

My Campfire Story

Cath Temple



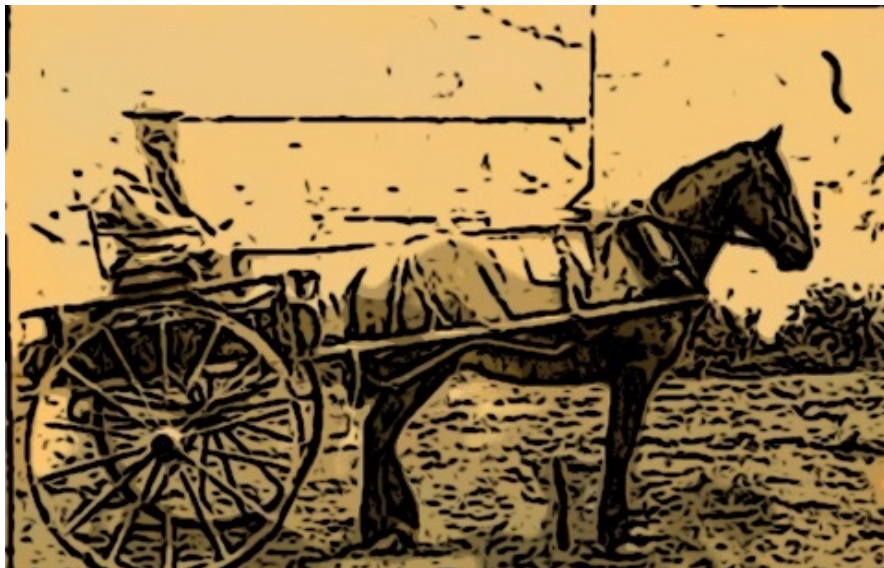


My mum was a great story teller,
as were many of the adults in the
small Mallee town of Nyah West
where I grew up.





Mum's wisdom was passed onto her children through her stories. We would sit around the large open fire in our lounge room where mum would relate the stories of her childhood.



She would tell us how she, as a child, would collect blackberries that grew wild on the mountainside where she lived. A neighbour would take her in a horse and gig to sell the berries to people in the nearby town of Beaufort. The money she made supplemented the meager family income. We would listen in wonderment as she related how she took refuge in the dam to escape the ravages of bushfires on Mount Cole. Having left the bushfires behind she would tell us how dust storms were a constant in the Mallee and how the storms would turn day into night.





The Murray River runs through the Mallee and provides the border for Victoria and New South Wales. It is the life source of the Mallee and was a place where we would spend much of our time, as kids, diving in and out of the waterholes. Aunts, Uncles, cousins and friends would all gather together.



This was a water hole in a number of ways. The adults shared a beer or two. They would catch up on all the news; who had had a baby, who had won awards, who had discovered the best cure for killing tumble weed.





Country kids are ingenious, you know. And, in my time, used to run wild around the countryside. Along with other kids in the neighbourhood we created an underground cubby; quite an engineering feat. It had lots of tunnels and a big cave-like room. I would often take myself off to this room where I would read my comics by candle light or reflect on how mean my brothers were or whether mum and Mrs Wilson would be able to go to heaven. They were overweight and in my childlike innocence I thought they wouldn't be able to be angels and fly to heaven.



Like the Murray, my life has had many twists and turns. I have been nourished and supported in my learning. The river has inspired me by its beauty and spirit as have the people that have been part of my life. It has lead me to a place where I have a passion for teaching and I apply my skills and knowledge everyday.

When I came across a reading titled, "Campfires in Cyberspace" written by David Thornburg, I recognised my childhood learning in the primordial metaphors he talks about and set about exploring how this could be applied in my classroom and the teaching of others.

It revolutionised the way I taught and how I set up learning spaces. If you would like to read this article, the details are listed below along with a brief summary of the metaphors.

Campfires in Cyberspace
Primordial Metaphors for Learning in the 21st Century
David D. Thornburg.

Thornburg Center for Professional Development
[Www.tcpd.org](http://www.tcpd.org)

In Summary -



The Campfire: Storytelling used as a mechanism for teaching. In the past elders used stories to pass on their wisdom to others. Today this can be seen through electronic whiteboards and other technology that provide the opportunity for an expert to share their wisdom with others.



The watering hole: This is essentially a place where we learn from our peers. It is more informal and often involved the sharing of rumours, news, gossip or discovery as people came together casually. A modern day example of this is around a coffee machine or in the classroom, casual comfortable furniture can be used to promote shared learning and conversations.



The cave: This is a place for introspection; being alone to gain new insights. Quiet spaces, be they rooms or pods or even tents can be used to promote quiet and individual reflection.

Life : This is where we get to know what we know by applying our skills and knowledge. In the classroom there needs to be spaces that ensure students have the resources and the area to apply their learning.



