and community attitudes as a risk factor.”

The Eaglehawks Community Meeting was convened by Worawa Aboriginal College as a follow up to the successful Reconciliation Sports Carnival held at the College where young men expressed aspirations for the establishment of an all Aboriginal football team in the Eastern Region. The meeting was held at the Korin Gamdji Institute and was facilitated by Tim Kanoa.

Who did we have in the Room?

- Trish Curtis, Upper Yarra Community College
- Stephen Noy, Community Engagement Inspector, Victoria Police
- Greg Kennedy, State Coordinator, Koorie Youth Council
- Steve Teakel, AFL Victoria Coaching Development Manager AFL Victoria
- Neville Nash, Umpiring Development Manager, AFL Victoria
- Aaron Clarke, Indigenous Programs Manager AFL Victoria
- Tyson Briggs, Player, Community Member
- Luke Issaccs, Local Indigenous Network Broker, Office of Aboriginal Affairs VIC
- Wally Harrison, Men’s worker, Ngwala Willumbong
- Dwayne Tennyson, Worawa Student (past), Community Member, Player
- Olly Philips, DHS, Centreline Medicare, Supporter
- Uncle Rod Briggs, Community Member
- Aunty Karen Briggs, Community Member
- Aunty Lois Peeler, Worawa College, Community Member
- Tom Bell, RAJAC EO Eastern
- Tim Kanoa, RAJAC EO Southern

What Programs and Initiatives Already Exist

- Game development in Victoria, AFL Victoria, Coaching courses and Umpiring Certification
- Eastern Football League
– 2 Football Development Officers
- Indigenous, Multicultural Initiatives
- Worawa College – Sports Academy
– infrastructure Grounds, Facilities
- Local Football Clubs
- Upper Yarra Community College – RTO, Training

What do the Community Want for our Youth

- Ongoing Supports for programs and after programs have finished
- Opportunity through sporting, education and life skills
- Education / training
- Employment Pathways
- Purpose and Inspiration
- Community want future Leaders and Mentors
- Positive Identity
- A Voice
- Connectedness
- Cultural Unity
- Aboriginality Acknowledgement

What were the outcomes of the meeting?

- Three other players / community members joined the group.
- There was considerable discussion on sport and desire for employment opportunities, diversionary measures. The boys spoke strongly about the need for employment and training pathways.



JOURNEY OF THE EAGLEHAWKS, JOURNEY OF ONE'S SELF

Development of an all-Aboriginal team provides a platform to engage the young men in their love of football and opportunity to demonstrate their athleticism.

It will build self esteem and greatly assist in building strong affirmation and appreciation of culture through Elder, family and community involvement and strong role models. The young men recognise football as a means of attracting other young men to be involved, with the development of a range of personal development activities, employment pathways and training activities that flow out from that.

Boys Commitment

- Work Placements
- Jobs with accredited programs and certificates
- Clear Pathways for employment
- Umpire Training Skills
- Coaching courses with AFL Victoria

Controlling Your Destiny

- Identify your goals. Goal setting
- Making your own choices (the Right Choices)
- Choices, Balance, between Community and Family
- Options, Opportunities
- Leading the Way (Being in control)
- Don't Give up
- Learn from your mistakes
- Courage
- Hard work, Dedication, Sacrifice, Commitment

What is your purpose?

- Footy
- Pre Season Boot Camp
- Fitness
- Training
- Invitationals
- Looking after your body

Individual

- Culture + Elders
- Purpose
- Warrior Within
- Cultural values
- Enhancing Self Discipline
- Taking on Responsibility
- Spirituality + Daily Life
- Team Building
- Plan + Individual Goals
- Direction leading to Employment







THE EAGLEHAWKS: MORE THAN JUST A FOOTY CLUB

The Eaglehawks is more than another football program.

For many young men football is an important 'rite of passage.'

This program takes a holistic approach in supporting young men to make a healthy transition into adulthood. Through engaging the 'warrior within' and through cultural strengthening and cultural guidance from Elders young men are challenged to be all they can be and to be proud of who they are. By recognising the spiritual realm and connecting it with daily life the budding footballers are led to a healthy understanding of their cultural values and responsibilities in all the roles they hold, and all the roles they will hold in the future.

Through understanding responsible stewardship of the land, waters and community, enhancing personal responsibility and self-discipline, each participant in the Eaglehawks program is challenged by the pathways available to them. The privilege of representing Eaglehawks at special events and meeting with Indigenous role models, motivational speakers and mentors is the impetus and conduit for the delivery of the high goals and outcomes undertaken by the Eaglehawks leadership.

A unique aspect of the Eaglehawks program is the personal development and skills training for future employment options offered through short-term pre-accredited and accredited training with portable units. Boot camp offers team building and focus on short and long term goal setting and technical skills development. Technical skills are honed under the direction of an experienced and passionate coach. Invitational games against Koori teams and leading schools with a high football profile will sharpen and test the participants in the sport that attracts and interests them.

The Eaglehawks concept is an attractional model of engagement. Young men are, for the most part, interested in being involved in football. Through the use of this interest a team of Elders and community experts aim to develop more than just young sportsmen, they envisage challenging, directing and nurturing the next generation of partners, fathers, workers and leaders. Eaglehawks exists to grow and establish whole and healthy Aboriginal men who can in turn lead in the future.





EASTERN EAGLEHAWKS: THE BEST OF THE BEST

by Anita Heiss, Epic Good Foundation

“The best of the best!” is how Tyson Briggs describes the Eastern Eaglehawks all Aboriginal football team, the newest sporting group in Victoria that is making waves in the Koorie community.

Tyson has a central role in coordinating the team of young men who love their footy but also have their eye firmly on the future. The Eaglehawks footy team has its roots in the aspirations expressed by a number of young men who participated in the Reconciliation Sports Carnival held at Worawa Aboriginal College in early 2014, about establishing an all-Aboriginal football team in the Eastern Region.

Twelve months later a few of the Eaglehawks are in the Grand Suite of the MCG about to watch Hawthorn take on Essendon. The young men appear more excited about the future of their own team than the game they are there to watch. And who can blame them?

On the day, Tyson is joined by team members Daen Ellis (18) a trainee carpenter, and skilled dancer, Dwayne Tennyson (20) who works part time and plays footy simply because he loves it; and Cory Glass, whose current job is to build glass houses to grow spinach, and who most consider ‘star’ of the team. They talk fondly and with thanks about their mentors Tom Bell and Stewart Thomson and there is no question in their minds in terms of how talented the team is.

Even though the boys have arrived at the game in swanky suits, it’s their new footy guernsey – featuring an eagle hawk in Koorie colours, and Hawthorn’s brown and gold – that they are dying to wear. The artwork incorporates Aboriginal designs from students of Worawa Aboriginal College. With pride they show an illustration of their guernsey to other guests in the suite: Olympian Kyle Vander Kuyp, sports writer Martin Flanagan, and hosts Cathie Reid and Stuart Giles, who have made the day possible and are supporting the development of the Eaglehawks team.

It is the goodwill and donation Cathie and Stuart have made through their Epic Good Foundation to the Hawthorn Indigenous Program (HIP), that will build the future the lads want to see for their team and themselves.

Epic Good has donated \$1 million over five years to the HIP, which has a comprehensive strategy to achieve a number of outcomes. One of which is to provide support for young talented men who play for the Eaglehawks with access to training, personal development, cultural strengthening and mentoring.

Lois Peeler is Chair of the Eastern RAJAC and has been part of the development of the Eaglehawks since inception, organising a community meeting at the Richmond Club in June 2014. She said. “The young men love their football, and are very keen to play, but they have clearly expressed their wish to gain skills that would lead to work and their interest and need to connect to their cultural identity, community leaders and mentors.

Lois notes that it is not just the financial backing the team requires and receives but the personal support also. “They’re wonderful young men, but the support provided to them by Uncle Rod and Aunty Karen, not only morally but practically in terms of providing a bed if needed, transport to training and games and also pushes them to the success they are seeing in their lives now,” she says.

“Football is our roots, our lives. It’s in our hearts. It’s what keeps us connected,” Daen says passionately, adding “But the opportunity here is also about helping our kids through hardship and getting a better education. What we all strive for is a better future.”



Dwayne echoes the personal role the Eagles play in his life saying, "The team is about being positive. I enjoy having a laugh with our brother boys on the field too. It also provides a way for those who miss the Take Up system, who are not on the radar of the bigger clubs to get noticed. So, at least there are opportunities now for young people who want to give it a go." He is quick to add that it's bigger than footy. "And it's not just about football, it's about health and employment opportunities as well."

For Cory, the answer to "Why the Eagles?" is simple: "My whole life revolves around football. It's natural for me."

The HIP officially provides for Shaun Burgoyne as an Ambassador attending the Worawa Cultural Camp and participating in the Worawa Reconciliation Sports Carnival among other roles. Cyril Rioli and Bradley Hill are also shining stars for the Eagles, especially Cory Glass who says of his own personal attachment to football, "It means a lot when I play. When I get a chance to play around brother boys – it feels good. I like to play like Cyril and be fast like Cyril."

Following this year's Reconciliation Match Bradley Hill spoke to the lads. It was a moment these young men appreciated as young Koorie players.

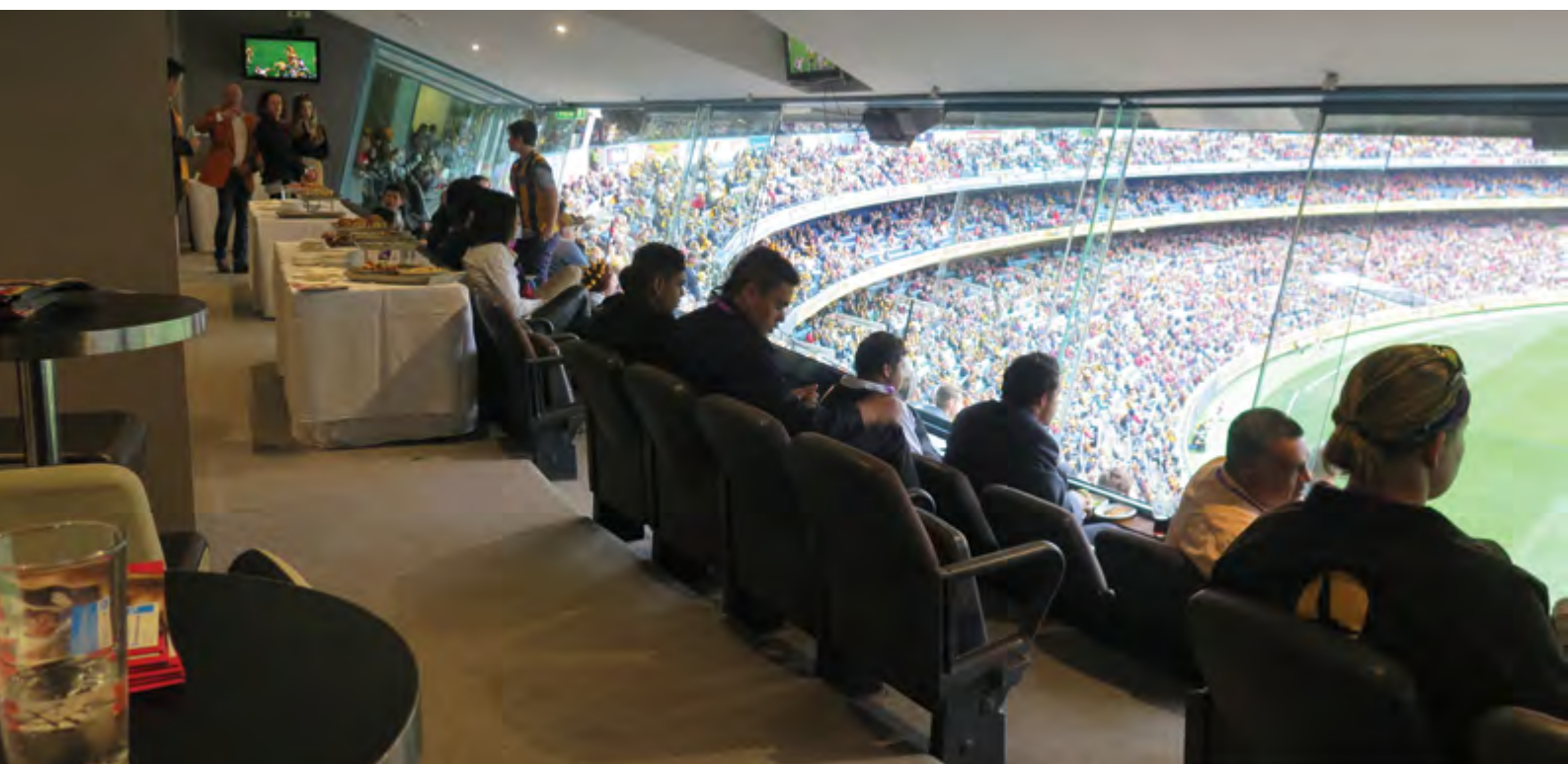
"When Hilly spoke to us, he spoke as if he was one of the cousins, like he was one of the mob, so we connected with him," Daen recalls.

Dwayne agrees saying Hilly provided hope and inspiration, "He told us a lot about his life, about the struggle points for young people, and yet he's made it."

This direct connection and accessibility to Indigenous players makes a difference to the pathways of young men, and it's one of the strategies acknowledged as successful by Leon Egan, the Program Manager for Indigenous Education at AFL Sports Ready. Leon played for HFC under 19s in the late 1980s, and he considers the greatest gift

of the HIP being, "The significant impact it has by giving young people access to HFC players." He adds, "Cultural awareness training of staff and players also means the club has a greater understanding of who we are therefore making it an accessible place not just for players but for all community."

At the end of the day Hawthorn have won the game and the Eagles have won a room full of fans. Their excitement about their games ahead and the opportunities they see their team providing not only young Koories but to non-Indigenous Australians wanting to learn, is infectious and will carry them in good stead on and off the field.





FLYING AHEAD IN SEASON 2015

SPREADING OUR WINGS

Through community meetings five initiatives were set to shape the Eaglehawks

INITIATIVE 1:

Form an Indigenous Football Team in the Eastern Region

- This is the key engagement mechanism for getting the boys involved – they love the footy and want to play
- It will actively encourage and recruit boys who don't get picked by the local football clubs for various reasons, including behavioural
- As well as learning the technical skills of football, the formation of the team will encourage:
 - Physical activity and fitness
 - Team development
 - Self-discipline and motivation
 - Leadership and mentoring

INITIATIVE 2:

Leadership in Football

Through a partnership with AFL Victoria, the young men will be able to train as umpires and coaches, developing skill such as:

- Conflict resolution
- Teamwork
- Communication skills
- Anger management
- Decision making
- Confidence and self-esteem
- Respect of and from others
- Leadership

This will give them the opportunity to remain involved with the game, contribute to the ongoing development of the game and the team, and maybe even earn an income.

INITIATIVE 3:

Cultural Camp

To strengthen and enhance the young men's personal cultural base, and aim to provide each person with a strong sense of purpose and responsibility.

Activity will include:

- Elder leadership
- Developing the Warrior Within
- Cultural values and traditional practice
- Self-discipline and personal responsibility
- Recognising the spiritual realm
- Connecting the spiritual to daily life (mentally, physically, spiritually)
- Understanding responsible stewardship of the land, waters and community
- Challenging experiences to build resilience



INITIATIVE 4: Goal setting and identifying direction

- Develop short and long-term goals
- Develop a purpose, vision and mindset, and an appreciation of their legacy
- Plan their dreams
- Focus on self-improvement and individual goals
- Build a healthy lifestyle and close connections with those close to them
- The football team will develop team goals, and include:
 - Playing invitational matches
 - Health and fitness checks and programs
 - Skills tests
 - Regular training

INITIATIVE 5: Pathways to Employment

- Education and training programs that are based around the goals identified by the individual young men, and include quality work experiences and placements
- A mentoring relationship that will assist the young men to stay connected with their training and/or employment and work toward sustainability
- Practical programs that assist with employment pathways, such as obtaining a driver's licence
- Pre-accredited programs that provide vocational pathways into complete courses
- Training delivered on-site and through distance/online learning
- Building relationships with local business and industry to develop sustainable and supported employment pathways
- Project-based community activity that has a strong cultural basis and develops pathways into employment and helps to develop connections with the broader community





Supported by the Eastern Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee (RAJAC)

