

ALFABET

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ABORIGINAL LITERACY FOUNDATION



*Art and Heritage
students set to shine*

WINTER 2019

IN THIS EDITION

New Programs

Junior Literacy and Preschool Program

Job Ready Page 4

Art and Heritage Connection Page 5

The Black Whip Snake Page 6

Fundraising Page 7

Books to the North, WA Page 8

Digital Literacy Hub update Page 9

Our Supporters Page 11

CEO'S REPORT

The first half of 2019 has been an exciting time for the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation. Our Books to the North Program is expanding into Western Australia and soon we will be sending boxes of books and library grants to schools in the Kimberly, Hamersley Ranges and remote parts of the Western Australian coast. There are about 50 remote Aboriginal schools in the region, and we are looking forward to providing books to all of them. A wonderful part of this program is the relationships established between schools in Melbourne and Sydney who donate books to remote Aboriginal schools. Later this year, we are hoping to establish a sister school program so that these schools can contribute even more to each other's wellbeing and knowledge.

We are thrilled to be starting our Work Ready Program for Indigenous young people in Central Melbourne. This

innovative program has been made possible through the generous donation of the IOOF Foundation and will be funded over the next two years. Students who are leaving school (or who have left) will be able to learn job seeking skills such as writing resumes, practicing interviews and other related skills. The most important improvement in young Indigenous lives comes about when he or she is able to obtain a fulltime job.

Another program that we are pleased to be commencing is our Junior Literacy and Preschool Program. Recent NAPLAN tests have shown that young Indigenous Australians are often 2-3 years behind their non-Indigenous peers entering secondary school. Research has found that students who enter secondary school with good literacy skills tend to complete their education, undertake further training and move into

fulltime employment. We feel that an Early Learning program is extremely important and after trialing it in the Ballarat/Hamilton region, we are keen to extend it throughout Victoria and eventually Australia.

I would like to say a special thank you to all the school students who donate books to our Books to the North Program. Over the past two years we have sent more than 100,000 books to Aboriginal schools in Northern Australia. This wonderful program is only possible through the generosity and efforts of young Victorian and New South Wales school children committed to helping their Aboriginal friends in Northern Australia.

I join the board and staff in thanking you once again for your support and interest.

Best regards,
Tony Cree

Below: Tony Cree with Warehouse Manager, Jun Jiao



NEW PROGRAMS IN 2019



Junior Literacy & Preschool Program

We have just commenced our Junior Literacy and Pre-School program, which is aimed at giving Aboriginal children in Western Victoria a head start in literacy. We are indebted to Aunty Anne Cooper, Aunty Janet Curtain and Keiah Cooper for leading this innovative program. What is really exciting about this is that as well as learning the traditional ABC's, the children will also be learning from the Wathaurong and Yorta Yorta languages; prominent Indigenous cultures in Central and Western Victoria. The traditional languages have left their mark with Aboriginal names in the area such as Ballarat, Bunninyong and Wendouree, and it's important that young Indigenous people have the opportunity to learn some of the basics of the language that lent itself to these words.

Job Ready Program

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation's Job Ready Program is starting in inner city Melbourne in June. This innovative program has been sponsored by the IOOF Foundation. As well as preparing young Indigenous Australians for work it will also mentor them through their later school days and when they first leave school. The unemployment of young Indigenous Australians has been identified in recent studies as the single most biggest reason for the disadvantage experienced by inner city Indigenous youth.

Another important reason for this program is the recent changes OH & S Legislation which has made it far more difficult to employ someone with poor literacy skills. Even the well know supermarket companies require their employees take simple literacy and numeracy tests; typically we are told many young Indigenous people do not pass and this is also reflected in recent NAPLAN testing.

We will be teaching job seeking skills such as using the internet, researching jobs in newspapers, Indigenous magazines and through the many employment agencies which support Centrelink Newstart payments. Participants in the program will be taught how to write résumés, prepare for job interviews and manage finances, which is so important once you have a job.

Other areas that will be covered are understanding obligations to the employer: including arriving at work at the correct time, understanding the arrangements of sick days and other times away from work.

We feel this program can make an important difference for young inner city Indigenous Australian and we hope that it can be a model taken up by other Indigenous organisations.



For more information on the above, contact info@aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org

ART AND HERITAGE CONNECTION

BY JACINTA HUMPHRIES

When we think of art and children, what are our first thoughts? I think of paint in my daughter's long blonde locks of hair. I think of paint getting under her smock and onto her clothes, while I ask myself, "However did she get it on her belly?" I think about the mucky water spilling over the table and slowly seeping into our cream carpet. I think of all the pages of seemingly random brushstrokes and how I will make some of this creative output disappear without her knowing.

I think about all the colours of the paints mixed together in the pots and the tedious task I will have ahead of me when she is finally finished; to salvage what I can of the original colours just so that next time she is inspired she has actual colours to work with instead of varying shades of brown and grey. And although every time she asks "Mummy, can I paint a picture?", all these thoughts come flooding in, I am also reminded of the happiness

and joy it brings her when she is painting, and how proud she is once she has finished something and shows me expectantly awaiting my approval - which I give her gladly. I know, no matter how onerous a task it is for me at the end of it, my daughter is imagining and creating; she is playful and happy and really, that's all that matters.

But there is much more to art and children: art fosters creativity which assists in developing their mental, social and emotional skills; art boosts a child's ability to analyze and problem solve in many ways. Using a paintbrush improves a child's fine motor skills, counting colours teaches basic math, and using different materials opens the doors to science. Perhaps the most important benefit of enabling a child to create is the potential to raise their self-confidence: when they are given the opportunity to experiment and make mistakes, they learn new ways to think and look at things.

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation's Heritage and Art classes bring all these factors together while fostering a greater awareness of their heritage and culture.

Exciting things are happening in 2019, with new faces joining our Heritage Connection Art Classes, including senior Indigenous students from the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Their rich culture has shone through in their artwork and it has been both a pleasure and a privilege to be able to bear witness to such raw talent and their unique interpretations of traditional story telling. It has also been wonderful to see our younger Indigenous students grow and learn new techniques to apply to their artwork and see their imaginations beaming on canvas.

With the year quickly progressing, we are proud to announce that there will be an art exhibition of the works held at Radmac Office Choice in Ballarat,

Victoria for the whole month of June. Each of the student's artwork will be on display and for sale, and all sales made will be going directly to the students. If you happen to be in the area, feel free to take a look at all the wonderful works the students have created during their time at our Heritage Connection Art classes.

"THE STUDENTS ARE PROGRESSING REALLY WELL AND THEY ARE EAGER TO LEARN. IT'S AMAZING TO SEE THEIR IMAGINATIONS RUN WILD. THEY ENJOY DOING THE ART AND THEY ARE QUICK WITH THEIR CREATIONS."
- JANET CURTAIN



THE BLACK WHIP SNAKE

One of our students whose work will be shown in our June exhibition is Tarikka. Tarikka comes from Timber Creek in the Northern Territory and goes to boarding school in Ballarat, Victoria. She recently spoke to us about her community and the meaning of her painting.

Where are you from?

I am from Timber Creek, which is in the Northern Territory. It is 600kms southwest from Darwin and it is 200kms east from the Western Australian border.

What community are you from?

In Timber Creek there are 5 different communities; we've got Bulla, Myatt, Gulardi, Gilwi and Murunginge. I live in Myatt.

What is life like in Timber Creek?

Life is just awesome, just to be free out in the bush, go fishing and doing cultural stuff with the family and just doing what I love most.

What do you like doing most?

Just being free and just being me doing the cultural things out bush.

What are the main differences about living in Victoria from Timber Creek?

Probably the weather. Also the landscape, its just really different from home: here it's sort of a flat land or country, where at home at Timber Creek we live in the Valley and there's so many hills around us.

Do you have a role model or someone who has inspired you? Why?

My grandfather was my role model. He was a strong Warnimyn Ngaliwurru Nungali man; he was a business man and a law man in my clan group and for the other four communities and around Timber Creek and the rest of the region.

What was his responsibilities as a law man?

So as a law man he was in charge of the ceremonies that we had, like our initiation ceremonies, our Corroboree dancing, when we had meetings about our Native Title case, he was basically a big boss for us, so he was in charge of everything and he knew what he was doing, and he was



proud of what he did for us back home.

How do you maintain your connection to your community?

Probably with art. When I do art, it keeps the connection.

Regarding Heritage, what sort of things do you do in the Myatt community, what is something specific to the Myatt community?

Our initiation ceremonies, it's a main big one for Ngaliwurru Nungali people back home. It brings a lot of people and family together.

What sort of culture differences are there when it comes to artwork do you know of compared to other Indigenous communities?

So back home our art style is mainly dot painting, and we use a lot of circles and in some of our arts we use contemporary pieces like drawing faces and then doing artwork around the face picture. When you go up to the Arnhem Land you see a lot of lines; they have a lot of line patterns, so (they) use a lot of space in their artwork.

Is there any art techniques you can't do or use?

In our culture we can't use Crosshatching because that's not how our ancestors, the Ngaliwurru Nungali and the

Warnimyn people they all did their art using dot painting, so Crosshatching is not part of our area.

Who taught you how to paint?

I actually got it from my cousins; two of my cousins. In my culture, I call them my 'brothers' because they are my mum's older sister's kids. So, growing up I watched them paint a lot. I think I was about 6 when I got a piece of paper and was copying their art and then from then on I was just stuck to it. I love it.

What is the story behind the piece of artwork that you've completed in the art class at ALF?

That story is about a black whip snake and in my language we call that the Wuyawuj, and the story behind the black whip snake is that a long time ago in the Dreamtime the snake was a whirl like a whirly wind and sort of swift, like the water, making it have whirls in it. The snake rose and as it was looking into the water it was singing Ngabul Ngabul meaning "whirly wind going into the water".

What do you like most about the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation's art classes?

I just love hanging out here, its chilled and a laid back place and people here are really kind.

"I'll probably become an art teacher at the primary school back home, to do stuff with them and also to encourage them to get away from home just for a bit ... to find themselves and come back and inspire other people in the community."

What do you want to do once you finish school?

Well I want to be a parks and wildlife ranger back home, looking after the environment and caring for the land and the animals. If that doesn't work out for me then I'll probably become an art teacher at the primary school back home, to do stuff with them and also to encourage them to get away from home just for a bit; a couple of years to find themselves and come back and inspire other people in the community.

Thank you for your time and thank you for being a part of our Indigenous Heritage Connection Art Classes. It has been fantastic seeing you and the other girls coming in each week and seeing the art work flourish in front us.

FUNDRAISING AND BOOK DRIVES

One of the most encouraging aspects of our work is to see how young people respond to the call and reach out to support kids their own age. In fact, most book drives are organised and run by the students themselves.

There have been many schools who have donated books to us over the past six months but some notable efforts include Westbourne Grammar School, Ivanhoe Grammar, Lowther Hall and Ruyton Grammar. These and other schools have donated thousands of books and stationery which we are distributing around Northern Australia.

There have also been some wonderful fundraising efforts on behalf of the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation recently. The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation was recently made the co-beneficiary of an auction at the annual

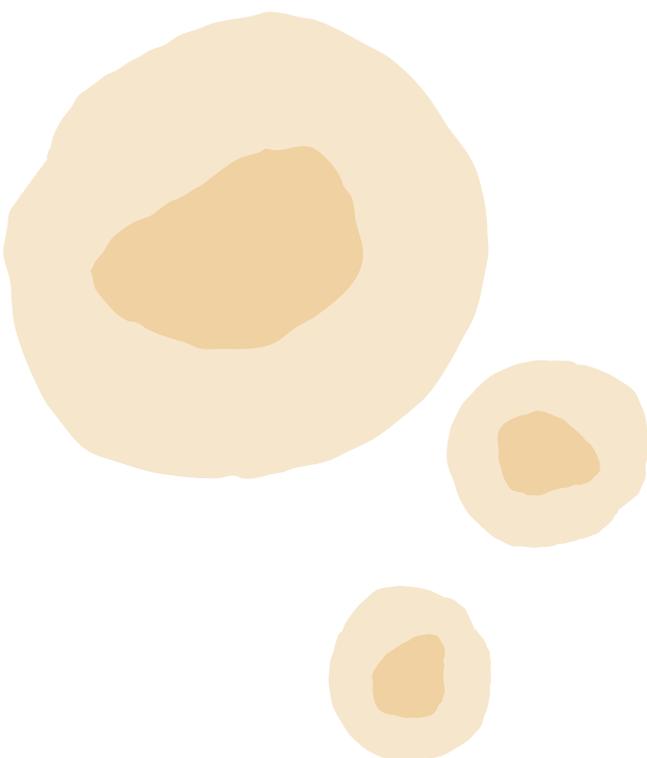
Discworld Convention in Melbourne. We were also so grateful to receive a donation from Darren Hanlon's Buried Country LP. The Ingram family also set about helping the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation as the beneficiary of the active fundraising efforts throughout the year, including neighbourhood stalls and Christmas donations. As an independent organisation, it is the support of individuals and philanthropic groups which enable our work to carry on. We are enormously appreciative of all your efforts.



Top right: Students from Westbourne Grammar School

Bottom right: Attendees of the 2019 Discworld Convention

Left: The cover art for Darren Hanlon's Buried Country LP



BOOKS TO THE NORTH

Getting geared up for Western Australia

Living in major cities and towns, it's easy to take for granted a lot of things that are so easily accessible to us, such as libraries or art galleries or even a hospital. Such places only exist in major towns and cities and are quite lengthy distances for rural and remote communities to be able to access. Rural and remote communities and schools are constantly set at a disadvantage, with a high turnover of staff, lack of resources and a lack of opportunities and accessibility. This creates a gap in aspiration for Indigenous youth, without access to such resources and opportunities, the desire to obtain further education is greatly diminished.

Governments tend not to focus on the little communities spread across the vastness of Australia; their focus is on dense populations for greater impact. The trouble is that the majority of the Indigenous population live in smaller communities in remote areas, and don't get flagged as a priority. Seeing is believing: we read about or hear about the difficulties that the Indigenous population face, and yet it is so distant and far from us that it almost seems unreal. But with the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation's Books to the North Program, we have witnessed the severe circumstances of the remote and rural communities in Northern Australia and the impact it has on the Indigenous youth.

In the past 20 years, the literacy gap has made slight improvements, but barely enough to make a historical shift in the continuing depletion of Indigenous education, health and longevity. The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation is a small organisation, but with big aspirations; although we are

unable to build hospitals, libraries or art galleries for the remote communities we do however, send boxes of books with a variety of culturally diverse literature, and offer library grant funds to help build upon the aspirations of Indigenous youth that benefit from our assistance.

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation's Books to the North Program is reaching its final leg of the campaign. This year we are contacting remote and rural Indigenous schools and community groups across Northern Western Australia as we have done for Northern Territory and Northern Queensland, with the offer of boxes of books and the opportunity to apply for a library grant to update and restore their library resources. We have been able to help so many Indigenous schools so far in Northern Australia, and it would not have been possible without the generous support of our donors and city schools with book drives and donations.

Jacinta Humpries,
Project Coordinator



DIGITAL LITERACY HUB

This year the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation has been working with the Alice Springs Language School to provide a new version of our Healthy Living Series in Arrernte for the benefit of speakers in Mparntwe and surrounding regions of central Australia.

Studies have shown that the ability to learn one language dramatically improves the ability to learn another and both English and Arrernte versions will provide a valuable reference point between the languages. We believe this strikes the right balance between the necessity of learning English and maintaining the oral traditions contained in Indigenous languages.

It may be misleading to describe the books as a translation because translating from English to Indigenous languages can be problematic: often English will raise concepts that have no equivalent in the Indigenous language. We also found that the Healthy Living Series weren't written in the syntax common to people from Central Desert regions. Despite this, the Alice Springs Language School has attempted to produce a faithful interpretation. With this information, we may now consider beginning future publications with the Indigenous language and then translating to English.

We are delighted that many independent authors and publishers have continued to contribute their Indigenous themed and general titles; including Fremantle Press and independent authors Tanya Perrin and Suzanne Barton.

Thank you to all those who have supported this important project. We look forward to continuing the rollout and exploring the ways new technologies can assist in addressing education disadvantages in remote and regional Australia.



We are grateful for the support of the philanthropic groups and consultants who have contributed to our recent endeavors in the online space.



BEQUESTS TO THE ABORIGINAL LITERACY FOUNDATION

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation is most grateful to individuals or organisations who choose to make a bequest. We would recommend that you inform your solicitor to include a bequest in your will – If you prefer, you can use the form provided below.

I _____ wish to bequeath _____ dollars to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation.

I would like this bequest to contribute towards:

- A library for a remote school
- Extending the tutoring program
- To provide a school or post-school scholarship
- All work currently undertaken by the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation
- Other (please specify)

If the donation is towards a school library or a school in the Northern Australia, we can arrange for a small named plaque to be placed at the school receiving your donation. Please tick below.

- Yes, I would like a plaque to be placed at the school.

Please forward a copy of this form to your solicitor and a copy to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation at info@aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org

or

P.O. Box 315 Flinders Lane
Melbourne, Victoria, 8009



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