New generation will keep flame burning

AIEF
AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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AS Year 8 student Toby Bedford enthralled a crowd of business and indigenous leaders with a story about his ancestor Jandamarra, he drew attention to a crucial point about indigenous culture.

In one way or another, Australia's first people have always been fighting for their place and their people. Making sure they receive a decent education is just one front in that battle.

"Tonight I am going to tell you a story my Oji, which means my grandmother, told me about my ancestor Jandamarra," the Melbourne Grammar School student said as he gave the Acknowledgement of Country at the launch of the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation annual report yesterday.

Jandamarra, a Bunuba man, lived more than 100 years ago and helped settlers track down his own people so they could be arrested.

"One day he realised he was doing the wrong thing and that he needed to help his people and protect his country. He freed some men he tracked for the police and became a fugitive," he said.

JAMES CROUCHER
Student Toby Bedford

"No one could ever find him on his country and he became known as a shapeshifter. Jandamarra kept fighting back until he was killed because he wanted his people to know that he was fighting for their country."

Foundation chief executive Andrew Penfold launched the group's results featured in its annual report at an event peppered with a list of business and indigenous leaders, including Prime Goup chairman John Hartigan, Apple Australia managing director Tony King and KPMG chairman Peter Nash.

The charity has raised $82 million since it began in 2007 and is on track to raise $140m, providing education to 7000 indigenous students on scholarships. "We need to aim higher because the fact is, we can't keep up with demand from indigenous students and their families," Mr Penfold told the crowd.

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