

# Gidja Walker

On Bush Regeneration  
Art, Culture and the  
Sharing of Knowledge

Photostory Laura Brearley

Artworks Gidja Walker

Photography Terry Melvin and Laura Brearley







We honour the beautiful Bunurong/Boonwurrung Country, and we thank the Ancestors who have cared for this Country for tens of thousands of years.

We recognise the wisdom of First Nation Peoples here and across the world who have taught us the importance of being in relationship with Country and caring for the Living World.



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Gidja Walker is an  
Ecologist, Educator and Artist

wEdu





Here are some insights from Gidja Walker about bush regeneration, art-making, culture and learning and the links between them ...

I work as an ecologist and  
have a lot of interest in art.  
I see the two as very similar.

They're both based in observation.









Things change over time.

Landscapes are living, dynamic places.





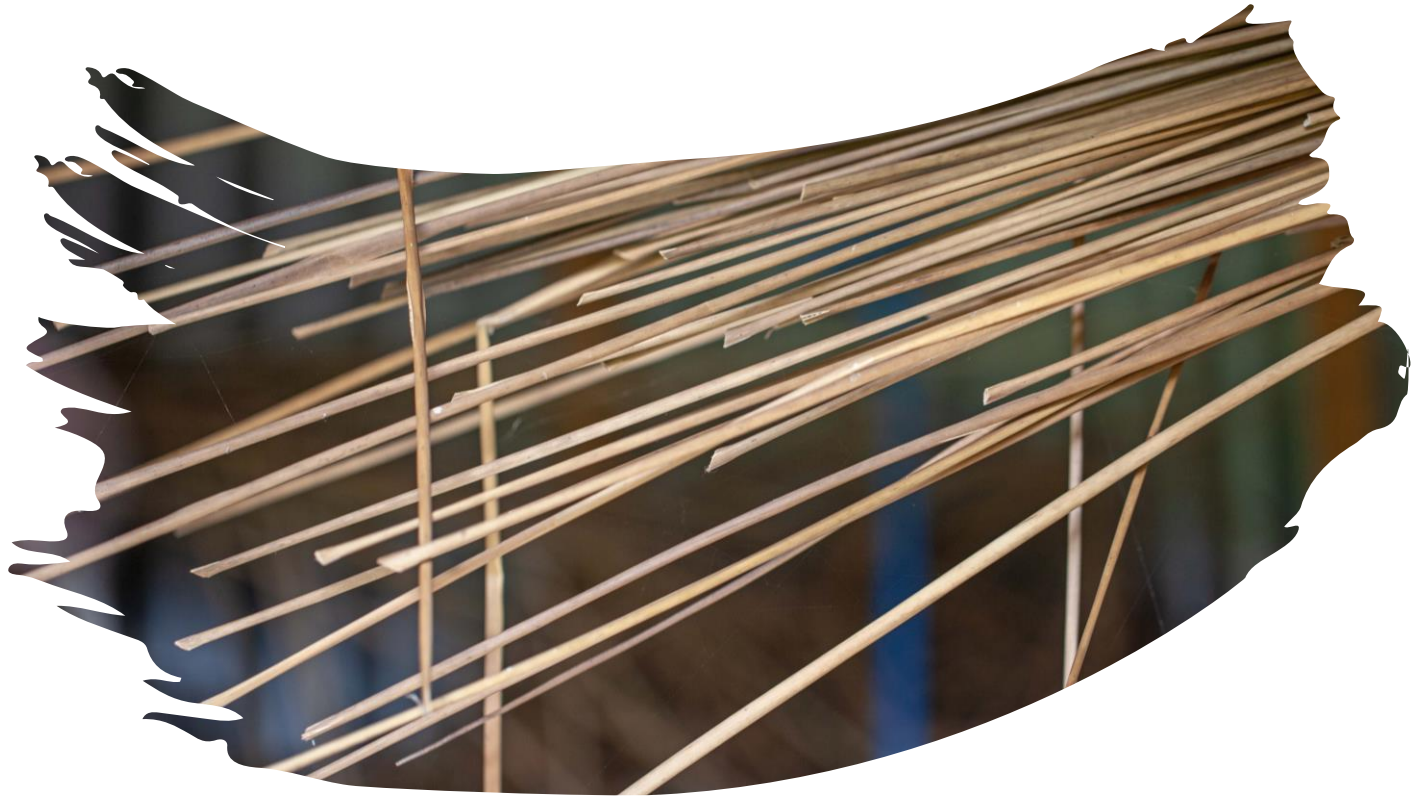


In terms of ecology and knowledge,  
the more you learn, the less you know.

I used to be quite secure in the  
knowledge I have, but things come along  
and show that things aren't that simple.

If you're not learning you're dead.  
I'll continue learning.





I've spent a lot of time surveying Saltmarsh, Alpine Grasslands, Western Grasslands and coastal areas. I've also done quite a bit of fire ecology.

I've spent most of my time on the Mornington Peninsula, the Bellarine Peninsula, Phillip Island, up on the Monaro High Plains and around Lake Eyre South.





In terms of my art practice,  
I work in painting, mosaic  
and papermaking.

A lot of my art work is  
based in nature.





I've found that young people  
really like being outside and  
connecting with nature.

Some people have lost  
that connection.

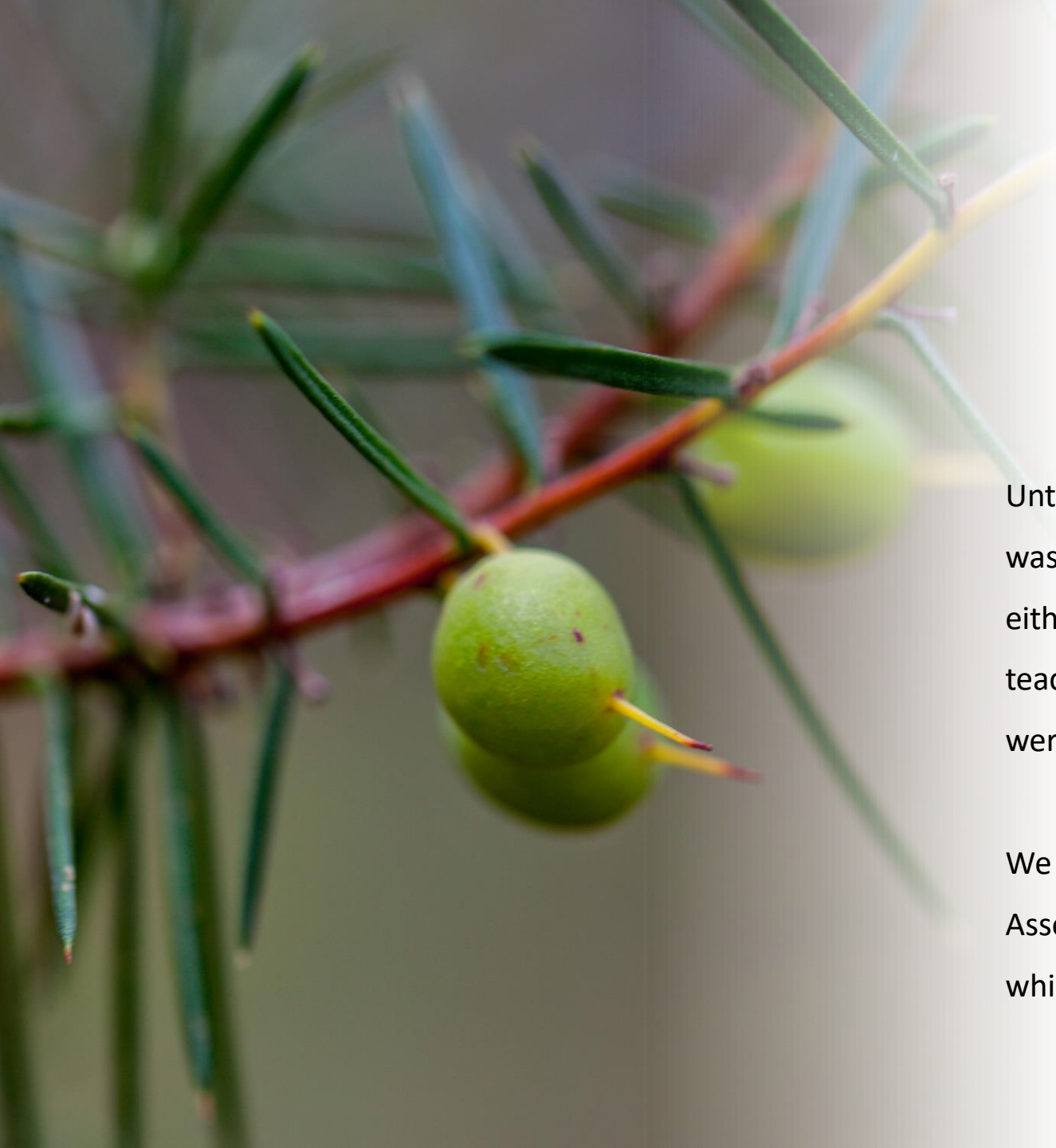




Young people are living in a totally different world. They're so much better at technology and mapping.

Things that used to take a lot of my time can be done a lot more quickly now. You can spend time doing other things.





Until recently bush regeneration wasn't actually a job. We were either classed as foresters, teachers or gardeners and there weren't the TAFE courses.

We are setting up the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators which will be good for that.

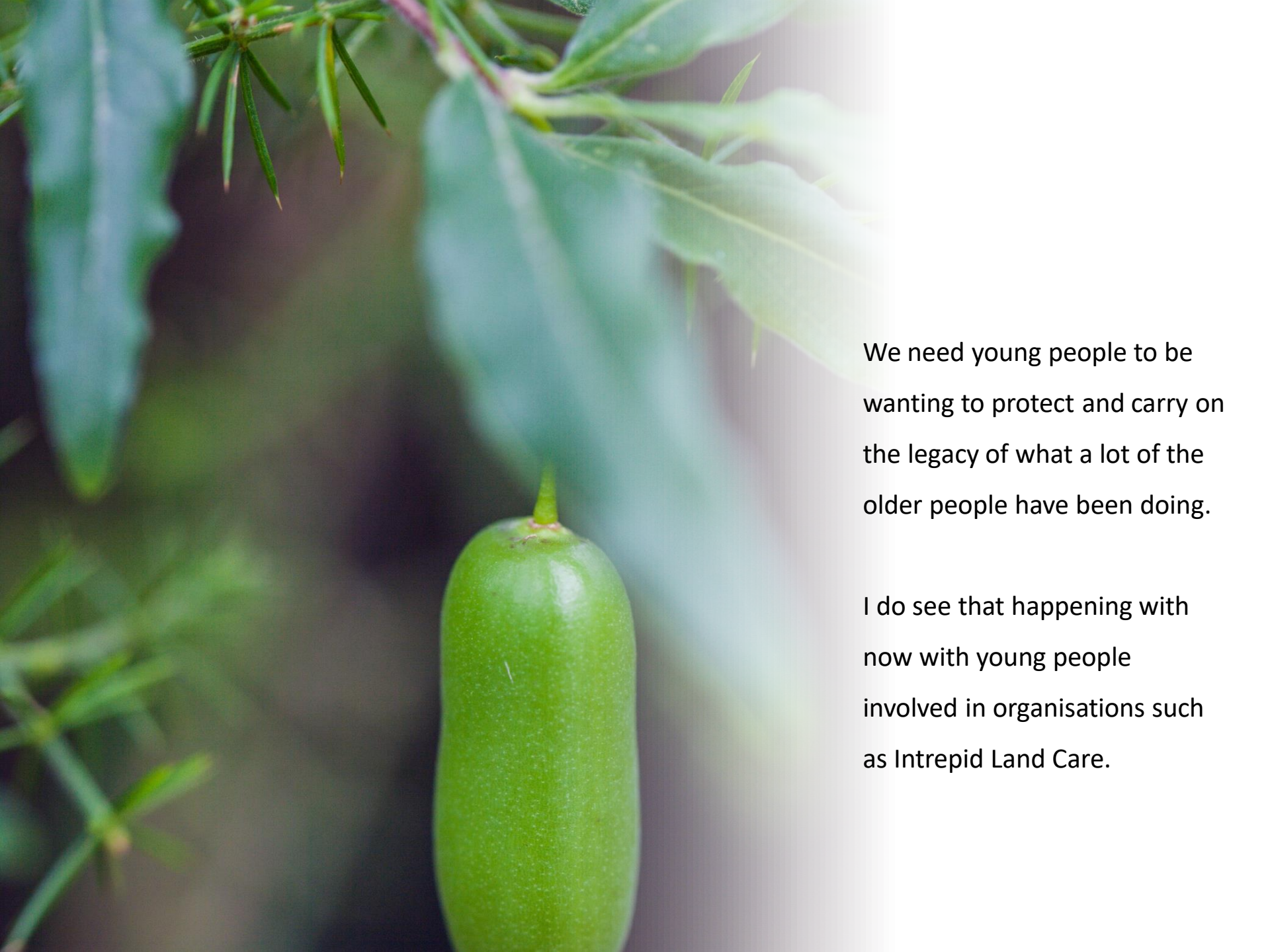
There are a lot of jobs involved in natural systems management and some of that requires interpretation like art work.











We need young people to be wanting to protect and carry on the legacy of what a lot of the older people have been doing.

I do see that happening with now with young people involved in organisations such as Intrepid Land Care.





I think mixing creativity, art and nature together is an easy natural alliance.

I've learnt how to identify reeds by making string.

Some grasses are rough, some are smooth, some are hollow  
but you don't know that until you're actually feeling them.







When you are making or creating something, you're looking at it from the other side of the brain and that gives you a different suite of solutions.





First Nations people inform everything. I learnt at a very early age that we hadn't been taught what had really gone down. I knew it was a hidden history and it didn't make sense to me. I felt quite confused by it.



I first became involved with First Nations people at the Koorie Information Centre, through Robbie Thorpe, Gary Foley and Aunty Alma Thorpe. The whole Thorpe family actually taught me a lot over the years. A lot of my early knowledge about plant usage and reading the land came from spending time with Bea Edwards (Nambooka) on Bunurong Country (Mornington Peninsula).

Those lessons have stayed with me.











At this stage of my life,  
I don't want to waste time.  
There's a lot of stuff I know  
and I have got to have  
someone to pass that on to.

I'm a visual and an oral person.  
It goes with the territory really.

It makes a more creative way of  
expressing and explaining, and  
through doing it.







Working with people and showing them is a far better way.

People don't necessarily want to learn in the same ways that were used to in the past.

Hands-on learning and through storytelling and art is a far better way to retain knowledge.





With deep thanks  
to Gidja Walker for  
her generosity and  
for her skills in passing  
on knowledge and wisdom.