

## **Darkiñung Abstract**

[commonly written with English characters as 'Darkinung', *Darkinyung* or *Darkinjung*]

The Original People of the Hawkesbury / Blue Mountains:  
- The Aboriginal Identification from Colonial History  
G.E. Ford, 2013

This Abstract has been prepared to address an emerging debate about who were the traditional people of the northern Blue Mountains / Hawkesbury region when the British settlers arrived. Does it matter? Yes: It matters for their descendants who are still living in the locality, the same as it matters for people seeking recognition of their origins in any continent. Are Cambodian people Thai? Should Polish people have their heritage classified as Spanish? Should the people from Ireland be called English? Here are the alternatives being considered since the release of 2010 "*Darkiñung* Recognition", with analyses of historical records. The findings are conclusive. Entries here are in time order.

### (1) 1790s

When Gov. Arthur Phillip led a boat expedition along the Branches of what became the Hawkesbury River in 1789, the Aborigines were not identified, but in his report navy Capt. John Hunter observed that they had been harvesting a yam along the river's banks. It was a root tuber from a sedge, a type of marsh club-rush. After returning by land with Aborigines from Sydney / Botany Bay in 1791, Phillip wrote ***I found on the banks of the Hawkesbury, people who made use of several words we could not understand, & it soon appeared that they had a language different from that used by those natives we have hitherto been acquainted with. - - - Two of those natives who have lived amongst us for some time were with us, which was from them that we understood, our new friends had a language different from theirs.***

Words were recorded by Phillip near Portland Head (Sackville) from two local men, *Gomebeere* and *Yellomundy*. A later visit led by army Capt. William Paterson in 1793 confirmed the Hawkesbury Aborigines were a different nation to the Cumberland Plains people. When the river Branches were settled, the first written identification given was "The Branch" natives for Aborigines around Richmond Hill /Kurrajong whose home estate included Springwood.

### (2) 1820s

As settlers explored the northern Blue Mountains, they learnt more words in the local language. John Blaxland jnr in 1824 first found that these Aborigines called the ranges *Wallambine*, written with a variety of spellings in English characters. Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell then instructed that the term be used as 'Wollombi' to establish a township at the junction of two mountain streams. References to the "Wollombi Tribe" followed for "The Branch" natives.

### (3) circa 1880s

A word list from locally-born James Tuckerman living at Sackville was published 1887 with more terms from families of the same people as Gov. Phillip had met. Around the same time, native-born Robert Mathews had become friends with these Aborigines, first at Broke on Wollombi Brook when he was surveying their country while living at Singleton. He moved to Parramatta, from where he would travel out to the Hawkesbury River to meet them. At Sackville Mathews completed a record of their language which the people there called *Darkin-nyoong* / *Darkinyûng*, then spelt as *Darkiñung*. The principal Families he listed at the time were Clark(e), Dillon, Everingham-Saunders, Barber-Morley and Newman. Mathews published this Hawkesbury / Blue Mountains language in 1903.

While visiting a different group at The Black Town west of Sydney (in order to record *Gundungurra* language spoken by a woman who had come from the southern Blue Mountains), Mathews also noted "our talk" ["Blacktown talk"] which had come from the Georges River at Liverpool. These Aborigines of the Cumberland Plains were identified by people from the Burragorang Valley as *Dharug* (*Dharuk*, *Dharruck*, *Dharrook*, *Dhoorook*). Mathews made it clear that dh is pronounced with the tongue behind the teeth like English th: Thug and tug are different terms and so are *Dharug* and *darug*. The Family he noted at Blacktown was Lock, who had come from Liverpool. Mathews published the *Dharug* language with the *Gundungurra* in 1901. Earlier, native-born John Rowley had listed the language spoken from Botany Bay up the Georges River, which was shown by James Kohen at Blacktown and District Historical Society in 1984 to be the same as Blacktown *Dharug* ("our talk").

## (4) circa 1910s

Mathews's language records were well reviewed by Wilhelm Schmidt in Europe in 1913. Yet in Australia his cultural findings were obstructed by British-born expatriates, led by Professor Spencer at Melbourne University and his friend Professor David at Sydney University, who would not accept that a native-born colonial-educated man who grew up among Aborigines could have knowledge that they didn't. They intimidated other researchers, such as those then at The Australian Museum Sydney (TAM), to ignore Mathews - changing the course of Aboriginal history.

## (5) circa 1940s

The impasse created by Englishmen was broken by Americans working at the South Australian Museum (SAM), Joseph Birdsell and Sutherland Davidson, and in 1940 Australian Norman Tindale at SAM published an extensive guide to Australian Aboriginal identifications. Unfortunately Tindale misread the grammar in an 1901 article by Mathews - who actually had reported that the *Darkiñung* of the Blue Mountains bordered the *Gundungurra* to their south. Instead, Tindale wrongly placed the *Dharug* from the Cumberland Plains in the mountains. This innocent mislocation was adopted by Fred McCarthy at TAM in 1946, who also used Tindale's misspelling of 'Daruk' for *Dharug*.

McCarthy himself had had Tindale's errors corrected by David Moore and Arthur Capell in 1960s when he became the first Principal of Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies in Canberra (now AIATSIS), but a new edition of Tindale's map was published 1974. Tindale's misspelling was last used in 1990 by Peter Stanbury and John Clegg, yet as late as 2010 old people set in their ways still held tight to Tindale's mistakes. (The AIATSIS Encyclopaedia in 1994 retained *Dharug* as the correct term, although extending it into *Gundungurra* territory.)

## (6) circa 1980s

A newly formed Blacktown and District Historical Society developed a liaison with descendants of the *Dharug* Aboriginal people who had lived at The Black Town, from which James Kohen there became the "authority" to replace Fred McCarthy and Peter Stanbury. Based on different circumstances elsewhere - where children had been separated from their families - Kohen formed a new 'Tribal Link' in 1988, for which he gave them a new name, 'Darug': a word from western Victoria which meant a vegetable root. This was to support an attempt to claim that it was *Dharug* people called 'darug'= yam, rather than *Darkiñung* people from the Blue Mountains, whom Capt. Hunter reported in 1789 were harvesting yams alongside the Hawkesbury River as for (1) above. Many plants throughout Australia form yam tubers.

## (7) circa 1990s

James Kohen became the accepted "authority" on Aborigines of Western Sydney when some of the Blacktown descendants who had lost their heritage accepted what he told them and adopted his new term 'Darug', published 1993 by the Blacktown and District Historical Society in an unchecked book: "The Darug and Their Neighbours". The new term given to Western Sydney descendants by Kohen, as misapplied to the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains is not accepted universally. This misapplication was not accepted in a case before the Federal Court of Australia. Unfortunately, Jack Brook of the Blacktown society had already used Kohen's mislocation of *Dharug* people to the Hawkesbury for a 1994 book in which he (Brook) used *Dharug* for the people at Sackville - who had been recognised by Gov. Phillip as speaking a different language, identified by Mathews as *Darkiñung*.

## (8) circa 2000s

Some Everingham-Saunders Family descendants, as well as local Barber-Morley Family descendants, had been tracking their Genealogy when they became involved in the Everingham Family Association with their cousin (common ancestors), Dr Geoff Ford, who was a career researcher then studying Cultural Heritage around the Hawkesbury region. Analysing colonial history records, he was able both to explain Tindale's mistake and to expose Kohen's Blacktown Hoax in which *Dharug* Aboriginal people who had moved from the Georges River to The Black Town were mislocated into *Darkiñung* Country - that is, across the Hawkesbury floodplain which had formed the ancient traditional border.

The analysis of this history may be checked in the full 2010 "Darkiñung Recognition", with references located using search terms in a download of the digital copy, available online from Sydney University Library at URL: <http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/7745>.