

# Project 3 Gumadagu Gurang, Place of the Ancestors

Presentation by Leanne Tobin and Leanne Watson,



The ASKAP telescope array is spread across the Australian Outback  
(Credit: Alex Cherney/ CSIRO)

“The sky is an integral part of the environment, and so many dreaming stories involve the sky as well as the land....In particular, creator spirits often move between the Earth and sky, and so stories about them often have a sky component.”

*Ray Norris Astrophysicist , CSIRO*

*From 'A Guide to Aboriginal Astronomy' by Angela Heathcote July 13 2017*  
<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/science-environment/2017/07/a-guide-to-aboriginal-astronomy/>

For Aboriginal people throughout Australia, the sky and the earth are intricately linked and provide the guiding maps that allow seasonal safe travel across country for thousands of years.

When looking up at the night sky, our Old People would read the stars to navigate the land when travelling for ceremony and trading. From the moving constellations, they also gleaned knowledge about seasonal changes back on country. This ancient knowledge ensured their long term survival and was interpreted as stories and songlines that were passed on throughout the generations.

The Dharug people from the Greater Sydney region, through ceremonies shared night sky stories with many other Aboriginal nations and some of the star stories such as the Seven Sisters story (Pleiades constellation) have songlines that are shared right across Australia and beyond.

Pleiades Messier 45 by Keesscherer, 2016



## Concept Design

'Home of the Ancestors' depicts Dharug beliefs and stories of the night sky. The stars are the twinkling of the various campfires of the Ancestors as they go about their daily lives; a reflection of life on earth.

*Both artworks include motif work from Dharug artists Aunty Edna Watson, Leanne Watson, Bundaluk Watson, Chris Tobin and Leanne Tobin.*

*Astronomy input has been provided by Professor Ray Norris (Western Sydney University and CSIRO Astrophysicist)*



## Gumadagu Gurang (Place of the Ancestors)

This artwork combines many Dharug sky stories. The Seven Sisters are represented as blue dotted circles. The Milky Way runs across the image, encompassing the many sacred paths of Creator-spirits.





Gumadagu Gurang/ Place of the Ancestors



# Gumadagu Gurang (Place of the Ancestors)

The movement of the constellations provided a celestial map, informing the people of the movements of animals and plants on country. An example of this can be seen in the centre where the shadow of a dark emu lies. The position of this emu throughout a calendar year, provides seasonal advice as to the movement of emu; when to collect eggs and when to hunt.

The importance of the emu is evident in the many emu engravings found on rock outcrops throughout Dharug country and is an important songline to the Dharug people.





The everyday lives of the Dharug living on country can be seen in this artwork with men and women hunting, fishing and gathering. Star children (child spirits) fall as shooting stars to Earth, where they lie in wait on the land; in the waters, rocks and trees for their mother: the moment of conception. The cycle continues as the star children upon coming to Earth, live their lives and then return to the stars upon death.

