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Indigenous training improves cultural awareness

VicForests' staff in Gippsland have received Cultural Awareness training from Gunai-Kurnai people for the first time.

Nathan Trushell, VicForests' Director, Corporate Affairs, said the training focussed on various aspects of indigenous culture including the identification of culturally and spiritually significant sites.

"This is the first group of VicForests' staff to undertake Cultural Awareness training directly with the Gunai-Kurnai," Mr Trushell said.

"More than 20 VicForests' staff from across Gippsland attended the full day session including staff from Swifts Creek, Cann River, Bendoc and Orbost.

"We are very appreciative that Gunai-Kurnai elder, Uncle Albert, took the time to meet with staff and share his experiences and understanding of Indigenous history in Gippsland.

"VicForests wishes to continue to build a productive, ongoing relationship with the Gunai-Kurnai people.

"Uncle Albert made specific reference to the importance of respect, trust and honesty when engaging with Indigenous communities.

"These comments were particular powerful and resonated strongly with our staff," he said.

Mr Trushell said VicForests' staff complete Cultural Awareness training every two years.

"We are particularly grateful to be able to be able to share the knowledge of the Gunai-Kurnai as the local Indigenous tribe for much of the Gippsland region," he said.

"The fantastic display of Gunai Kurnai history housed at the 'Keeping Place – Krowathunkoolong' in Bairnsdale gave staff a good understanding of the area which makes up the tribe's 'country'.

"The opportunity to meet and talk with local communities is extremely valuable in improving our understanding of Indigenous culture and heritage," he said.

"Our staff have previously undergone a more generic Cultural Awareness training program.

"We look forward to other VicForests' staff from across our organisation benefiting from similar training," Mr Trushell said.

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