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VicForests helps Solomon Family immortalise their history

VicForests' Community Support Program has assisted the Nindi-Ngujarn Ngarigo Monero Aboriginal Corporation capture the history of one of the most well-known Indigenous families in East Gippsland.

The project will document the history of the Solomon family who have managed to stay as a group during the time when indigenous people were relocated to missions such as Lake Tyers. Many of the Solomon family still live in and around Orbost and their family line remains strong.

Doris Paton, who is managing the project, said: "It is a great opportunity to document this as a living memory of the Solomon men and women Elders who grew up in Orbost. It is an important contribution to the local story of the area".

Ms Paton said the group was appreciative of the assistance the Community Support Program has provided and what that means for the project.

"Staff at VicForests' Orbost office provided me with information about the grant opportunity. I thought it would be a great opportunity to document the connection Aboriginal people had living in the bark huts at and around Orbost.

The Community Support grant awarded to us by VicForests allows us to return to the area to follow up on gathering information, collecting stories and collation of the various pieces of the story."

Speaking about the background to the project Doris explained: "The Solomon Family lived in the Orbost region for a long time and participated in farm work, logging, timber industry, housekeeping, vegetable growing and many other local activities. This family is still in the memory of many people who remember them living in the region.

"The project will include the Aboriginal connection to the timber industry. It is an important part of the Orbost story.

"Many Aboriginal men and women worked in the area particularly in the timber industry, in forestry, cutting sleepers, felling trees and with the timber mills.

"My father was a 'gun' lever man in the mill at Club Terrace. Many Aboriginal families lived and worked in the mills that provided free housing and plenty of work. Aboriginal men were valued workers in the industry," said Ms Paton.

Now in its fifth year, the VicForests' Community Support Program has provided over \$260,000 to a wide range of groups and across the respective regions as well as a number of in-kind donations.

The Community Support Program assists organisations that contribute to the wellbeing of local communities by providing grants of up to \$2,000 to charity groups, sporting groups, educational and community groups located across the Central Highlands, Gippsland and East Gippsland.

The Victorian forestry industry plays a key role in building and supporting rural and regional communities through its business activities and by sponsoring local community events and activities.

VicForests is committed to assisting the development of Indigenous communities through its Community Support Program as well as through employment and training opportunities and a number of in-kind and ad hoc donations to different projects.

VicForests respects the history of the land it works on and looks to Indigenous communities for guidance and expertise on a range of matters such as ensuring indigenous cultural sites of significance are protected from timber harvesting operations.