

A MESSAGE STICK is a form of communication traditionally used by Indigenous Australians. It is usually a solid piece of wood, around 20–30 centimetres in length, etched with angular lines and dots. It is considered a form of proto writing. Message Sticks are often commonly called letters by Aboriginal people.



NAIDOC Message Stick from Army's Indigenous Elder

Yura Everyone, (*Hello in my native language*)

I send my fondest regards & warmest of wishes to you and your loved ones. I want to take this opportunity to also thank you all, for your sacrifice, dedicated service, & the inspirational example you set for us all. It is with immense pride I pass these sincere & heartfelt thanks to you all, given when I am visiting Communities, this is something that is continually echoed to me. Without doubt, I can only imagine this year has turned into a blur for you all, given the increased operational tempo & support you have been called upon to carry out domestically, in addition to all of your other commitments, to which I know there are many. No doubt you will all agree it has been a year of constant change. Speaking of change, you may be aware of the changes to NAIDOC Week, which is usually celebrated in July each year. However, this year the celebrations have been moved to 8-15 Nov, so as you can see it runs during another incredibly special commemorative day for us all, Remembrance Day.

NAIDOC stands for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee. Its origins can be traced to the emergence of Aboriginal groups in the 1920's which sought to increase awareness in the wider community of the status and treatment of First Nations Peoples. **NAIDOC Week** is recognised Nationally & is conducted to celebrate the history, culture, & achievements of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is important to note that NAIDOC Week is intended to be celebrated by **all Australians from all walks of life**. After all, we are all proud Australians. Each year there is a NAIDOC Week theme, & this year's theme acknowledges that hundreds of Nations and Indigenous cultures covered this continent, whom all were managing the land to provide for the future. 2020 is titled *Always Was, Always Will Be*. It reinforces the profound spiritual connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land & sea. In fact, spiritually Indigenous Peoples belong to the land & mother earth, as she does not belong to anyone.

First Nations Peoples have a long and rich history with the Army, which continues today, bonded by our passion for this Country, as we stand together committed to reconciliation and 'Closing the Gap' by maintaining strong connections with Indigenous communities.

In closing, I urge you to explore what is happening in your community during the NAIDOC week, and consider being involved or simply to visit an event. There are many ways to do this. I also challenge you "Mob" please, to seek permission to do something within your units, to celebrate culture amongst your fellow soldiers. In closing, & as always, I sincerely thank you all for your ongoing service.

Yuwayi, *Aunty Lorraine*

Lorraine Hatton, OAM – indigenous Elder Army

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Our Indigenous Military History – We fought together ...

Charles Mene MM

Charles Mene was born in 1915 on Mabuiag Island in the Torres Strait. He enlisted in the Militia on 3 September 1939 and later transferred to the 2nd Australian Imperial Force eventually joining the 2/33rd Battalion that was sent to the Middle East as part of the Syrian campaign. The 2/33rd Battalion also saw action at Kokoda, Buna and Gona. The Battalion lost over a hundred men and experienced some of the toughest fighting that Australian soldiers would endure during World War Two.

Charles also served in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan from 1946. In 1950, he re-engaged to serve in Korea with the 1st Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment. Due to his extensive combat experience, he served in the machine gun platoon of Support Company but was occasionally seconded to rifle companies to lead less experienced soldiers in battle.

In 1952 Charles was awarded the Military Medal (MM) for his leadership and coolness under fire. After the Korean War, Charles joined the Regular Army and was posted to the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, as the battalion prepared for operations in Malaya. After two years of serving in Malaya, he returned home to Australia and discharged in April 1961.



Lorraine Hatton, OAM – indigenous Elder Army