

Margaret Simpson collection

Margaret Simpson (1937 – 2014), a former principal of Sylvania Public School and gifted educator who advocated a 'hands-on' learning approach for school students donated this collection of Aboriginal artefacts to Sutherland Shire Museum.

During the 1970s and 1980s Margaret, with the help of her husband Ron, obtained several tools used by Aborigines of the Western Desert in the Northern Territory. She used these in the classroom as a practical way to help students understand traditional Aboriginal lifestyles and values.

Source: Ron Simpson

Aboriginal artefacts for the Museum

A great coup for the museum was the donation of a collection of Aboriginal artefacts by Margaret Simpson, a former principal of Sylvania Public School and gifted educator who advocated a 'hands-on' learning approach for school students. During the 1970s and 1980s the Gymea Bay resident obtained several tools used by Aboriginals of the Western Desert in the Northern Territory, and used these extensively in the classroom as a practical way to help students understand traditional Aboriginal lifestyles and values.

Bruce Watt met Margaret in her later years and admired her collection. He and Glen Stelzer, a recently retired primary school principal who had worked with Margaret and was a great admirer of her teaching, began cataloguing the collection. Before her death in November 2014, Margaret arranged for her collection to be displayed at the SSHS Museum. The exhibition was unveiled during Heritage Week 2015 while Clarence Slockee, a Mindjingbal Aboriginal man from the far north coast of NSW and Aboriginal education officer with Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens, played the didgeridoo. He spoke about Aboriginal culture and demonstrated some of the items in the exhibition. Clarence Slockee was awarded an Australia Day Medal in 2012 for his outstanding public service. Bruce Watt was proud to accept the collection on behalf of the Society. 'It not only had provenance, but it was also a tribute to a highly respected local educator.'

References:

- 'Heritage Week at the Museum', by Bruce Watt, SSHS *Bulletin*, May 2015
SSHS Minutes, 20 September 2014
- *The Margaret Simpson collection of Aboriginal Artefacts from the Western Desert*, Sutherland Shire Museum;
- <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au> accessed 13 December 2015; <http://www.facebook.com/AILDm/posts>, accessed 13 December 2015
- Bruce Watt, email to Elizabeth Craig, 13 December 2015